

Jerry Berndt - Old Mole

Protest, Politics and Everyday Culture in the USA between 1967–1977.

Edited and annotated by Maik Schlüter

America between 1967 and 1977. The American photographer Jerry Berndt (*1943) accompanied and documented this ten-year period like no other. Berndt was himself active in the anti-Vietnam War activities of the 1960s. He created an extensive socio-documentary body of work that, beyond any simple polarizations, allows in-depth insight into the social constitution of those years.

Jerry Berndt's freelance and commissioned works fall under the genre of documentary photography and exhibit both photojournalistic qualities as well as a conceptual approach. What is important is the context of the period: in the late-1960s, journalism, film, photography, and literature were redefined. The socio-documentary approach was rediscovered and expanded: social issues and a critical political consciousness were coupled with individual and highly subjective criteria. Concepts such as New Journalism, New Hollywood, or, in the field of photography, New Documents sum up these aspirations. In this sense, Jerry Berndt practices a new version of Street Photography and positions himself as an independent heavyweight in this genre. Not only does he embark on a road trip through the United States, he places himself in close proximity to political conflicts, systematically portrays America's people and cityscapes, and time and again embeds photographs into his commissioned works for newspapers that depict a general atmosphere beyond current events. This prowess has made him one of the most outstanding photographs of his generation.

Concentrating on the period between 1967 and 1977 allows zeroing in on these photographic qualities. Jerry Berndt took photographs primarily in Boston, Detroit, and Chicago: strongholds of student resistance, yet typical American cities in which industrial workers live with their families, the middle class builds homes in quiet suburbs, and in which the automobile industry and the bank sector are booming. At

the same time, the urban peripheries are increasingly sprawling, and social conflicts are mounting. The strict separation of black and white lifeworlds, racism as lived on a daily basis, is a lasting conflict that the black community will no longer tolerate. Jerry Berndt roams through the streets of the cities: he takes pictures at demonstrations and shows how colorful, enthusiastic, and resolute the students are. Yet he also shows the conservative establishment that openly confesses its allegiance to Richard Nixon. He shows the young and often distraught police officers who are completely overwhelmed by their role as the defenders of the country, as well as the aggressive and dull faces of the cops from the South as they ruthlessly lash out at hippies. Jerry Berndt portrays the white middle class and the working class, and takes pictures of both blacks and whites living in America's ghettos.

In the early 1970s, Jerry Berndt withdraws from the political protest and works as a photographer for daily newspapers. It is during this period that he produces images that bring to a point the way Americans see themselves in terms of culture and society: beauty pageants, car showrooms, children's competitions, fashion shows, high-school girls, street children, the homeless and the unemployed, bikers, artists, bartenders. He also takes pictures of the urban infrastructure: offices, bars, arterial highways, billboards, parks, and parking lots. But this life is marked by the disappointment and uncertainty that accompanied the Watergate affair and by the trauma of the Vietnam War, which ended with a tremendous loss of lives, by the oil crisis, and by serious environmental pollution. Economic and social disenchantment prevail throughout the country. While the assassination of the Kennedy brothers and Martin Luther King were part of a monstrous dynamism of political trench warfare, existential turmoil, naïve enthusiasm, and brutal political considerations, which define the 1960s, the 1970s are a decade of paranoia and depression. Jerry Berndt's photographs fill precisely that period of transition that portrays political and social transition.

Jerry Berndt / Photographer

Jerry Berndt (*1943 in Milwaukee, Wisconsin) has consistently worked as a photographer for the past forty years. In the late 1960s, commissioned by Harvard University, he extensively documented Boston's *Combat Zone* within the scope of a sociological study, and for years accompanied the student protest movement as a freelance photographer. He worked for various newspapers and magazines—the *Boston Globe*, the *New York Times*, *Newsweek*, and *Paris Match*, among others. His work as a photojournalist took him to numerous conflict areas—San Salvador (1984), Haiti (1986–91), Armenia (1993–94), and Rwanda (2003–04)—which gave rise to extensive reportages. In the early 1980s, Jerry Berndt's powerful images in the series *Missing Persons* raised America's awareness for the situation of the homeless. Berndt has taught at Boston University's College of Fine Art and at the University of Massachusetts. His works are included in prominent collections around the world, such as those at the Museum of Modern Art in New York, the Museum of Fine Arts in Boston, or the Bibliothèque National in Paris. In 2008, his work was honored in Germany for the first time within the scope of a comprehensive retrospective in Braunschweig and Berlin. Jerry Berndt lives in Paris.

