

An Autobiographical Narrative as a 60-Foot-Long Scrapbook

By Vince Aletti *Tuesday, Dec 28 2004*

Jim Goldberg, the San Francisco-based Magnum photographer, is best known for his tough, terrific 1995 book on teenage runaways and addicts, *Raised by Wolves*. In it, Goldberg pioneered a new kind of concerned, personal photojournalism—one that closed the distance between the artist and his subjects by including their snapshots and writings along with his pictures and interviews in a collage-like document that looked like a caseworker's log as filtered through the you-are-there sensibilities of Larry Clark and Nan Goldin. A similar approach to even more personal material dictates the design of the larger of two elements in this show: a 60-foot-long autobiographical installation called "Another Story." Clark's influence, as well as Robert Frank's, is immediately apparent, but despite its length Goldberg's exploded scrapbook has an intimacy and narrative logic all its own. Though that narrative—which includes his wedding, the death of his father, and the birth of his daughter (whose photograph silhouette is a motif)—is fitfully chronological, it is by no means linear or transparent. But the elusiveness of "Another Story" is part of its appeal. Goldberg doesn't claim to be a counterculture everyman, but his fill-in-the-blanks story invites us to merge his history and our own.



By photo: Jim Goldberg/Pace/Macgill Gallery

Jim Goldberg: *Coming/Going* (1971-2004)

Filling out the show are 20 prints from Goldberg's 1988 book *Rich and Poor*—straightforward, black-and-white environmental portraits of San Franciscans from both economic strata who provide their own often disarmingly revealing handwritten captions. "Me and Bobby been together two weeks and we're still happy," writes Susie, whose combination of low expectations and boundless optimism is typical. ("I am going to build an empire," insists one unlikely candidate for success.) But blunt realism also abounds: "I wish that Stanley and I could like each other when we are together," writes Patty. "But we don't."