

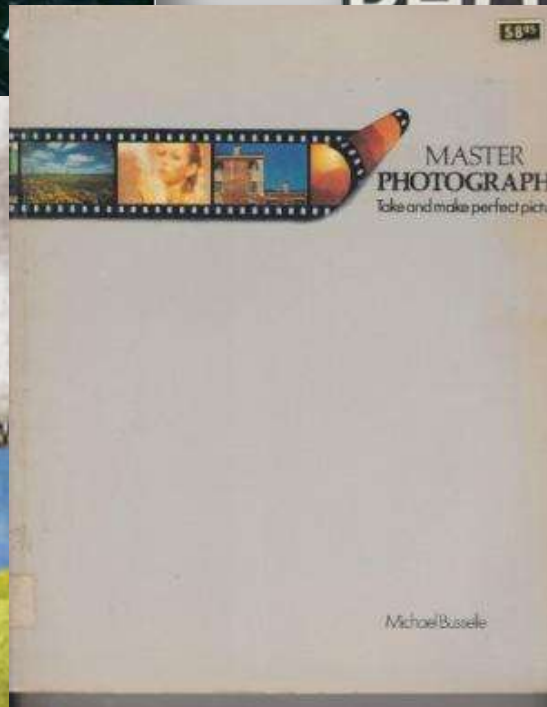
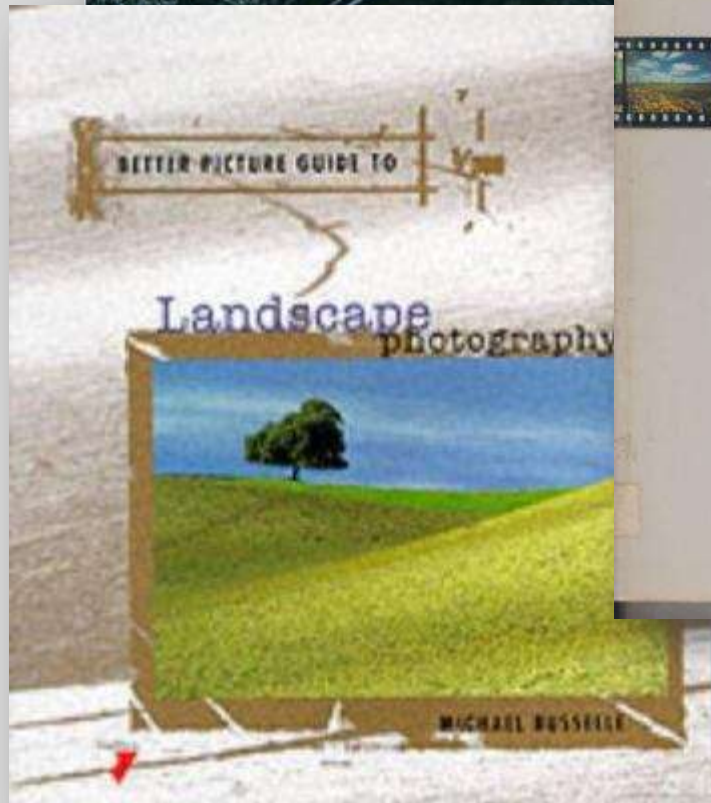
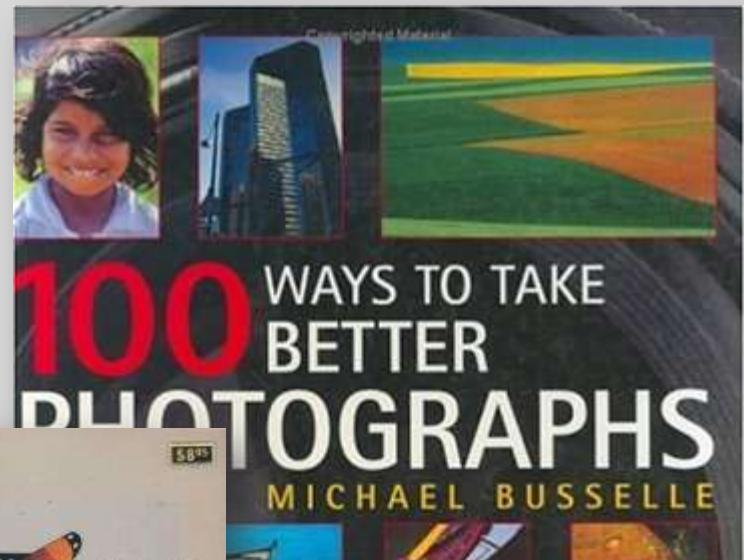
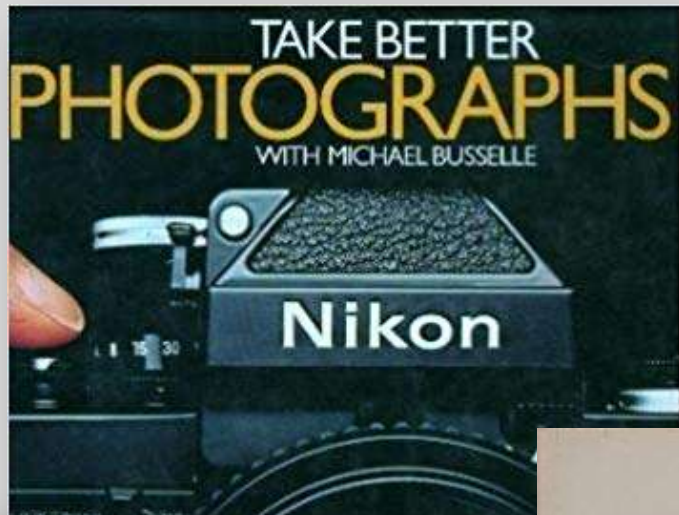
**Royston Photographic Society**  
**21<sup>st</sup> March 2019**

