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Honor and Integrity in Photography

Burk Uzzle, 150 years of manipulated images and a group show at
Janet Borden in On Photography



By
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Burk Uzzle: American Puzzles

Steven Kasher Gallery

515 W. 26th St.

212-966-3978

Through July 31

Any competent photojournalist can tell a story with his camera, but how many can tell a

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joke? Burk Uzzle (b. 1938) is one such. Sometimes the joke is the subject: "Family Named Spot, Daytona Beach, Florida" (1997) is a picture of two dogs wearing coats spotted as if they were Dalmatians and held on leashes by a couple wearing T-shirts with the same pattern of black spots. Anyone with an iPhone (if there had been iPhones in 1967) could have taken a picture showing this is funny but, the same way a master comedian pares his routines down to their essentials, Uzzle decapitates the couple so we only see them from their shoulders down. And that is all we need. Similarly, other people sensitive to cultural disparities might have seen something humorous in the woman in the top hat selling a picture of a dog side-by-side with a reproduction the Leonardo DaVinci's "Last Supper," but Uzzle's tight cropping makes the gaucherie unavoidable in "Howling Last Supper, Baltimore, Maryland" (1967).

Uzzle has a droll eye, and frequently his humor is based on subtle visual incongruities. In "Kennedy Airport" (1967) two small figures on a walkway in the lower left are dwarfed by swirling masses of modernist architecture. In "Overpass in Curlers, Baltimore" (1967), a woman with her hair done up seems disproportionately large compared with the two men at the bottom of the image until we realize they are in a distant space. Kasher has up over 80 of Uzzle's antic black-and-white images.