



"I believe that my photographs exist outside of time."

Fact File

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Pigment-based archival prints are available at 20x24 or larger, with prices varying between \$800-\$2,000. Contact the photographer for more information.

(Vladimir Kabelik portrait by George Hosek)

A simple and effective metaphor frames Vladimir Kabelik's photographs. First applied in the early 1980s, the concept sits well with the photographer, who himself sits in "a modestly sized condo full of gifted photographs, paintings, glass pieces, ceramic sculptures made by my wife, and books" on the 15th floor of a building outside Toronto with a sweeping view of Lake Ontario.

Despite having "reached the stage in life when people stop acquiring things," he has assembled and published copies of an object he hopes will endure. *Vladimir Kabelik: PHOTOGRAPHY*, a 136-page monograph self-published in 2016, contains the photographs printed here along with reflective, scene-setting text. The book is an autobiographical survey, compiled by a man born in 1951 in what was then Czechoslovakia. After discovering photography as a boy and earning a Master of Arts degree from the Academy of Film and Television Arts (FAMU) in Prague, he was active in the city's vibrant film, media and photography communities, winning awards and exhibiting regularly.

But in 1981 Kabelik, his wife and their sons hurriedly left Prague and emigrated from Czechoslovakia after the secret police interrogated him because of his contacts with anti-communist dissenters. It was clearly, bittersweetly, time to go. After stopovers in Austria and Switzerland, the family alit in Canada in 1982. Kabelik continued to pursue photography and documentary filmmaking and expanded his understanding of the relationship between the mediums. "Filmmaking is an intellectual exercise that involves a structured story, motion and people. Photography is an emotional experience. The story is told within one frame; stillness is much more important than action."

Kabelik structured his illustrated memoir as a three-act drama, evolving from his childhood discovery of photography in the first act to his rueful departure from Prague and settling in Canada in the second, followed by the still-evolving third. He writes:

"Without any warning we reach Act Three. At first we don't even notice. Then something

insignificant happens, we see ourselves as we really are and cannot believe the change. Suddenly we are older, weaker and wondering whose life this is that we're living? It isn't what we were dreaming of, not what we starved for."

Kabelik acknowledges in Act Two a comment by an early North American influence (the effective metaphor mentioned at the outset of this piece), who termed his images "niches"—spaces in which objects and intentions are situated, sometimes by accident, sometimes fabricated. The term applies to the content and rectangular form of Kabelik's images, the physical facts of his subject matter, and his own mental compartments.

For Kabelik, distressingly exiled, a niche is a safe space, protected from winds of sociopolitical change, though subject to aging. Filmmaking, he explains, entails compromise and accommodation. Stills are more encapsulated; the niches they construct "reflect my inner need for peace and quiet."

Another kind of stillness suffuses Kabelik's photographs in that they are largely unpopulated. A connection with his Czech countryman Josef Sudek is not inappropriate; the elder artist's elegant and elegiac images find corollaries in Kabelik's. In both, people are scarce and the evidence of human passage is thinning. Shadows are accumulating, settling in like dust and cobwebs, dimming sight and muting sound.

Like Sudek's, Kabelik's images are glancing moments stilled, settings encountered while we, hand-in-hand with the photographer, were out looking for other things. It's not clear whether something physical has disappeared or if the absence is simply a presence that never materialized.

"I believe that my photographs exist outside of time," Kabelik says, "and therefore they will outlive my films easily." The absence of humans affords the images greater longevity, since the niches and their contents acquire only the thin, melancholic veneer of passing life.