***Looking at  
Pictures***

**Brian Human**



**Robert Frank, Bar - Gallup, New Mexico, from *The Americans***



<b>Guild of Photographers</b>	<b>Marden Kane</b>	
	<b>Same</b>	<b>Other, e.g.</b>
<b>1. Impact</b>	<b>X</b>	<b>Humour</b>
<b>2. Presentation</b>	<b>X</b>	<b>Entertainment quality</b>
<b>3. Technical excellence</b>	<b>X</b>	<b>Newsworthiness</b>
<b>4. Lighting</b>		<b>Marketability</b>
<b>5. Technique</b>	<b>X</b>	<b>Social impact</b>
<b>6. Creativity</b>	<b>X</b>	<b>Memorable</b>
<b>7. Story telling</b>		<b>Inspiration to others</b>
<b>8. Subject matter</b>		<b>Expression of theme</b>
<b>9. Colour balance</b>	<b>X</b>	<b>Uniqueness of concept</b>
<b>10. Composition</b>	<b>X</b>	<b>Innovative</b>
<b>11. Centre of Interest</b>		<b>Level of detail</b>
<b>12. Style</b>	<b>X</b>	<b>Use of brand</b>
<b>13. Congruence / harmony</b>	<b>X</b>	<b>Wow! factor</b>



# Aim of Talk

- **To suggest ways of looking at and understanding pictures**
  - It's *not* about providing rules or a checklist for judging photographs
- **Will consider:**
  - Some approaches
  - Discuss six examples
  - Discuss your pictures

# Challenges

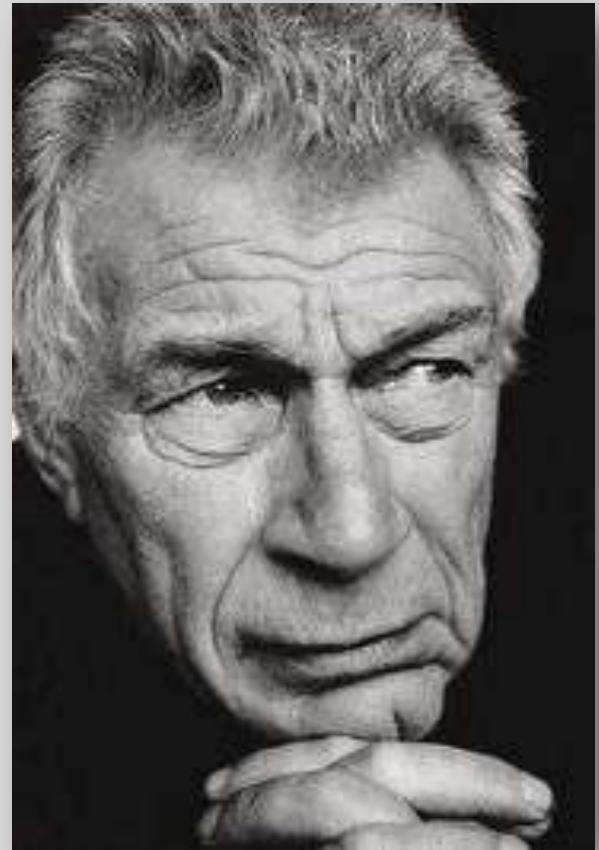
- **Record or expression – document or art**
- **Single image or wider body of work**
- **Uniqueness and multiplicity**
- **Technical quality v creativity**
- **Depends on roles, applications and viewing context**
- **Ubiquity and commonplaceness of photographs**