Maik Schlüter / Curator and Author

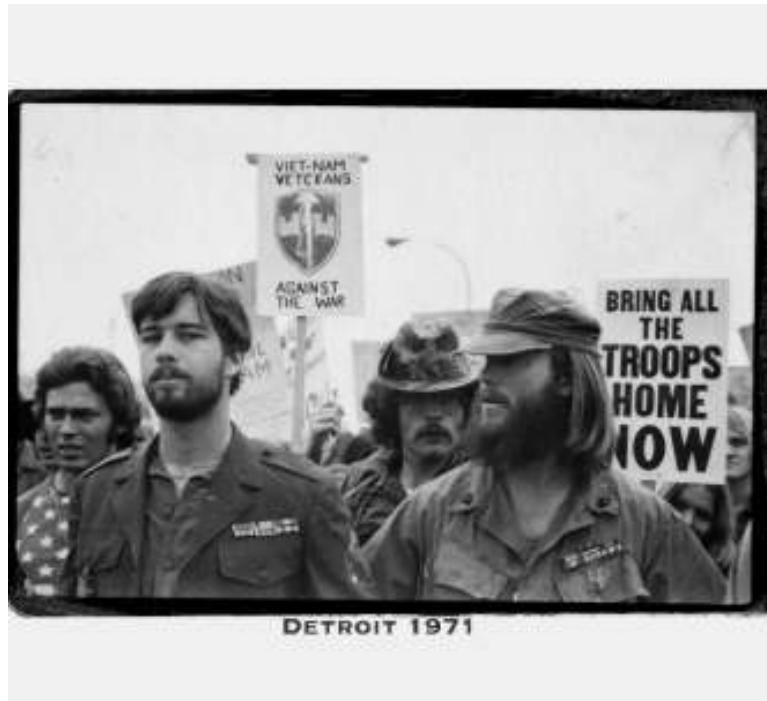
Maik Schlüter is an author and curator in the area of contemporary art. From 2007–08 he directed the Museum für Photographie Braunschweig, was a curator at the Kestnergesellschaft, Hannover, from 2003–2005, and in 2001 he worked as an assistant curator at the Nederlands Fotomuseum, Rotterdam. He regularly contributes to *die taz (Die Tageszeitung)* in his capacity as an art critic. He has published articles on and curated numerous exhibitions with, e.g., Hanne Darboven, Candida Höfer, Cindy Sherman, Lynne Cohen, Fischli/Weiss, Marco Poloni, David Deutsch, Jerry Berndt, and Amy Patton. His most recent publications include *Jerry Berndt: Insight*, edited in collaboration with Felix Hoffmann (Steidl, 2008); *Tobias Zielony: Story/No Story* (Hatje Cantz, 2010); and *Noir Complex* (Spector Books, 2010).



