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Lee Friedlander, graphic designer Mark Schwartz share in art, photos and camaraderie

Framing a friendship

The rapport between Cleveland graphic designer Mark Schwartz and the famous American photographer Lee Friedlander has been photographically fruitful. The pictures with this story — most never published before — were taken during visits to Cleveland in which Friedlander troled the area with Schwartz at the wheel of his Range Rover or hung around Schwartz's house.

STEVEN LITT
Plain Dealer Art Critic

It was around noon on a sunny day in February, and the renowned American photographer Lee Friedlander had just arrived in Cleveland from New York with his wife, Maria Friedlander.

The 75-year-old photographer, who had come for the opening of a show of his work at the Cleveland Museum of Art the next day, was in no mood for lunch, despite the hour.

He wanted to photograph a steel mill.

"I've checked the weather and this is the only day we're going to have sun," Friedlander told his host and longtime friend, graphic designer Mark Schwartz. The photographer said he needed shots for a new book of images he was working on called "America By Car."

"Lee is all about making pictures," Schwartz explained later. "I expected he'd want to go to lunch, relax. Nope. Straight to the Flats for the next two hours."

With Schwartz behind the wheel of his black Range Rover and Maria in back, Friedlander aimed his

ONLINE EXTRA:
For a gallery on the new Friedlander images, go to cleveland.com/arts

Hasselblad camera through the windshield at the ArcelorMittal plant, houses in Slavic Village and other subjects.

As the photographer excitedly gave directions ("Stop here!" "Closer!"), Schwartz positioned his car near conveyors, pipes and other motifs, so Friedlander's wide-angle lens could frame everything, including slices of the car interior,



The ArcelorMittal steel plant in the Cleveland Flats rises dreamily over the dashboard of Mark Schwartz's Range Rover in Friedlander's 'Cleveland, 2009,' reproduced for the first time here. (Copyright 2009 by Lee Friedlander, Courtesy Fraenkel Gallery, San Francisco).



Friedlander tilts his head admiringly, if a bit goofily, toward 12-year-old Emma Schwartz in 'Emma, Cleveland, 2009.' (Copyright 2009 by Lee Friedlander, Courtesy Fraenkel Gallery, San Francisco).

Schwartz's face, the moon roof, the rear-view mirrors.

"I'm a rolling tripod, at the very least," Schwartz said, describing the visit Wednesday, May 13 during an interview at the museum's Friedlander show.

The resulting images, some published here for the first time, are the fruit of a close friendship that has affected both men. Friedlander has influenced how Schwartz thinks as a designer, and Friedlander has benefited from Schwartz's patronage and help on assignments.

On the surface, the two couldn't be more different.

Schwartz is a bearish man who wears black, talks rapidly and is never shy about sharing

his opinions.

Since the early 1980s, he has helped shape the irreverent persona of Nesnadny + Schwartz, an award-winning graphic design firm with offices in Cleveland, New York and Toronto, and clients including Vassar College, the Spy Museum, Eaton Corp. and Progressive Corp. He's also become a serious collector of photography and a trustee of the Cleveland Museum of Art.

Framing a Friendship

Friedlander, large, heavy and balding with luminous blue eyes, speaks publicly through his work. He avoids interviews. When Schwartz asked him to allow previously unpublished pho-

tographs to be printed today in The Plain Dealer, he agreed on the condition that he didn't have to talk to anyone.

"Lee doesn't want to be trapped into conversations," especially about his photography, Schwartz said. Indeed, even when they're alone, Schwartz said Friedlander doesn't say much, if anything, about his work. Schwartz has visited Friedlander's home and studio in Rockland County, N.Y., but never has

watched Friedlander at work in his darkroom, where he does all his own printing.

"I've tried to tease a little bit out of him. As much as you get from Lee is his passion about getting up every morning and going to it and continuing in this unending process and quest. He wants to make pictures."

Aside from their love of photography, Schwartz and Friedlander are in touch with their inner teenagers.

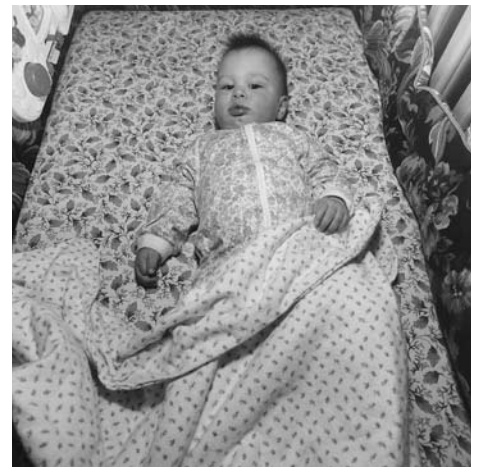
"We both have the maturity of 14-year-old boys," Schwartz said. They love cruising in the car, schmoozing, hunting down ethnic restaurants, talking about their families.

