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A Narrative of Resilience: Margaret Morton's Photographs of Homelessness in New York City

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A Narrative of Resilience: Margaret Morton’s Photographs of Homelessness in New York City

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First Reader: Professor Ellen Handy

Submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Master of Arts of the City College of the City University of New York

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Introduction

In 1989, Margaret Morton began to interview and photograph members of a homeless community residing in New York City’s Tompkins Square Park to record the inherently transient nature of the improvised structures and communities constructed by such individuals.¹ Improvised dwellings of all shapes, sizes, styles and materials sprang up throughout New York City in the late 1980s and into the 1990s as a result of a growing crisis of homelessness (fig.1). Deindustrialization had shifted the city’s economy from manufacturing to technology and finance, leaving many jobless and eventually homeless.² Morton’s work resulted in four books, Transitory Gardens, Uprooted Lives (1993), The Tunnel (1995), Fragile Dwelling (2000), and Glass House (2004), as well as many articles by Morton in The New York Times and The Village Voice. A consistent format in Morton’s books is the inclusion of the subject’s own words alongside the photographs of their dwellings. These testimonies of their unwavering determination to create a sense of home are a compelling contrast to the impermanence of the dwellings themselves as apparent in Morton’s images.³ I maintain that Morton’s work should be considered inter-genre. Her inclusion of extensive narratives that include her subject’s ideas and words differentiates her work from that of photojournalists as well as contemporary artists who also address homelessness as a subject, but typically do not include their subjects’ own words in their work, and who lack Morton’s commitment to maintaining a longstanding relationship to these subjects beyond the final work of art.

The city’s attempts to quell the increasing visibility of homelessness are a significant context for Morton’s photographic endeavor to represent the improvised

³ Alan Trachtenberg, intro. to Fragile Dwelling by, Margaret Morton (New York City: Aperture, 2000), 5-9.
communities of self-made structures prevalent in the late 1980s and early 1990s.⁴

According to Thomas J. Main, the city’s policies can be separated into three distinct phases; entitlement, paternalism, and post-paternalism.⁵ The 1981 court case Callahan v. Carey decreeing that every man had the right to shelter provided by the city and state of New York was a significant factor in shaping the homelessness policy under Mayor Ed Koch.⁶ This resulted in the growth of New York City’s shelter system and the decline in quality of these shelters that struggled to keep up with the influx of single homeless men seeking refuge.⁷ The paternalistic policies enforced during Mayor David Dinkins’ administration as well as both of Rudy Giuliani’s terms provided programs for treating drug addiction and mental illness as prerequisites to placement in housing.⁸ The administration of Mayor Michael Bloomberg’s post-paternalistic approach placed chronically homeless individuals into housing, then provided appropriate treatment programs.⁹ Morton’s books were published during different mayoral administrations with varying homeless policies and individual photographs are not dated. However, many of her photographs, like the demolition or eviction of homeless communities, correlate with specific policies enforced by New York City mayors.

Photojournalists from the New York Times and Village Voice were often present when city authorities clashed with homeless communities during the removal of structures from city property, like Tompkins Square Park (fig.2).¹⁰ Media portrayals of anonymous homeless individuals forced from their dwellings differ greatly from Morton’s depictions of the same event, which include important and humanizing details from

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⁵ Main, Homelessness in New York City, 4.
⁷ Main, Homelessness in New York City, 5.
⁸ Ibid, 6.
⁹ Ibid, 8.
individual residents of the encampment that accompany the photographs. Artist Martha Rosler also embraced the homeless crisis in New York City as a subject and cause for her exhibition, *If You Lived Here*… sponsored by the Dia Foundation in 1989 (fig. 3). In comparing these two very different approaches to homelessness as subject matter to the photographs of Morton, as well as introducing the work of photographers Jim Goldberg and Jeffery A. Wolin (figs. 4 and 5), I will argue that Morton’s commitment and engagement with her subject, which is evident in her inclusion of their own words as narrative in the final work, resulted in an inter-genre depiction of homelessness that focuses on personal triumphs and determination in the face of an unrelenting threat to survival.

In the decades since Morton began her documentation of New York City’s homeless communities, there has been no comprehensive art historical analysis of her photographs. Her work, however, has been exhibited at institutions like the Museum of the City of New York, the New Museum of Contemporary Art, and recently in a retrospective at Leica Gallery in New York City. In the absence of in-depth scholarly analysis, Morton’s own publications and primary sources, including articles written by Morton while she was photographing homeless communities as well as interviews with the artist, will serve as the foundations for this study of her work. Morton’s book *Fragile*...
Dwelling is briefly mentioned in Didier Aubert’s analysis of the “doorstep portrait,” a common trope in documentary photography that imposes middle class social norms onto those it intends to help.\textsuperscript{14} While there is extensive literature on documentary photography and photojournalism, I will make most use of Loup Langton’s book, \textit{Photojournalism and Today’s News: Creating Visual Reality}, which provides practical analysis of the genre as well as the culture of the modern American newsroom.\textsuperscript{15} My analysis of the city’s social policies regarding homelessness relies heavily on Thomas J. Main’s book \textit{Homelessness in New York City: Policymaking from Koch to de Blasio}.\textsuperscript{16} Main’s contemporary insight on the various homeless policies of New York City’s recent past will be valuable for this analysis. The book accompaniment to Martha Rosler’s 1989 exhibition, \textit{If You Lived Here…: The City in Art, Theory, and Social Activism} is also an important source as it includes writings about New York City housing, city planning, and history of homelessness.\textsuperscript{17}

Morton’s sustained engagement with her subjects as individuals over time and the incorporation of their own words separates her work from documentary and journalistic photography as well as from contemporary artists like Rosler. Instead, her work can be considered inter-genre because it adopts qualities, such as the subject matter that focuses on homelessness, from genres like photojournalism and fine art, but ultimately function outside their established boundaries. Ultimately, Morton’s photographs reject the presumptions of these genres, which limit engagement with the subject and a general time commitment to photographing a single subject, to offer a

\textsuperscript{17} Brian Wallis, ed., \textit{If You Lived Here…: The City in Art, Theory, and Social Activism}, (Seattle: Bay Press, 1991).
narrative focused on resilience and creativity for the largest homeless community since the Great Depression.¹⁸

This analysis will begin with a comparison of Morton’s earliest publication, *Transitory Lives, Uprooted Lives*, with photographs taken by photojournalists from the *New York Times* and *Village Voice*. Morton’s book includes depictions of makeshift dwellings, made by homeless individuals from detritus and found objects, which became alternatives to the substandard conditions of New York City’s shelter system under Mayor Koch.¹⁹ The construction of these structures in Tompkins Square Park in the late 1980s served as the catalyst for Morton’s initial documentation of the structures (fig. 6).²⁰ As one of the largest encampments of the homeless in New York City, Tompkins Square Park became a visible symbol of the homeless crisis and garnered the attention of city officials who on more than one occasion attempted to evict those living in their self-made dwellings.²¹ Photojournalists were often assigned to document the city’s removal of the homeless and the destruction of their structures (fig. 2).²² While their work captured only newsworthy events and rarely involved interaction with their subjects, Morton established relationships with those she photographed in order to create both visual representation and what she calls an “oral history” of the vulnerable community.²³

Contrasting Morton’s work with documentary and journalistic photographers makes clear that her emphasis is truly on the lives of her subjects, not on instances of conflict or the spectacle of homelessness.

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¹⁹ Main, *Homelessness in New York City*, 16.
Following the advice of a man she encountered living alongside the East River, Morton began to photograph the longest-lasting community of self-made dwellings in New York City (fig. 7).\textsuperscript{24} Located in a two and a half mile abandoned Amtrak tunnel underneath Manhattan’s Riverside Park, the community remained undisturbed for over twenty years, until discovered by railway workers in 1991.\textsuperscript{25} In 1989 Martha Rosler called attention to New York City’s homeless crisis by organizing the exhibition, \textit{If You Lived Here}..., which included gallery installations and discussion panels concerning housing, gentrification, and city planning (fig. 3).\textsuperscript{26} As a part of the exhibition, Rosler allocated an area of the gallery to be used by a group of community organizers and advocates, who were also homeless.\textsuperscript{27} The second chapter will explore the contrasts between Rosler and Morton’s engagement with the homeless community. Morton’s ability to access the subterranean community depicted in \textit{The Tunnel} was made possible by her commitment to become engaged with her subjects, listening to their stories, and gaining their trust. In contrast, Rosler’s decision to create a space within the gallery for homeless individuals demoted their function in the exhibition from contributors and educators to mere visual reminders of homelessness.

Morton’s practice diverges from that of documentary photographers, photojournalists and conceptually based artists like Rosler. Indeed, it can be defined as inter-genre photography, which adopts characteristics of established genres but exists outside their boundaries by both collecting oral histories from her subjects and integrating them as text alongside her photographs.\textsuperscript{28} She is not alone in her creation of

\begin{thebibliography}{9}
\bibitem{24} Margaret Morton interview, 2004
\bibitem{25} Margaret Morton, \textit{The Tunnel}, (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1995), ix.
\bibitem{26} Rounthwaite, “In, Around, and Afterthoughts (on Participation)”, 46-47.
\bibitem{27} Ibid.
\bibitem{28} The term “inter-genre” has previously been discussed in relation to the study of literature and music. In both cases, as well as in my own argument, “inter-genre” describes the way in which specific genres interact by sharing of certain traits. Jeff Rider, “Genre, Antigenre, Intergenre,” \textit{L’Esprit Créateur} 33, no. 4 (Winter 1993): 18-26.; Amy J. Devitt, “Re-fusing Form in Genre Study,” in \textit{Genres in...}
an inter-genre approach to art photography with a sociological dimension. The final chapter will explore the ways in which Jim Goldberg’s *Rich and Poor* (1977-85) and Jeffrey A. Wolin’s *Pigeon Hill Portraits: Then & Now* (2016) include the personal histories of their subjects, in their own words (figs. 4 and 5). Both photographers use handwritten text in their work, for Goldberg, in the subjects’ hands, and for Wolin his own, inscribed directly on the photographs themselves. Like Morton, their work functions outside the bounds of traditional genres and challenge subjectivity in photography through their prominent inclusion of the subjects’ own words literally as part of the work of art produced.

Morton’s photographs of homeless communities and the dwellings they constructed are a rejection of the confines of genre. Her commitment both temporally and emotionally to those she photographed far exceeds the expectations of traditional photojournalism. This closeness to her subjects and the resulting vulnerability depicted in the photographs is also not comparable to contemporaries, like Rosler who created in-depth exhibitions calling attention to the homeless crisis. For these reasons, Morton can be valued for her adaptation of “inter-genre” photography, which resulted in collaborative depiction of resiliency and homelessness in New York City.

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Chapter One

Coverage of Homelessness in Photojournalism and Margaret Morton’s

Transitory Gardens, Uprooted Lives

An encampment of approximately one hundred-fifty people living within Tompkins Square Park in the late 1980s served as a consistent visual reminder, to residents of the surrounding neighborhood, of New York City’s failed social policies regarding homelessness (fig. 8). The 1975 financial crisis and subsequent economic boom in the 1980s left thousands of New Yorkers out of a burgeoning job market that shifted away from manufacturing and toward finance and technology. Inhabitants of the public park began to construct their own makeshift shelters out of found materials, as a way to avoid the city’s over-crowded and dangerous shelter system. Margaret Morton, a resident of the East Village neighborhood, where Tompkins Square Park is located, was drawn to these “improvised dwellings”, as she calls them, within the park in 1989 and began to photograph them. Inspired by the work of Bernd and Hilda Becher, Morton photographed the structures with frontal compositions devoid of any people as a way to highlight the diligence and creativity of those constructing the dwellings (fig. 9). The Bechers’ typologies included a series of black and white photographs organized in a grid formation; each photograph depicting frontal studies of the same type of industrial structure in different locations, which emphasized the subtle differences in architectural

traits (fig. 10).33 Morton’s early photographs share a similar frontal composition to the Bechers’ typologies, however they are not devoid of human presence, scattered belongings and specific design features and decoration differ from the Bechers’ sterile architectural study. Although every dwelling was different, Morton’s initial process photographing the architectural qualities of each characterized the ways in which homeless individuals created their own dwellings, based on their needs or style. Soon, Morton would discover the value of her encounters with these homeless individuals whose stories she transcribed in a notebook, then eventually recoded on tape.34 As city authorities evicted or destroyed communities, new ones emerged in other areas. Morton followed with a camera each time, her focus turning to the homeless as individuals, and most importantly to their personal histories. Morton published these photographs of dwellings and community gardens constructed by homeless individuals in the book Transitory Gardens, Uprooted Lives (1993), co-authored by Dana Balmori a landscape scholar and designer.35 The book’s layout presents the depictions of improvised structures, their evolution over time throughout Morton’s visits, and portraits of those who constructed them, alongside text featuring their own words, as transcribed by the photographer (fig. 11). In her photograph’s of “Tony’s Tree House,” for example, Morton was able to capture the evolution of the dwelling, located in a vacant lot between Ninth Street and Avenue C, from construction, to demolition, and finally recreation, each at the same spot surrounded by ailanthus trees (fig. 12). As Morton captured every reconstruction of Tony’s dwelling, the narrative of his life on the lot becomes clear:

34 Ibid.
expansion led to an eviction, then eventually the return to rebuild as a street vendor.

Morton’s commitment to photographing and interviewing the homeless community on the Lower East Side resulted in a depiction of homelessness that focused on a narrative of individuality and resilience over time, very different from the more typical newspaper representations of the homeless as helpless and anonymous.

The visibility of New York City’s homeless in the 1980s and 1990s garnered much media attention from newspapers like the *New York Times*, which deemed the crisis newsworthy mostly during times of confrontation with authorities at protests and forced evictions. Unlike Morton’s efforts to create a visual and oral history of a transient and unstable community, photojournalists working for newspapers rarely engaged with those they photographed. In *Photojournalism: An Ethical Approach*, Paul Lester explains that any economic, political, or emotional involvement with the subject can threaten a photojournalist’s credibility. This sentiment is echoed in Loup Langton’s *Photojournalism and Todays News: Creating Visual Reality*, wherein the author details both the ethics of photojournalism as well as the types of relationships that can form between the photographer and subject. Langton makes clear the importance of an ethical approach to photojournalism and newspapers’ intolerance for staging, manipulating, or even faking photographs among contemporary news sources. This emphasis on unbiased and objective photographs provides photojournalists a buffer between themselves and the subject. Although Langton describes instances wherein photojournalists choose to develop connections and eventually trust with those they


photograph, he maintains that the ability to create a relationship between photographer and subject is actually dependent on newspapers and their editors who control the amount of time a journalist can spend on one subject.\textsuperscript{40} Morton’s ability to work independently and not under the management of an editor afforded her the ability to commit long periods of time to photographing a homeless community, allowing space to cultivate and maintain lasting relationships with those she encountered.

Neal Boenzi, a staff photographer at the \textit{New York Times}, is one photojournalist who covered homelessness in New York City in the late 1980s. In fact, Boenzi was present in Tompkins Square Park during one of the last forced evictions of the residents and their dwellings by the New York Police Department and his photograph of the event appeared the \textit{New York Times} on December 14, 1991 (fig. 2).\textsuperscript{41} Whether Boenzi was assigned to the event or if he merely stumbled onto the scene is unknown, however is most likely that Boenzi shot less than a handful of photographs and left. This was a common practice for the photographer who believed any given assignment warranted only about six frames, most of which would be usable.\textsuperscript{42} What is clear from the photographs themselves is a keen eye for drama in composition and timing. However as evident through the photograph’s caption, Boenzi and the \textit{Times}, in general, were not interested in obtaining the names of the homeless individuals in the photographs much less their own views on the event as it was unfolding. Similar images can be found in issues of the \textit{Village Voice}, a weekly publication, devoted to significant events and issues pertaining to the neighborhoods surrounding Tompkins Square Park.

\textsuperscript{40} Ibid, 187.
Photographs of homeless individuals in Tompkins Square Park, taken by Andrew Lichtenstein, are included alongside an article from the June 11, 1991 issue of the \textit{Village Voice}, which discusses the fate of the encampment (fig. 13).\textsuperscript{43} In the article, Sarah Ferguson describes the encampment as a failure on the city’s part, as they were unable to cope with the increase in visible homeless. Like the caption below Boenzi’s photograph, the \textit{Village Voice}, does not include any substantial information regarding the identity of those depicted, a detail that detaches the plight of homeless individuals from the reader. However, Ferguson does include quotes from a woman named Sherletta McCaskill, president of the client’s advisory board at the Lexington Avenue Women’s Shelter. McCaskill, who is homeless as well, describes the struggle between organizers and Mayor Dinkins, for whom many homeless individuals voted. The article makes sure to include the perspective of the homeless as well as a positive representation of the community, like McCaskill, who was active in maintaining a right to shelter and housing.

Although the article’s content is favorable toward the homeless community living in Tompkins Square Park, the accompanying photographs are more in line with the traditional photojournalistic approach than with Morton’s work. The distinction between Boenzi’s and other photojournalists passing interest and Morton’s commitment to continue photographing individuals as they re-constructed dwellings and recording their personal stories results in two very different photographs of the same subject and even event.

