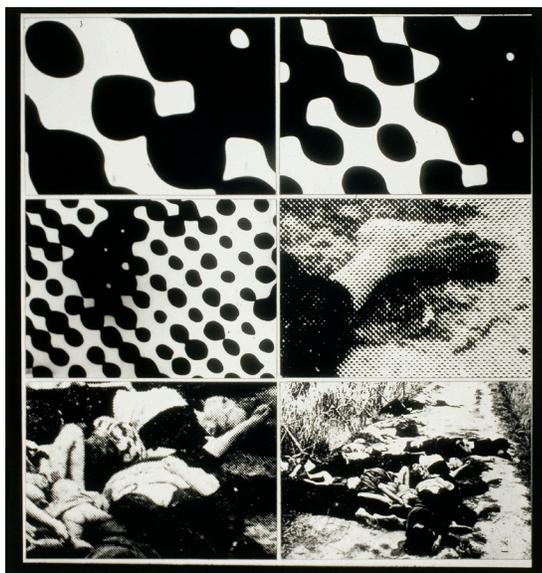




International Center of Photography

Contact: Communications Department  
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media release



## John Wood: Quiet Protest

On view from  
May 15  
through  
September 20, 2009

Media Preview  
May 14, 2009  
11:30–1:00 pm

RSVP:  
info@icp.org  
212.857.0045

John Wood  
*My Lai Massacre*, ca. 1969  
© John Wood

Like many artists who came of age in the early 1960s, John Wood has long put progressive social concerns at the center of his work. *Quiet Protest*, a series by the noted mixed media artist and educator, will be on view at the International Center of Photography (1133 Avenue of the Americas at 43rd Street) from May 15 through September 6, 2009. It is part of a larger retrospective of his work entitled *On the Clear Edge of Meaning*, the major portion of which is being shown at the Grey Art Gallery of New York University from May 12 through July 18.

Wood, now 86, pioneered the use of multimedia collage, and is a master in his use of many additional techniques including straight photography, cliché verre, solarization, mixed media, offset lithography, and drawing. According to curator Nathan Lyons, “John’s work freely moves between process and concept.” In this instance, the *Quiet Protest* series explores political and social issues through thoughtful photo montage pieces, as opposed to more traditional documentary photography.

The images to be exhibited at ICP span a period from the 1960s through the 1990s, and explore topics from nuclear waste and ecology to gun control and the Vietnam War. But Wood’s formal and elegant collage technique does not try to promote a specific political or social cause, nor does he attempt to offer explanations or promote solutions. Instead, he raises cultural questions within pictorial metaphor, by subtly using juxtaposition and word play. As he wrote in 1970, “...maybe the time has come for creative photography to encompass the large problems without propaganda or journalism...”

In this exhibition, a work from 1965 uses a halftone newspaper image of the My Lai massacre as source material to explore the coded dot patterns that compose the horror of that iconic scene. And

environmental concerns become clear in two solarized prints from 1989, “Cooling Tower” and “Cactus”—one expelling water vapor into the air from a nuclear plant, while the other dwells in the desert storing water for its very survival. Seen as photographic negatives, the images are transformed, and we experience a strange kinship between them.

John Wood was born in 1922 in California. During the Depression, his family moved frequently around the United States. As early as the third grade he took drawing classes, which did not set him on a career path but left a lasting impression. After serving as a B17 pilot in World War II he returned to his early interests in art, studying graphic design and photography at the Institute of Design in Chicago. He then went on to a career in teaching at the School of Art and Design at Alfred University in Alfred, New York, where he taught printmaking and photography for thirty-five years.

Regarding the *Quiet Protest* series, David Levi Strauss has commented: “Wood has always been careful to leave some leeway for viewers to find meaning in his work, thus implicating us in that making. He also implicates us, as citizens, in the problems he addresses. We are all responsible for what happens.”

The exhibition, national tour, and accompanying catalogue are curated and coordinated by Nathan Lyons, Director Emeritus of the Visual Studies Workshop, Rochester, NY, in collaboration with Marie Via, director of exhibitions for the Memorial Art Gallery, and Dr. Alison Nordstrom, curator of photographs for George Eastman House.

## **TOUR**

Because of the large scope of the exhibition, *On the Edge of Clear Meaning* first opened in Rochester at three locations: The Memorial Art Gallery, George Eastman House, and Visual Studies Workshop.

In New York City, the International Center of Photography will host the *Quiet Protest* series, and the Grey Art Gallery will show the remainder of this retrospective of Wood’s work.

The full exhibition will open at Syracuse University’s SUArt Gallery in October 2009.

## **PUBLICATION**

*John Wood: On the Edge of Clear Meaning*

Steidl, 176 pages, 168 color illustrations

Essays by David Levi Strauss, William S. Johnson, and Ezra Shales