

STEPHEN ALTHOUSE
Gallery of Art, Barry University, Miami, Florida
October 12 - November 25, 2001
Gallery talk by the artist, Wednesday, October 17, 12:00 noon

It may be said that contemporary Western art is a reflection of our society, sometimes as documentation, sometimes as approval, sometimes as criticism, and sometimes as concern. This retrospective exhibition of photographic images by Stephen Althouse has been curated in response to the terrible tragedy of September 11, 2001. In the selection and narrowing process for this exhibition, images were chosen which illustrate the recurrence of specific elements that permeate much of Althouse's work. Weapons, both primitive (Amazonian blowgun darts, stone implements) and sophisticated (stealth bomber), have been symbols utilized by the artist since the late 1960's not as advocacy of violence but, after one knows the background of the artist, just the opposite. Raised in rural Pennsylvania, Althouse contemplated his Quaker beliefs in his early twenties and late teenage years under the influence of the Vietnam War, which at that time was a vague and misunderstood major military campaign radically affecting his generation, the politics of that era, and the established social order.

Privately expressing his concern for humankind and our historic inability to recognize the early signs which prohibit us from diagnosing societal problems before they reach the extreme and epidemic, Althouse is not without hope. Under a shrouded medieval helmet he inscribes in Braille the Latin words, "occurrent nubes", translated as, "clouds (heaven) will intervene." If it may be said that contemporary Western art is a reflection of our society, then it could also be said that the artwork of Stephen Althouse is a metaphoric mirror of prophecy in the context of the recent terrorist attack upon our nation. In his large-scale photograph, **Shrouded Swords**, dating to 1999, he encrypts a Braille phrase in the center of his piece, "veniente occurrite morbo" meaning, "meet the coming of the disease."

A characteristic of photography is its ability to communicate precisely detailed information, and Althouse's earlier works are rich with extremely fine detail. However, in his latest series he chooses to obscure and camouflage that information through the covering of subject matter with cloth. Detail is concealed further by employing exaggerated photographic grain whose texture is reminiscent of his earlier works done in sand. Secrecy is heightened in his imagery by integrating Braille phrases into his compositions, adding a profound and mysterious quality to his work.

Dart, 2001
Mask VI, 1999
Mask VII, 1999
Mask III, 1997
Mask IV, 1997
Mask V, 1997
Berlin, 1997
Swords, 1997
Spears, 1997
Standing Armor, 1995
Darts II, 1994
Ubi Lapsus, 1993
Darts I, 1989
Blades II, 1989
Goodbye II 1988
Blades I, 1985
Papyrus, 1984
Shrouded Stealth Bomber, 1999
Hex Nuts and Wrenches, 1999
Shrouded Swords, 1999
Shrouded Gauntlet, 1999
Shrouded Helmet, 1999
Gauntlets, 1994