

APRIL 13-19, 2005

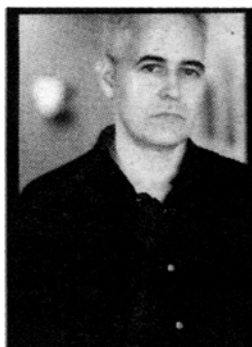
## tear sheet

## TAKE FIVE

**ALLEN FRAME** grew up in the Mississippi Delta and has lived in New York City for over 25 years. He knows everyone and has worked with so many great talents—yet he's too self-effacing ever to name-drop. Frame's gentlemanly candor and laser-like insight have influenced and encouraged flocks of both the famous and not-yet-famous. His exquisite photographs have been shown all over the world, as has *Electric Blanket*, a project he co-created for Visual AIDS with fellow photographers Frank Franca and Nan Goldin. He teaches at SVA, the International Center of Photography, and Pratt Institute, and still somehow finds time to guest-curate shows and to write for numerous publications (including this one). *Detour*, a monograph of his work, was published by Kehrer Verlag Heidelberg in 2001.

**1 You once observed that all good black-and-white photography looks alike. Is that true?** Oh, did I say that? *What* did I mean? Well, most photography today is color—you seldom see black-and-white photography in a fine-art context—which makes anyone doing it interesting if they're doing it as a choice, rather than as some conservative compulsion. I've feared people thought I might be doing that. So I wanted to really *push* the use of darkness—

**2 As a subject?** Yes, I wanted to photograph with as little light as possible.



**3 Why does that fascinate you?**

It has to do with intimate situations—late-night parties, early mornings. There's something unreal and abstracting about darkness

that super-compresses the mood and atmosphere and helps create this really confrontational body of work.

**4 They seem so casual—almost like dark snapshots—but then you see they're totally composed.**

The tension between the kind of casual, intimate situations I like to shoot and the very stylized, even elegant compositions is one of two extremes meeting. People think my work looks like film stills, but they're not. I was trying to recreate that kind of rigorous stylization, but in real time. But without it being planned and posed . . .

**5 And without narrative?** There's definitely an implicit narrative, but it's fun to play with those elements and keep them at bay. My photographs are not diaristic or documentary—they're more about repetition of a mood or an atmosphere. Most people see photography in a very literal way; they *seldom* get past the obvious or take notice of the mixing of genres or intent. It has a lot to do with perception and rejection—and people are confused. But that's what's so exciting. LD BEGHTOL

See Allen Frame's solo exhibit at Gitterman Gallery (170 East 75th Street, 212-734-0868), April 14 through June 4.