BOSTON, 1968



DETROIT, 1972 AM. NATZI PARTY







DETROIT 1972 NEO-NATZIS



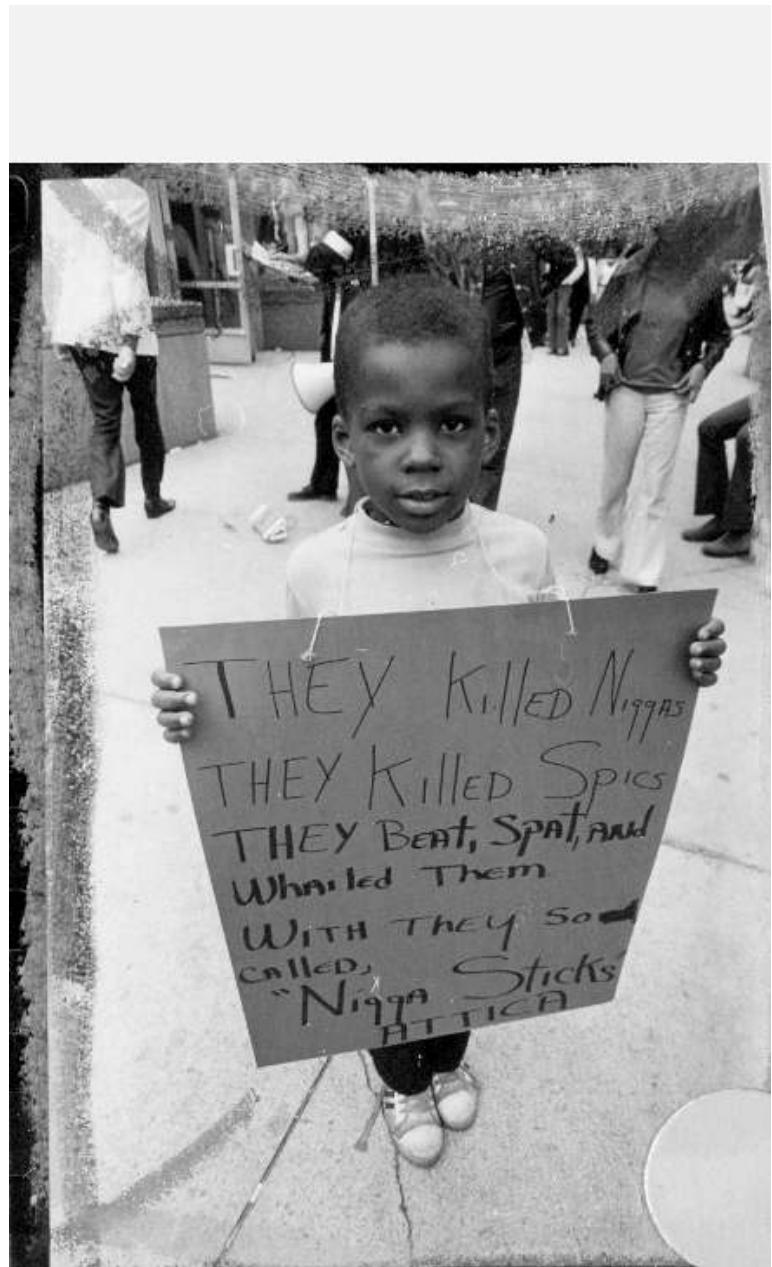
DETROIT 1971



DETROIT 1970



WASHINGTON DC 1972



DETROIT 1971



DETROIT 1971



DETROIT 1972

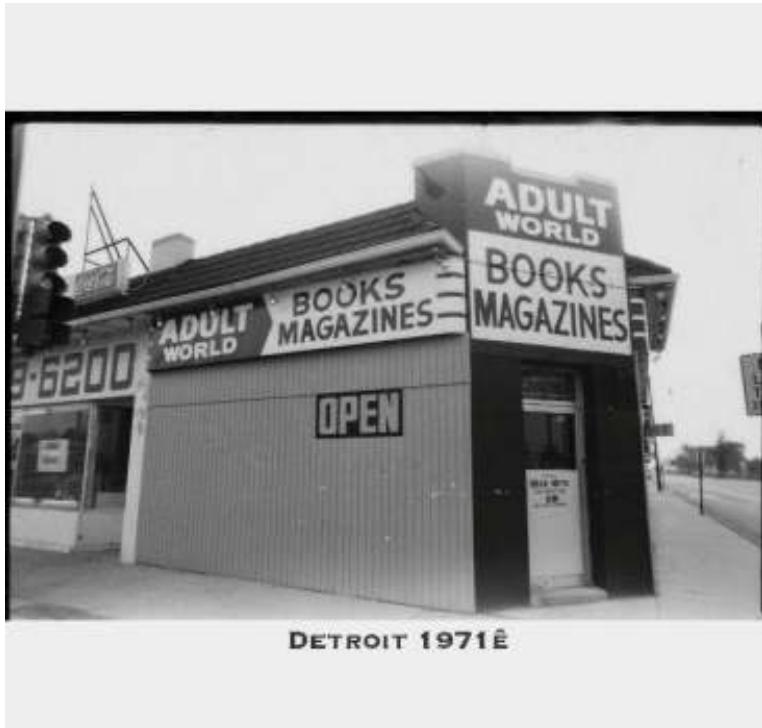


DETROIT 1971



DETROIT- DEL RAY 1971







DETROIT 1971



DETROIT 1971



DETROIT 1972



MILWAUKEE 1967



REVERE BEACH, BOSTON, 1979?