\textbf{The Mayor}

Elected as a fiscally conservative Democrat, Ed Koch spent his first term as Mayor of New York City attempting to bring the city back from the brink of bankruptcy.

brought on by the 1975 financial crisis.\textsuperscript{44} In order to solve the city’s financial troubles, the Koch administration sought to restructure the local economy in order to attract business from large corporations.\textsuperscript{45} Offering up large tax abatements to corporations like AT&T, IBM, and Philip Morris insured that their businesses, which provided white-collar jobs, remained and grew within the city.\textsuperscript{46} Political economists refer to this restructuring as “deindustrialization”, or the shift from an economy based on manufacturing to an economy centered on the FIRE sectors: finance, insurance, and real estate.\textsuperscript{47}

Deindustrialization in New York City is reflected in the employment rates from 1977 to 1987, wherein the total number of jobs increased by twelve percent.\textsuperscript{48} A deeper analysis of the statistics reveals that manufacturing jobs decreased thirty percent while jobs in the FIRE sectors increased by thirty-two percent. Under Koch’s administration New York City’s economy was bolstered, but a significant percentage of the population was left unemployed. Forty-five percent of New Yorkers were jobless compared to thirty-four percent nationally, and unable to participate in the new economy.\textsuperscript{49} This disparate distribution of income affected minorities significantly; for example in 1988, twenty-three percent of New Yorkers were living below the poverty line, of that population thirty-three percent were African-Americans and forty-one percent were Latino.\textsuperscript{50} An immediate and troubling side effect of deindustrialization under Mayor Koch was the increase of homelessness, which for decades had been tolerated, or ignored, by most New Yorkers.

\begin{quote}
\textsuperscript{45} Blau, \textit{The Visible Poor}, 135.
\textsuperscript{46} According to Joel Blau, the total number of tax cuts given to corporations by New York City from 1977 to 1984 was $750 million, Ibid.
\textsuperscript{48} Blau, \textit{The Visible Poor}, 137.
\textsuperscript{49} Blau, \textit{The Visible Poor}, 137.
\textsuperscript{50} Ibid, 138.
\end{quote}
and political leaders. Once the homeless populations became more visible by residing in public parks and vacant lots, much debate and news coverage ensued.

Homelessness policies under the Koch administration did not successfully deal with the systemic and social issues, which caused such a high population of visible homeless, who for the first time in decades had resorted to living and sleeping on the streets of New York City. According to Thomas J. Main, author of *Homelessness in New York City: Policymaking from Koch to de Blasio*, under Mayor Koch, policies focused on “entitlement”, attempting to provide shelter to anyone who requested it. The unprecedented court case *Callahan v. Carey* brought the issue to New York’s Supreme Court, where lawyer Robert Hayes argued that homeless men were being turned down from shelters and forced to remain on the streets even through cold winter nights. As a result of the case, Mayor Koch signed a consent decree promising to provide shelter to men who requested it, although they were expected to meet specific standards of need for relief. What followed shocked even the most educated advocates who underestimated the number of individuals who would come forward at shelter intake centers, like the Men’s Shelter on Third Street. The number of homeless men seeking shelter in New York City was so large that after just six weeks, the city ran out of beds. To keep up with such a high demand, the city opened up more shelters in hotels and abandoned city-owned buildings, like the Kenner building on the grounds of an old state psychiatric hospital on Ward’s Island, which was opened in response to the consent

52 Main, *Homelessness in New York City*, 5.
53 Ibid, 18-25.
54 According to the Legal Information Institute at the Cornell Law School, a consent decree is a “court order to which all parties have agreed. It is often done after a settlement between the parties that is subject to approval by the court.” In regards to *Callahan v. Carey*, Main explains, the consent decree functioned as a compromise between Hayes and the city to provide shelter to those who meet particular standards of need. “Consent Decree,” Legal Information Institute, Cornell Law School, accessed February 23, 2018, https://www.law.cornell.edu/wex/consent_decree.; Main, *Homelessness in New York City*, 24.
decree signed after *Callahan v. Carey* and was under-staffed and over-crowded immediately.\(^{56}\) Although the city attempted to provide housing relief to homeless men who sought it, city shelters were deemed too dangerous and undesirable by many who opted instead to live in vacant lots and public spaces like Tompkins Square Park.\(^{57}\)

One such inhabitant of Tompkins Square Park was Nathaniel, or The Mayor, as many of the other park’s residents called him, because he frequently served as their representative to city officials or homeless advocates.\(^{58}\) Morton’s photograph of Nathaniel’s improvised dwelling serves as the cover for the book *Transitory Gardens, Uprooted Lives*. The dwelling surrounded a section of the park’s benches and is depicted, by Morton, in a frontal view that highlights the cascading tarps Nathaniel tied together to serve as a roof and his own garden that housed a hierarchy of found objects (fig. 9). Before interviewing and recording the personal histories of the homeless individuals she encountered, Morton photographed residents of Tompkins Square Park initially because of their proximity to her own home and her interest in the architectural details of the structures.\(^{59}\) Morton’s photograph of Nathaniel’s dwelling in Tompkins Square Park shares formal qualities with Bernd and Hila Bechers’ typologies. The indiscernible location of the structure in Morton’s photograph is similar to the “Water Towers” by the Bechers. Nathaniel’s dwelling takes up most of the lower half of the frame, while the bare branches that line the Park’s edge and rows of buildings in the background make up the rest of the image. There are no signs, no people, and no specific details that would inform a viewer the location of this structure, besides the text Morton decided to include in the book’s format. The Bechers’ series of typologies, “Water Towers”, created from 1972-2009, also assumes their positions in undisclosed

\(^{56}\) Ibid, 19.
\(^{57}\) Morton, “The Homeless,” 141.
\(^{59}\) Margaret Morton interviewed by Pradeep Dalal, 2004.
locations with only some vegetation and nondescript structures included in the composition (fig. 14). Although only a brief portion of Morton’s project was dedicated to photographing these dwellings without their creators, the inclusion of these photographs adequately captures the details of dwellings, like Nathaniel’s, and the materials that were functioned as both structural and decorative features.

Morton’s interest in architecture and “place making”, as she calls it, was influenced, by the photographic work of the Bechers, as well as by the book *Architecture Without Architects* by Bernard Rudofsky, which she discovered as an undergraduate student at Kent State University. The book was published in conjunction with an exhibition, of the same name, at the Museum of Modern Art in 1965. Rudofsky, an architect and critic, sought to redefine the history of architecture by focusing on the work of little-studied cultures whose architects he calls “nonpedigreed” and “untutored”, and were most often anonymous. The press release from the Museum of Modern Art that accompanied Rudofsky’s exhibition included a quote from the architect, which stated, “the untutored builders do not subordinate the general welfare to the pursuit of profit and progress, for they know that progress that takes no account of human need is self-defeating.” Here, is the most striking connection to Morton whose photographs of improvised dwellings constructed by homeless individuals exemplify the most basic of human needs, a home. In each case the improvised dwellings were created taking into consideration the specificity of the individual’s wants and needs, but most importantly these structures stand, albeit precariously, in spite of the city’s attempts to house the population in substandard shelters.

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In *Transitory Gardens, Uprooted Lives*, Morton focuses on Nathaniel’s garden rather than the details of the structure itself.\(^{64}\) The previously mentioned photograph of Nathaniel’s dwelling in Tompkins Square Park includes his garden predominantly displayed in front of the structure, what at first glance seems like a random assortment of objects cluttered in one area, is actually a thoughtfully arranged hierarchy of objects found by or given to Nathaniel (fig. 15).\(^{65}\) The text accompanying the photographs of Nathaniel’s garden and structure reveal that the mound of dirt, which served as the foundation for the garden was collected from various part of the park, as Nathaniel had volunteered to help with “park upkeep.”\(^{66}\) Morton also maintains that the garden is not particularly useful in a traditional sense, there are no vegetables growing and no places to sit. Nathaniel explains, however, the garden is communal and its organization is collaborative, “People would come by and ask to leave something in the garden: an earring, a flower. Some people wanted to add to it. Some want to take away from it.”\(^{67}\) Nathaniel’s decision to expand his personal garden to include the surrounding area of the park encouraged the interaction with other inhabitants of the encampment and support the notion that those living in the park, did so to create a sense of community.

Morton’s close-up photograph of Nathaniel’s garden set against the tarp from his dwelling features the plethora of objects that seem to spill out of frame. Some items are clearly discernable, a straw basket and tin container flank each end of the composition, while the unearthed dirt and foliage camouflages other items. The importance of this garden is apparent in Morton’s text as she regales the process of photographing Nathaniel’s space. She describes him sweeping around the area of the garden and tent, a necessary task for avoiding off eviction, as the objects in his garden could be mistaken

\(^{65}\) Ibid, 64.
\(^{66}\) Ibid, 66.
\(^{67}\) Ibid, 64.
as garbage and gain attention for the Park’s Department who were under pressure to keep the park as orderly as possible.\textsuperscript{68} While Morton’s photographs of Nathaniel’s garden depict a thoughtfully planned space containing a tent and garden, it is the accompanying text with both Morton’s and Nathaniel’s words included, that amplify the significance of even the smallest details that are portrayed in the images, a characteristic that differs from the Bechers’ architectural studies that emphasized formal congruities between mechanical structures with no use of text.

After two years of photographing homeless individuals, Morton decided in 1991 to begin creating what she believed could become an oral history of the community.\textsuperscript{69} In an article published in 1993 Morton wrote, “I was concerned that an important record of the homeless crisis would be lost as the dwellings were periodically demolished.”\textsuperscript{70} Sensing the importance of chronicling the personal histories of everyone she photographed, Morton would initially take notes during conversations but eventually began to tape-record the interviews.\textsuperscript{71} She even sought advice on creating oral histories from Kai Erikson, the chairman of Sociology at Yale University, her alma mater.\textsuperscript{72} In Transitory Gardens, Uprooted Lives, the first of four books published containing Morton’s photographs of homeless communities in New York City, much of the text that accompany the images are written by Morton or Balmori, while the italicized sections are understood as the words of the subject, transcribed from Morton’s recording of their encounter (fig. 11). It can be assumed that Morton’s own writing is her interpretation of interviews held with those she photographed, but the inclusion of the subject’s own words allows their narrative to be understood without bias or reinterpretation from the

\textsuperscript{68} Ibid, 66.
\textsuperscript{69} Margaret Morton interviewed by Pradeep Dalal, 2004.
\textsuperscript{71} Margaret Morton interviewed by Pradeep Dalal, 2004.
\textsuperscript{72} Ibid
photographer. As the conclusion to Nathaniel’s section, Morton includes a paragraph detailing the fate of his tent and garden:

At 5:30 a.m. on December 14, 1989, in fourteen-degree weather, the police expelled the residents of Tompkins Square Park. While the sanitation trucks ground up the remnants of their dwellings, the unprepared residents left the park with whatever they could carry. The Mayor soon moved back into the park, only to be evicted again on June 3, 1991. At that time, he was relocated to the Dry Docks on East Tent Street and given a job with the city’s Parks Department.73

The succeeding page features a photograph that mirrors the composition of the initial frontal photograph of Nathaniel’s dwelling but instead of a structure made from tarp and found material permeating the park’s environs, remnants and debris are strewn about a section of the park as police officers and park workers hasten the park’s residents to leave (fig.16). A solitary figure near the foreground crouches behind a bin of his belongings. We can assume that this figure is The Mayor, and while there is no caption to confirm this detail, it is clear the figure is hurriedly salvaging anything they can before the city disposes him of his former housing. An abandoned bicycle wheel, used cardboard boxes, and other items are shown like a barrier between the crouching figure and the line of police officers, some of whom adorn helmets with shields, a precaution necessitated by the tumultuous history of residents in the park. Two police watch the figure as he collects his belongings, one stands with his hands in his coat pockets looking directly at the squatting figure, the other with his hand stretched over his mouth, a gesture that can be interpreted as a yawn. Morton’s text regarding Nathaniel provides some details of the eviction having taken place during the early hours of a December morning in fourteen-degree weather, details that help inform the tone of the photograph and give a clearer understanding of those depicted.74 By including a narrative of Nathaniel’s experience residing in Tompkins Square Park, providing his quotes from

73 Morton, Transitory Gardens, Uprooted Lives, 64.
74 Ibid, 66.
interviews conducted by Morton, and presenting visual representations of such events, the artist creates an intimate depiction of Nathaniel’s life, complete with his own words, a deliberate counter to photojournalist’s passing interest with the same subject.

The Bystander

For over a century Tompkins Square Park has been the site of political unrest and protest, often resulting in brutal clashes with police.\textsuperscript{75} The park’s first riot took place in 1873 when the Committee of Public Safety, a group of socialists and immigrant workers, organized a protest against the lack of jobs, housing, and food.\textsuperscript{76} After the city revoked the Committee of Public Safety’s permit for protest the night before the planned event, more than seven thousand people descended into the park, only to be driven away by over one thousand police, using horses and clubs.\textsuperscript{77} Almost a century later, the presence of counterculture groups like hippies, the Hare Krishnas, and the anarchist theater group known as the Diggers, within the park’s boundaries caused continuous unrest and clashes with the NYPD.\textsuperscript{78} During Memorial Day weekend in 1966, the neighborhood’s long-time residents, frustrated by the noise and behavior exhibited in Tompkins Square Park called on authorities to break up a gathering of hippies that were chanting and playing music. After yet another confrontation between police officers armed with clubs and the group convening in the park, seven people were injured and forty were arrested.\textsuperscript{79}

\textsuperscript{76} Marilynn Johnson, Street Justice: A History of Police Violence in New York City, (Boston: Beacon Press, 2003), 30-32.
\textsuperscript{77} Ibid, 32.
\textsuperscript{78} Ibid, 259.
\textsuperscript{79} Ibid.
In August of 1988, Tompkins Square Park saw its second riot since 1873, wherein local residents, homeless individuals, and activists demonstrated against the neighborhood’s drastic gentrification as well as Mayor Koch’s one a.m. curfew put in place to control the number of homeless people, drug use, and noise within the park. As was the case in past confrontations, the 1988 riot lasted all night between hundreds of demonstrators and four hundred and fifty riot police, resulting in thirty-eight injuries, nine arrests, and six complaints of police brutality. Multiple newspapers covered the violence of this conflict, using graphic and striking photographs for cover stories and alongside columns regaling the night’s unrest (fig.17). New York Times staff photographer Angel Franco was on the scene documenting the tense confrontation between riot police and protesters (fig.18). Franco himself was pulled into the violence after witnessing a police officer beat a couple leaving a grocery store. Attempting to photograph the encounter, he was dragged into an alleyway and struck by another officer. The Village Voice also covered the 1988 riot, extensively. In one issue alone, from August 16, 1988, a week after the riot occurred, six separate articles were devoted to the events of that night. One article by Andrea Kannepell, outlines a timeline of the night’s events, beginning with a tense but uneventful bike ride toward Tompkins Square Park to the sudden outburst of violence between mounted police and protesters. Acts of police brutality, were outlined in almost every article, C. Carr, a resident of the neighborhood as well as a journalist for the Voice, described an incident where he found

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83 McFadden, “Park Curfew Protest Erupts into a Battle and 38 Are Injured”.
himself and others being mowed down by police officers with cubs.\textsuperscript{85} Each article in the \textit{Voice} purposefully and thoughtfully laid out the events of the night, to make clear the aggression bestowed by the NYPD onto protesters and civilians alike. Newspapers, like the \textit{Times} and \textit{Village Voice}, heavily reported the severity of the confrontation, as some photojournalists and journalists, like Franco and Carr, were forced, unwillingly, from bystander to participant and victim.

The staff photographer, Neal Boenzi, was present for yet another police confrontation in Tompkins Square Park during the December 1989 removal of about twenty makeshift structures constructed by homeless individuals.\textsuperscript{86} Morton managed to photograph this vulnerable moment for Nathaniel, as he hurriedly collected as many belongings as possible, dismantling the dwelling he had tended to for years (fig. 16). Morton’s knowledge of the eviction was obtained through personal relationships, while a photojournalist like Boenzi was assigned to cover it for a \textit{Times} article. Her commitment to photograph the same individuals as their structures evolved over time and were destroyed and rebuilt made capturing the moment of Nathaniel’s eviction important for the overall artistic project, as well as the narrative constructed in the book.

A photojournalist, like Boenzi, does not have time for such a commitment. On December 14, 1989, Boenzi was a bystander to the eviction of over one hundred homeless people from Tompkins Square Park (fig. 2). In one of his photographs of the event, there are no homeless individuals depicted, although at center of the composition flames engulf a tent pitched over a section of benches. Alongside the fire, three police officers are seen one after another; the first gesturing aggressively toward camera and whose facial expression suggests the photographer was not welcome. Considering Boenzi was known for taking as few photographs as possible for each assignment, the

\textsuperscript{85} Carr, “Night Clubbing,” 10.
ability to capture a symmetrically composed action shot, on film no less, is a remarkable feat. Boenzi’s snapshot of a structure set ablaze shares both similarities and differences with Morton’s depiction of Nathaniel’s eviction from the park. It is clear the photographs share the same location; similar benches, lampposts, fencing, and the presence of police officers are apparent in both depictions. Despite these similarities, the photographs portray the same event in completely different ways, with completely different qualities. Morton’s depiction of the police officers as observant and stoic are a far cry from Boenzi’s officer who is active in the scene, clearly gesticulating and walking toward the camera. Another obvious difference is the absence of any homeless individuals in Boenzi’s photograph, which creates a depiction of the event that lacks human connection and downplays the severity of the homeless community’s vulnerability. Morton’s photograph of the eviction, especially within the context of her previous portrayal of Nathaniel and his dwelling, manages to evoke sympathy, but not pity, and is serene compared to Boenzi’s action shot. The nature of each photograph, why they were taken, and by who are reflected in the final product, where Morton’s commitment to capturing the full scope of Nathaniel’s life creating his own home integrates her into the lives of those she photographs. The immediacy and demand of photojournalism is evident in Boenzi’s image as he is delegated as the bystander to a newsworthy event.

The Painter

Morton’s *Transitory Gardens, Uprooted Lives* includes many personal accounts from homeless individuals that forewent government or charitable assistance in order to create homes, which reflected their particular needs as well as their personal style. One

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87 Gonzalez, "King of New York Streets."
such individual included in the book is James and his garden and dwelling located on Ninth Street between Avenues C and D (fig.19). The first depiction of James’ garden and tent in the book is a frontal composition reminiscent of the photographs of Nathaniel’s dwelling in Tompkins Square Park. A small circular garden, enclosed by small bricks housing rocks painted by James and found toys, sits center frame, directly in front of a row of chairs and the dwelling that is covered in a tarp. A predominant building towers over James’ structure in the background with others flanking each side. The next depiction of James’ dwelling is composed in nearly the exact position as the last and depicts subtle changes to the architecture of the tent and the evolution of the garden’s features (fig. 20). Here, a mannequin head placed on top of a stick and fake rifle leaning against it are at the center of the garden. The row of chairs is gone and the dwelling itself seems larger and sturdier. According to Morton’s text, James’ garden had undergone much change when he expanded the dwelling to accommodate three more people. She also suggests the absence of chairs and the creation of more aggressive sculpture was due to the increase of residents in the lot from six to almost twenty.

