

John Divola: Three Acts
Photographs by John Divola
Essay by David Company
Interview by Jan Tumlir

Hardcover with jacket

110 duotone and 53 four-color individual images

144 Pages

11" X 9.25"

ISBN: 1-931788-95-2

Book Synopsis

In 1973, artist John Divola began the first of three highly ambitious and original bodies of work that together form this publication. The Vandalism series comprises black-and-white photographs of interiors of abandoned houses. Entering illegally, Divola spray painted expressive markings in the forms of dots, lines, and grids, creating a series of conceptual gestures that referenced "action painting" as readily as the graffiti that was fast becoming a cultural phenomenon. The following year, Divola began the Los Angeles International Airport Noise Abatement series, photographing a condemned neighborhood bought out by the airport to serve as a noise buffer for new runways. Unlike the Vandalism series, where the artist's own intervention was at the crux of the project, here he focused his obsessive eye on unsanctioned entries by vandals who had absconded long ago. An extensive catalog of break-ins, the photographs record the evidence of violent entries: shattered windows, doors torn from hinges, a crowbar resting in the jamb of a door pried open. The final installment in this book, the Zuma series, is the artist's documentation of the destruction of an abandoned beachfront property. While employing similar strategies of painting and intervention, the Zuma images add variation and complexity to Divola's established themes as they incorporate color, elements of nature, and meditation on change. These cyclical images skillfully juxtapose romantic skies and sunsets with a seaside structure that, frame by frame, deteriorates into ruin as it is vandalized by the artist and others who eventually set it on fire. Divola's art practice shares a tradition with conceptual artists such as Bruce Nauman, whose photographs are considered to be performance or sculpture, and Robert Smithson, who used photography to investigate the built environment. Divola's stunning body of work uses photography in a way that exceeds the medium's essential capacity to describe. Divola puts this idea succinctly: "My acts, my painting, my photographing, my considering, are part of, not separate from, this process of evolution and change. My participation was not so much one of intellectual consideration as one of visceral involvement."

"Once seen, the work of John Divola is not easily forgotten, particularly his photographs made in disused buildings. There is nothing quite like them in the history of the medium." —David Company

Artist Biography **John Divola** is the recipient of a Guggenheim Fellowship, four National Endowment for the Arts Fellowships, a California Arts Council Individual Artist Grant, and other awards. His work is in numerous museums, including the Museum of Modern Art, New York; Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York; and Museum of Fine Arts, Houston. He teaches photography at the University of California, Riverside. **David Company's** Reader in History and Theory of Photography at the University of Westminster, London, and is cofounder of the organization Photoforum. He is the author of *Art and Photography*. **Jan Tumlir** is a Los Angeles-based writer and critic. He is adjunct graduate faculty at the USC School of Fine Arts and contributes frequently to *Artforum*, *Frieze*, and *Flash Art*.



JOHN DIVOLA Three Acts

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