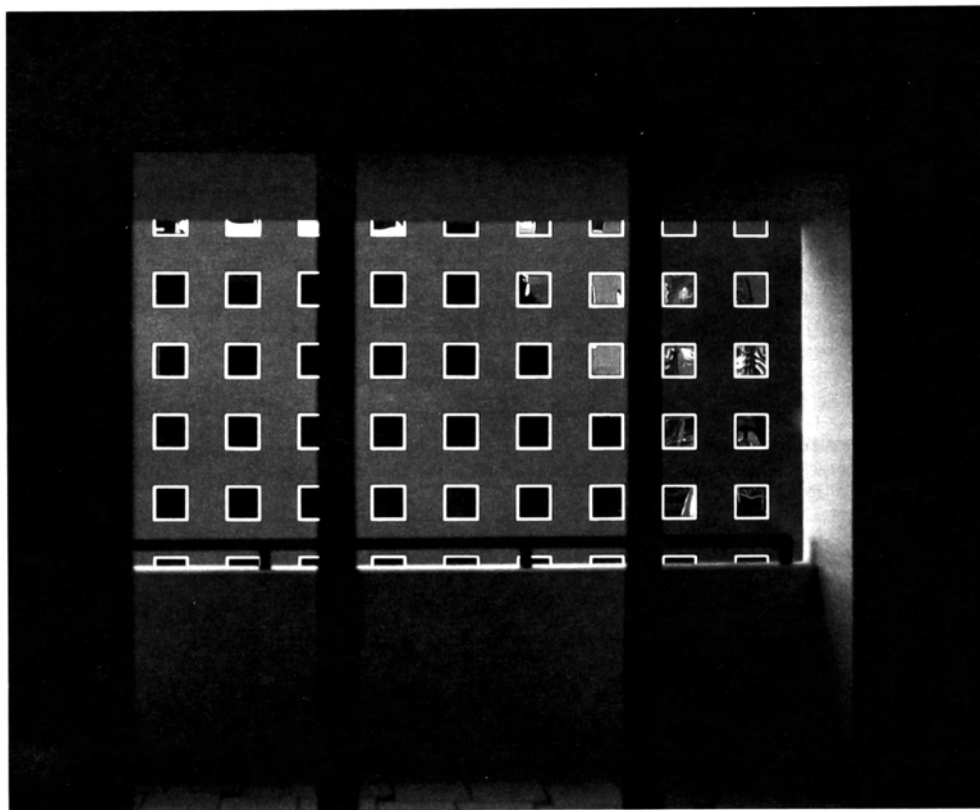


photography

BY SARA DASSEL

Making a Life Out of Making Art

Three emerging photographers strive for the elusive balance between art and everything else.



BOSTON IS HOME TO AN UNUSUAL NUMBER of talented photographers. The School of the Museum of Fine Arts, Massachusetts College of Art, Art Institute of Boston, Boston University, Harvard University, and a host of other local institutions turn out scores of promising undergraduates and graduate students, many of whom dream of recognition—or at least of paying the rent through their work. For many young artists, the fantasy of the art scene in the 1980s persists, feeding the notion of the young art superstar living a life of glamour and fame. But the meteoric ride to instant fame is a rare exception, and the life of an artist is full of rejection and hard work. Walking into a gallery or museum, one wonders how the artist got there. What does it take to be represented by a nationally known gallery, recognized in certain publications, or included in major museum exhibitions?

In 1998, shortly after completing graduate school, Oscar Palacio signed on with Elias Fine Art. At that time his work captured the poetic minutiae of his surroundings. A sweetly intimate image of several Froot Loops laid out across a crumpled wax paper bag illustrated Palacio's quiet eye for capturing things we might easily rush by in our daily lives. In the past few years his work has matured and become more directed. Referencing his early training as an architect, Palacio's strongest images are those of the overlooked details of cityscapes, such as *Balcony*, in which the regular pattern of windows in an apartment building is framed and bisected by the geometry of the sliding doors through which it appears. The precise crispness of the image is softened by barely visible reflections in the windows. The deep, rich palette of his work has become more

somber and soulful. Often shot at dusk or dawn, many of the works explore the quiet harmonies of blues and grays, with the subtle color changes defining the composition. After including Palacio's work in several group shows, Dan Elias gave him his first solo show in September 2001. Now preparing for a second show, he is clearly encouraged by Elias's support and continued interest in his work, but now would also like the freedom to seek representation in other cities and to have some hand in forwarding his career himself.

While having a gallery provides exposure, prestige, and support, Palacio still struggles to achieve wider recognition that would lead to supporting himself through his work. Like most artists, he maintains a day job, forcing him to spend evenings and weekends making art, itself a full-time job that not only includes the creative process, but also entails seeking

grants, applying for residencies, and entering juried competitions. Each connection he establishes helps to keep the momentum going. Citing graduate school as a key experience in his evolution as an artist, Palacio marvels at the lives of Mass Art mentors, such as Abelardo Morell and Frank Gohlke, and their ability to balance home lives, work, and artmaking. Despite the struggle in having no time for a "life" beyond work and art, he has found a supportive surrogate family of friends and a community in Boston. All is "tolerable" because Palacio is able to do his art. He is a fervent believer that success stems from the strength of one's work, and now he hopes to build on his initial success.