The text accompanying the images of James’ garden is mostly quotes taken from Morton’s interview with the subject. In the five pages of text dedicated to James, three full pages and portions of the last two are dedicated to James’ words alone. This text includes significant information from James’ background like his birthplace in South Carolina, his source of income, his love for painting, and his ability to cultivate a garden having been learned from his parents. James also seems very distrustful of people who take photographs without asking for permission. He explains, “We have people come in cars, sneak up on us. That’s wrong. Ask! That’s all you’ve gotta [sic] do.” It is

89 Ibid, 68.
90 Ibid, 72.
91 Ibid, 73.
clear from the quotes that James seems to trust Morton, who after multiple visits and
conversations was able to earn trust and the ability to enter James’ space. He goes on
to explain his plans for expansion and invites Morton back to see the finished product,
“…and when you see you gonna be like oh Jimmy, how you do that – that when I gonna
want you to take the picture [sic]”. Morton makes sure to include the fate of James’
garden with both text and visual evidence, after a fire drove out a community of
homeless living in a lot on Eighth Street between Avenues B and C, most inhabitants
relocated to James’ lot only to be followed by the police, who evicted the whole lot and
eventually bulldozed what was left. In Morton’s final depiction of James’ garden, his
structure is completely gone as a bulldozer scoops up remnants in the background (fig.
21). The same, familiar building is still present at the outskirts of the lot and James’
painted rocks, too large and heavy for him to take with him, sit in the foreground and are
sure to be destroyed by the impeding bulldozer. Unlike a photojournalist, Morton’s
commitment to interviewing and photographing the homeless was both emotional and
temporal. Depictions of the dwellings evolving in size, style, and function, along with the
words of their creators provide context that would normally not be understood from
solely visual documentation.

Morton’s depiction of the lifespan of James’ dwelling, from it’s initial construction,
to expansion, and destruction counters the way in which a photojournalist like Boenzi
captures moments in the life of homeless individuals. In a Times article from December
15, 1989, the day after the Tompkins Square Park eviction, another of Boenzi’s
photographs captures the park’s residents forced from the property (fig. 22). An
unnamed homeless woman, faced away from the camera, carries a large Christmas tree
through a walkway lined with abandoned belongings and the remains of makeshift
dwellings. The photograph’s caption offers little information concerning the identity or

92 Ibid, 73.
backstory of the woman (fig. 23). As a publication, the New York Times follows a basic formula for creating captions, the first line is meant to connect the photograph to the story and the second offers the basic information about the scene, like location.\(^9^3\) The lack of information and general anonymity of the homeless woman depicted, only upholds negative connotations equated with homeless individuals who in this article are represented as a nuisance to the neighborhood and perpetrators of criminal activity. In contrast, Morton’s photographs and interviews laud homeless individuals’ ability to create and maintain a home in the face of constant threat of destruction.

**Conclusion**

The inhabitants of the Tompkins Square Park encampment exhibited a type of diligence and care while creating their structures, as exhibited by Morton’s photographs of Nathaniel’s dwelling and accompanying garden. As a way to avoid the city’s deteriorating shelter system, due to the Koch administration’s attempts to deal with the influx of homeless individuals demanding the right to shelter, individuals constructed their own dwellings that reflected their personal style in form and function. Nathaniel utilized the existing placement of park benches as the basis of his dwelling, expanding his space using tarps and found materials to create a tent-like structure to house himself and his belongings. Morton’s photographs of Nathaniel’s garden also emphasize the importance of community within the encampment. Through his own description, Nathaniel explains the collaborative nature of his garden as many other inhabitants both take and contribute items, as they see fit. It is clear from both the visual and verbal depictions of Nathaniel, provided by Morton’s photographs and her inclusion of each subject’s oral history, that the sense of community was important for those living in the Tompkins Square Park encampment.

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Morton’s initial photographs of the dwellings constructed in Tompkins Square Park centered on the structure’s formal and architectural qualities. Gleaning influence from the work of Bernd and Hila Becher, whose photographs presented a study of multiple architectural structures, Morton’s early photographs of the dwellings do not include depictions of the dwelling’s creator. The absence of the individual, in only a few of Morton’s photographs, underline the formal qualities of each structure, the care and deliberateness of each material and decoration, but lack the personal connection that occurs once Morton begins to photograph portraits of individuals. Morton’s interest in Bernard Rudofsky as an undergraduate at Kent State, also served as a source of inspiration as she began to document the structures created by homeless individuals. Rudofsky’s writing centered on reformulating the history of architecture, by considering the monuments, cities, and structures created by civilizations and individuals, who previously had not been considered proper architects, as legitimate contributions to the history of the medium. Morton’s depiction of structures built by the homeless offer a similar perspective, as the formal qualities of the photographs highlight the ways in which each dwelling is uniquely built to accommodate the builder, or architect. Lastly, the representations of homelessness taken by photojournalists from news outlets, like the New York Times and the Village Voice, contrast greatly with Morton’s depiction of the same population. Photographs included alongside columns detailing newsworthy events, like Neal Boenzi’s photographs of one of the evictions from Tompkins Square Park from December 1989, depict a dramatic scene of belongings set on fire and police officers in action but offer no information about those involved. Morton’s photographs of the same event and community present the inhabitants of Tompkins Square Park as self-sufficient and resilient, capable of attaining their own sense of home by constructing dwellings suited to their needs.
Chapter Two

Engagement with the Homeless in Margaret Morton’s *The Tunnel* and Martha Rosler’s *If You Lived Here*…

After photographing inhabitants of the Tompkins Square Park encampment in 1989, Morton followed recently evicted residents to their new dwellings in and around the Lower East Side, including a row of plywood shacks erected along the East River, between the Manhattan Bridge and Brooklyn Bridge.\(^{94}\) During an encounter with an East River resident, Morton was informed of, and encouraged to visit, an underground community residing in an abandoned tunnel located uptown.\(^{95}\) In an interview from 2004, Morton explained the significance of creating relationships with those she photographed, taking advantage of chance encounters, and her own curiosity discovering these communities as key elements to continuing her photographic project, “Someone living on the East River tells you to go to this intersection – this traffic island in the middle of 96th street… and to yell down an airshaft the name of this person who you have never met before and hope he responds. It is not something that comes out of the theoretical construct.”\(^{96}\) Following the advice of one individual from the River community, Morton became privy to the location of the tunnel and befriended the community’s unofficial leader. While other contemporary artists whose treatment of homelessness as a subject centered on theoretical approaches to city planning and urban development, Morton favored these types of chance encounters, which directed her focus to content rather than theory.\(^{97}\) By gaining access to the tunnel, through knowledge obtained from an established relationship with a homeless individual, Morton was able to photograph and

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\(^{95}\) Margaret Morton interviewed by Pradeep Dalal, 2004

\(^{96}\) Ibid.

\(^{97}\) Ibid.
interview the inhabitants of one of the longest established homeless communities at the time.\footnote{Margaret Morton, "The Homeless," in New York Calling: From Blackout to Bloomberg, ed. by Marshall Berman and Brian Berger, (London: Reaktion Books Ltd., 2007), 143.} This community of nearly fifty people took up residence in an abandoned Amtrak tunnel, which stretched two and a half miles under Riverside Park in upper Manhattan (fig. 24).\footnote{Ibid.} The photographs and interviews are the subject of Morton’s second book \textit{The Tunnel}, published in 1995.\footnote{Margaret Morton, \textit{The Tunnel}, (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1995).} The short prologue and epilogue, which provide historical context for the tunnel and the whereabouts of those featured at the time of the book’s publication, are the only sections written by Morton. She delegates the rest of the book to those she photographed by including their stories, in their own words, alongside each photograph, a detail which strays from her previous publication featuring much of Morton’s own writing interwoven with the subject’s own words. (fig. 25). Morton’s commitment to establishing and maintaining relationships with homeless individuals whom she interviewed and photographed as a way to obtain information that would further her effort to create a visual and oral history of homelessness contrasts with other contemporary artists’ methods and struggles to engage with homelessness as subject matter.

In 1989 artist Martha Rosler called attention to New York City’s homeless crisis by organizing the exhibition, \textit{If You Lived Here}…, which included gallery installations and discussion panels, re-purposed as “town hall” style meetings, concerning housing, gentrification, and city planning (fig. 3).\footnote{Charles Wright and Gary Garrels, “A Note on the Series,” from If You Lived Here: The City in Art, Theory, and Social Activism, ed. Brian Wallis (Seattle: Bay Press, 1991), 9-10.} Hosted by the Dia Art Foundation, at their two SoHo galleries, the extensive, three-part exhibition consisted of various types of media, including photographs, posters, installations, and prints contributed by established artists, as well as from people outside the art world like activists and those specializing in
architecture, urban planning, and homelessness.\textsuperscript{102} The exhibition came at a time when the Dia Art Foundation and its board, particularly filmmaker and dancer Yvonne Rainer, decided to support exhibitions from artists whose work and social engagement went beyond art typically presented at museums and galleries.\textsuperscript{103} Accordingly, Rosler’s exhibition utilized objects that would not normally be considered art, like maps and graphics based on homeless statistics, which were relevant to the subject matter at hand (fig. 26).\textsuperscript{104} The exhibition was organized in three parts, each focused on a specific topic; “Home Front” centered on self-organized activism regarding housing, while “Homeless: The Street and Other Venues” dealt with homelessness that was both visible and invisible, as well as those living in public housing and those accommodated by friends or family.\textsuperscript{105} Lastly, “City: Visions and Revisions” explored alternative urban planning and included contributions from architects and urban planners. While it is clear Rosler created a cohesive and educational exhibition centered on issues of gentrification and homelessness, within galleries that were located in a section of Manhattan where these issues were particularly pertinent, her limited engagement with actual homeless individuals within the exhibition and their placement within the installation will be analyzed further.

In line with Rosler’s commitment to include contributions from multiple disciplines that dealt with the themes highlighted in If You Lived Here…, the second installation, “Homeless: The Street and Other Venues”, incorporated an office and living space within the gallery for the activist group Homeward Bound Community Services (fig. 27).\textsuperscript{106} The

\textsuperscript{103} Ibid, 4; Wright and Garrels, “A Note on the Series”, 9.
\textsuperscript{104} Möntmann, “(Under)Privileged Spaces”, 4.
\textsuperscript{105} Ibid, 5.
self-organized group was comprised of homeless individuals, who joined together in 1988 to create an encampment in front of City Hall Park to protest then Mayor Ed Koch’s policies regarding homelessness.¹⁰⁷ The encampment, which shared visual characteristics with the dwellings erected in Tompkins Square Park, became a symbol for homeless advocacy due to the work of groups like Homeward Bound, who, while residing in the camp, managed to register over two thousand people to vote and even met with local legislators as well as Reverend Jesse Jackson.¹⁰⁸ In If You Lived Here: The City in Art, Theory, and Social Activism, the book companion to Rosler’s exhibition, the group are provided a short section to introduce themselves stating:

_We are the homeless who are now regaining our self-respect, controlling our addictions, solving our family problems, and finally beginning to realize that we are somebody. We have joined hands with many individuals and groups, sharing our problems and solutions in a symbiotic relationship, bringing feelings of fulfillment to all._¹⁰⁹

Adair Rounthwaite’s “In, Around, and Afterthoughts (on Participation): Photography and Agency in Martha Rosler’s Collaboration with Homeward Bound” provides a study of the exhibition that focuses on Rosler’s engagement with Homeward Bound, the group’s visibility within the gallery installation, as well as their political agency as participants.¹¹⁰ Rounthwaite ultimately criticizes the way Rosler utilized the presence of Homeward Bound, and concluded that the documentation of the group as participants is contradictory to their inability to function as activists within the exhibition.¹¹¹ By including them in the installation, creating an office space in full view of visitors to the gallery, the group may not have been able to function as it normally would.

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¹⁰⁷ Ibid.
¹⁰⁹ Ibid, 220.
¹¹⁰ Adair Rounthwaite, "In, Around, and Afterthoughts (on Participation)", 47-63.
¹¹¹ Ibid, 63.
I would also argue that their obligation to utilize the space may have prohibited some members from working on the streets, among other homeless individuals.

The intentions behind Rosler’s inclusion of Homeward Bound in *If You Lived Here…* are ultimately unclear. Was their presence in the gallery a contribution to the content of the exhibition, or were they merely participants in an installation to be viewed by Dia’s visitors? Taking into consideration, Rosler’s well known opinions on documentary photography, which will be discussed later, it can be surmised that her decision to include Homeward Bound was a direct response to those, like Morton, who photographed the homeless. By inviting the group to participate, Rosler most likely sought to provide an opportunity for homeless individuals to act as advocates from themselves. However, taking into consideration Homeward Bounds’ successes before the exhibition, they did not need an artist’s exhibition to create change. Compared to Morton’s ability to engage personally with the homeless individuals she encountered and photographed, especially evident in her ability to gain access to the tunnel, Rosler’s attempt to provide space and exposure to homelessness proves problematic.

**The Invisible**

When Morton called down into the airshaft on West Ninety-Sixth Street she was greeted by Bernard Monte Isaac. He entered the abandoned tunnel, running underneath Riverside Drive in Upper Manhattan, to establish a dwelling of his own on June 7, 1985 (fig. 2.8). Before descending into the tunnel, Bernard lived in an abandoned van underneath the Ninety-Sixth Street Bridge, but once the vehicle had seized by the Metropolitan Transportation Authority, he erected a tent within Riverside Park. Bernard lasted there only about two weeks; constant rain and harassment from the Parks

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Department drove him underground.\textsuperscript{113} By the late 1980s, he and about seventeen others, each handpicked and approved by Bernard himself, resided within the Amtrak tunnel for a decade.\textsuperscript{114} The decision to create a home underground seemed like an easy one for people like Bernard, who had spent years living on the streets and saw the tunnel as a safer alternative to city shelters, one that could offer protection from natural elements and the ability to create a space that would be wholly their own. As discussed in the previous chapter, New York City’s tumultuous economy from the late 1970s into the 1980s led to the increased visibility of homelessness and Mayor Koch’s policies during his three terms, from 1978 to 1989, resulted in the decline in quality of city shelters. By 1989, David Dinkins, former Manhattan borough president, was running a mayoral campaign focused on changing policies regarding homeless families.\textsuperscript{115}

As Thomas J. Main explains in \textit{Homelessness in New York City: Policymaking from Koch to De Blasio}, Dinkins developed policies that focused on redefining the homeless family, while he was still Manhattan borough president.\textsuperscript{116} In fact, the task force he appointed as borough president, published a report in March 1987 entitled, \textit{A Shelter is Not a Home}. The report, which focused only on family homelessness, maintained that the most viable solution was for the city to provide more permanent housing for families, as a way to avoid long-term stays in shelters. In 1988, the Dinkins task force publically urged the city, under Mayor Koch, to double the number of rehabilitated apartments intended for homeless families to eight thousand.\textsuperscript{117} By 1990, newly elected Mayor Dinkins, had begun to implement his policies that sought to end the use of welfare hotels and instead provide permanent housing units, which had increased

\textsuperscript{113} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{114} Margaret Morton, “The Homeless,” 143.
\textsuperscript{115} Thomas, \textit{Homelessness in New York City}, 69.
\textsuperscript{116} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{117} Ibid.
by 1989 as Mayor Koch’s policies had begun to create change.\textsuperscript{118} Dinkins also prioritized housing homeless families over single adults living in shelters or on the streets.\textsuperscript{119} As a way to facilitate the push to house more low-income families, the Dinkins administration reorganized the process for filling vacancies in housing projects. Instead of following the New York Housing Authority’s established procedure, the vacancies would be reported directly to the newly established Command Center, a centralized division, which would match an eligible family, immediately.\textsuperscript{120} The preferential treatment of housing homeless families first, did not go unnoticed. Early on in Mayor Dinkins’ enactment of these policies, the Housing Authority, which provides affordable housing to low-income New Yorkers, noticed an increase in low-income family applicants and a decrease in applicants that were single, adult, working poor.\textsuperscript{121}

In 1990, the Housing Authority’s single tenants had begun to organize public demonstrations, protesting the city’s preferential treatment to homeless families that had benefited from an expedited placement into vacant public housing.\textsuperscript{122} To quell unrest among many public-housing residents and improve the quality of Koch era city-run shelters, the Dinkins administration began to focus on a five-year plan devoted to single homeless adults.\textsuperscript{123} In October 1991, Dinkins announced the \textit{New York City Five-Year Plan for Housing and Assisting Homeless Adults} that intended to close Koch-era shelters and to create a smaller, decentralized shelter system.\textsuperscript{124} Main describes this period of homelessness policy as “paternalism”, and explains the paternalist direction as “one that emphasized the importance of getting homeless people, who are able to do so,
to take responsibility for their housing situation." This paternalistic paradigm, which would be further implemented by the Giuliani administration, focused efforts toward resolving existing problems apparent in certain homeless individuals, like substance abuse or mental health issues. While confronting and solving issues that may have contributed to the duress equated with a homeless individual, the paternalistic policies do not deal with the larger, economic sources for the increase in homelessness.