If Friedlander "hears a good dirty joke, I'm No. 3 or 4 on the call list," Schwartz said.

Coming together as friends

The photographer and the designer became friends in 1996, when Schwartz sent Friedlander a letter asking whether he'd shoot photographs for the 1995 annual report of the George Gund Foundation, which Schwartz was designing.

The foundation commissioned important local and national photographers to create original portfolios to illustrate the re-ports. Friedlander quickly agreed and soon arrived in Cleveland with his gear to do a series on Clevelanders at work.



Friedlander took 'Sophie, Cleveland, 1995,' during his first visit to the Schwartz/Katz home. (Copyright 1995 by Lee Friedlander, Courtesy Fraenkel Gallery, San Francisco).

Schwartz, an experienced photographer in his own right, offered to help Friedlander talk his way into factories, hospitals and offices.

"Lee needed somebody to open doors and occasionally hold the flash," Schwartz said. "Twenty-one locations in 12 days. He stayed at our home. It was pretty intense having a famous stranger in our house."

But the strangers soon became friends. And Friedlander, never without his camera, began shooting images around the Schwartz home in Cleveland Heights. A shot of Schwartz's infant daughter, Sophie, lying in her crib dates from that era.

In late 2002, Friedlander returned for the opening of a Cleveland museum exhibition called "A City Seen," based on the works of 12 photographers commissioned to do Gund annual reports.

Framing a Friendship

Feeling very much at home while visiting Schwartz's house, he followed the designer's wife, Bettina Katz, and their daughter, Emma Schwartz, then 6, into a bathroom so he could shoot them as they primped before a party the family was throwing for the visiting photographers.

"He inserted himself in the bathroom for 45 minutes and



'Emma, Cleveland, 2002' resulted from a bathroom photo session before a party in the Schwartz/Katz home. Friedlander recently sent the image to Emma as a Valentine gift. (Copyright 2009 by Lee Friedlander. Courtesy Fraenkel Gallery, San Francisco).

closed the door," said Schwartz. "After 45 minutes, Tina threw him out."

One picture from that session frames young Emma as she clips curlers into her hair. She looks lost in a reverie and seems completely unaware of the man taking her picture.

"There's nothing unobtrusive about Lee," Schwartz said. "He's a big man, with a big camera and flash. He inserts himself in a situation until he be-

comes invisible, and that's when the good pictures get made."

On occasions, though, Friedlander thrusts himself into the situation. He's famous for shooting his own shadow intruding comically into the picture.

He's also made a habit of snapping self-portraits by holding his Hasselblad at arm's length and aiming it at his face, or sometimes tilting his head toward that of a friend.

He did that on the most recent visit to the Schwartzes with Emma, now 12. He printed an image of the picture and sent it to Emma several weeks later.

In addition to gaining insights into Friedlander's work and methods, Schwartz has the satis-

faction of knowing how many of the pictures in the current show at the Cleveland museum were made — because he was there.

One is a shot of Lake Louise in Canada, taken in 2000, with a pile of boulders in the foreground, thrusting toward the glassy lake and distant peaks. Schwartz, who was traveling with Friedlander, recalls asking a group of Japanese tourists to move from the spot so the photographer could frame his shot.

Admiring the fruit of his friendship, Schwartz gazed at the picture Wednesday and said, "I loved the idea that I helped make it."

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'Mark, Akron, 2009' records a photographic expedition with photographer Lee Friedlander in February, with Schwartz at the wheel. (Copyright 2009 by Lee Friedlander. Courtesy Fraenkel Gallery, San Francisco).

Gallery: The Unseen Lee Friedlander (12 photos)
photos from The Plain Dealer

Description: The friendship between Cleveland graphic designer Mark Schwartz and American photographer, Lee Friedlander, has been photographically fruitful. These pictures were taken during visits to Cleveland from 1995-2009

Article: http://www.cleveland.com/arts/index.ssf/2009/05/photographer_lee_friedlander_g.html

Gallery: <http://photos.cleveland.com/gallery/4501/The%20Unseen%20Lee%20Friedlander>