# The Ambiguous Image

*A photograph is a meeting place where the interests of the photographer, the photographed, the viewer, and those who are using the photographs are often contradictory. These contradictions both hide and increase the natural ambiguity of the photographic image.*

John Berger, 2008

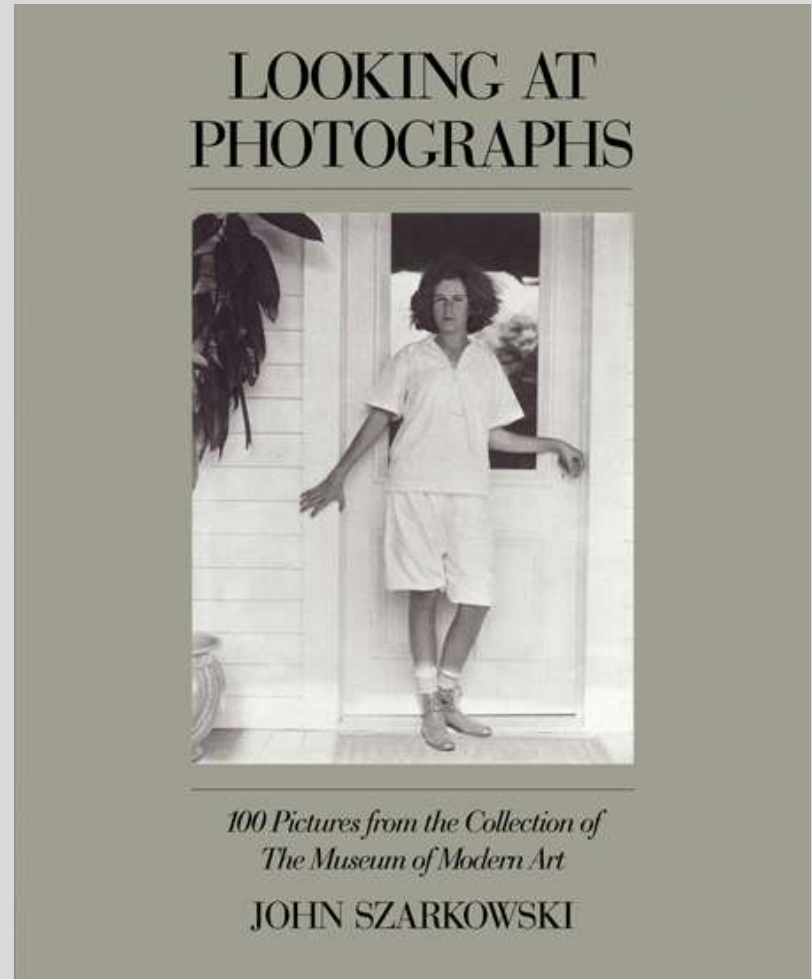




# Looking at Photographs 1

- For Szarkowski legitimate photography:
  - Was straight
  - Was liberal in subject matter
  - Had strong formal content
  - Presented fragments of actuality pictorially organised
  - Reflected the photographer's strong personal vision

**John Szarkowski 1973**



# Looking at Photographs 2

- Szarkowski's analysis:
  - Kertész' use of the 35mm camera
  - The unexpected detail
  - The ephemeral moment
  - The formal quality of the play between pattern and deep space
  - Likened to spider's web, the pedestrian as a fly
  - Distilled 'a free and childlike pleasure in the beauty of the world'