Dinkins’ five-year plan was comprised of two main actions, the first centered on creating a shelter system that provided homeless individuals with relevant training and rehabilitation to help them function independently, the second action devoted two hundred million dollars to creating new housing. Despite the push to completely reconfigure New York City’s homeless policies, the Dinkins administration’s plan was not received well by many, who feared the newly constructed shelters would be located in their neighborhoods and near their own homes. Mayor Dinkins, pressured once again to changes tactics, created the Commission on the Homeless, led by Andrew Cuomo that became known as the Cuomo Commission. The Commission’s two main stances on policy were outlined in a report from February 1992 entitled, *The Way Home: A New Direction in Social Policy*. First, the Commission stated that, according to their findings, homeless individuals or families possessed an “underlying problem” that resulted in them being homeless. Main describes the second aspect, “mutual obligation,” as an approach that would require homeless individuals who had any type an underlying problem, such as drug addiction or issues with mental illness, to address the problem as a precondition to receiving housing. The Dinkins’ administration’s handling of the

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125 Ibid, 7.
126 Ibid, 91.
127 Residents of Staten Island expressed their disapproval of the construction of new shelters in the borough at Community Board meetings, a detail that had been leaked to a local newspaper before the plan’s release. Ibid, 92-93.
128 Ibid, 94-95.
homelessness crisis in New York City, while ostentatious in its attempt to overhaul past policy mistakes, fell short in providing adequate aid for homeless individuals, by focusing on specific struggles that were believed to cause homelessness, rather than exploring the systemic issues with shelter systems and public housing.

The urgency with which the Dinkins administration instated social policies in the early 1990s was an attempt to quell a homeless population, which began to visibly increase as a consequence of New York City's 1975 financial crisis. This homeless population then utilized unused or forgotten spaces, like an abandoned Amtrak tunnel, as a place to create dwellings. The tunnel ran two and a half miles, from Seventy-Second Street to One Hundred and Twenty-Third Street, underneath Riverside Park in Manhattan, became the home to two separate homeless communities beginning in the early 1970s and into the 1990s (fig. 24).\textsuperscript{129} Morton points out in the prologue for her book, The Tunnel, that the very location at the center of this photographic project had a long history with homelessness,

\textit{The mudflats along the Hudson River were occupied by squatters when the Hudson River Railroad arrived in the mid-1800s. By the early 1900s both the homeless community and the railroad had expanded: a tar paper shantytown with 125 occupants lined the four tracks of the New York Central and Hudson River Railroad where it stretched six miles along an area known as Riverside Park.}\textsuperscript{130}

She goes on to explain that by 1934 Robert Moses, the urban planner responsible for the construction of numerous bridges and freeways in and around New York City, had planned and succeeded in transforming the mudflats and exposed train tracks into a public space and promenade along the river.\textsuperscript{131} The tracks, and the freight trains that used them, were then concealed, underground, within large concrete structure. Due to

\textsuperscript{129} Morton, “The Homeless,” 143.
\textsuperscript{130} Margaret Morton, “Prologue” in The Tunnel, (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1995), ix.
the drastic changes in manufacturing and transportation, by the 1970s the train tracks, and the tunnel that housed them, became unused and abandoned.\textsuperscript{132} Homeless individuals sought refuge within the tunnel as early as 1973, making this community one of the longest-lasting in New York City.\textsuperscript{133}

During Morton’s many visits exploring, photographing, and understanding life in the tunnel, Bernard consistently reiterated the mantra “make no plans.” The unpredictability of life underground did not allow for strategic methods in photographing the surroundings.\textsuperscript{134} Bernard served as Morton’s primary guide throughout her time photographing the tunnel community, a friendship that proved valuable for the photographer who gained access, credibility, and permission to enter individual’s private spaces, only through the approval bestowed by the community’s de facto leader.\textsuperscript{135} Morton’s photographs of Bernard, mostly taken with a flash and diffuser, due to the lack of natural and artificial light underground, follow the daily routine of a man living a very comfortable life in a scenario many would consider unimaginable. In the first photograph of Bernard in \textit{The Tunnel}, he stands in front of a wall covered in graffiti with his hands in his pockets, multiple layers of clothing are evident, and his expression, looking directly to camera, is natural (fig. 28). It is assumed he is neither amused, nor bothered, by the action of the photographer, but seems defiant as himself, unapologetic, and proud. Morton used the Mamiya 6 camera that created a medium format, square negative. In this image of Bernard, the subject is framed at the center of the composition, from the waist up, leaving equal sections of negative space on either side and above. This photograph is an important one, in the organization of the book, because it is the introduction to the tunnel, which mirrors Morton’s introduction as well.

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\textsuperscript{132} Morton, “Prologue”, ix.
\textsuperscript{133} Morton, “The Homeless,” 143.
\textsuperscript{134} Margaret Morton, in conversation with the author, February 9, 2018.
\textsuperscript{135} Morton, \textit{The Tunnel}, 11.
\end{flushright}
The next photograph is of Bernard in motion, hammer and wooden pallet in hand, ignoring the photographer’s presence (fig. 29). It is assumed he is in the process of repairing or renovating an aspect of his dwelling. This depiction of Bernard, going about his day, offers a deeper understanding of life in the tunnel, constantly in motion, adapting to the instability of living in such a vulnerable setting. Morton’s patience and dedication is evident in these photographs, by dedicating the early stages of her interactions with Bernard to only conversations and recording his oral history, Morton began photographing Bernard once he became comfortable with her presence in his space.\textsuperscript{136} Having visited the tunnel every week nearly three times a week, from 1991 to 1995, Morton developed trust with subjects by never presenting her camera upon initial meetings and always engaging in conversation before asking permission to take photographs. This method had evolved from her earlier process, photographing structures in Tompkins Square Park and the Lower East Side. As her interest in recording oral histories came to the forefront, an aspect equally as important as the photographs, Morton began to understand the benefit of simply hanging around, for hours, or even days before ever taking a photograph. Her penchant for patience, Morton credits her Mid-Western upbringing in small town Ohio, where the practice of spending time around those who live off the land was familiar.\textsuperscript{137} Although a knack for patience helped in creating trust and understanding between photographer and subject, the foresight to engage and create a relationship with those she was photographing was less a regional trait than a meaningful attempt to represent a population that could potentially be taken advantage of, by the city and in their own personal lives.

The \textit{Tunnel} includes nine photographs that pertain to Bernard, each presented alongside text of his oral history, taken verbatim from Morton’s tape recordings. A series

\begin{footnotes}
\item[136] Margaret Morton, in conversation with the author, February 9, 2018.
\item[137] Ibid.
\end{footnotes}
of photographs depicts Bernard’s space and structure, belongings, and his fondness for cooking (fig. 30). One photograph, a brightly lit kitchen area with a counter top, table, and chairs, are riddled with objects like pots, pans, and bottles. A copy of Francisco Goya’s *The Third of May 1808*, possibly created using spray paint, as is often the case with graffiti, takes up the entirety of the space’s immediate wall. It is juxtaposed by another graffiti mural, on a wall toward the background with texts that reads, “Modern day society is guilty of intellectual terrorism,” signed by “Smithizm”.¹³⁸ Both of these murals call to mind the efforts of everyday people fighting against oppressive forces and their creativity. The kitchen space is cluttered with food and cooking supplies suggesting Bernard uses it frequently. The following photograph depicts Bernard sitting within the same space, in front of a multiple pots and kettles on burners, stirring ingredients. These images are accentuated by Bernard’s own words in the text of the book, where he explains the relative ease of finding quality food within in the dumpsters of local grocery stores and farmers markets.¹³⁹ Bernard goes on to boast about the food he cooks for himself and other inhabitants of the tunnel, recalling dinners of steamed vegetables like cauliflower, wild rice, and chicken, a sense of pride emanates from Bernard’s words as does his ability to create a life of standard in adverse circumstances.

Another photograph depicts Bernard seated in his room of cinderblocks, at a small table with a kerosene lamp, the only source of light besides Morton’s diffused flash (fig. 31). His belongings surround him; a mattress and multiple items of clothing, including a hat perched on a coat hook. Bernard shares intimate details of his life and past with Morton, who then transcribed them into the book, from his source of income to his personal struggles with substance abuse, a clear understanding of the man is evident through both picture and text. Morton also photographed Bernard’s collection of

¹³⁹ Ibid, 12.
recyclables, boxes of empty cans and bottles, meant to be redeemed for profit, a practice he picked up as a child growing up in Florida (fig. 32). In the text, Bernard once again presents a very positive view of his living situation, explaining his process collecting cans from building superintendents along the West Side and bringing them to a redemption center called We Can, located on West Forty-Third Street. Bernard’s introspective and positive outlook on his life is undeniable, one of the more striking photographs taken by Morton, depicts a small tree surrounded by the darkness of the tunnel, lit only by natural light beaming through iron grates above, with a single fruit on its barren branches (fig. 33). Much like Bernard, this tree grew and flourished underground, despite he harshness of weather conditions and human interference. Near the end of his section in The Tunnel, Bernard reflects on his time underground:

*There’s a certain level of consciousness required of man. And one can’t perfect that within functional society. You have to basically be separated and apart from it. And I guess that’s why I’m going through what I’m going through. I’ve been put into a hell of an environment to try and perfect this. But by the same token, it’s a perfect environment. It’s all about one’s focus and one’s will to be. And everything is challenging.*

In 1991, the community of about fifty people, comprised of Bernard’s small group along with another group of individuals living in another part of the tunnel, was discovered by Amtrak crews looking to lay new tracks for passenger trains. Despite their detection by Amtrak, most residents refused to leave. Over the next four years the community grew and thrived, furnishing their spaces with found furniture left on the streets by a surge of Upper West Side’s residents moving out of the neighborhood; they also utilized a pipe that contained water run off from the Hudson, collected bottles and other items to maintain a meager income, and fended off hunger by scavenging discarded food from near by markets. By June 1995, Amtrak had once again disrupted

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140 Ibid, 18.
141 Ibid, 27.
life in the tunnel, this time threatening arrest and padlocking many of the entrances and exits.\textsuperscript{143} Undeterred, many residents regained access to their homes by cutting the locks with saws and even digging holes from above. When Morton finally published \textit{The Tunnel}, in 1995, she included in the book’s epilogue, the whereabouts of the inhabitants she encountered and photographed, including Bernard, who still lived in the tunnel.\textsuperscript{144} In an op-ed for \textit{The New York Times}, entitled “Homes for the Invisible,” from October 1995, Morton brought to light the status of those living underground and detailed the Coalition for the Homeless’ efforts to make available vouchers for permanent housing, dedicated specifically to residents of the abandoned tunnel.\textsuperscript{145} While the nine million dollar Federal program had been set up to provide these vouchers in November 1994, only two had been used in one year. Due to the Coalition’s success accessing and dispersing these vouchers, Bernard was able to move aboveground and into an apartment in North Harlem.\textsuperscript{146} In the years since the publication of \textit{The Tunnel}, Morton has remained in contact with many residents she photographed, bringing them copies of the book as well as prints of the photographs she made. Morton remained in regular contact with Bernard until his death.\textsuperscript{147} The creation of a photographic and written record of the longest-lasting homeless community, living in an abandoned tunnel underneath New York City, was a possible feat due to Morton’s commitment to having meaningful engagement with her subject, gaining access, trust, and respect that allowed unprecedented depictions of those living underground.

\textsuperscript{143} Morton, “The Homeless,” 144
\textsuperscript{144} Morton, \textit{The Tunnel}, 143.
\textsuperscript{146} Morton, “The Homeless,” 144.
\textsuperscript{147} Margaret Morton, in conversation with the author, February 9, 2018.
The Visible

Before founding Homeward Bound Community Services, Larry Locke, a homeless house painter, like many in his position, had relied on New York City’s overcrowded, understaffed, shelter system as a refuge from living on the streets. On June 1, 1988, during the fourth annual candlelight vigil, organized by the Interfaith Assembly on Housing and Homelessness, a group of homeless individuals came together to form Homeward Bound. In the book If You Lived Here: The City in Art, Theory, and Social Action, Homeward Bound recalls the purpose of the yearly vigil, “to make visible the plight of the homeless and to make legislators aware of the great need for housing for people with no housing.” Each year the vigil had included services at St. Paul’s chapel, a procession to City Hall, then a temporary, overnight encampment in City Hall Park, a symbolic gesture that brought the severity of homelessness to the doorstep of then Mayor Koch. Instead of leaving the next day, Locke and a group of other homeless individuals decided to stay, garnering attention from news media, legislators, and Mayor Koch as well. While the city had attempted to remove structures on multiple occasions, as reported by Michel Marriott who covered the encampment extensively for the New York Times, mayor Koch was careful not to encroach on the group’s right to protest the administration's housing policies. Some of Homeward Bound’s most significant accomplishments included, registering over two thousand individuals to vote, meeting and working alongside legislators, testifying in City Hall hearings regarding housing and homelessness, and gaining attention from Reverend Jesse Jackson, who stood alongside members of the group during a rally to kick off

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149 “Homeward Bound,” from If You Lived Here, 220.
150 Ibid.
Housing Action Week in December of 1988.\textsuperscript{152} Homeward Bound’s visibility within the City Hall Park encampment, afforded the group its ability to organize and activate fellow homeless individuals, establish connections with important legislators and advocates, as well as establish a reputation that focused on the homeless’ capability to create change for themselves.

As Rounthwaite’s comprehensive case study of Homeward Bound’s participation in \textit{If You Lived Here}… noted, the origins of Rosler’s contact with the group was initially through her assistant, Dan Wiley, an urban activist who had spent time living and sleeping alongside the homeless demonstrators in City Hall Park.\textsuperscript{153} While Rosler described the inclusion of Homeward Bound within the gallery installation as serving a practical purpose that provided the group with office space, including a phone and fax machine, the effect of their presence on viewers is questionable.\textsuperscript{154} Rosler’s initial plans were to provide a sleeping quarter for the group as well, although the Dia Art Foundation’s terms for their Wooster Street location did not allow for residential occupancy.\textsuperscript{155} One photograph of the installation features a row of cots, lining a temporary gallery wall, intended for Homeward Bound, which remained in the exhibition despite their use being prohibited by Dia (fig. 34). This installation view of unused beds is in contrast with Morton’s depiction of Bernard in his living space (fig. 31), as he sits in contemplation, surrounded by his belongings, viewers and readers can understand the pride and significance held within every item. Bernard’s bed is a mattress on the ground and in this image, it is unmade and slept in, another visual reminder of the importance of

\textsuperscript{153} Rounthwaite, “In, Around, and Afterthoughts (on Participation), 49.
\textsuperscript{154} Rounthwaite interviewed Martha Rosler on July 21, 2010, as part of research for this study. Ibid.
\textsuperscript{155} Ibid, 51.
a bed for homeless individuals. In contrast, the cots at Dia are obviously unused, the sheets and blankets are tucked meticulously under the thin mattresses, and reminiscent of the maintenance found in a hotel. While no personal affects are present in the Dia installation, Bernard’s space is filled with belongings collected for his own use or to resell for a profit. Overall, the two images of sleeping quarters offer two very different depictions; one lived in and cherished, the other void of function due to the regulations instated by the Dia Foundation, which could be seen as a critique of the system’s lack of engagement with the homeless community.

Unable to use the space for as a temporary shelter, Homeward Bound was left to utilize some desks and chairs, as well as letterhead, phone, and fax machine. As seen in another installation photograph from the original exhibition in 1989, Homeward Bound’s temporary headquarters was virtually at the center of the gallery, surrounded by artwork by renowned artists as well as homeless individuals (fig. 27). As Rounthwaite points out, the presence of Homeward Bound within the gallery signified the group’s visibility to gallery visitors and Dia patrons, as a significant aspect of their participation in If You Lived Here…. Minutes from a Homeward Bound meeting from April 5th 1989, obtained by Rounthwaite from Rosler’s archive, echoed the issues contributed to being confined to the gallery space, stating “we are on display” as a potential problem for the group. Although Homeward Bound’s visibility within City Hall Park allowed them to promote their cause and make important connections with legislators and activists, their presence as the central focus within the gallery space did not have the same impact.

A review of If You Lived Here... by Peg Tyre and Jeannette Walls for New York Magazine in 1989, offers a critique of Rosler’s inclusion of Homeward Bound within the

156 Ibid, 49.
157 Ibid, 50.
gallery installation. In a quote from a Dia spokesperson, the presence of Homeward Bound within the gallery space was thought to provide a dynamic quality to the exhibition that emphasized active rather than passive participation (fig. 35). The spokesperson goes on to reassure skeptics that the group would have much to do in the gallery, “It’s not like they are just sitting there. They can use the phones and write letters.” But Tyre and Walls remain unconvinced, including in the review, a quote from an unnamed source, that calls into question the contradiction between inviting homeless individuals to the opening of an exhibition whose primary audience is middle to upper class artists and intellectuals. While the presence of Homeward Bound as a feature of the installation forced gallery goers to confront the realities of homelessness, the members’ visibility played a larger role than their participation, according to many reviews. The location of the Dia Art Foundation’s two gallery spaces, on Wooster Street and Mercer Street situated in the SoHo neighborhood of Manhattan, is another point of contention for many critics. One New York Times review of the exhibition described the location choice as “risky”, considering the burgeoning downtown art market’s role in the gentrification of SoHo, a former manufacturing center. According to the statement made by the Dia Art Foundation’s executive director and director of programs, hosting If You Lived Here… at the foundation’s downtown locations, instead of at their newly constructed gallery on Twenty-Second Street in Chelsea, would offer “ready accessibility to the audience actively participating in this critical process as well as to the general public.” Dia’s intention to include those who were directly affected by New York City’s recent troubles regarding housing, gentrification, and homelessness is clear, however by constructing a

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159 Ibid.
161 Wright and Garrels, “A Note on the Series,” from If You Lived Here, 9.
temporary office for Homeward Bound, a service that had already been offered by an organization called The Food and Hunger Hotline, at the center of the exhibition was less an invitation for participation than an exercise in voyeurism.

