



For Immediate Release:

A Matter of Wit

January 13 – February 27, 2011

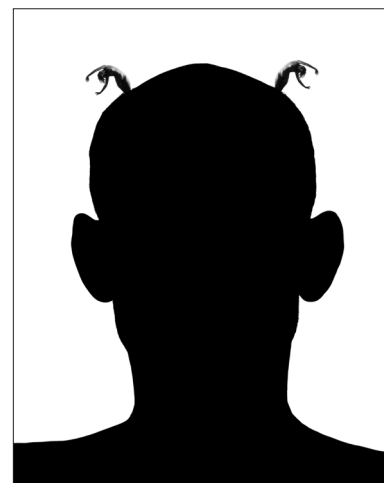
Gilbert Garcin, Miro Švolík, Colin Blakely



Gilbert Garcin, *241 Les Premier Pas*
[*The First Steps*], 2003



Colin Blakely, *Disappearance II: The Ever-Present Legacy of Lineage*, 2004



Miro Švolík, *Another Way of Looking at It*,
1999

FotoFest Headquarters Gallery, 1113 Vine Street, Houston, Texas, U.S.A.

Opening Reception: Thursday, January 13, 2011 6-9pm

HOUSTON, TEXAS - NOVEMBER 23, 2010 - FotoFest begins its 2011 exhibition season with an international triad of artists whose photographic works are characterized by visual fantasy, irony and wit.

A Matter of Wit features the first large-scale U.S. exhibition of the French octogenarian artist **Gilbert Garcin**, alongside the work of one of Prague's heralded masters of staged photography, **Miro Švolík**, and U.S. artist **Colin Blakely**, whose whimsical images make humorous commentary on everyday life.

The 100-print exhibition opens **Thursday January 13, 2011 at the FotoFest gallery in Houston, Texas**. The opening reception is 6-9pm, The first **Saturday Matinee public tour and talk by the artists is Saturday, January 15, at 2pm**. The exhibition and artist talk are free to the public.

“Wit and humor are among the rarest and most precious aspects of creative expression in almost any field of art,” says the exhibition curator, Wendy Watriss, FotoFest Artistic Director and Senior Curator. “Photography is often seen to be peculiarly adept at showing us the humorous aspects of human behavior because of street photography’s ability to ‘capture’ the fleeting, unguarded moments that reveal paradox and comedy what we do. But what about the images that are deliberately constructed to play with our sense of what photography usually is and what is visually real? Visual paradox and staged fantasy are the most difficult things to do successfully in photography, but this is what these artists do.”

Gilbert Garcin, who is making his first large-scale U.S. appearance in *A Matter of Wit*, began photographing at the age of 60, after many years of managing a lamp manufacturing firm in the south of France. In his dark suit, formal white shirts

and ties and with the simplest and most minimal of materials, Mr. Garcin, now 81, defies the normal expectations of what a photographic artist is and does.

Mr. Garcin creates fanciful, humorous scenarios involving himself and, more recently, his wife. The scenes, which may involve complex interactions with labyrinths of lines, geometric objects, sand dunes, and empty stretches of space that seem to expand into outer space, are generally created by the artist in his kitchen. In a most 'artful' yet understated way, he challenges the very idea of photography as a 'record of reality.'

On public streets and remote landscapes, **Miro Švolík** creates elaborate tableaux, mises-en-scene with his friends and relatives. Building on the traditions of Slovak folk tales and popular theatre, he constructs a world of visual fantasy and playful interactions between man and nature. His works from the 1980s were the antithesis of social realism in the days of Czechoslovak Communism and led the way a new avant-garde movement in Czecho-Slovak photography.

From early drawings and street productions outside his studio apartment, Miro Švolík's work became ever more fanciful, combining humans and animals in whimsical relationships with classic Czech and Slovak landscapes. In his most recent work, he makes constructivist sculptures from parts of nude bodies and elements of classical painting and performance.

Colin Blakely, originally from Houston, injects elements of nature and text into the most familiar settings of everyday life to expose the curious underpinnings of the domestic scenes that we take for granted. Nothing is out of bounds – hunting dogs, flags, rural facades, clouds that are out of place, small town architecture, stars, the memories of romantic Western landscapes.

Despite the "Middle America" setting of Colin Blakely's work, it never settles into comfortable or easy expression. There is always something slightly askew or out of place in his images, and the titles point to other preoccupations – *The Anachronism of Basic Instinct* or *The Seeming Impenetrability of the Space Between*.

A Matter of Wit continues through February 27, 2011 at FotoFest Headquarters Gallery, 1113 Vine Street in Downtown Houston. The first of several free, public artist tours of the exhibit take place Saturday, January 15, 2011 at 2pm. The gallery hours are 10am-5pm Monday-Friday and Noon-5pm on Saturday. **FotoFest Galleries are open late on Thursday evenings until 7pm. Admission to FotoFest exhibits is free.**

Additional tours and programming are planned and will be announced on the FotoFest website at www.fotofest.org.

On view at FotoFest Headquarters through December 11, 2010 is B-SIDES: A Dialogue with Contemporary U.S. Photography. For more information on A Matter of Wit and other FotoFest exhibitions and programs, please contact FotoFest, 713.223.5522 ext 19 or info@fotofest.org; or visit the FotoFest website at www.fotofest.org.

FOTOFEST 2010-2011 EXHIBITION SPONSORS

The Houston Endowment Inc., The City of Houston through the Houston Arts Alliance, Texas Commission on the Arts, National Endowment for the Arts, The Wortham Foundation, FotoFest Board of Directors, iLand Internet Solutions, KUHF 88.7 FM, HexaGroup, Vine Street Studios

FOTOFEST INTERNATIONAL

Founded in 1983 by photographers Frederick Baldwin and Wendy Watriss, FotoFest is a year-round, international non-profit organization promoting the photographic arts and education. FotoFest started the first and longest-running international citywide festival of photography in the U.S. The Biennial festivals and FotoFest's year-long programming are known for their presentation of important talent, contemporary and historical, from around the world. In selecting its exhibitions and related art programs, FotoFest has a strong commitment to aesthetic quality and important social ideas. FotoFest has curated and commissioned exhibitions of photo-based art from Latin America, Asia, Europe, the Middle East and North Africa. Its Biennial portfolio review, the Meeting Place, is considered one of the best in the world. In addition to its year-round art programming, FotoFest's school-based education program, Literacy Through Photography, uses photography to stimulate visual literacy, writing and analytical thinking.