

surrounding science and technology in relation to the human genome, *The Future of Human Nature* always returns to concrete current applications, specifically preimplantation genetic diagnosis and embryonic research. It does not consider the issues of abortion or non-human genetic manipulation, nor does it indulge in speculations about the vague threats posed by future possibilities (although Habermas warns us against being oblivious to them). It makes a clear distinction between medical interventions for which the question of consent has been carefully attended to, and interventions for which such consent is not even contemplated.

Working in this focused area strengthens the force of Habermas' arguments, driving them to the conclusion that, whatever decisions we make about experimentation with and use of human embryos now, these decisions are not to be taken lightly and have far-reaching implications for what it will mean in the future to be human.

This book is also a rich introduction to current ethical thinking in Europe and to the relevance of philosophy to society. It is replete with references to relevant current and past literature in this area, although these are primarily restricted to the Western philosophical tradition and current European work.

In a postscript written in January 2002, Habermas notes the difference between European discussions of *whether* to proceed with human genetic experimentation, and North America debates, which in his reading jump over the step that links ethics and justice in order to discuss *how* to proceed. He also acknowledges that the ideas in the present book are far from the whole story: "My impression is that we still have not reflected deeply enough."

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Lifeworks

Perfect strangers

Photography is a broad medium. Whether used to create individual still images or strung together in series to create movement, photographs are able to both document reality and convey emotion under the headings of journalism and of art. Demonstrating this complexity of expression was part of the goal of *Strangers, the first Triennial of Photography and Video*, held at the International Center of Photography in New York City from September 13 to November 30.

The title *Strangers* is meant to reflect the revival of "street photography," whereby artists leave the studio and engage with strangers to incorporate them into their images. *Strangers* is also meant to refer to the global union of the participants in this show. The curators brought together 100 works by 40 artists from 20 countries, including many not previously exhibited in the United States. This effort was announced by the organizers' declared intention to "bring our audience an illuminating vision of where visual culture is headed, and to inspire debate and discussion about where it might go next."

In recent work by the highly influential American photographer Philip

Lorca Dicorcia, strangers are used to create what might appear to be a staged performance. His photographs are set in one location on a street in Havana, and are part of a larger body of work that helped redefine street photography. By using lighting arrangements that one might expect to see on a movie set or in the theatre, he is able to create the mood of a movie still. He waits and watches as people pass by and interact in natural ways, and then captures a decisive moment that is highly narrative. These moments blur the distinction between the casual and the contrived. The viewer is unsure whether these images are real moments or elaborate constructions by technicians and actors.

Dutch artist Julika Rudelius creates a similar feeling in his video *Train*. Rudelius recreates a voyeuristic moment by shooting his video through a crack in the seat-cushions on a train. Through the two bands of upholstery we see the moving mouths and hands of teenage boys as they share stories of their sexual experiences, often in vulgar language. This is an undeniably familiar moment: we have all watched strangers interact, eavesdropping on their stories, interpreting their subtle body language,



Chien-Chi Chang. From *The Chain*, 1998. Gelatin silver print, 152.4 cm × 101.6 cm.

and enjoying their actions and reactions. This turns the stranger into a spectacle — a point that English artist Julie Henry also makes in her video *Going Down*. Henry reverses the roles of

spectator and spectacle by filming the fans of a soccer game rather than the game itself. She films the spectators of both the winning and the losing teams, and projects both videos onto the two adjacent walls of a corner. One wall screams with cheers and elation, while the other simultaneously declares visible heartbreak.

Photography was originally used solely as an art of identity, and transported personal images between people who might never meet. Dutch photographer Rineke Dijkstra's beautiful large-scale colour photographs draw on this tradition. From 1994 to 2003, she photographed a young Bosnian refugee met in a refugee camp in the Netherlands. However, this series of six portraits does more than simply document physical appearance. Together, they also document the assimilation of an identity into a new culture. In the first picture, taken of a girl at age six, we see the subject wearing the clothes of her homeland. With each subsequent picture she begins to incorporate the clothes, make-up and mannerisms of her adopted land. This represents a process of shaping and erasing identity. A similar idea is found in the photos of

American John Schabel. These images were taken at night around tourist attractions in New York City. Schabel focuses his camera onto amateur photographers as they prepare to take a picture of their posing friends. By taking his picture at the exact moment that their flashes go off, he creates a white explosion in the middle of his images, erasing the very person he was photographing. Schabel's photos obliterate identity at the very moment that another photographer was attempting to capture it.

Chinese photographer Chien-Chi Chang documents the intimate interactions between strangers in a temple in Taiwan that also serves as an asylum. Those who run the asylum are opposed to the use of medications as treatment; instead, they use six feet of metal chain to bind pairs of residents together. They believe that this action will enable the more stable patient to bring the other to a higher level of sanity.

As in any other medium, these artists demonstrate the ability of the creative mind to expand photography and video in new directions, and to deal with developing social issues. With the constantly evolving sentiments regarding unification, alienation and globaliza-



Rineke Dijkstra. *Almerisa, Alsymucetner Leiden, The Netherlands, March 14, 1994.* Part of the ongoing series, *Almerisa*. Chromogenic print (12 cm x 100 cm).

tion, these works demonstrate common themes from across the globe and reinforce the idea that even strangers can always find common ground.

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Room for a view

The red toque

Alexei sits in a chair wearing a red toque pulled to his brow. His eyes are slits. He has worn the toque each session these two months. Sometimes he says a single word, a short staccato, a grunt.

"We got new toys this week," the therapist says. "We got trucks and a doctor's bag. We got paints and modeling clay."

It is a warm April day.

Alexei pulls the red toque over his face past his eyes. He stands up and walks forward, blind. He stumbles over a box of blocks. The therapist catches him and walks him to his chair. He

pulls the toque over his ears.

"Can you hear me, Alexei?" the therapist asks.

Alexei shakes his head.

"Can you see me, Alexei?" the therapist asks.

Alexei shakes his head.

This will turn into a game, the therapist thinks.

"Let's make a house," she says. "You can put in whoever you want."

Alexei pulls the red toque past his lips and chin. The toque covers his face and jaw. Alexei is blind, deaf and dumb. He grows still.

The toque becomes a death mask.

"How about I draw a picture," the therapist says.

Alexei sits motionless. He can sit this way for the entire session.

"How about I draw you?" the therapist says. "I will draw you with your toque over your face, like you are playing hide and seek."

Alexei shakes his head.

"Yes," the therapist says. "I will draw you. Too bad you will not see my picture."

"But I have X-ray eyes," Alexei says.

The therapist takes a drawing pad and a scented felt marker. She begins to draw Alexei.