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IN YOUR WORDS

Israel's ground assault in Gaza

Israelis bomb Gazans into the Stone Age, then get on their computers, connected to the Internet (while Gaza is without electricity), and complain about Stone Age rockets. Does anyone find these complaints slightly comical? Coming from a nation that literally illegally occupies outside their own 1967 borders causing the world and the U.S. endless problems in that region? Not only do the Israelis illegally occupy; they also build permanent illegal settlements essentially annexing land through war, a central prohibition of the Geneva Convention. Then, Israelis complain about resistance?!

JOHN, ST. LOUIS

Why can't Fatah let the Gazans into the West Bank so that Israeli forces can focus on fighting Hamas? Since it failed to pay Gaza's state employees, Hamas's popularity decreased and Palestinians are less willing to sacrifice. It is isolated after it lost support from Iran and Egypt's Muslim Brotherhood. . . . If Israel gets rid of Hamas, Fatah will be in a stronger negotiating position with Israel.

J. VON HETTLINGEN, SWITZERLAND

Subprime bubble for used cars

When predatory loan practices go unpunished, they are bound to recur. Then the borrowers get blamed for wanting something they can't afford. In the subprime mortgage fiasco, the people who were told they could afford a house were the ones who suffered, not the people who told them they could afford the modest houses they sought.

CHARLOTTE SCOT, OLD LYME, CONN.

These usurious car loan practices are alive and well in this area. It's another example of the American way of doing business: Fleece anybody dumber or more desperate than you are.

ROB L777, CONWAY, S.C.

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IN OUR PAGES

International Herald Tribune

1889 Jack the Ripper and the Police

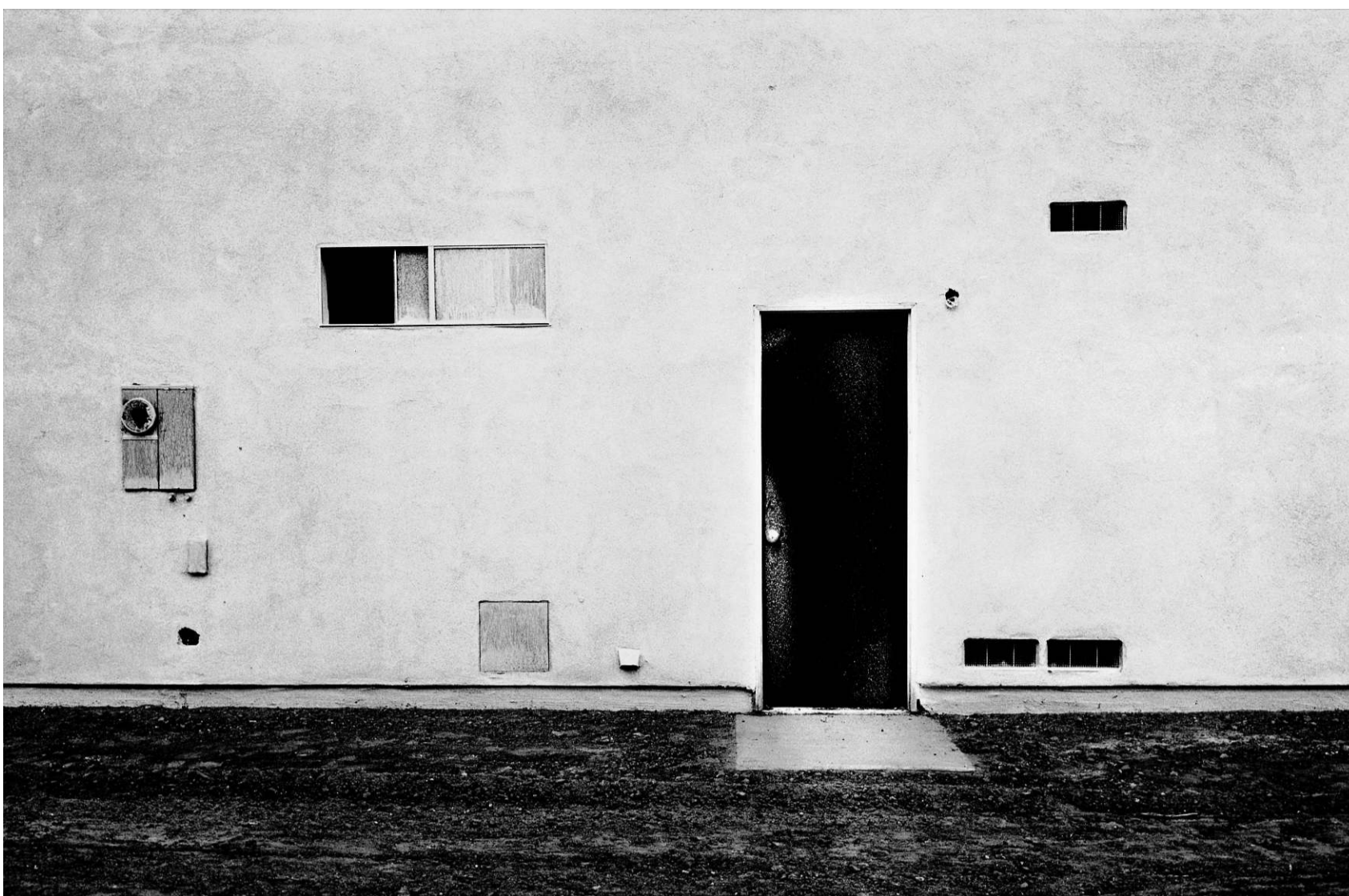
LONDON One of the most interesting and, perhaps, significant points in connection with the murder of Alice Mackenzie is one to which much attention has not yet been called. Every one of the murders displayed a knowledge of police customs and the rules of the patrol, upon which the murderer calculated closely. He calculates so very closely in this respect as to give fair reason for the assumption that he has either been connected with the police, or is intimately acquainted with some member of the force who furnishes the information, of the result of which he does not dream.