Rosler’s inclusion of homeless individuals as participants within *If You Lived Here*…is unsurprising considering her own theories regarding representation, participation, and documentary photography. Her essay “In, Around, and Afterthoughts (on Documentary Photography),” from 1981, criticized the limitations of traditional documentary photography as a tool to promote advocacy and progressivism.\(^{162}\) Citing the work of Jacob A. Riis, Lewis Hine, and others, Rosler condemns the practice of “victim photography”, or the depiction of poor, unaware subjects who do not maintain any control during their transaction with a photographer, as exoticism and voyeurism.\(^{163}\) It should be stated that Morton’s photographs of homeless communities in New York City could be considered examples of “victim photography.” However, Morton’s commitment to establishing a relationship with her subjects and the consistent practice of allowing an individual time to speak about their experiences, before the notion of a photograph was ever introduced, do not fall in line with Rosler’s so-called “victim photography” in which the key characteristic is the subject’s unawareness of the photograph being taken. Rosler also questioned the type of reform that often followed photographic exposés of undesirable work or living conditions, as was the case with both Riis and Hine, “With the manifold possibilities for radical demands that photos of poverty and degradation suggest, any coherent argument for reform is ultimately both polite and negotiable.”\(^{164}\) She suggests that the advent of traditional documentary photography, and its evolution as a genre, has allowed viewers to temporarily show concern for social

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\(^{163}\) Rosler, “In, Around, and Afterthoughts (on Documentary Photography)”, 178.

\(^{164}\) Ibid, 177.
issues while simultaneously asserting themselves, not only as members of a higher echelon, but far removed from any blame regarding the fundamental problems depicted in such images.

In 2010, during an interview for the exhibition, *If You Lived Here Still…*, a project designed to revisit the same issues as its first iteration, but this time centered around the city of Barcelona, a question about representation echoed similar sentiments. Rosler stresses the importance of engaging with those who are directly affected by issues, like homelessness and poverty, and creating a space where those who are often in the minority can be advocates for themselves.\(^{165}\) Considering Rosler’s vocal and well-documented theories regarding the photographic documentation of people who do not readily maintain social or political power, photographs merely depicting certain issues would not be suffice and the participation of Homeward Bound in *If You Lived Here…* was intended to confront galleries goers with the reality of homelessness. The effect of Homeward Bound’s presence in the gallery cannot be quantified easily, however multiple accounts, including one from members of Homeward Bound, derided Rosler’s placement of the group within the gallery as potentially problematic, relegating the group as a purely visual function within the exhibition.

Despite these criticisms, the exposure of Homeward Bound, which was provided by their inclusion in *If You Lived Here…* and its accompanying events, became an opportunity for the group, and its most vocal member Larry Locke, to assert themselves as successful and dedicated advocates. As previously discussed, the exhibition included three different topics and installations, each one accompanied by an “open forum.” These panel discussions were organized like town hall meetings, wherein members of the public were encouraged to participate, and issues strayed from the standard

aesthetic or art historical topics often discussed in art institutions. Instead, each panel centered on the same topic as the installation and was mostly comprised of individuals outside the art community. Included on the panel for “Homelessness: Conditions, Causes, Cures”, were Anne Troy, executive director of Emmaus House, a residential program in Harlem, Cenén, an African artist and poet, Douglas Lasdon, the director of the Legal Action Center for the Homeless, Jean Chappell from Parents on the Move, a group of homeless advocates, and finally Larry Locke from Homeward Bound.

In his opening statements, Locke describes the conditions Homeward Bound had to endure, as they lived and demonstrated in City Hall Park, and asserts his ability to provide important perspective on homeless issues, “Now some of us are working to educate people like yourself. Instead of you educating me, I have the opportunity now to educate you to some extent.” Locke goes on to discuss many of the organization’s successes, specifically the day Reverend Jesse Jackson visited the encampment. The panel’s moderator, Bill Batson, revealed his own admiration for Homeward Bound during the discussion, detailing the diligence and determination with which the group had been able to advocate, lobby, and organize. Throughout the discussion, Locke contributed rather consistently, reiterating the importance of participation and collaboration with homeless individuals, and at one point, while interacting with a member of the audience, who expressed her disapproval of Councilman Abe Gerges’ late arrival on the panel, firmly stated the importance of working together and talking to one another, as a key factor in solving some of the most complex housing problems. Initially, Locke’s presence on the panel for “Homelessness: Conditions, Causes, Cures” and his opening statements, in particular, seems to contradict Homeward Bound’s concerns with their

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166 Wright and Garrels, “A Note on the Series,” from If You Lived Here, 10.
168 “Homelessness: Conditions, Causes, Cures,” 190.
169 Ibid, 203.
visibility as a part of the installation of If You Lived Here…, as outlined in the minutes to a meeting that took place weeks before the open forum. However, I maintain that while Homeward Bound members understood their visibility within the gallery as potentially exploitative, the possibility of making connections and educating others, through discussions like the open forum, were the primary benefits for them in contributing to the exhibition.

While both Morton and Rosler created work that centered on homelessness in the late 1980s and early 1990s in New York City, Morton’s ability to maintain meaningful engagement with the subjects of her photographs, provided her with the access, respect, and approval of those she encountered, as well as relationships that lasted well after the destruction of the community. Although Rosler’s theories on documentary photography clearly oppose the very idea of photographing the homeless, Morton’s ability to provide adequate context, through the inclusion of the subject’s own words as text in the book, as well as her commitment to the well-being of those she photographed, challenge the traditions of documentary photography outlined by Rosler, as being insufficient and even unethical. Despite these differences, both Morton and Rosler’s work provide representations of homelessness that confront perceived notions of the homeless.

Conclusion

Both Bernard and Larry Locke, the most notable individuals in Morton and Rosler’s projects, provide compelling histories, which emphasize their own ability to create and sustain adequate lives despite adverse conditions. While both of these men were homeless in New York City at exactly the same time, each of them chose to avoid the city’s undesirable shelter system but in very different ways. Bernard was able to maintain a life outside government intervention and the shelter system, by relying completely on his ability to be invisible. The communities Morton had photographed
living in Tompkins Square Park or along the East River, were under the constant threat of eviction and demolition due to their locations in residential neighborhoods and on public grounds. Bernard and others living in the tunnel, on the other hand, survived as long as two decades, constructing homes from found material or repurposing existing structure, because they were not visible to the general public. Even after Amtrak discovered them, most tunnel residents were able to continue to live underground for years, until an effort from the Coalition for the Homeless made available vouchers for permanent housing, specifically for those living in the tunnel. Morton’s commitment, both temporally and emotionally, to those she encountered while creating this photographic project, provided her the ability to create a permanent document of a community that would eventually be destroyed.

Larry Locke, unlike Bernard, created a life for himself by being as visible as possible, from constructing an encampment outside City Hall, to becoming one the spokespeople for the advocacy group Homeward Bound. Locke’s passion for bridging the gap between homeless individuals and local legislators and activists successfully brought change for many. By registering many people to vote and becoming involved in local politics that could provide changes to New York City’s homelessness policy, Locke and other members of Homeward Bound became their own advocates. As a participant in If You Lived Here… and the open forum, “Homelessness: Conditions, Causes, Cures”, Locke presented himself as an educator, whose presence was intended to share useful information about homelessness to a group of people, who other wise, may not be exposed to those types of issues. Although the presence of Homeward Bound within the gallery installation was not a successful tool to bring awareness, Locke’s ability to utilize his visibility to promote their cause was evident.

These works by Morton and Rosler share an important and distinct similarity; each of their depictions of homelessness, in photographic form or in the flesh, so to
speak, are meant to challenge the meaning of homelessness. Rosler’s inclusion of Homeward Bound in the installation of If You Lived Here…, was intended to encourage a representation of the homeless as catalysts of change, their own advocates, and important players in local legislation regarding homelessness policies. While I would argue that the presence of Homeward Bound in the gallery installation, as a visual component of the exhibition, was an unsuccessful attempt to invoke participation and collaboration, Locke’s performance as a representative for the group during the open forum resulted in a positive and encouraging representation of homelessness. The homeless depicted in Morton’s The Tunnel are not merely victims of the systemic flaws in New York City’s social policies. Instead, they present themselves, through their own words and Morton’s photographs, as self-sufficient creators of their own community, constructing homes in unexpected places, but maintaining a type of life not normally equated with homelessness. Morton’s ability to engage, meaningfully, with the homeless individuals she encountered and her commitment to those she photographed, even after the publication of The Tunnel and destruction of the community, are the contributing factors that allowed for such an in-depth, personal, and encouraging representation of homelessness in New York City.
Chapter Three

Creating Narrative with Photography and Text: Inter-genre Photography

Each of the previous chapters included comparisons of Margaret Morton’s photographs of homelessness in New York City to the work of photojournalists and conceptual based artists like Martha Rosler whose subject matter and themes also dealt with the city’s homeless population. I have argued that Morton’s photographs of the initial encampment located in Tompkins Square Park, featured in the book Transitory Gardens, Uprooted Lives, and the photographs taken by photojournalists for news sources like the New York Times and the Village Voice of the same encampment, exhibit distinct differences. The most significant is the general time commitment allotted to photographing the encampment, particularly during a newsworthy event, like one of the evictions that occurred in December 1989, lead by the New York Police and Parks Departments. While Morton dedicated years to this project, creating an oral and visual record of a homeless population that created their own makeshift homes, a photojournalist, like Neal Boenzi from the New York Times, was only expected to photograph the homeless during an event like an eviction. Furthermore, Morton’s inclusion of the subjects’ story, in their own words, alongside the photographs in the book, is in stark contrast with the captions often found under photographs in newspapers like the Times, which often left the names of homeless individuals depicted out of the general description of the event. I have also mentioned the important differences between Morton’s photographs from The Tunnel and Martha Rosler’s multidisciplinary exhibition, If You Lived Here…, which dealt with the contemporary issues of

gentrification, homelessness, and urban planning, specifically in downtown neighborhoods of New York City. \(^\text{172}\) I argued that Morton’s engagement with those she encountered, allowed for personal relationships to be established, trust to be built, and eventually photographs to be taken, all of which was feasible do to Morton's patience and ability to gain access into these communities by befriending their unofficial leaders, like Bernard in the tunnel. In contrast, Rosler’s provision of a temporary office space within the installation to Homeward Bound Community Services, allowed the group to make connections with other organizers, but ultimately presented them primarily as components of the installation, to be viewed by gallery goers. \(^\text{173}\) Morton’s final two books regarding New York City homelessness are *Fragile Dwelling* from 2000 and *Glass House* from 2004 (fig.36). \(^\text{174}\) Like both books before them, *Fragile Dwelling* and *Glass House*, each include a fair amount of text featured alongside the photographs, text that includes the words of those in the photographs, taken from Morton’s tape recordings. Morton’s oral and visual history of a specific population of the homeless, which incorporates transcriptions of tape recordings featuring the words of those she encountered alongside photographs of their dwellings and themselves, should be considered a practice in inter-genre photography.

The term inter-genre has previously been discussed in relation to the study of literature, music, and linguistics. In each case, as well as in my own argument, inter-genre describes the way in which specific genres interact by sharing certain traits. \(^\text{175}\) In

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Amy J. Devitt’s “Re-fusing Form in Genre Study,” from the book *Genres in the Internet: Issues in the Theory of Genre*, she analyzes genre study from social, historical, and rhetorical perspectives. She describes the term “inter-genre-al”, as the result of the interaction between genres, or the overlapping of certain traits or actions that then create yet another type of genre.\(^{176}\) Regarding linguistics, Jeff Rider describes genre as “a bundle of distinctive traits defined in opposition to other such bundles,” and “intergenre” as the sharing of one or more of these traits.\(^{177}\) Similarly, I would argue that Morton’s photographs should be considered inter-genre, because they exhibit similar qualities to genres like documentary photography, fine art, and photojournalism. However, due to Morton’s process collecting oral histories of those she photographed and her method maintaining relationships with her subjects, they function outside the boundaries of these genres established criteria. While Morton’s photographs share the same subject matter as some photojournalists, like Boenzi, her temporal commitment to the subject and use of text set her apart. Morton’s photographs also interact with conceptual art, like that of Rosler, by again dealing with the same subject matter, but instead of centering the work on an initial concept, Morton’s final book of photographs, in conjunction with the text included alongside them, have the potential to bring social change due to the photograph’s content.\(^{178}\)

The works of two other photographers also share inter-genre qualities, similar to Morton’s photographs of hopelessness in New York City. Jim Goldenberg’s photographic book, *Rich and Poor*, published in 1985, features two different sections; the first contains a series of photographs depicting portraits of people living in a single room occupancy

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\(^{176}\) Devitt, “Re-fusing Form in Genre Study,” 44.


hotel and the second series depicts portraits of affluent residents of San Francisco.\textsuperscript{179} This study on the vast economic inequalities within an American city, is further accentuated by the presence of the subject’s handwritten thoughts regarding the portrait, which were included on the margins and borders surrounding the photograph, a detail facilitated by Goldberg upon a follow-up visit to the homes of each individual (fig. 4).\textsuperscript{180} Similarly, photographer Jeffery A. Wolin has also incorporated hand written text overlaid on top of his photographs. In his portraits of residents from the Crestmont Housing Projects, also known as Pigeon Hill, in Bloomington, Indiana, Wolin writes the stories of those depicted, directly on the photograph (fig. 5).\textsuperscript{181} The project, which spanned over two decades, culminated in a book, titled \textit{Pigeon Hill: Then and Now}, published in 2016.\textsuperscript{182} Just as Morton has included text alongside her photographs, both Goldberg and Wolin utilize the qualities of written text in concurrence with their photographs, as a way to allow the subject a sense of agency and control in creating a narrative. This use of text and image, as well as the similarities in subject matter, which center on marginalized, poor, communities, reflect an inter-genre approach to photography.

\textbf{Rich and Poor}

When the Tompkins Square Park encampment was evicted and destroyed for the final time, on June 3, 1991, many of its residents were left to relocate and rebuild their makeshift dwellings, as an alternative to living in New York City’s dilapidated shelter system.\textsuperscript{183} Morton’s interest in following the Tompkins Square Park residents to their

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new communities as she shifted focus from architectural studies of the dwellings to recording a visual and oral record of the temporary structures and those who created them, led her to the community of “Bushville.” Located in a vacant lot on East Fourth Street in Manhattan’s Lower East Side, the community was comprised of two rows of plywood houses that lined a central path (fig. 37). This was a deliberate organizational plan for the dwellings that offered optimal positioning for residents to keep an eye out for potential threats, like theft and vandalism from other homeless individuals or eviction and harassment from city authorities. The community, as Morton encountered it, was made up of about fourteen homeless men from Puerto Rico, whose dwellings and accompanying decorative details, reflected their heritage and place of birth (fig. 38).

Structures like those found in “Bushville” are referred to as las casitas, or small houses, and are architecturally reminiscent of traditional rural homes in Puerto Rico. Beginning in the 1980s, many las casitas were constructed in the Bronx and Upper Manhattan, which functioned as community gardens and centerpieces for their surrounding neighborhoods. Details like, brightly painted rock decorations and Puerto Rican flags, as well as architectural forms, like a covered walkway, referred to as a marquesina, were all elements included by the residents of each dwelling, that harken back to a deeply personal pride and connection to their country of origin. Despite the overall effectiveness of the community’s organization and the ways in which residents created dwellings that

closely resembled permanent structures, “Bushville” was demolished by the city, on December 15, 1993 (fig. 39).  

The destruction of the “Bushville” community, as well as the eviction of the Tompkins Square Park encampment, were both important events brought about by the Dinkins administration’s implementation of paternalistic policies. To deal with the homelessness crisis, the Dinkins’ Administration focused on solving any “underlying problems” that homeless individuals may have exhibited, to prevent them from becoming chronically homeless. Continuing this paternalistic paradigm, Mayor Rudy Giuliani, who was elected in 1994, edified such policies by ramping up the shift from city-run to privatized, not-for-profit, shelters. Early on, in the Giuliani Administration, the Department of Homeless Services (DHS), had released a report, “Reforming New York City’s System of Homeless Services”, which embraced the Cuomo Commission’s call for mutual responsibility, and made this aspect a central objective for reform. As explained in the previous chapter, the concept of mutual responsibility was a key characteristic of paternalism that emphasized homeless individuals’ acceptance of responsibility upon receiving aid, and participation in programs to which they were assigned. This practice of implementing either rehabilitative or mental health programs as a prerequisite to receiving housing attempted to deal with the immediate increase in homelessness that may have been caused by an underlying problem, but did nothing to solve the origin of homelessness in the drastic economic and financial shifts, which occurred in the late 1970s.

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189 Main, Homelessness in New York City, 109.
190 Ibid, 107.
For the Giuliani Administration, the concept of mutual responsibility took form in the signing of an independent living plan, by both recipient and provider, which ensured the recipient would participate in appropriate programming that would help facilitate their ability to live independently.\textsuperscript{191} To enforce this, as Thomas J. Main explains, the Administration instated a forty-eight-hour eligibility period, an unprecedented regulation, which established a client’s eligibility before housing him or her.\textsuperscript{192} Essentially, this meant that instead of housing clients immediately, in emergency housing, regardless of their situation, the eligibility process would determine if the individual should receive housing relief or if the presence of dysfunctional behavior should precipitate immediate enrollment in a program. Organizations like the Coalition for the Homeless, claimed the eligibility period would impose strict requirements for individuals to receive aid and went against the \textit{Callahan} decree, a court order which guaranteed the right to housing and did not include such requirements.\textsuperscript{193} Since Judge Stanley L. Sklar, who was responsible for the implementation of the \textit{Callahan} decree, had not ruled on the ability to establish eligibility requirements, the city agreed not to enforce them.

