

Book Reviews

Words:
Dean Brierly

"I've found that there can be a very thin line between dreams and reality..."

The Great American Pastime, Jungian Journeys and Coney Island Chronicles

THE BIG SHOW

Charles M. Conlon
Abrams
224 pages, 210 photographs
Hardbound, \$35



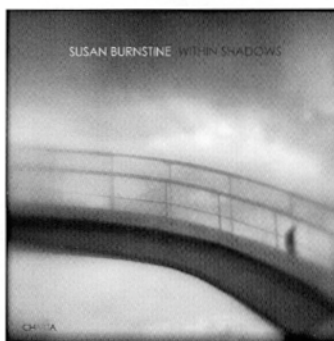
Although relatively unheralded during his lifetime, Charles M. Conlon is now generally recognized as the greatest photographer the Great American Pastime has ever known. Conlon took approximately 30,000 pictures of professional ballplayers between 1904 and 1942, yet considered his photography a hobby, and never left his job as a newspaper printer and proofreader. Moreover, the majority of his images were reproduced without attribution, effectively consigning him to decades of obscurity. His work was finally rescued from limbo with the 1993 Abrams book, *Baseball's Golden Age: The Photographs of Charles M. Conlon*. This follow-up volume adds further luster to his unmatched visual legacy.

Conlon's most famous photograph is a 1910 shot of Ty Cobb upending third baseman Jimmy Austin as he slides into the bag, but his real forte was portraiture, lensing ballplayers, umpires and managers in the dugout

and on the field. Conlon's style was simple and straightforward; he didn't attempt to create visual excitement through lighting or composition, but let the drama emerge from the famous and not-so-famous faces of his subjects. Conlon's honest and unassuming approach not only defined the face of baseball during this era, but also provided a subtle perspective on the culture at large. Each image is paired with a caption written by baseball historian and author Neal McCabe, who relates anecdotes, personality quirks and player quotes, including this gem from outfielder Lefty O'Doul on coaching Gary Cooper for his role as Lou Gehrig in *Pride of the Yankees*: "He threw the ball like an old woman tossing a hot biscuit."

WITHIN SHADOWS

Susan Burnstine
Charta
100 pages, 45 photographs
Hardbound, \$47.50



If Susan Burnstine had been around during the early part of the 20th century, she might well have become Carl Jung's favorite photographer. Burnstine's ongoing body of

work fluctuates between several interrelated series that explore her conscious and unconscious reality. Burnstine has stated that her images are based in large part on Jungian dream interpretation, and she has included a quote from Jung to open this beguiling new monograph: "Who looks outside, dreams; who looks inside, awakes."

Burnstine's dark-toned imagery has consistently been rooted in the dreams that have haunted her throughout her life. The frequency and intensity of her childhood nightmares sometimes made it hard for her to know whether the signs and images she encountered were part of her waking life or her dreams. "I've found that there can be a very thin line between dreams and reality, and so I made a deliberate choice to convey that line between black and white, yin and yang, and the conscious and unconscious worlds."

Despite the intensely personal nature of her work, Burnstine renders her subjects in abstract visual terms, typically as silhouetted figures either heading into an area of light or emerging from one. As a result, anyone can imaginatively enter these dreamlike scenarios.

Much has been made of Burnstine's penchant for using self-built plastic cameras, but it's her rigorous visual and thematic consistency that leaves such a profound and lasting impression.