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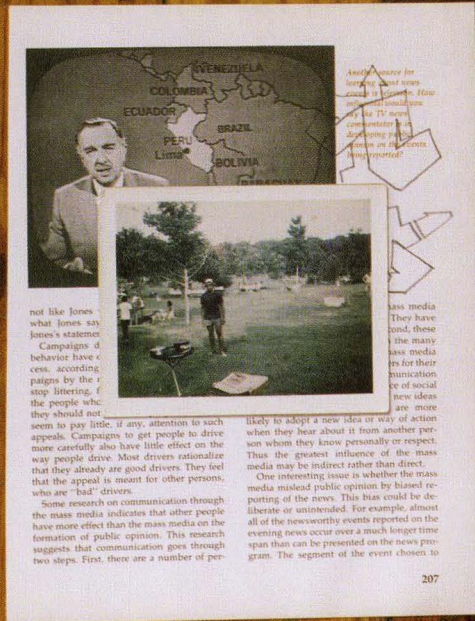
## "Riffs on Real Time: Leslie Hewitt" Exhibition Brochure

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**RIFFS ON REAL TIME** Leslie Hewitt

2009 october 30 through december 7, clough-hanson gallery, rhodes college, memphis, tn



Riffs on Real Time (3 of 10), 2008, Chromogenic print, 40" x 30"

For Leslie Hewitt's exhibition at Clough-Hanson Gallery she presents *Riffs on Real Time* series (2008). Each of the photographs in the series presents a documentation of a three layer collage or a temporary sculpture. Intentionally using the most straight forward and seemingly neutral means to present the information, she works with an even hand, like an archivist documenting evidence. The artist has a strict editing process, leaving her with a distinct visual language that could parallel a poet writing a haiku. In this case, her three phrases become a stack of three visual layers. The first and closest layer is a snapshot image, which bears the marks of its specific history. One sees the telltale fading, the discoloration in the once white borders, and worn, rounded corners. The images captured in the snapshots vary along with their format and size, ranging from what appears to be a carefully trimmed azalea in bloom to a man in a baseball hat and shorts standing next to a grill at a picnic. The artist's selection of the objects in the middle layer is as varied and considered as the first. This intermediate layer is always made up of a common, historical object like a hardbound yellow book, a torn page from a magazine, a found computer diagram, or a map. The final and most distant layer presented is the wood floor on which the two layer pile rests. While at first the floors in the photographs may appear to be the same, closer inspection reveals that each one has its own characteristics. Some appear to be well-worn work spaces: we see gouges, burns, and paint dripped on the old red heart pine, while others show gently worn but clean hardwood oak. *Riffs on Real Time*, the artist's photographic variations, prompt viewers to reconsider associative power in art. With deceptively simple set of tools, Hewitt creates work that is at once wonderfully poetic and deeply engaging.

Hewitt's carefully considered aesthetic, conceptual, and compositional choices establish the foundation for the viewer's entry into the real heart of the work. With Hewitt's use of photography, rather than sculpture, she is able to more carefully direct our viewing experience. The viewer only sees the selected objects from this particular bird's-eye point of view. Here it is impossible for the viewer to change his/her angle and look at the spine to find out the title of the book or magazine. Using the series of ten images allows the artist to investigate and subtly adjust

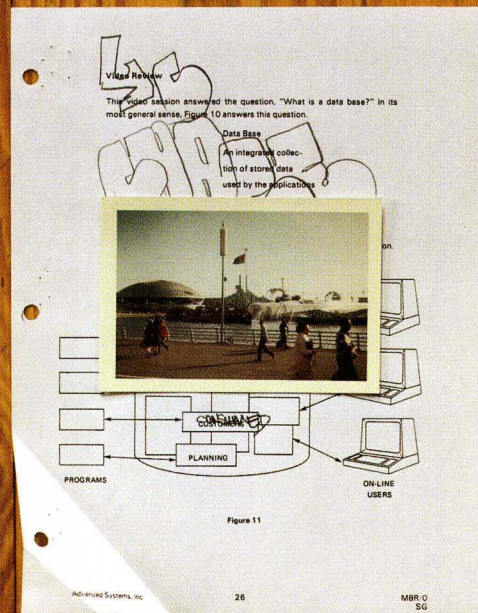
these images to ask, "What happens when this particular snapshot is paired with this particular object?" While the objects share a close physical space, the viewer becomes keenly aware of the metaphorical distance between these historical and personal moments.