1964 Harlem Riots Flare Anew

NEW YORK For the third consecutive night police broke up an unruly, bottle-throwing crowd in the Negro community of Harlem tonight [July 20]. The steel-helmeted, nightstick-waving police scattered the two separate crowds without firing a pistol shot. Neither police nor members of the crowds were injured. Two Negroes were shot and wounded early today in clashes between roving gangs and scores of police. The violence, and demands from civil-rights leaders that the city act to protect the Negroes, prompted the mayor's office today to order a study of complaints of police brutality.

Find a retrospective of news from 1887 to 2013 at iht-retrospective.blogs.nytimes.com

Finding light in darkness

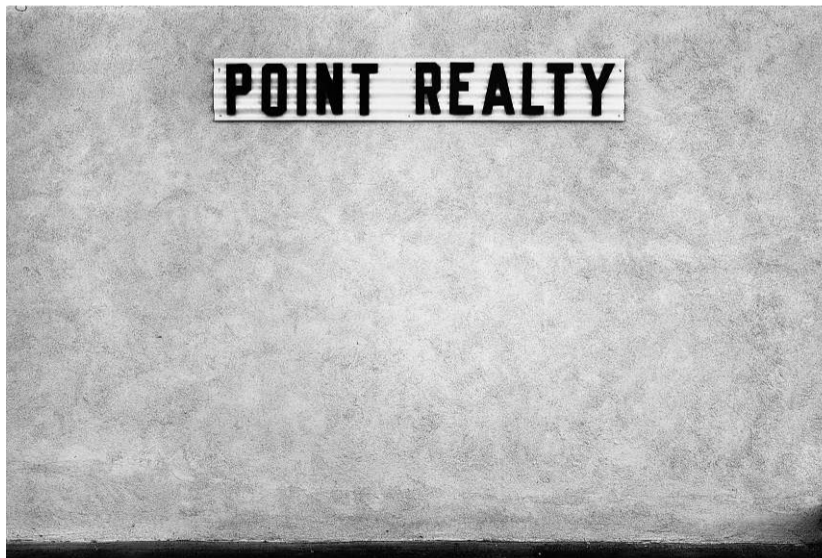


PHOTOGRAPHS BY LEWIS BALTZ/GALERIE THOMAS ZANDER, COLOGNE, EXCEPT FOR BELOW LEFT, CAPRICORNE FILM



BLEAK BEAUTY The American photographer Lewis Baltz is known for his minimalist shots of industrial areas and charmless residential developments. Now, an exhibition in Paris explores the influence of film noir on his work, including pictures from the works of Alfred Hitchcock, Jean-Luc Godard and Michelangelo Antonioni, whose 1964 film

