

MIXED DOUBLES

black and white studio portraits of pairs -
people connected by birth, marriage, social, business or other ties

Mixed Doubles...manages to capture the essence of community.... With a straightforward frankness, these photographs depict the wide variety of races, classes, and couplings that make up New York and specifically Brooklyn. This is one 'installation' where more is more.

Susan 'Artburger' Hamburger, Waterfront Week: (June 1998)

In collaboration with The Kentler International Drawing Space, a not for profit art gallery, the images in this series were taken over four summer in Red Hook, Brooklyn. The diverse nature of the community makes it an ideal setting for the project. Both conventional and unusual pairs were invited to participate. Of special interest were pairs who have been active in community life. Locations have included the Kentler, a community health center, the local public library, and the public housing tenant offices. The photographs have been widely exhibited in Red Hook and the main branch of the Brooklyn Public Library. Mixed Doubles Red Hook III was funded, in part, by the Re-Grant/ Decentralization Program of The Brooklyn Arts Council (which is made possible with public funds from the New York City Department of Cultural Affairs).

From its incidental beginning in 1989 as a self-generated series, *Mixed Doubles* has emerged as a primary focus of my work. In addition to the personal body of work compiled, I have also photographed pairs in a Jersey City nursing home; for a NYC Board of Education mentoring program; at a senior citizen day center (funded by the Haym Salomon Geriatric Foundation); and at various social occasions. The series has been widely exhibited and has also become the basis for a range of commercial assignments.

I see the series as a cataloging of all sorts of pairs rather than one that investigates a specific attachment. Only information provided is the type of pairing. The studio setup, which is portable, is an integral part of the project. The created environment adds a celebrity-like atmosphere to the sessions as it is a situation most people are not likely to encounter. The starkness also supports the cataloging nature of the project. Spectators are welcome, and after observing, frequently decide to participate. Subsequent to the picture-taking, a reception is held for display and distribution of the photos. Each person receives a copy of their picture.

While we must all define ourselves as individuals, we do not exist in isolation. Our pairings - whether chosen, given, or assigned - define who we are as individuals as well as form the basis of our more complex social structures. Thus, at its most personal level, the project enables participants to examine the range of partnerships that shape their lives. Further subtexts of the series explore gender relations and life cycles.

My experiences with *Mixed Doubles*, its adaptability to different situations, and the responses of both participants and spectators support my commitment to its continuation. I see the photographs already taken as just the beginning of a long term, if not life-time, project. My goal is to take the series into as many different contexts and environments as possible. As such, the series explores our customs and rituals - celebrating our cultural similarities and diversities.