

BIOGRAPHY
ANDREAS GURSKY
PHOTOGRAPHER
GERMANYBORN 1955

ANDREAS GURSKY WAS BORN IN LEIPZIG AND STUDIED IN ESSEN AND LATER DÜSSELDORF. AS WINNER OF THE CITIBANK PRIVATE BANK PHOTOGRAPHY PRIZE IN 1998, GURSKY HAS ESTABLISHED HIMSELF AS ONE OF THE LEADING PHOTOGRAPHERS OF HIS TIME. HE GENERALLY PHOTOGRAPHS LANDSCAPES IN LARGE COLOUR FORMAT - THE IMAGES ARE OF URBAN LANDSCAPES (THE HONG KONG STOCK EXCHANGE) BOTH INTERIOR AND EXTERIOR. GERMAN ARTIST ANDREAS GURSKY IS BEST KNOWN FOR HIS BILLBOARD-SIZE PHOTOGRAPHS THAT INHABIT A SPACE BETWEEN PAINTING AND PHOTOGRAPHY, LANDSCAPE AND HUMAN CONCERN, ANIMATE AND INANIMATE. HE OFTEN PLACES HIS LARGE-FORMAT CAMERA AT A HIGH-ANGLED DISTANCE FROM HIS SUBJECT, CREATING IMAGES THAT SUGGEST MAPPING STILLS FROM OUTER SPACE OR CYBER-TECHNOLOGY. SOMETIMES COMPUTER MANIPULATED, HIS IMAGES OF CORPORATE ARCHITECTURE, ENVIRONMENTAL CONTEMPLATIONS SUCH AS PEBBLY EARTH, AND MASS GROUPS OF PEOPLE FREEZE-FRAMED MID-MOTION OFTEN REFERENCE THE GEOMETRIC FORMS OF MINIMALIST ART AND THE "ALLOVER" QUALITY OF A JACKSON POLLOCK PAINTING. OUR EYES DANCE ACROSS HIS DENSE, OFTEN

SLIGHTLY ABSTRACTED
IMAGES, WHICH DISPLAY
STRONG FORMAL
ELEMENTS AS THEY BLEND
RELATIONSHIPS BETWEEN
NATURE, CULTURE, AND
TECHNOLOGY. HE IS
PARTICULARLY CONCERNED
WITH CAPTURING MOTION
AND CREATING A MOMENT
OF STILLNESS IN THAT
SPACE. HIS WORK IS "AS
MUCH AKIN TO THE
PHYSICS OF MOTION AS IT
IS TO THE PHILOSOPHY OF
CONVERGENCE." LET'S
ENTERTAIN FEATURES A
LARGE PHOTOGRAPH OF A
MASS OF YOUTHFUL
PARTYGOERS TITLED MAY
DAY III. THIS HAZY,
OVERCAST IMAGE EVOKES
FILM STILLS, APOCALYPTIC
IMAGININGS, MASS
DEMONSTRATION NEWS
DOCUMENTS, AND OTHER
ASSOCIATIONS FROM OUR
COLLECTIVE
CONSCIOUSNESS. ONE
CRITIC COMMENTED THAT
GURSKY'S IMAGES "DEPICT
SOCIAL AND GEOGRAPHICAL
STRESSPOINTS... INVOLVE
PEOPLE WHO ARE DRAWN
INTO A KIND OF
GEOGRAPHICAL OR SOCIAL
UNITY, IF AN IMPERFECT
ONE." THIS MASS
GATHERING OF RAVERS
SUGGESTS THAT SOME OF
US ARE CAUGHT IN A
MOMENT WHEN CULTURAL
TROPES SUCH AS MUSIC
PRESENT THE ONLY VIABLE
AND DESIRABLE
OPPORTUNITY FOR
COLLECTIVE ENGAGEMENT.
POLITICS HAS BEEN
USURPED BY CULTURE AND
IDENTITIES ARE FORMED

THROUGH THESE MOMENTS
OF COMMON ECSTATIC
ABANDON. THROUGH
HIGHLY DRAMATIC MEANS,
GURSKY AT ONCE
DOCUMENTS AND REMAPS
THIS PARTY AS AN
INSTANCE OF PROMISE,
FAILURE, CONFUSION, AND
HOPE.

WRITE OUT WHAT I THINK::
I WAS INITIALLY DRAWN TO
THIS SERIES OF
PHOTOGRAPHS BY THE
DUST JACKET
ILLUSTRATION WHICH IS A
SOMEWHAT UNUSUAL
COMPOSITION FOR GURSKY,
IT TURNS OUT. I WAS
TOUCHED IMMEDIATELY BY
THE SPARSE,
GEOMETRICALLY PLEASING
LANDSCAPE RUNNING ON
ENDLESSLY IN A STRIATED
BANNER OF PERFECTLY
MATCHED COLOUR. THERE
ARE SEVERAL OTHER
'NATURALISTIC' STUDIES
INCLUDED IN THIS
PORTFOLIO OF 76 PLATES
BUT MOST OF THE WORK
EXAMINES THE
CONTROLLED CHAOS OF
URBAN SETTINGS, OFTEN
FEATURING COUNTLESS
HUMANS PERAMBULATING
POINTLESSLY IN ENDLESS
MOTION. "BEING MODERN
CAN ALSO INVOLVE THE
DANGER OF LOSING ONE'S
INDIVIDUALITY AND RIGHT
TO SELF-DETERMINATION,"
MARIE LUISE SYRING
REMINDS US.
GURSKY WORKS ON THE
BOUNDARY BETWEEN
PAINTING AND ART
PHOTOGRAPHY. HE TESTS
AND RETESTS THE
CRITICAL DISTINCTIONS

SEEMINGLY INHERENT TO
THESE TWO
REPRESENTATIONAL
DOMAINS. THUS MANY, BUT
NOT ALL, OF GURSKY'S
PHOTOGRAPHS SEEM TO
HAVE AN EXPLICITLY
CLINICAL ORIENTATION. HE
IS PROBING A FRAGILE
BOUNDARY AND WE KNOW
IT. THE COLD TRUTH WHICH
EMANATES FROM A STARK
OBJECTIFICATION OF THE
SUBJECT MATTER WHICH
COMPELS GURSKY IS
HOWEVER ALWAYS
BALANCED BY THE WAY IN
WHICH HE FLOODS HIS
OVERRUN VISUAL FIELDS
WITH LIGHT AND RIOTOUS
COLOUR. THAT I MIGHT
PERSONALLY PREFER THE
WARMER EMOTIONAL
TONES OF HIS
NATURALISTIC WORK TO
THE HARSHER ELEMENTS
OF THE CITYSCAPES IS OF
COURSE HARDLY THE
POINT. ALL OF HIS WORK
MAKES YOU THINK! AND
SOMETIMES GASP AT THE
SHEER EXCESS OF TALENT
AND TECHNIQUE WHICH
PROPELS THE CREATION OF
SUCH INTENSELY
INTELLIGENT, BEAUTIFUL
ART.