With the eligibility process being stalled in court, the Giuliani Administration shifted efforts to the privatization of city shelters, as a way to enforce substantial prerequisites and paternalistic policies.\textsuperscript{194} Although the Cuomo Commission, under Mayor Dinkins, described the creation of not-for-profit shelters as a potential alleviation for the city, in dealing with the increase in homeless individuals seeking shelter, there was no significant increase in privatization during Mayor Dinkins’ term. On the other hand, the Giuliani Administration made the creation of not-for-profit run, program-based, shelters a priority. By 1996, over fifty-four percent of shelters were privately run and

\textsuperscript{191} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{192} Ibid, 108.
\textsuperscript{194} Ibid, 109.
more that forty-five percent were city-run, compared to the 1988 figures, which show only twenty-six percent of shelters that were privately operated and seventy-three percent run by the city.\footnote{Ibid, 110.} Family shelters saw a similar shift towards privatization, by 1996 seventy-two percent of families were housed in private shelters, run by not-for-profit organizations and by 1998, almost all eighty family shelters had been allotted to organizations that were not-for-profit.\footnote{Ibid.}

The transformation from city-run to not-for-profit operated shelters, is encapsulated in the renovation of the East Third Street shelter, which was mentioned in Chapter One. In the 1980s, East Third Street served as an intake shelter, which provided a small infirmary room that slept only a dozen men, did not offer any long-term shelter or food, and did not facilitate an extensive interview to establish appropriate referrals to larger shelters.\footnote{The Men’s Shelter on East Third Street, functioned only as an intake center that referred individuals to other shelters in the system or flophouses in the neighborhood, paid for by the city. Ibid, 111.} By 1997, East Third Street had been converted into a program shelter that provided a six-month rehabilitation program, which meant they only accepted men who suffered from substance abuse and were already in the shelter system. Along with these initial requirements, clients were also expected to sign a contract that insured their understanding of the shelter’s rules, such as the prohibition of sexual activity and illegal substances as well as enforcing the client to shower once, daily, and provide urine samples for drug testing upon request.\footnote{Ibid} Once individuals were admitted to the therapeutic program, an assigned case manager closely monitored their participation. Overall, this transition into a privately run, program oriented, shelter resulted in the building’s renovation and the subsequent improvement to the quality of life for those residing in the East Third Street shelter.
The privatization of the shelter system in New York City, under Mayor Giuliani, developed two tracks for those seeking housing relief.\textsuperscript{199} The first were those that requested shelter from the city, without any requirements. For these individuals, city-run general shelters that offered little or no services other than housing, meaning they did not have rehabilitation or mental health programs as a term for staying at the shelter, were the only option. Although these shelters often housed thousands of individuals, they did not enforce prerequisites, referrals, or stipulations in exchange for shelter. The second track included program shelters, like the East Third Street shelter, that would offer extensive programs and services to residents and were privately run by not-for-profit organizations.\textsuperscript{200} While legally, the city could not enforce such strict rules and requirements, these private, program shelters, were well within their rights to do so, as long as a resident who no longer wished to follow a program was able to return to a general shelter. Overall, the Giuliani Administration was able to enforce the paternalistic paradigm to homelessness policy, first introduced by Mayor Dinkins, by successfully transforming city-run shelters into not-for-profit shelters that were able to enforce strict requirements and rules. The privatization of homeless shelters saw a definite improvement in shelter conditions and quality of programs and management, however it did not provide a solution to the problem of homelessness, as the population would only increase in the years that followed.\textsuperscript{201}

The creation and destruction of the homeless community “Bushville” existed as a result of paternalistic measures introduced by Mayor Dinkins and carried out by Mayor Giuliani. One of the more prominent members of the “Bushville” community, included in Morton’s \textit{Fragile Dwelling}, is Pepe Otero (fig. 40). As the informal leader of the small, tight-knit, community, Morton’s ability to befriend and gain the trust of Pepe, allotted her

\begin{flushright}
\textsuperscript{199} Ibid, 112.
\textsuperscript{200} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{201} Ibid, 139.
\end{flushright}
the ability to move freely within “Bushville”, talking to and photographing each resident. In the first photograph depicting Pepe in Morton’s book, he is seen from behind the door to his plywood dwelling, the door’s top section seems to be on a hinge, and at the moment of this photograph, it is flipped up to create the void where Pepe is leaning and a makeshift awning, above the door. A latch is visible at the edge of the top section, flipped up and over Pepe, a detail that most likely allows Pepe to lock the hatch from the inside, no doubt a safety precaution to stop intruders. Pepe also fashioned window grates out of abandoned shopping carts, as another safety precaution to avoid possible burglary and vandalism. This window grate is visible to the left of Pepe, in the photograph, fastened on a small, narrow window. The man himself seems utterly relaxed in front of the camera, a possible result of his familiarity with Morton, who insisted on speaking with and getting to know any homeless individual she encountered, before asking permission to take a photograph. He rests both arms on the ledge of the opening, placing his chin on top of his right wrist, and looks directly to camera. His news-boy cap and large–rimmed glasses are qualities reminiscent of older men and create a sense of nostalgia or familiarity for those viewing the photograph.

Pepe had lived in “Bushville” since 1990, taking over a one room, plywood shack, from a friend. Previously, he had lived in the Tompkins Square Park encampment, in a tent made out of plastic bags, for only about six months. In the text, provided by Morton in the book, Pepe explains that while residing in the park, he was responsible for keeping his area clean and tidy, a detail mentioned by Nathaniel, from Chapter One, as well. As was the case in Morton’s previous publications, the text transcribing the words of those in the photographs is differentiated from words written by Morton, by using italics. The next photograph of Pepe, finds his shack changed

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202 Margaret Morton, in conversation with the author, February 9, 2018.  
204 Morton, Fragile Dwelling, 14.
drastically, a new cloth or plastic awning covers a front porch and walkway made from wooden pallets (fig. 41). Pepe is seated in the open doorway, holding an open book on his lap. The book is opened to expose a traditional portrait of Jesus Christ. Viewing this photograph, in conjunction with reading the available text from Pepe, the significance of books, and possibly this specific book, is understood. Pepe explains, that as a young man, in Puerto Rico, he made a good living as a bookbinder and typesetter. He eventually immigrated to New York, believing his skillset would provide him a better living, only to end up making even less than his job in San Juan. Once in New York, he eventually became a machine operator, until a major accident on the job almost cost him his hand. For years, Pepe lived in a room at First Street and First Avenue, most likely a single room occupancy, where he shared a bathroom with other residents, but because the city refused to maintain the building, Pepe decided to stop paying rent and eventually had to leave, becoming homeless for the first time.

The next series of photographs depict Pepe and his dwelling and its various renovations and extensions, before the destruction of “Bushville” in 1993. First, a depiction of the interior of Pepe’s dwelling, specifically, a room dedicated only to tools (fig. 42). The photograph’s composition, in this tight space, includes a wall of tools, hung in rows. Hammers, saws, and more are placed thoughtfully on each hook, easily accessible and recognizable. Referring, again, to the text included by Morton, it is understood that Pepe is able to make a living repairing small electronics, like radios and lights. This tool room is an important factor to the well being of Pepe, as it affords him a minimal wage. The next photographs depict Pepe actively working on the construction and renovation of his dwelling, the first finds him crouched down beside the structure painting a piece of wood that would eventually be installed on the windows as a

205 Ibid, 12.  
206 Ibid, 14.  
207 Ibid, 12; Morton, “The Homeless,” 144.
decorative detail. It can be seen that, at the time of this photograph, Pepe’s dwelling had
gone through yet another renovation, the front porch and awning is now completely
closed in with plywood. Wooden pallets are still utilized as a walkway, but this new angle
provides more information about the structure, including a ramp leading into another
covered area and an unfinished rocking chair, most likely being repaired by Pepe.

In a photograph, from a year later, Pepe and a visitor, named Papito, are turned
to camera, interrupted in their work laying marble for a walkway next to Pepe’s dwelling
(fig. 43). In the background, Pepe’s dwelling is almost unrecognizable. Plastic crates
and old bedposts have been repurposed as a fence around the perimeter of an open-air
porch with a slated roof. It is clear from this series of photographs, the care and time with
which Pepe has committed to creating a home. In the text he explains, “I’m no architect.
God is the architect – He is the best architect in town. I have plenty of time. I have to live
someplace, it's all I have.” The various decorative details, interwoven in the design of
Pepe’s dwelling, are visual reminders of Puerto Rico and prove his determination to
create a sense of permanence and stability. The last photograph included in this section
is Morton’s depiction of the destruction of “Bushville”, from the early hours of December
15, 1993 (fig. 39). Taken from a high vantage point, most likely on the roof or from the
window of an adjacent building, a bulldozer is seen dismantling any structure in its
way. The neatly constructed, permanent looking, dwellings that lined each side of the
vacant lot were no longer, all that was left were the debris and belongings left behind
from residents. After the demolition, Pepe was the only resident of “Bushville” to be

\[^{208}\text{Morton, “The Homeless,” 144.}\]
\[^{209}\text{Morton, }\text{Fragile Dwelling, 20.}\]
\[^{210}\text{In conversation with Margaret Morton, from February 9, 2018, she
detailed a similar experience from August 17, 1993. While photographing the
demolition of “The Hill”, an encampment near Canal Street, Morton followed an
unnamed photojournalist form the }\text{New York Times,}\text{ as he barged into a nearby
apartment building and made his way to the roof. There, they all were able to take
aerial photographs of the site. Margaret Morton, in conversation with the
author, February 9, 2018.}\]
offered subsidized housing.\textsuperscript{211} Morton’s photographs of Pepe and the “Bushville” community, along with the text that accompany them, depicts a homeless population who demonstrated reliance despite the constant threat of eviction, and instead of relinquishing control to the city’s policies regarding shelters and public housing, they constructed dwellings that resemble traditional homes, decorated with memories from their past.

Issues regarding homelessness, public housing, and economic disparity during the 1970s and 1980s also occurred in cities across the country, like San Francisco. When Jim Goldberg moved to San Francisco in 1976, he encountered and befriended people living in a transient hotel, also known as a single room occupancy hotel (SRO), a group of people, which he had previously no interaction with, growing up in New Haven, Connecticut.\textsuperscript{212} Through connections he established, knocking on doors, and word of mouth, Goldberg began taking photographs of residents in these types of hotels, sitting among the dilapidated state of their dimly lit, crowded rooms. Goldberg has explained the influence that traditional genres, like photojournalism or social documentary photography, have had on his work. For example, Goldberg was interested in bringing exposure to a marginalized population, like those living in SROs, just as many social documentary photographers intended to bring about change as a result of their photographs of underprivileged or struggling communities.\textsuperscript{213} Instead of approaching the work as an outsider looking in, like a photojournalist for example, Goldberg wanted those he photographed to tell their own stories and share their own experiences.\textsuperscript{214} Goldberg

\begin{itemize}
\item[\textsuperscript{211}] Morton, “The Homeless,” 146.
\item[\textsuperscript{213}] Goldberg, “Afterward”, 147.
\item[\textsuperscript{214}] Jones, “In My Own Words”.
\end{itemize}
shares this characteristic with Morton, who devoted time to establish relationships with her subjects before taking photographs of their dwellings.

Goldberg began to ask a series of questions, which aimed to help the subject share their stories and comment specifically on the transience of living in a SRO hotel. He then asked the subjects to write a portion of their story onto the margins of the photograph after he assisted in editing the text. After almost a decade of visiting subjects, these photographs and others, were eventually published in a book titled, *Rich and Poor*. This practice of using text and picture, as Morton has used in her photographic books depicting homelessness, is a characteristic of inter-genre photography, because it adopts traits from genres like photojournalism or documentary photography, but ultimately goes a step further in order to allow the subjects the ability to share their own stories, in their own words.

In Goldberg’s photograph of Dorothy from 1983, she writes, “My face shows the intensity of a painted woman. I’ve been mugged and beaten. I did not ask for this life.” (fig. 44) These words, in Dorothy’s clear but languid handwriting, are seen at the top margin above the photograph. Within the photograph, Dorothy is seated on her unmade bed, facing the camera, half of her face is lit by a nearby window. Her left leg is curled against her on top of the bed, as the other hangs off of the bed, and out of frame. Her hands are tense and awkward, positioned around her left foot, which is bare. As she suggests in the writing, Dorothy’s face projects irritability that is evident in her contorted mouth and furrowed brow. She goes on to write, below the photograph, “This makes me look like a bum – I am not. I am fantastic Dorothy, a popular personality. The nicest person in the hotel.” The placement of the text, both above and below the photography, creates an interesting dynamic with the image itself. Goldberg has

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217 Ibid.
commented on the text’s ability to both contradict and support the subject of the photograph, and believes this characteristic creates a larger and more complicated discussion, that other traditional genres shy away from.\textsuperscript{218} Morton’s use of text and image does not have the same intention, her inclusion of the subjects’ words, verbatim and unedited, allows a reader to understand their personal histories without judgment or bias. Reading the text, in accordance with Goldberg’s photograph, presents an interesting contradiction, as Dorothy expresses her displeasure with the portrait and defends her bright persona within the hotel community. It is clear that Goldberg did not worry about the subject’s opinion of the quality of the photograph, but instead valued the way they viewed themselves as inhabitants of the hotel.

After photographing the transient hotels in San Francisco, Goldberg became disheartened by the subject matter, in the afterward to the book \textit{Rich and Poor}, he stated, “My work had reached its limits. I left, telling myself that I had exhausted the hotel people, as subjects. Although part of me would like to deny it, they had exhausted me too.”\textsuperscript{219} An uncommonly candid revelation from the photographer, who had expressed his interest in the SRO residents as a study of resilience, even in a vulnerable living situation, but after years of photographing, he began to question the very American problem of economic disparity and chronic poverty. As a way forward for the project, Goldberg decided to photograph the rich in a similar way. He began by calling individuals on the Board of Trustees at the San Francisco Art Institute, where he was enrolled, many of whom reveled at the opportunity to help a struggling artist.\textsuperscript{220} For this “Rich” section, Goldberg’s process was unchanged, he entered the subjects’ living space, photographed them among their personal belongings, and upon another visit, asked them to write on the photograph. As was the case with the photographs of SRO

\textsuperscript{218} Jones, “In My Own Words”.
\textsuperscript{219} Goldberg, “Afterward”, 148.
\textsuperscript{220} Ibid, 149.
residents, the focus of each subject’s handwritten message varied, from their opinion of the photograph, to comments on their lifestyle, to well wishes for the photographer. The photograph of Sharon, in the “Rich” section of *Rich and Poor*, features a woman in a tight leotard or one-piece bathing suit (fig. 45). She is looking toward the camera, head resting on a pillow, as she lays on a large sofa, lined with large cushions. Her hands are folded behind her head and her bare legs are bent at the knees, feet propped up on, yet another, cushion. Sharon’s text reads, “I like to be attractive and distant. I love the games, intrigue, and mystery of being a woman. Honesty can be boring. True femininity is a great deal of power.”

It seems as though, when Goldberg asked Sharon to write a message on the photograph, she decided to forgo her personal history in favor of a commentary on womanhood, perhaps something she feels can be understood in her portrait. It is clear from Sharon’s position on the couch and her choice of clothing, that she is comfortable in herself and surroundings, and even relishes in the ambiguity of her personal life by leaving it out of the accompanying text.

Just as Morton photographed homeless individuals within their self-made dwellings, surrounded by their belongings, Goldberg’s *Rich and Poor* features photographs of individuals in their living spaces, a characteristic that makes the vast differences in economic class apparent. Dorothy is seated in on bed with tousled sheets and pillows, pushed into the corner of the room. The walls surrounding her feature patterned wallpaper, which is missing and torn away in some places. What looks like a spackled over hole, is evident just at the base of one wall, peeking out over the bed. There are no personal affects, no pieces of art or photographs adorn the walls, the room looks like it could belong to anyone. Sharon on the other hand, lays comfortably on a luxurious couch, behind which is a wall of mirrors and an animal skull with horns hangs above her. Through the reflection, the rest of the room is visible; upholstered chairs, a

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221 Goldberg, *Rich and Poor*, 103.
crowded bookshelf, and a fireplace with yet another mirror placed above it. Also, seen in the mirror’s reflection is a large glass door, which looks to lead out to a balcony. All of these details are cleverly exposed through the mirror and not the composition itself, a detail that echoes Sharon’s proclivity for mystery. The comparison of these two photographs, their visual characteristics, as well as the handwritten text that accompany them, reveal the unpleasant reality of the wealth disparity in San Francisco. The text also reveals the ways in which women both view and carry themselves. In this regard, Dorothy and Sharon are surprisingly similar, each is concerned about how they are seen by those around them and the importance of presenting themselves in a certain way, something Dorothy did unsuccessfully, as she expressed her disapproval of her portrait.

In Morton’s *Fragile Dwelling*, she includes two photographs of JR’s Place, a dwelling nestled in a chamber that sits on top of a forty-five-foot-tall, rusting structure on the edge of the Hudson River on a collapsing, unused dock (fig. 46).222 Led there by a graffiti artist, using the tag MENT, she befriended while photographing the tunnel, Morton was able to access the precariously constructed and solitary dwelling, which featured a warning sign placed near the entrance that read, “STAY THE FUCK OUT OF MY HOUSE”.223 In the text featured alongside the photograph of JR, seated outside of his dwelling and next to the large sign, he shares details of his life and the reasons he believes he got to this position. A tour in Vietnam, brushes with the law, and jail time are some of these details, but all along, JR emphasizes his constant search for work and a steady income, recognizing the distrust many may feel when dealing with “people like me”.224

In Goldberg’s *Rich and Poor*, two examples of men in both sections provide an interesting comparison to JR. The portrait of a man named Dennis, included in the

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222 Morton, *Fragile Dwelling*, 106.
223 Ibid.
224 Ibid, 108.
“Poor” section of the book, features a bearded man with long hair, in jeans, a T-shirt, and leather jacket, seated on an armchair in the corner of a room (fig. 47). Behind him, is a wall of shelves housing paraphernalia while pieces of art are seen hung on the opposite wall. Dennis' handwritten text, featured at the bottom of the photograph, reads. “This life is like a cheap sordid movie, the type middle America would like…I am doomed to this place. I have no future.” Despite the depressive tone of this text, Dennis includes, next to his signature, a small drawing of a setting sun. It is clear, Dennis feels his life stagnant and uneventful, and that he is not destined to get out of the position he finds himself in, as a resident of an SRO. Although he has amassed a wealth of belongings, items that he exhibits with a sense of pride, he does not feel the same way about his life.

