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ARTIST'S STATEMENT

Samsara n. 1. The world of appearances and illusion. 2. The eternal cycle of birth, suffering, death, and rebirth.

In 1970, as a very young student, I witnessed and documented the events surrounding the deaths of 4 students from National Guardsmen's bullets at Kent State. This had a profound impact on me and represented a turning point in my way of thinking. I began to view the arts as an alternative to the alienation and violence in our society and as a personal and collective means toward a renewal of humanistic values. This is the ultimate paradox of the creative process; that the deeper we strive to penetrate within ourselves, the more we reach a common ground of shared human concerns.

I am interested in the evocative power of the photographic medium to reveal the clash of cultural values evident in the modern world — to raise our collective level of awareness of the contradictions inherent in ourselves, and by extension, in the world itself. My current photographic work investigates signs and symbols of urban culture, especially those found in advertising and commerce. I find it sad—even tragic—that the nobility of our humanity and our search for enduring values have been appropriated through words and images designed to titillate and sell. It is, according to James Joyce, a form of pornography.

Our fundamental right to the pursuit of happiness has been distorted to imply the desire to consume, and this has an untold impact on our implicit humanity and on the environment. Modern culture, through the voice of media and advertising, debases even the most noble and uplifting aspects of the human experience such as faith, hope, and love. Our once soaring ideas and ideals have entered common parlance, are often treated with a cool, distant, ironic stance, and are brought down to the lowest possible level. Explicit allusions to light and love, truth and beauty, permeate the marketplace, designed to manipulate human sentiment for the basest of reasons. It is an upside-down view of reality.

This ongoing series of photographs derives, for the most part, from the vitality of major urban centers such as Hong Kong, New York and others, and reflects my deep concern over the influence of urbanized, consumer culture on the global, social and natural, environment.