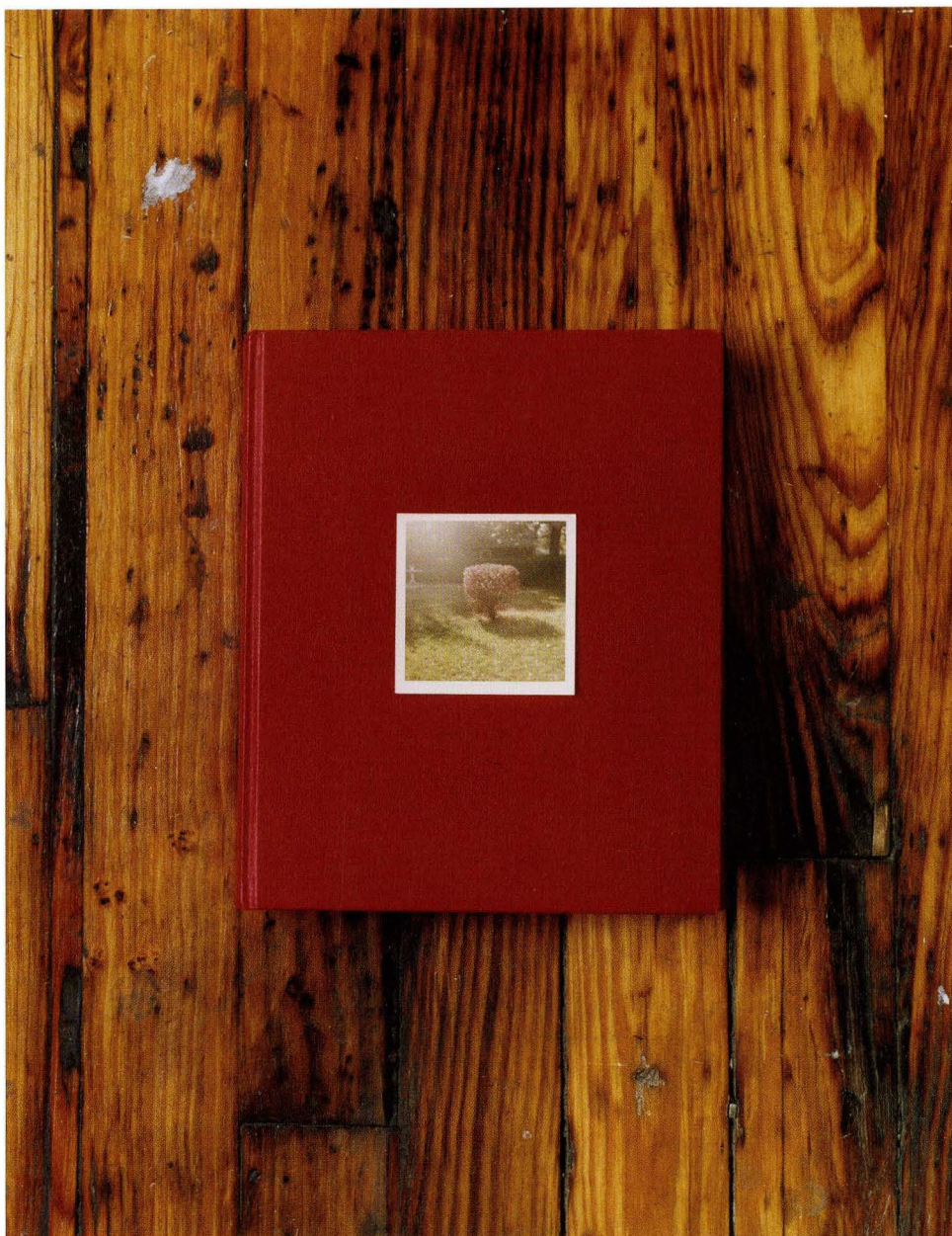
In *Riffs on Real Time (2 of 10)* the artist shows a folded magazine page that features a black and white press photograph of a chaotic scene of a building fire underneath a snapshot of an interior scene showing an end table on which, among other common household items, rests a framed image of a young man in his graduation cap and gown. While these two dramatically different images retain their inherent specificity, there is a contextual gap or space left open through Hewitt's act of photographing. The common viewer is placed in a new position free to make new connection and assertions on the seemingly contradictory scenes. In this regard, each piece in the series has its own degree of abstraction.

It is, of course, well within the artist's power to provide us with enough bibliographic information to reveal all the specific references in each work (where at times she does do this overtly) but to desire this all of the time would be an *exclusive* rather than *inclusive* course of action and would work against the artist's desire for the viewer to form his/her own thoughts and connections, informed by the photograph and the series as a whole.<sup>1</sup> This strategy allows the artist to build a directed and implied narrative without making work that is didactic or assuming of cultural, political or social views as something rigid or fixed in time. We as the audience run the risk of missing a more generous interpretation of her work if we approach these images as we have been taught – that is, to try to unlock the artist's riddle. On the contrary, *Riffs on Real Time* creates a place where conversation without all the answers can happen and could evolve over time. In doing so, Leslie Hewitt builds a space that also allows us to consider our own histories and to investigate how we use these common materials to subtly shape our personal versions of history, as well as our understanding of the world.

Hamlett Dobbins  
Director, Clough-Hanson Gallery

<sup>1</sup> In a telephone conversation with the artist on October 12, 2009 the artist facetiously alluded that she would one day write a lengthy bibliography on all the intentionally obscured references in her work.





*Riffs on Real Time (4 of 10)*, 2008, Chromogenic print, 40" x 30"



*Riffs on Real Time (6 of 10)*, 2008, Chromogenic print, 30" x 40"



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Cover Image: *Riffs on Real Time (5 of 10)*, 2008, Chromogenic print, 30" x 40"  
All images courtesy the artist and D'Amelio Terras, New York