

January 6, 1966.

Mr. John F. Mathias,  
John Simon Guggenheim Memorial Foundation,  
90 Park Avenue,  
New York City, New York. 10016

Dear Mr. Mathias:

I am sending herewith the reports on the work of Rudolph Janu and Duane Michals and within the next day or so will mail the remaining report for Ray Metzker. We have had a great number of visitors and unexpected work during the last week and I regret very much that I have not been able to have these statements reach you sooner. I rewrote the Duane Michals report and it is not sent you on your usual form sheet. I hope this does not inconvenience you too much.

I am very grateful to you for your patience and trust I am not too late with these statements. I am much interested in the work of each of these three candidates and am glad to have had this opportunity to recommend it highly.

Sincerely yours,

Hugh Edwards, Curator of Photography.

Metzker report sent. 1-7-66

Requested of:

Hugh Edwards,  
The Art Institute of Chicago,  
Michigan Avenue and Adams Street,  
Chicago, Illinois. 60603

Name of Candidate:

Mr. Duane Michals (4)

REPORT: Since the publication of his photographs in DU sometime ago, the work of Duane Michals has been of much interest to me. That selection of photographs was an early and welcome example of a new photographic approach which set out on new ways of freedom from many of the sentimentalities of "involvement" and by-passed the tiresome (often ridiculous) repetitions of naive social ideas. The human and acute sophistication of his attitudes brings us to single individuals and not types. The anecdote - one of photography's most common temptations - is entirely absent from his work and he does not try to create an illusion of profundity by photographically plagiarizing painting and other arts. His photographs are honestly photographs and since they employ those abilities which are unique to photography, they are examples of the art of photography. The possibilities of his special objectivity were brilliantly displayed in the series of "fashion" portraits in the December 1965 issue of Esquire. These prove a commercial assignment can result in observations which are deeply revealing and impressive with sharp meaning. Mr. Michals does not have to shout from housetops, incite riots or preach shallow metaphysics to make his truthful observations persuasive and convincing. It is good to hear he plans to photograph places without people and have the promise that he will show us interiors. Photographers, generally, have relied on exteriors and on people themselves to depict human expression, so Mr. Michals' difficult new project is commendable and provokes lively anticipation. After so much consideration of the exterior and the loneliness of man in society, one is impatient to see what a gifted young artist will show of the interiors and deserted places.

Signed: \_\_\_\_\_

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Position or Title \_\_\_\_\_

Address \_\_\_\_\_

In 1962 a one-man show of the photographs of Rudolph Janu was held at The Art Institute of Chicago. At that time I had known his work for a little more than a year and had seen it change from promising high quality to an individual expression of refreshing, singular character. I was surprised by the large response these quiet pictures provoked from the public: this remains one of the four most popular shows we have exhibited during our five years of activity with photography. Like the lithographs of Daumier, these photographs spoke to everyone, showing that Rudolph Janu understood and utilized one of the possibilities of the medium in which which he was working. Since then his photographs have been a consistent flow of fine technique balanced by a wealth of quietly stated subject matter, rich in observation and revelation. His is a poetry, not of events, but of the significance of the ordinary facts of existence. As with many other young workers with the camera, he makes appeals to consciousness more than to the conscience, arousing a personal emotion more than imposing some heavy self-expression on his viewers. He, also, is another who does not assume a condescending attitude towards "jobs" and does not omit his best from them. If public taste and perception are to be improved, this is the kind of artist who will do the most for them. He makes an assignment serve his purpose and finishes it with success. This is demonstrated by the simple, personal illustrations for John Bainbridge's Like a Homesick Angel. His intelligence and tastes in other fields than photography bring much to his interpretations. And with the unpeopled, quiet landscape he shows gifts as remarkable as those which make his pictures of man's social predicament memorable. After the distinguished work he has done in black and white, it will be of great interest to see what he will do in increasing our perception by a new work in color and naturally one is happy to recommend the encouragement of this.

January 7, 1966.

Mr. John F. Mathias,  
John Simon Guggenheim Memorial Foundation,  
90 Park Avenue,  
New York City, New York.            10016

Dear Mr. Mathias:

I sent off the statement in regard to Ray Metzker this morning and trust it has reached you.

I have just noticed on the statements by the photographers themselves that these sheets were to be returned to you. I am sending them herewith and once again I hope all this has not caused you too much trouble.

With best regards,

Yours sincerely,

Hugh Edwards, Curator of Photography.

In 1959, when Ray Metzker exhibited his remarkable My Camera and I in the Loop at The Art Institute of Chicago, the distinguishing quality of photographic objectivity which is his was already developed and formed. This show consisted of 135 prints which had been done as a master's thesis at The Institute of Design of The Illinois Institute of Technology and presenting it to the public was our first one-man exhibition by a contemporary photographer. As a large many-faceted picture of Chicago's Loop it had great public appeal, but this was only one of its attractions and undoubtedly was not what has caused it to be remembered ever since by visitors to our gallery. Those streets and crowds had been the subjects of other exhibitions which were soon forgotten. In Ray Metzker's photographs they were shown by an original and gifted individual who - it seemed instinctively - could extract the most typical features from chosen objects so that a complete form and spirit were unfailingly brought to the viewer. What appeared to be an unrelenting conscientiousness for austere abstraction was a controlled passion for reality. This was expressed by a rare faculty for bringing to the somewhat inflexible surfaces of photographic printing papers a new observation of human truths and those ordinary sights which are seen every day without the realization of their significance. All of it was done with a technical practice so expert that it went unnoticed and served to heighten the picture's entity and meaning. These photographs were as polished and concise as the maxims of La Rochefoucauld or Chamfort. I shall never forget the impression they made when I first saw them and there are always new discoveries every time I look at them again.

Since then Ray Metzker has produced a large amount of work which has never resorted to superficial facility or repetition, nor has it become fatigued and monotonous. One of his photographs always bears the signature of his gifts and is immediately recognizable. In his application for a fellowship he states his desire to follow a path in which he has already made remarkable beginnings. With his fine and balanced sense for composing visual representation, his ability to make use of the resources of photographic chiaroscuro, and his rare knowledge of both the advantages and the limitations of the camera, the work he wishes to do should result in an accomplishment which would reward any encouragement.