

WHILE WE HAVE TOUCHED on the composition of the elements, what is included in the ingredients, even how they might be stirred, we have not really explored the order in which the ingredients are added.

In pictorial language, this is simply the order in which images are presented: the sequence, the beginning, the middle, and the end, if we are inclined to look at them linearly.

This can consist of a portfolio, usually twelve to twenty-four images; the current measure of proof of a sustained inquiry, the visual essay for lack of a better word, something that tells the story. Storytelling, as we think of it in "picture books."

This is important, because a sustained inquiry and the subsequent ordering of the sequence is the stuff of monographs, exhibitions, magazine publications, and the somewhat elusive idea of rigor. Since we are living in the paradigm of this perception, it merits attention.

I thank Edwards for sending me a number of images to play with. She did not send them in any order, or as a sequenced sustained inquiry. Instead, I got to choose as I pleased from several bodies of work—a menu consisting of unrelated courses. This, after all, is to indulge the magic of curating. She sent me eleven images, in all, from the years she was my student.

I also want to acknowledge that since I chose to write about more than the

obviously connected images she sent, she surrendered her images to this fate. I am intent to put together a narrative that will render the trove of individual images subservient to the meaning of the whole, based on something which grabbed me while clicking through the "buffet." Before we get to that, let me also mention that the stylistic consistency made wandering between distinct bodies of work so inviting.

This is the second level of subtext. If you remember the prologue, now we are playing chess on a three-dimensional, instead of a two-dimensional, board.

What Are We Looking at?

We already know how far the subtext of one or several closely related images can lead, and arguably each of Edwards' images deserves this individual attention. I trust, that at this point in the book, you can determine if and how you connect with them individually.

I now want us to take the additional step of putting them together as a sequence. As such, we will consider them not once, but reordered four times to examine the varied experiences and responses this can yield.

For argument's sake, let's call her untitled images One, Two, and Three. Version 1 is the order that immediately worked for me most deeply (Figures 34.1, 34.2 and 34.3).

How Can the Image Be Interpreted, Version 1?

Image order One, Two, and Three: the angel, the insect, and the thousand-mile stare.

The ethereal nature of the angel photograph, with its lack of focus stands visually apart from the in-focus images in a substantive way. Why? Because the winged beings are next to each other and the difference in visual treatment between them and the third image is pronounced. The angel and the wasp are immediate neighbors, not separated by the stare but instead punctuated by it.

This opens up a direct discourse between the angel and the wasp—or, between religion and nature. We have already visited this theme. But it did not so obviously lead to an acronym. Wasp plus a sprinkle of angelic dust inevitably leads us to WASP, White Anglo-Saxon Protestant. Image number Three may well ask the question, "Am I that?"

Okay, so what happens when we change the order?



FIGURE 34.1 One. © Jennifer Edwards