"Il Deserto Rosso" ("Red Desert"), above left, is featured. Together, the images convey a sense of detachment and isolation but also have a disturbing beauty. The Paris exhibition, "Common Objects," runs through Aug. 24 at Le Bal, a multipurpose art space at 6, Impasse de la Défense, in the 18th Arrondissement.



Otto Piene, artist known for his kinetic work, dies at 86

BY BRUCE WEBER

Otto Piene, a German painter and sculptor known for his experiments in kinetic art and for working at the junction of art, nature and technology, died on Thursday in Berlin, where he was attending the opening of a retrospective of his work. He was 86 and had homes in Düsseldorf, Germany, and Groton, Mass.

OBITUARY

His death was confirmed by Joachim Jäger, head of the Neue Nationalgalerie in Berlin. The retrospective, "Otto Piene, More Sky," opened there and at Deutsche Bank KunstHalle on Wednesday as a joint project devoted to honoring Mr. Piene's influential role in post-war German art.

In 1957, along with Heinz Mack, Mr. Piene founded the Zero Group, a collection of artists dedicated to redefining art in the aftermath of World War II. Through the mid-1960s, the group attracted adherents from Japan and the Americas as well as Europe. Their work — to be celebrated in an exhibition at the Guggenheim Museum in New York this fall — anticipated developments in

land art, minimalism, conceptual art and performance art.

Among other things, the Zero artists explored new modes of painting, including monochromes and unusual materials: Mr. Piene himself experimented with smoke, soot and burned paint. They employed light, open space and movement as rudiments of artworks and used technology to create artistic effects.

Mr. Piene's work included mechanized light sculptures. In one work, "Light Ballet," exhibited at a New York gallery in 1965, a roomful of aluminum spheres, bulb-studded globes and brass columns, illuminated in sequence, glowed and dimmed in an endless program, enveloping viewers in a pattern of oscilloscopic blips and racing shadows.

In an interview at the time, Mr. Piene said he had been fascinated with light from boyhood, when he began contemplating how far a candle could throw its light and cast its shadow. During World War II, he recalled, he found the tracers and searchlights that striped and dotted Germany's night skies "hectically beautiful."

"Light is my medium," Mr. Piene said. "I hate objects that just stand there demanding interpretation. Previ-

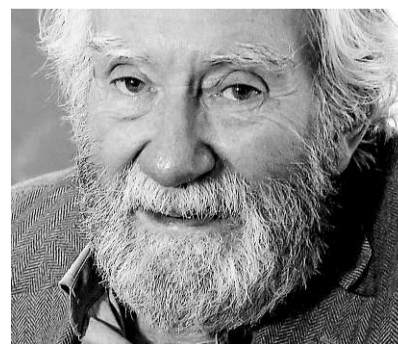
ously, paintings and sculptures seemed to glow. Today they do glow; they are active. They don't merely express something; they are something."

In the late 1960s, Mr. Piene began creating projects in the air over public spaces, events he called sky art. These were collaborations with scientists, engineers and often large groups of volunteers in which he created inflatable tubes or other balloonlike shapes made of polythene or other plastic substances, filled them with helium and allowed them to float above buildings or landscapes, which became backdrops for artistic events unfolding in the sky.

Perhaps Mr. Piene's best-known sky art was "Olympic Rainbow," consisting of five different-colored polythene tubes, each more than 1,500 feet long, which were inflated and released to close the 1972 Summer Olympics in Munich.