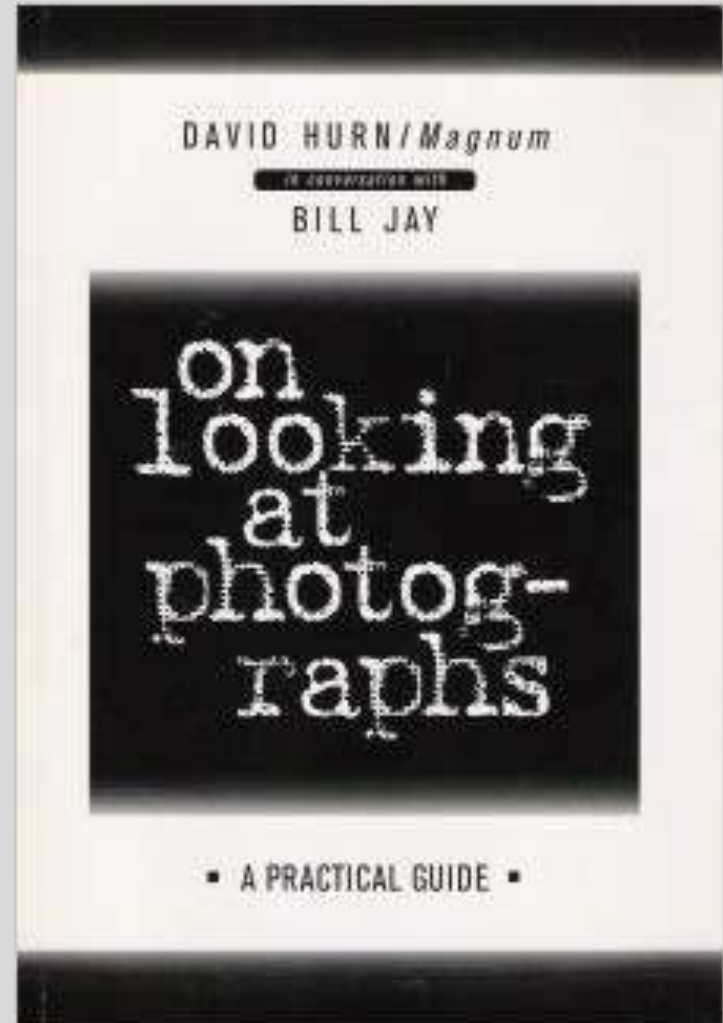


André Kertész, *The Stairs of Montmartre*, Paris 1926

# On Looking at Photographs 1

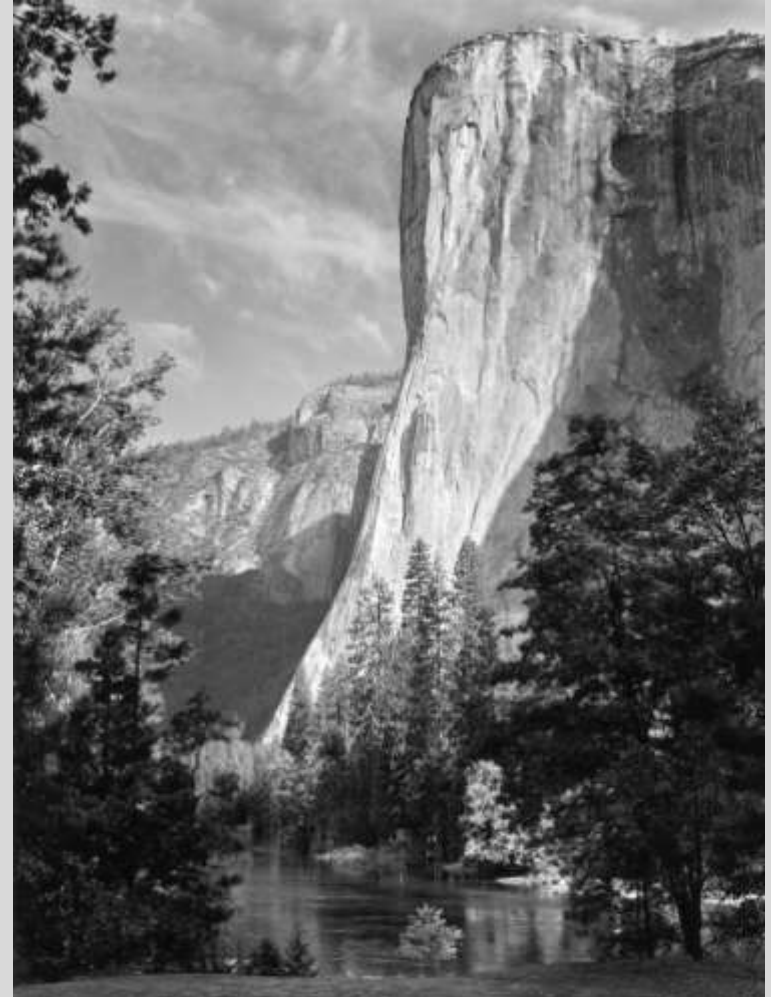
- **Hurn & Jay argue**
  - **Meaning - is slippery**
  - **Merit - is rare**
  - **Art - is different from documentary**
  - **Morality – is important**