This is a similar sentiment to that of Gary A. Zellerbach, whose portrait, Goldberg includes in the “Rich” section of the book (fig. 48). Gary is seated on a small, paisley patterned, sofa, his face is not toward the camera but aimed downward, toward a wooden “Z”, on top of the glass coffee table. Above him hangs a large painting or drawing, featuring multicolored dots, spirals, and a snake. His handwriting is very clear and in all capital leaders, it reads, “People are envious of my wealth. I can’t help having been born with money. I try to ignore the hurt and hide it all away where I don’t have to deal with it. I can’t escape being a Zellerbach.” Gary’s unease within his own home and among his family’s wealth is evident in his position on the couch and inability to connect with the camera. These men in Rich and Poor and JR in Fragile Dwelling share a similar quality, each feels as though they do not have control over their lives. For JR and Dennis, it can be understood, from the text, that they have ended up where they are because of events they did not predict, and because of their current position, they do not see a way out, towards a more stable life. For Gary, his family’s wealth has afforded him

225 Goldberg, Rich and Poor, 35.
226 Ibid, 95
a comfortable life but one that comes with the expectations he may not be comfortable with, and the pressure to establish something for himself. For these photographic projects, both Morton and Goldberg committed a significant amount of time establishing relationships with those they photographed. In each case, the photographer made multiple trips over the span of years. For Goldberg, this meant taking multiple trips to a subject’s home, the first to photograph, then to interview, and lastly to have them write their own words on the photograph, over the span of almost ten years.227

Then and Now

Morton’s final photographic book, depicting homelessness in New York City during the 1990s, was Glass House, published in 2004 (fig. 49).228 Like The Tunnel, before it, this book is devoted to only one small, community of homeless individuals, residing in an abandoned glass factory on the Lower East Side. From October 1993 to February 1994, Morton visited and photographed residents of Glass House, attending their weekly Sunday house meeting and Thursday workdays.229 It was not until 1999 that Morton began to revisit the subject, contacting former residents of Glass House and bringing the project to a conclusion. The organization of Glass House, as a book, stands apart from Morton’s previous publications; the daily machinations of the group, as a community, are the main interest. Morton included sections detailing the house rules, meetings, disputes, and drug use policies, as the main aspect of the book. Her proclivity for including portraits alongside the oral histories of those depicted, in their own words, is still present, but left to the second half of the book. Also in line with her previous publications, Morton makes sure to include a brief section at the beginning, which

227 Jones, “In My Own Words”.
228 Margaret Morton, Glass House, (University Park: Pennsylvania University Press, 2004).
229 Morton, Glass House, 150.
outlines the appropriate historical context of the surrounding neighborhood. In this case, she includes a history of Alphabet City, on the Lower East Side, dating back to the 1800s.\textsuperscript{230} In an interview from 2004, Morton explains, that as a long time resident of the neighborhood and professor at nearby Cooper Union, she had witnessed the various changes to the community over the decades and wanted to understand the significance of the historical context, both for herself and the reader.\textsuperscript{231} In uncovering the history of the Lower East Side, just as she did with the location of the abandoned Amtrak tunnel from \textit{The Tunnel}; Morton was able to understand the cycles of poverty, immigration, and homelessness, which were apparent since the nineteenth-century.\textsuperscript{232}

The deindustrialization of New York City’s economy, as discussed in Chapter One, has been the impetus for both the increase in homelessness and the subsequent creation of such communities as, the encampment in Tompkins Square Park, “Bushville”, and the group of squatters who repurposed an abandoned glass factory into a place for communal living. The introduction of a community living in an abandoned building is the first for Morton, but an important inclusion that highlights the phenomenon of abandonment, which transformed thriving and diverse New York City neighborhoods to derelict and dangerous.\textsuperscript{233} Abandonment, which occurred throughout New York City during the 1970s, most notoriously in the Bronx, is a result of gentrification and deindustrialization, wherein tenants were no longer able to pay their rent and building owners found it more profitable to either abandon the building completely or collect fire insurance, by setting the building on fire.\textsuperscript{234} Working in tandem, the deindustrialization of the city’s economy, the 1975 financial crisis, and the gentrification of neighborhoods that

\begin{flushleft}
\textsuperscript{230} Ibid, 1-3.
\textsuperscript{231} Margaret Morton, interviewed by Pradeep Dalal, 2004.
\textsuperscript{232} Morton, \textit{Glass House}, 2.
\textsuperscript{233} Ibid.
\end{flushleft}
housed vulnerable populations, whose low economic and social status made them easy targets for real estate buy outs, all resulted in an unprecedented increase of visible homeless by the 1990s, including those residing in the Glass House.²³⁵

The homelessness policies of New York City’s mayors during this period have been outlined in the previous chapters as well as this one, to provide the context with which homeless communities were dealt with by the city. Their policies have been explained in contrast to the communities Morton photographed, who refusing to obtain housing via government aide, had decided to build their own homes and maintain a temporary stability, not afforded in city-run shelters and housing. By the time of Glass House’s publication, in 2004, the Bloomberg administration had begun to introduce, what Thomas J. Main describes as, “post-paternalistic” homelessness policy. Just as Mayor Dinkins and Mayor Giuliani developed “paternalistic” policies, meant to deal with the ramifications of Mayor Koch’s “entitlement” policies, the Bloomberg administration’s focus turned to solving the homelessness altogether.²³⁶ To do so effectively, Mayor Michael Bloomberg created a coordinating committee, which adopted a business-like mindset for policy making that would avoid being tied up in courts, as the past administrations’ policies were consistently brought before a judge. This shift in policymaking, most notably, allowed advocates for the homeless to be involved in the process, instead of leaving decisions to only the city and Legal Aid Society to be battled in court.²³⁷

Mayor Bloomberg’s five-year plan, Uniting for Solutions Beyond Shelter, included four main strategies that changed the direction of homelessness policy in New York City. First, was the emphasis on the prevention of homelessness, on the onset, and

²³⁵ Hooper, Susser, and Conover, “Economies of Makeshift,” 199.
²³⁶ Main, Homelessness in New York City, 8.
²³⁷ Ibid, 147.
providing emergency shelter only when needed.\textsuperscript{238} The plan also outlined the Bloomberg administration’s commitment to embracing supportive housing by committing to the construction of twelve thousand units of supportive housing for homeless families.\textsuperscript{239} The most significant shift from “paternalistic” to “post-paternalistic” policy, instated by Mayor Bloomberg, was the expansion of Housing First, which upon a family or individual’s entry into the shelter system, their placement into permanent housing was to begin immediately, rather than assuring rehabilitative or mental aide was dealt with, before an individual was afforded housing.\textsuperscript{240} Lastly, Mayor Bloomberg’s five-year plan set the goal for ending chronic homelessness by utilizing the previously explained strategies, an ambitious target that no previous administration dared to set.

An important impact of Mayor Bloomberg’s “post-paternalistic” policies, was the controversial decision made in October of 2004, by the DHS, to forego its policy that prioritized shelter residents’ entrance into public housing and provided shelter subsidies, in the form of Section Eight vouchers.\textsuperscript{241} As detailed by Main, in \textit{Homelessness in New York City: Policymaking From Koch to de Blasio}, the administration’s decision to end shelter subsidies was based off of the notion of perverse incentives, meaning families or individuals would purposefully become homeless in order to receive better housing.\textsuperscript{242} Although reports analyzing the effects of the Dinkins administration’s homelessness

\textsuperscript{238} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{239} According to the United States Interagency Council on Homeless (ISICH), supportive housing provides safe, affordable, and community-based housing with voluntary support services that help a family or individual stay housed and become productive members of the community. “Supportive Housing,” United States Interagency Council on Homeless, accessed March 15, 2018, \url{https://www.usich.gov/solutions/housing/supportive-housing}.
\textsuperscript{240} Main, \textit{Homelessness in New York City}, 148.
\textsuperscript{241} According to the New York City Housing Authority, the Housing Choice Voucher Program, also known as Section 8, is a system that provides financial assistance low and moderate-income families to rent housing in the private market. Eligible families who meet certain requirements are given a voucher to begin the search for housing, once placed, the New York Housing Authority will pay a percentage of their monthly rent. “About Section 8,” \textit{New York City Housing Authority}, accessed March 22, 2018, \url{http://www1.nyc.gov/site/nycha/section-8/about-section-8.page}.
\textsuperscript{242} Main, \textit{Homelessness in New York City}, 10.
policies had refuted the argument of perverse incentives, in regards to Dinkins’ policies and in New York City, in general, Mayor Bloomberg and DHS officials upheld the decision. Ultimately, the end of prioritizing homeless families for receiving Section Eight vouchers and being placed in permanent housing resulted in the increase of the shelter population because studies had shown, receiving permanent housing was the best way to prevent families from becoming homeless again. The Bloomberg administration’s attempt to solve chronic homelessness, by providing policy that was “post-paternalistic”, which emphasized Housing First as well as supportive housing, would eventually fall short of its goals due to the belief that perverse incentives would increase the number of people in public housing, but instead resulted in an increase in the shelter population.

Before Mayor Bloomberg began his implementation of “post-paternalistic” homelessness policies, homeless squatters in New York City took advantage of the increased number of abandoned buildings, to establish functioning communities that created a stable environment based on interpersonal relationships and communication. Morton photographed one such community that lived in the Glass House, located on Avenue D and Tenth Street, formerly the factory for General Glass Industries Corporation, which vacated the building in 1973. The Glass House community was established in 1992, after a fire engulfed a near by abandoned building, which housed a group of squatters who called themselves “Foetus”. Former members of “Foetus”, who had been kicked out, were already residing in Glass House, and invited the displaced squatters to join them. The group then began to clear the piles of debris and construct walls to create their own living spaces, as well as a shared common area (fig. 50).

244 Main, Homelessness in New York City, 156.
245 Morton, Glass House, 7.
Morton’s photographs depicting members of the Glass House squat working together to create habitable living spaces are an important aspect of her oeuvre. Photographs of the construction or renovation of spaces, represents homeless individuals as active participants in their quest for a home, by creating a dwelling for themselves in places that are often unwelcoming or dangerous, are present in each of her books. The Glass House residents are seen repairing floorboards and building walls, with materials salvaged from nearby renovations and dumpsters.\textsuperscript{246} Since the building lacked basic amenities like power and working plumbing, the group managed to siphon electricity from the streetlight outside the building and tap a nearby fire hydrant to supply fresh water.\textsuperscript{247} Despite the dilapidated state of the Glass House building, members of the group were able to create a livable situation, which emphasized the importance of communication, participation, and fairness.

One aspect of Morton’s \textit{Glass House}, that is different from her previous publications, are the sections devoted to important factors of the community living, including house rules, security, drug policy, and dispute management. Each section includes photographs relating to the topic as well as text from both Morton and members of Glass House, who detail their decisions and experiences. The section devoted to security is particularly extensive, as it details the different watch groups, night watch, bike watch, eviction watch, and barricade crew, which were expected to take specific precautions to prevent police interference and eviction.\textsuperscript{248} Each member of the house was expected to sign up for shifts on the night watch and then required to volunteer on one more security watch team.\textsuperscript{249} Morton’s photograph of the community bulletin board included in \textit{Glass House}, portrays the sign-up sheet for watch; the shifts are clearly

\begin{flushright}
\textsuperscript{246} Ibid, 13.
\textsuperscript{247} Ibid, 12-13.
\textsuperscript{248} Ibid, 36.
\textsuperscript{249} Ibid, 38.
\end{flushright}
delineated in thick, black marker (fig. 51). Names of house members are written throughout the sheet, various scribbles and markings are evident, as many members switch times and days that are more suitable. Above the sign-up sheet, another paper outlining the agreed upon protocol for dealing with various authorities, like the police, inspectors, or fire department, is pinned on the board. For this sheet, Morton decided to include the information, transcribed directly, within the text. From the photograph, only the text written in bold marker is easily legible, but other smaller, text, most likely written in pen or pencil is not clear. By including the information within the text of the book, Morton is highlighting its importance, as it deals with the community’s focus on survival. While other communities, photographed by Morton, fell victim to police intervention and eviction, often times with no warning, it is valuable to understand the length with which members of the Glass House would go to ensure their safety and stability as a community, by relying on one another to follow a set protocol that would help delay an inevitable eviction.

While Morton’s use of text, both her own and the subjects’, included alongside the photographs, work together to create a clearer narrative of homeless individuals who, despite obstacles, have managed to create makeshift homes, the work of photographer Jeffrey A. Wolin uses text to connect the past and present, particularly, how an individual’s past memories effect their current lives. In the mid-1970s, between undergraduate and graduate school, Wolin worked as a forensic photographer for the Kalamazoo Police Department, in Michigan. This experience would have a profound effect on both the subject matter and themes of Wolin’s photographs, as well as influence the way in which he incorporated text in his work. The photograph “Police

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251 Wolin, “Written in Memory: Jeffrey Wolin at TEDxBloomington”, 2014.
“Police Days”, from 1987, is one of Wolin’s earliest practices in combining image and text (fig. 52). As a professor at Indiana University, he obtained access to the depicted specimen, called John, which belonged to the science department. Wolin photographed the decapitated head of the specimen, a convicted murderer, who had been executed by the state and body donated to science, and wrote vignettes recalling the cases he worked on as a forensic photographer. Wolin saw this convergence of text and image, as an opportunity to utilize his background in writing, and explore the idea of autobiography.252

Influenced by artists like Frida Kahlo and Sister Gertrude Morgan, who intertwined image and text, Wolin’s early photographs were autobiographical. In “Police Days”, Wolin connects the striking image of a cadaver’s decapitated head to the trauma of witnessing horrific crimes as a forensic photographer, combining the image and the text about his past, Wolin reckons with the impact of violence on his life.

It was another senseless act of violence that caught the attention of Wolin, which eventually resulted in the book *Pigeon Hill: Then and Now*. In September 1986, Ellen Marks, a former graduate student from Indiana University, was murdered in a shack near Pigeon Hill, a poor neighborhood of Bloomington, her head had been decapitated and body mutilated.253 As the news sent shockwaves through Bloomington, Wolin became interested in the area of Pigeon Hill, partly due to the victim’s connection to Indiana University as well as his own background in police photography. Beginning in 1987, Wolin photographed portraits of residents of the Crestmont public housing projects, recording their stories and developing relationships with many. Like Morton, Wolin relied on his connections and interpersonal relationships with residents of Crestmont and Pigeon Hill to gain access to the community, as well as trust from those he encountered. Wolin quickly became known as “The Picture Man”, bringing his printed photographs

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253 Wolin, “Written in Memory: Jeffrey Wolin at TEDxBloomington”, 2014.
back to the subjects as gifts, which were greatly appreciated according to the photographer.\textsuperscript{254} Although Wolin was awarded a Guggenheim Fellowship in 1991, he stopped photographing Pigeon Hill the same year, devoting the next twenty years to photographing Holocaust survivors and Vietnam veterans.\textsuperscript{255} In September 2010, Wolin heard news of yet another murder in Pigeon Hill and upon reading a newspaper article, recognized the victim as one of the children he had photographed, almost exactly, twenty-four years earlier.\textsuperscript{256} Wolin used this unfortunate event as a catalyst to return to his portraits of Pigeon Hill residents. He re-immersed himself into the community, first by teaching a photography class at the local Boys and Girls club, where after each class, he would walk around with a handful of prints from the previous batch of portraits, asking passerby if they recognized anyone in the photographs.\textsuperscript{257} Eventually, he would encounter a woman who knew someone from the photographs and brought Wolin to her. From then on, a combination of word of mouth and Facebook profiles, allowed Wolin to re-photograph one hundred, and interview around forty, Pigeon Hill residents. The old portraits and new, with Wolin’s handwriting neatly drawn on top of each photograph, became the book, \textit{Pigeon Hill: Then and Now}.

Each then and now portrait in the book, offers an interesting look inside the lives of individuals living in poverty and through adverse situations. From stories of trauma, to drugs, and jail time, the portraits, like Wolin’s previous work, deal with the subject’s interpretation and memory of their past self, and how that lends to their current lives. The portraits featuring Crystal Grubbs, the woman murdered in 2010, who had been photographed as a child, are especially somber (fig. 53). The “then” portrait, from 1991,

\textsuperscript{254} Stamets, “On Exhibit: Words and Pictures by Jeffry Wolin.”
\textsuperscript{256} Wright, “Jeffrey A. Wolin, Artist.”
\textsuperscript{257} Ibid.
depicts Crystal as a young girl with shaggy blond hair and bangs, wearing an ill fitted, white tank top. Her Aunt Judy is standing close beside her, with her arm around Crystals shoulders, their round faces are pressed together, as they look up toward Wolin’s camera, both are smiling bashfully. The text surrounding this image is from Aunt Judy’s perspective, from 2010, “Crystal was my favorite niece...she always said when she grew up, she wanted to have kids and be a good mom. I’ll always miss her.” Wolin’s placement of the text on top of the photograph is similar for each portrait; his neat and tidy handwriting is strategically placed to surround the bodies of those in the photograph. In this example, Crystal and her Aunt are placed centrally in the composition, with slightly more negative space next to Crystal. Wolin’s writing begins at her shoulder, fitting only enough words, on every line, from the edge of the photograph to the beginning of Crystal’s arm. Once near the bottom, Wolin continues his writing following the bottom edge, overlapping the lower torsos of the subjects, to the right edge of the photograph.

Wolin took the present-day photograph of Aunt Judy, holding one of his photographs of Crystal, in 2013, three years after her murder (fig.53). Judy is again placed at the center of the composition, her head is tilted slightly to one side, and her gaze is not directed towards the camera but looking somewhere in the distance. Her hands grasp a print of Wolin’s portrait of Crystal as a young girl, most likely taken at the same time as the image from 1991, as she is wearing the same clothes. Crystal’s head in the portrait is tilted in a similar way to her aunts, creating continuity between these two images, taken two decades apart. Wolin wrote Judy’s words along the outer edges of the photograph, only this time on the right side of the image, hugging the curvature of Judy’s bent arm. In the text, Judy speaks about her niece’s death, detailing the names of the suspected murderers, who have not yet been charged, and the frustration with the

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police, who according to her have fumbled the case. She also reveals that Crystal’s intention to have children came to fruition, “Imagine her two girls growing up not knowing their mother. One day we will get justice.” Judy’s sadness, depicted through both image and text, is palpable; her words echo the expression on her face. These photographs together, function as a tribute and memorial to Crystal, whose untimely and tragic death brought Wolin back to Pigeon Hill.