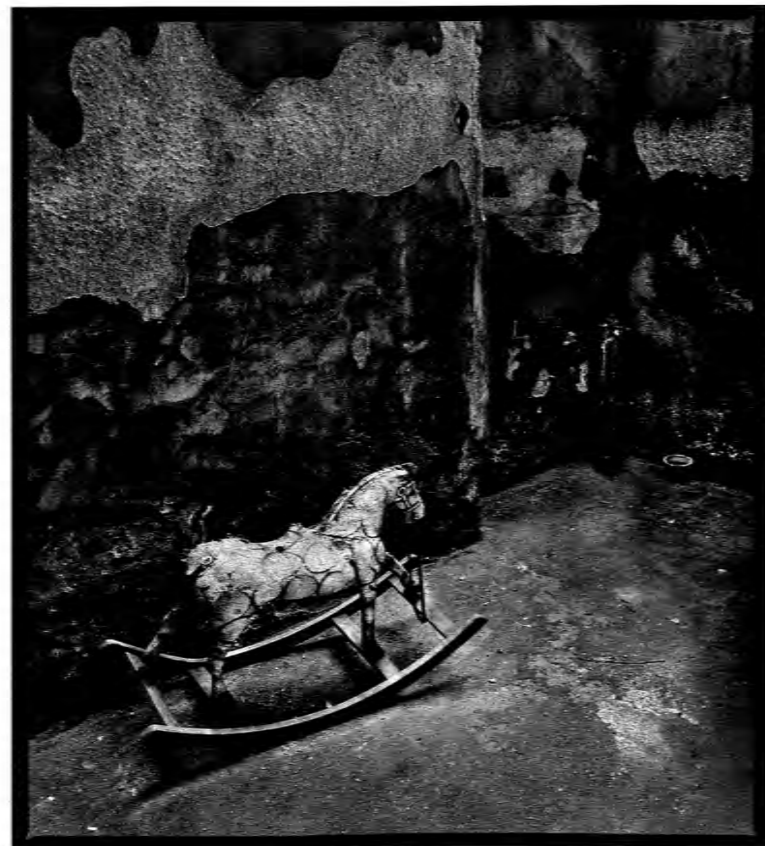
— George Slade



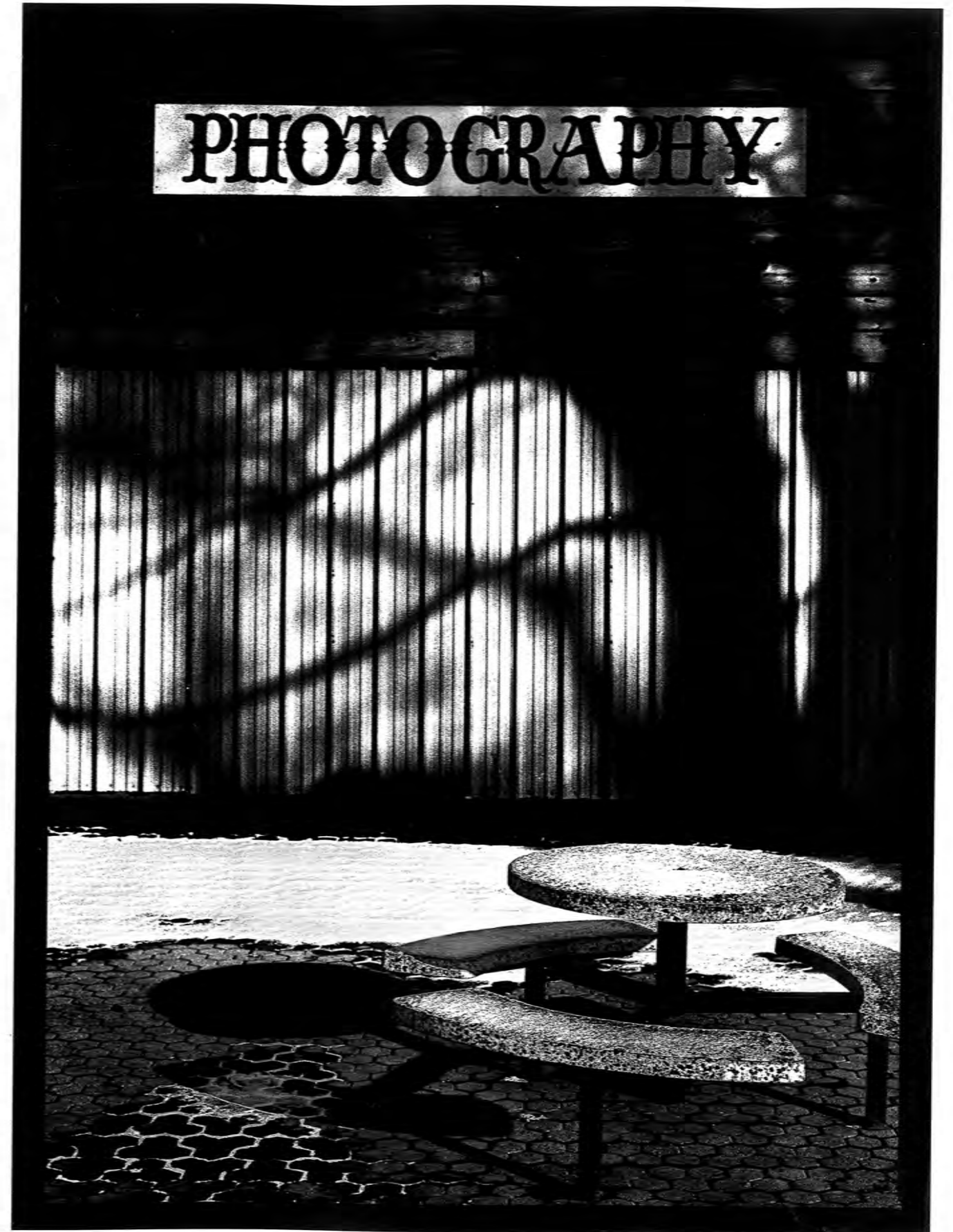
Horse in a Window



Molly



Rocking Horse



Photography