David Hurn & Bill Jay, 2000



# ***On Looking at Photographs 2***

- **Photography's foundations:**
  - **Subject evokes a reaction in the photographer**
  - **Maximum clarity for the full expression on the subject matter**
  - **Carefully composed**
  - **Exposure made at the right moment**



**Ansel Adams, *El-Capitan, Yosemite National Park, 1956***

# On Looking at Photographs 3

- Consider: what is the photograph *of*?; what is the photograph *about*?
- What is a good photograph? Not the same as, *Important, Useful, Interesting, Likable*
- Three questions:
  - What's the intent of the photographer?
  - Is the intent realised?
  - Was it worth the effort?
- Single images or sequences?

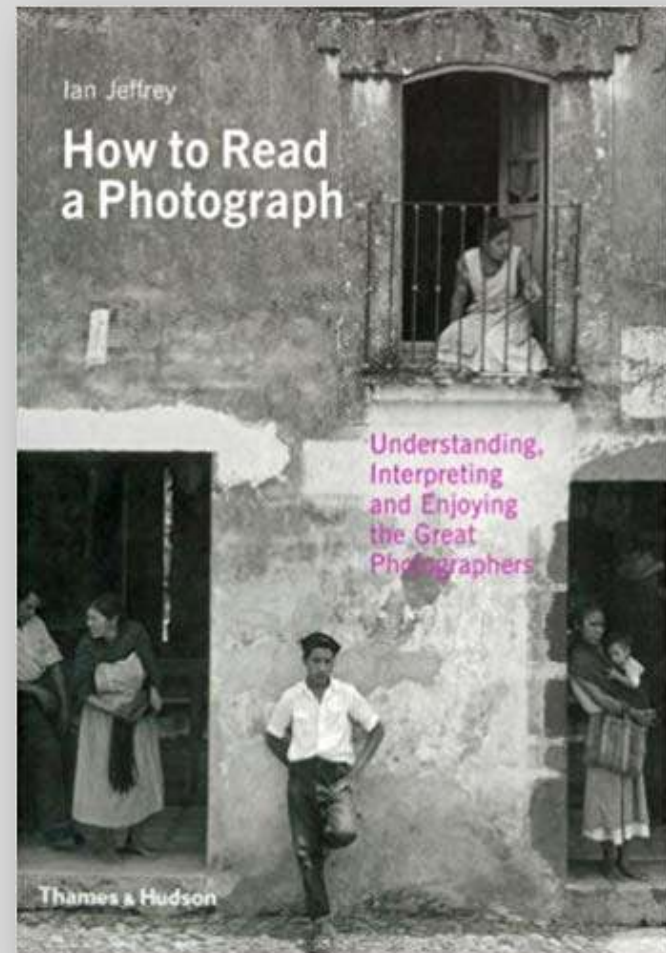


Robert Frank, *Movie Premier – Hollywood, 1955*

# How to Read a Photograph 1

- Evidence of past times, events
- Evocations of feelings
- Jeffrey explores:
  - Biography of photographer
  - Technique
  - Subjects
  - Actions
  - Historical context

Ian Jeffrey 2008





# How to Read a Photograph 2

- Diane Arbus - troubled
- Clarity – medium format
- People on the ‘outer limits’
- Dressed to go out – glamour, expectations, but just about managing
- Age of prosperity and Cold War