Those who were re-photographed by Wolin for Pigeon Hill were faced to reconcile with their past and younger selves. One example, unique to the entire book, is the photograph of Shannon (fig. 54). Wolin’s “then” portrait, from 1990, depicts Junior, a young man wearing a T-shirt, jeans, sneakers, and a baseball hat. He is standing awkwardly near a tree, one foot caught in a crevasse between two branches, and his arms outstretched in front of him, each hand grasping a smaller branch of the tree. The young man is not looking towards the camera and his body is angled away as well. The writing at the very bottom of the photograph reads, “I hate this photograph because it’s just not me. I’m transgendered and I knew it from the time I was six.” The reason for Junior’s visible discomfort in front of the camera can be understood, only after reading the text. His unwillingness to even acknowledge its presence is clear and Wolin’s writing proves integral for understanding the subject’s inner dialogue, even twenty years after the photo was taken. The “now” portrait, features Shannon, a tall, lean woman, wearing a tight tank top and denim shorts. She is leaning her back on a tree, her legs crossed at the ankles and hands casually placed near her hips. Wolin’s writing explains Shannon’s journey, “I see who I’m supposed to be. I see success now…Being out of the closet, being in public as a female, I don’t have suicidal tendencies anymore. I’ve begun hormone therapy. February 10, 2010, was when I went to court and was granted a name

259 Ibid, 29.
260 Ibid.
261 Ibid, 60.
and gender change. I ceased to be ‘Junior’ and became ‘Shannon’.” The two portraits could not be any different; one represents Shannon’s painful past and trauma, living as a closeted transgender woman, which is evident in the way Junior stands before the camera. The other represents the power and confidence of Shannon’s future, as she stands defiantly, finally comfortable in her own body. Wolin’s process of writing the words of his subjects on top of the photographic portraits creates a narrative between past and present, which deals with the exploration of memory, as it is tied to the community of Pigeon Hill. This use of text in Wolin, Goldberg, and Morton’s work can be considered inter-genre photography, because of the time commitment devoted to photographing a certain community and the ability to create and maintain relationships with their subject, which for each photographer was essential in expanding the scope of their work. Finally, these three photographers created narratives by merging image and text, and included the words of those they photographed, alongside or instead of their own.

**Conclusion**

Margaret Morton’s photographs of homelessness in New York City, during the late 1980s and into the 1990s, successfully created a narrative of resilience that depicted a vulnerable population as determined, self-reliant creators of their own dwellings. Morton’s consistent depictions of communities over time, as they evolved visually, grew larger in population, and ultimately were destroyed by the city, help shape the narrative of homeless individuals who were determined to create a sense of stability despite their vulnerable and transient way of life. While photojournalists and conceptual artists created work that dealt with the same homeless population, Morton’s work stands apart due to her utilization of inter-genre photography. By sharing and adapting qualities from multiple established genres, Morton was able to use both text and image to create

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262 Ibid, 61.
this narrative. Photographic projects by both Jim Goldberg and Jeffrey A. Wolin, also exhibit inter-genre qualities, in their use of handwritten text interwoven with photographs, which together, allow the subjects of each photograph to tell their own story. Other qualities, shared by Morton, Goldberg, and Wolin, that set their work a part from established genres, are the artists’ ability to devote a long-term commitment to one project and to establish and maintain meaningful relationships with their subjects.

Goldberg’s decade-long project, photographing citizens of San Francisco from vastly different social and economic backgrounds, differs from traditional social documentary and photojournalism in its use of text and image. By including handwritten messages, from the subject of each portrait, in the margins of the photograph, Goldberg explores the way the subject views their own life, in the confines of their living spaces. The decision to photograph each individual in their home, allows the viewer to understand the vast differences between life as an SRO resident and that of a wealthy Trustee. Although some photographs do not include great details about the personal life of the subject, as was the case with Sharon, the juxtaposition of the content of the text and photograph provide insight into the life depicted. Ultimately, due to Goldberg’s rigidity in process and method, the shared qualities in the photographs of both rich and poor, highlight the similarities between two polarized communities.

Wolin’s photographs of the residents of a small Indiana community, called Pigeon Hill, also include handwritten text, overlaid on top of the image. Unlike Goldberg, Wolin writes the text himself, taking the words from interviews with the subject. While extreme acts of violence brought Wolin to the community, both in 1986 and in 2010, his portraits of those in the community deal with the effects of past trauma on the subject’s current life. Wolin’s then and now portraits are the result of his commitment to establishing a relationship with his subjects, which allowed him to re-enter the community and complete the project. These qualities, shared by Goldberg, Wolin, and Morton, result in
photographic projects that value and utilize the personal stories of those in the
photographs, supported by the maintained relationships established with the
photographer. The ways in which Morton’s photographs interact with multiple genres,
like photojournalism and conceptual art, through the use of image and text, the ability to
commit a significant amount of time to photographing communities, and finally, the
maintaining of personal relationships with her subjects, allow her work to be considered
inter-genre.
Conclusion

Morton’s photographs of New York City’s homeless population, beginning in 1989 and continuing through the 1990s, reflect the policies of the city’s contemporaneous mayors, from Koch to Bloomberg. Whether it was the entitlement-based policies created by Koch, or the reign of paternalistic policy enforced by both Dinkins and Giuliani, or Bloomberg’s unprecedented effort to solve chronic homelessness through a post-paternalistic approach, the homeless population photographed by Morton was directly effected by many of the landmark decisions that occurred over the years. The presence of homeless communities like the encampment in Tompkins Square Park, Bushville, or the group living inside the abandoned Amtrak tunnel, existed in spite of many policies and efforts to thwart their visibly throughout the city. Morton’s efforts to create both an oral and visual history of these homeless communities, resulted in a comprehensive series of photographs that span four different books and depict homeless individuals as active participants in their own fate, by constructing their own dwellings instead of relying on the city’s policies for aid and housing.

Morton’s depiction of the Tompkins Square Park encampment was her first experience photographing a homeless community. As a resident of the neighborhood surrounding the park, Morton possessed intimate knowledge of the social context of the encampment, from its early iteration to its demolition she had witnessed, first-hand, the events that occurred in the park, like the 1988 riots and multiple evictions. Morton’s early photographs of the encampment focus on the architectural features of the dwellings and highlight the ingenious manipulation of materials made from detritus and found objects. Inspired by the work of Bernd and Hila Becher, these early depictions do not include any individuals in their composition. However, once Morton decided that her own notes, taken while interviewing the homeless individuals responsible for these encampments,
were not adequate in describing the details uncovered, she began to tape record her conversations and eventually include their words alongside the photographs. The photographs of Nathaniel’s garden and dwelling in *Transitory Gardens, Uprooted Lives* follow the construction and maintenance of his space as well as its destruction by the New York Police Department. The comparison of Morton’s depiction of Nathaniel’s dwelling to the photographs of the Tompkins Square Park eviction, by photojournalist from the *New York Times* and *Village Voice* distinguishes Morton from the established genre of photojournalism. The most significant difference is the general time commitment she devoted to photographing a group of individuals, who she followed from their eviction to the new communities they created, compared to that of photojournalist, like Neal Boenzi, whose only encounter with the encampment was during its destruction.

Morton’s depiction of the oldest and longest-lasting homeless community, which lived in an abandoned train tunnel underneath Riverside Drive in Upper Manhattan, are also photographs that do not abide by established genre criteria. The photographs from *The Tunnel*, including those of Bernard, the community’s unofficial leader, highlight Morton’s ability to engage with homeless individuals she wished to photograph. Her knowledge of the tunnel’s existence was dependent on her ability to gain information from other groups of homeless individuals through out the city. Furthermore, her relationship with Bernard, which lasted until his death, was integral to gaining access to the community and moving freely from one area to another, encountering different inhabitants along the way. This engagement differs from Martha Rosler’s attempt to include homeless individuals in the exhibition *If You Lived Here*…. While the members of Homeward Bound Community Services benefited from their ability to easily network with other organizers and advocates, as Larry did while participating in one of the exhibition’s three public forums, the inclusion of a temporary office space in the middle of the gallery function mostly as a visual reminder of homelessness rather than a catalyst for
participation. Rosler’s lack of engagement with the homeless individuals she invited to her exhibition is in contrast with Morton’s ability to create meaningful relationships with those she photographed, as a means to expand the project to other communities in New York City.

Since Morton’s work cannot be neatly categorized within established genres like photojournalism or contemporary conceptual art, it should be considered inter-genre photography because it shares certain qualities with both, like subject matter, but utilizes text as a characteristic that is just as important as the photographs in the final work. Photographers Jim Goldberg and Jeffrey A. Wolin have also created work that can be considered inter-genre for similar reasons. Goldberg’s depiction of the wealth disparity in San Francisco during the 1980s, through portraits of single room occupancy residents and members of the Board of Trustees at the San Francisco Art Institute include handwritten messages from the subjects. While Goldberg sited social documentary photography and photojournalism as influences, the inclusion of the subject’s handwriting on the photograph is a departure from the characteristics of these established genres. Similarly, Wolin’s portraits of the residents of a small Indiana community called Pigeon Hill feature handwritten text on top of the image. Here, Wolin writes the stories of those he photographs himself, in neat and easily legible handwriting. Inspired by artist Frida Kahlo and outsider artist Sister Gertrude Morgan, Wolin’s photographs adopt their inclusion of autobiographical text in the work of art. The photographs from Pigeon Hill: Then and Now are considered inter-genre because they adopt qualities from folk art to depict a subject matter that is traditionally photographed by social documentary photographers. Morton’s depiction of homeless communities that constructed dwellings from found material and detritus in conjunction with the transcription of text from recorded encounters, emphasized the human need for a home
and the resilience exhibited by individuals who created such homes in the face of constant threat of removal or worse.
Illustrations

**Figure 1:** Margaret Morton, *Tompkins Square Park*, 1989, Cooper Union, https://cooper.edu/academics/people/margaret-morton.

**Figure 2:** Neal Boenzi, *Police and Park Dept. Rangers Were Sent Into Park to Remove Shelters Set Up by Homeless. In Retaliation, Many of the Shelters were Set Afire*, December 14, 1989, The New York Times, https://www.nytsyn.com/archives/photos/753163.html
Figure 3: Photographer unknown, *If You Lived Here...*, installation view, 1989, http://www.martharosler.net/projects/here.html

Figure 4: Jim Goldberg, *Untitled, Me and Bobby*, 1977, Magnum Photos, pro.magnumphotos.com
Figure 5: (left) Jeffrey A. Wolin, Tina Flinn w/ Jay, Pigeon Hill, 1988, Jeffrey Wolin, http://www.jeffreywolin.com/.  

Figure 7: In Margaret Morton, *The Tunnel* (New Haven: Yale University, 1995), ii.

Figure 8: Map of Tomkins Square Park, printed in the *New York Times*, December 7, 1989, B2.

Figure 10: Bernd and Hila Becher, *Winding Towers, Britain*, 1966-97, nine photographs, gelatin silver print on paper, 1720 x 1420 x 21 mm, Tate, [http://www.tate.org.uk/](http://www.tate.org.uk/).
Nathaniel is nicknamed The Mayor because he often served as representative of the hundred or so homeless residents of Temperley Square Park. His space in the park makes one directly confront any preconception about what constitutes a garden. This one consists of a large mound of earth, leaves, sundry objects, and an area edged at the front by a metal strip, which sets a clear limit to the whole. There are found objects here, but they have been drawn into the overall arrangement. This array, built up with pots, plants, branches, and dead leaves, makes the whole site feel more settled. A sense exists of something composed, not just haphazardly piled, and this makes the makeshift effect of the tent structure. It is clear that necessity did not drive the making of this garden.

I built the tent around a junk bench. I had a garden outside. I’ve got a place. I’ve got a garden. It came from things growing, actually. Two or three big sunflowers came up there from seeds. I had a playing statue there. I found it on the other side of the fence, caught him, and put him in a cage. I would bring him out to play in the garden in the daytime. At night I would put him on a chair and put him back in his cage. People would come by and ask to have something in the garden an earring, a flower. Some people wanted to add to it. Some would want to take away from it. Some of my friends would add something to the garden and come back and see if it was still there a week or two later.

The composition has a hierarchy. The concrete planter with doubts in it is flanked by two figures and has a metal mat in front of it. The planter closes the composition as well as marks the entrance, while the arrangement of the garden replicates the moundling tent, though it is much smaller than the tent in height and width.

Figure 11: Margaret Morton, Nathaniel’s Garden, in Margaret Morton, Transitory Gardens, Uprooted Lives (New Haven: Yale University, 1993), 64-65.
Figure 12: Margaret Morton, *Tony’s Tree House*, in Margaret Morton, *Transitory Gardens, Uprooted Lives* (New Haven: Yale University, 1993). 77-80.
Figure 13: Sarah Ferguson, “Should Tompkins Square be Like Gramercy?”, photograph by Andrew Lichtenstein, Village Voice, June 11, 1991, New York Public Library

Figure 14: Bernd and Hila Becher, Water Towers, 1972-2009, nine photographs, gelatin silver print on paper, 1720 x 1420 x 21 mm, Tate, http://www.tate.org.uk/


Figure 23: John Kifner, “Tent City in Tompkins Square Park is Dismantled by Police,” *New York Times,* December 15, 1989.
Figure 24: Upper West Side Map, approximated locations of the abandoned Amtrak tunnel and Morton’s entry point are indicated in red, New York Journey, [https://www.newyorkjourney.com/upper_west_side_map.htm](https://www.newyorkjourney.com/upper_west_side_map.htm).


Figure 30: Margaret Morton *Bernard*, in Margaret Morton, *The Tunnel* (New Haven: Yale University, 1995). 13-14.
Figure 31: Margaret Morton, Bernard, in Margaret Morton, *The Tunnel* (New Haven: Yale University, 1995). 16.

Figure 32: Margaret Morton, Bernard, in Margaret Morton, *The Tunnel* (New Haven: Yale University, 1995). 19.
Figure 33: Margaret Morton, Bernard, in Margaret Morton, The Tunnel (New Haven: Yale University, 1995). 25.

Figure 34: Oren Slor, Homeless: The Street and Other Venues, from If You Lived Here . . ., 1989, installation view, in Adair Rounthwaite, "In, Around, and Afterthoughts (on Participation): Photography and Agency in Martha Rosler's Collaboration with Homeward Bound." Art Journal 73, no. 4 (Winter 2014): 52.


Figure 42: Margaret Morton, Pepe’s toolroom, Bushville, 1993, in Margaret Morton, Fragile Dwelling, (New York: Aperture, 2000), 16.

Figure 44: Jim Goldberg, “My face shows the intensity of a pained woman. I’ve been mugged and beaten. I didn’t ask for this mess. This makes me look like a bum - I am not. I am fantastic Dorothy, a popular personality. The nicest person in the hotel.”, 1983, Magnum Photos, pro.magnumphotos.com.

Figure 45: Jim Goldberg, "I like to be attractive and distant. I love the games, intrigue and mystery of being a woman. Honesty can be boring. True femininity is a great deal of power.", 1983, Magnum Photos, pro.magnumphotos.com.

Figure 3.14: Jim Goldberg "This life is like a cheap sordid movie the type middle America would like. Its boring, I keep waiting for something to happen. I am doomed to be in this place. I have no future.", 1983, in Jim Goldberg, Rich and Poor, (New York: Random House, 1985) 35.
Figure 48: Jim Goldberg "People are envious of my wealth. I can't help having been born with money. I try to ignore the hurt and hide it all away where I don't have to deal with it. I can't escape being a Zellerbach.", 1983, Magnum Photos, pro.magnumphotos.com.

Figure 49: In Margaret Morton, Glass House, (University Park: Pennsylvania University Press, 2004), ii.
Figure 50: Margaret Morton, (top left) *The Glass Factory*, (top right) *Tyrone and Chad*, (bottom left) *Lisa*, (bottom right) *Angela and Markus*, In Margaret Morton, *Glass House*, (University Park: Pennsylvania University Press, 2004), 9, 14, 15, 27.
Figure 51: Margaret Morton, *On Watch*, In Margaret Morton, *Glass House*, (University Park: Pennsylvania University Press, 2004), 37.

“Crystal was my favorite niece. On that day I had just got back from the asthma doctor with my son, Marvin. Crystal was close to Marvin. She didn’t have many friends. A lot of people wouldn’t hang around Grubbs. Crystal was a happy kid with a big smile. She always said when she grew up, she wanted to have kids and be a good mom. I’ll always miss her.”

“Crystal was killed in September 2010 by three guys: Adrian Henly, Alvin Fry and John Sergent. The police know who murdered her. They charged them with cooking meth but not murder. The police messed up the case. They’re hoping one of the three will crack and name the murderer. I didn’t see much of Crystal after her second daughter, Rosie, was born, and Crystal started to party. That’s when she began hanging out with Adrian. None of us liked him but Crystal was addicted to Adrian. Imagine her two girls growing up not knowing their mother. One day we will get justice for her.”

Figure 53: Jeffrey A. Wolin, Crystal and her Aunt Judy, Pigeon Hill, 1992 and Judy after Crystal’s Murder, Acadia Court, 2013, in Jeffrey A. Wolin, Pigeon Hill: Then and Now, (Germany: Kehrer Heidelberg Gallery, 2017), 28.
"I hate this photograph because it's just not me. I'm transgendered and I knew it from the time I was six. I was raped when I was fifteen while dressed as a girl. That's why I hate men."

"I see who I'm supposed to be. I see success now. I went from having nothing to having a home and a significant other who loves me. Being out and being in public as a female, I don't have suicidal tendencies any more. I've begun hormone therapy. February 10, 2010, was when I went to court and was granted a name and gender change. I ceased to be 'Junior' and became 'Shannon'."

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Margaret Morton


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Social Issues in New York City


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American Social Documentary Photography and Photojournalism


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**Other Artists**


Theoretical Writings


