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anatomy of an annual report

The corporate issue simply wouldn't feel complete without a handful of annual report "anatomies"—that is, a glimpse into how some of the more innovative reports from 1995 were pulled together. This year, we look closely at four: The Progressive Corporation, The George Gund Foundation, The Neiman Marcus Group and Penwest. All engaging, all powerful and all rich, in their own ways.

The George Gund Foundation

by Janet Traylor

"There are people on my staff who would like to have a more traditional annual report with pictures of happy grantees," says David Berkholz, executive director of the Cleveland, Ohio-based George Gund Foundation. The non-profit organization's 1995 report instead uses Lee Friedlander's straightforward black-and-white images of Cleveland's factory workers carrying on in the midst of their daily routines.

Though most workers appear absorbed in their tasks, there are no scripted smiles. The report's chipboard cover bears the simple title, "People Working."

Though the annual report was a first for Friedlander, the subject matter was somewhat of a historical revisitation. Some 20 years earlier, he was commissioned by the Akron Art Museum to depict the industrial landscape and factory workers in Akron, Pittsburgh and Cleveland. The resulting book was titled *Factory Valleys*.

Friedlander exists outside the commercial realm of *American Showcase* and *The Black Book*. Though he has shot for some magazines and album covers, he doesn't do much of that kind of work anymore. A photographer for some 50 years, Friedlander is known for his personal work, which has been exhibited in major museums throughout the world and assembled into 13 critically acclaimed books.

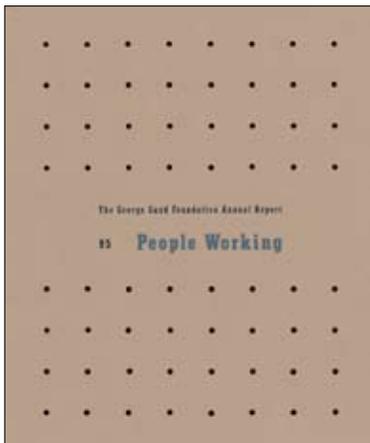
"They call it 'art photography' today because you show it in art galleries," says Friedlander, who is represented by the Fraenkel Gallery in San Francisco and the Janet Borden Gallery in New York. "But I'm just a regular photographer."

Director Terence Pitts of the Center for Creative Photography in Tucson, Arizona, sees Friedlander in a somewhat larger context, calling him "one of the most important American photographers for the last quarter-century or more." The low-key Friedlander is the recipient of three John Simon Guggenheim Memorial Foundation fellowships as well as the prestigious "genius" award from the MacArthur Foundation.

Creative director Mark Schwartz of design firm Nesnadny + Schwartz (Cleveland, New York and Toronto), along with Gund's Berkholz, are both big fans of black-and-white contemporary



Left: The cover of The George Gund Foundation's 1995 annual report. Top and bottom: The report reproduced 49 of Friedlander's photos, shot with a Hasselblad and a couple of strobes.





Locations included an airport, bakery and hospital.

photography. And Schwartz says he had always wanted to work with Friedlander.

Since they first collaborated on the private foundation's annual report six years ago, Schwartz says he and Berkholz have chosen mostly fine-art photographers who have essentially no commercial language and don't normally work in the "picture for hire" arena. The Foundation has worked with Judith Joy Ross, also a former Guggenheim Fellow, and with Dawoud Bey, Michael Book and others.

"It's been fun," says Berkholz. "We've worked with great photographers, gotten wonderful material and the Foundation ends up with 10 to 12 prints at the end of the project." Schwartz says Gund has developed a "pretty significant" collection of contemporary photography during the years they have used this approach.

In creating the Foundation's 1995 annual report, the client, design firm and photographer first developed the general theme of "people working." After Schwartz nailed down the shooting locations, Friedlander made two trips to Cleveland, first for a six-day, then a seven-day shoot.

Friedlander shot with Hasselblad, along with a couple of strobes. Schwartz accompanied the photographer for the entire shoot, assisting with equipment and with some of the background lighting.

"I was like a Sherpa," says Schwartz of his equipment-toting. He also says he served as a

skill, talking to people being photographed and telling them about the project so the photographer could concentrate on taking pictures.

Creative director and photographer developed a friendly relationship, leading to some good-natured banter. According to Schwartz, "Lee wants to be known for his work, but if the truth be known, the work is an excuse to travel, and travel is an excuse to discover new restaurants. If you mention a city to Lee, he will name a favorite restaurant—New Orleans, New York, all over the world."

Friedlander doesn't disagree, saying Schwartz measured the shoot as "13 days, 19 restaurants."

The 1995 book produced 49 of Friedlander's photographs, in black and special-match gray laser-scanned duotones on coated stock. Though final editing was predicated on quality, not quantity, Schwartz says designer Michelle Moehler was able to include images from all the locations—which was fortunate, since it "took some negotiation" to secure the venues.

Locations included a meat plant, a bakery, an automotive plant, an electric company, a hospital, a science center and an airport. Schwartz felt that despite the large number of images, the pictures held together and told a cohesive story about the diversity of Cleveland's work force.

Schwartz says that in addition to doing a wonderful job with the imagery, Friedlander "was an incredible professional," finishing the job two months ahead of schedule, interacting

positively with the people he photographed and making 300 prints as part of the process.

Though taken with a fixed-lens square-format camera, the images have a sense of being captured in the moment, rather than posed. The camera is present but not intrusive as people go about their days, wrapping fresh bread, tending to patients, pressing garments, operating heavy equipment on an assembly line.

"It was pretty characteristic of my work; the client let me do what I wanted and we had a good time," says Friedlander. He says the budget was adequate. "It wasn't big, but it was the kind of work I like to do," he adds.

Berkholz says the fee for the project was a "shade more" than what they would normally pay, but "not in any way extravagant." The Foundation purchased ten of Friedlander's original prints.

"It ends up being a wonderful situation for us," says Berkholz. "We produce a book that has utility beyond our need merely to report our activities. And we end up with a collection of prints worth probably as much as the shooting fee we paid the photographer. All in all, it's a win-win." ●