DETROIT 1971



DETROIT 1970A



UNDER THE MYSTIC BRIDGE, EAST BOSTON 1977



UNDER THE MYSTIC BRIDGE, EAST BOSTON 1977



DETROIT 1972



DETROIT 1972



DETROIT 1972



BOSTONVILLE, MA C. 1970



DETROIT 1973



DETROIT 1971



DETROIT, MI 1972



MILWAUKEE, WI 1972



NIXON'S FIRST WATERGATE SPEECH 1973



DETROIT 1971







DETROIT 1970



DETROIT 1971





CAPE COD DRIVE IN 1979



FRAMINGHAM MA 1976



DETROIT 1971



DETROIT 1971



DETROIT 1970



DETROIT 1971



BOSTON 1974-76



BOSTON, 1977



GREENFIELD, MI 1972



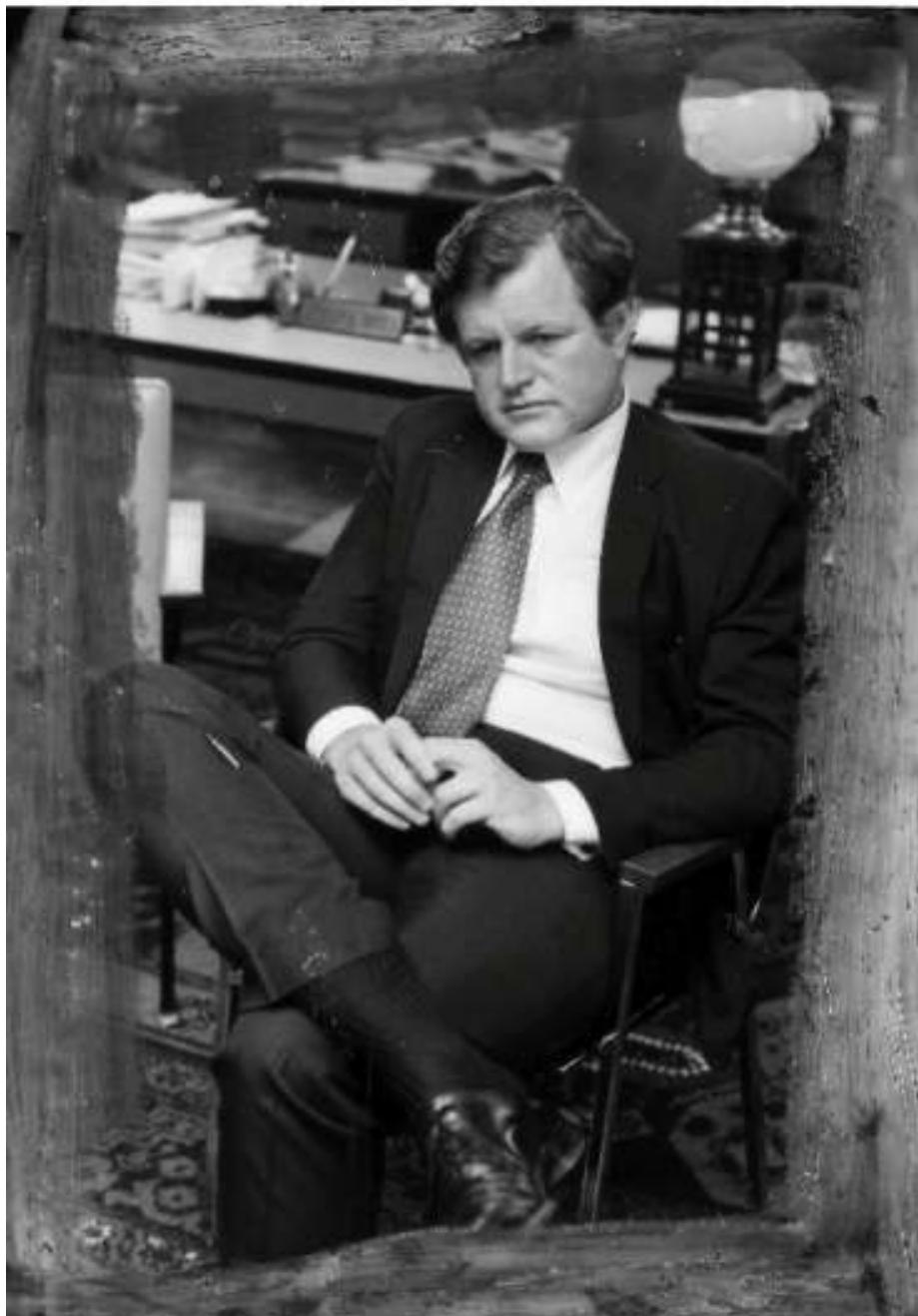
TEENS DRINKING CONCORD MA 1976



SEABROOK, N.H. 1977



BOSTON 1974-76



BOSTON PHOENIX OFFICE, 1975-76



SEABROOK NH 1977



SEABROOK N.H. 1978-9



SEABROOK, NH 1977



BOSTON, 1978



SEABROOK NH 1977



SEABROOK, NH 1977



SEABROOK, NH 1977



SEABROOK, NH 1977



SEABROOK, N.H. 1977





SEABROOK, 1979