***Diane Arbus, A young Brooklyn Family going for a Sunday outing, New York City, 1966***



# Discussion 1



**Jane Bown, *Trevor Phillips*,  
1999**

# Discussion 2



**Sebastiao Salgado, *Ice Castle, Weddell Sea, 2005***

# Discussion 3



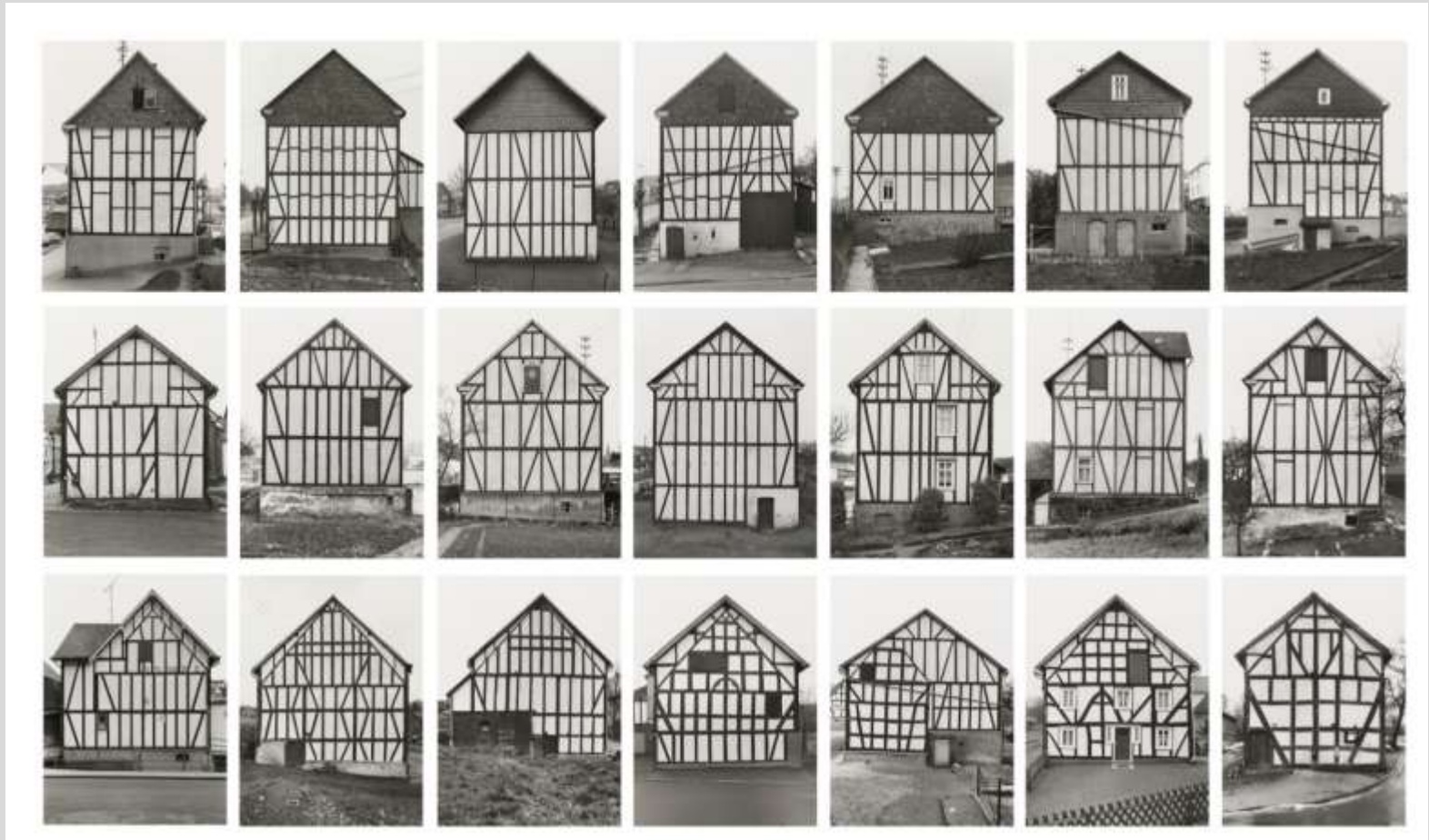
Robert Mapplethorpe,  
*Calla Lily*, 1986

# Discussion 4



**Robert Irwin, *Van Gough Bridge, Arles, France*, 1990**

# Discussion 5



**Bernd & Hilla Becher, *Framework Houses*, 1959-73**



# Discussion 6



Gregory Crewdson, *Untitled (Ophelia)*, 2001