Mr. Piene was born in April 1928 in Bad Laasphe, east of Cologne and Düsseldorf in west-central Germany. He studied painting and art education at the Academy of Art in Munich and the Kunstakademie Düsseldorf and philosophy at the University of Cologne.

He went to the United States in 1964 and taught at the University of Pennsyl-



WOLFGANG KUMM/DPA, VIA ASSOCIATED PRESS

Otto Piene was a pioneer of "sky art," creating projects in the air over public spaces.

vania before becoming a fellow at the Center of Advanced Visual Studies, a provocative academic venture at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology that encouraged collaborations between artists and scientists. Mr. Piene became director of the center in 1974 and led it for nearly two decades, expanding its commitment to producing art for civic consumption. (The center has since merged with M.I.T.'s visual arts program.)

Under his leadership, the center created "Centerbeam," a massive multi-

media construction. Commissioned in 1977 by the Documenta 6 exhibition in Kassel, Germany, and later mounted on the National Mall in Washington, it involved 22 artists and a phalanx of scientists and engineers and featured laser-projected images on moving steam screens, solar-tracked holograms, a 144-foot water prism and helium-lifted sky sculptures.

In 1996, Mr. Piene received one of the four annual prizes for artists awarded by the American Academy of Arts and Letters. His works are in numerous museum collections around the world, among them the Museum of Modern Art in New York, the Walker Art Center in Minneapolis, the National Museum of Modern Art in Tokyo, the Stedelijk Museum in Amsterdam and the Centre Georges Pompidou in Paris.

"He was a developer and a discoverer," Mr. Jäger said. "So many of his ideas are relevant today, from project-oriented work, to discussion-led thinking, to the ephemeral; all of that is now commonplace. That is a central contribution of his work."

Melissa Eddy contributed reporting from Berlin.

Watergate and lessons not learned



Albert R. Hunt

LETTER FROM WASHINGTON

William S. Cohen served as an influential three-term United States senator, as well as secretary of defense, and is a respected global thinker. He believes his defining political moment was a summer four decades ago.

As a 33-year-old freshman Republican representative from Maine, he was a central figure in the House Judiciary Committee's vote on July 27, 1974, to impeach President Richard M. Nixon.

It was one of the most important and high-minded deliberations in congressional history. Unfortunately, it failed to become a model for subsequent actions. The impeachment of President Bill Clinton and the calls to follow the same course for George W. Bush and now Barack Obama are petty and frivolous by comparison.

Mr. Cohen recalled members' struggling with the impeachment standard of "high crimes and misdemeanors." These recollections are a reminder that American politicians can rise and re-

spond to crises. Mr. Cohen, who ignored advice in 1972 not to go on the Judiciary Committee — because "it doesn't do anything" — said lawmakers were short on precedents and could look only to

English law and the politically tainted effort to impeach President Andrew Johnson more than a century earlier.

There was, however, the voluminous record of the charges, including the nationally televised hearings of the special Senate Watergate Committee. To prepare for the impeachment deliberations, Mr. Cohen memorized the testimony before the Senate panel to compare it with his committee's hearings.

He and most of his colleagues, excluding a few Nixon sycophants on the right and Nixon-haters on the left, took their role very seriously, he said. "We realized impeachment had to be of such gravity," he said, it would have to rely on "the fundamental foundation of the Constitution if you're going to remove a president that people have just elected."

The mood was tense and the outcome was in doubt well into July. Mr. Cohen was called a "Judas and traitor" by Republicans in his home state, and his children were threatened.

The swing bloc — a half-dozen Republicans, including Mr. Cohen, and three Southern Democrats — zeroed in on charges of obstruction of justice. In particular, they focused on allegations that Nixon directed a cover-up of the attempted break-in by campaign operatives into the Democratic National Committee headquarters in the Watergate building, and abuse of power, including using the Central Intelligence Agency for domestic political purposes, trying to get the Internal Revenue Service to go after political opponents and breaking into a psychiatrist's office to find dirt on a leaker, Daniel Ellsberg.

A crucial figure in these deliberations was Representative Charles E. Wiggins of California, the president's chief defender. "He was a great lawyer," who forced impeachment advocates to develop a deeper and more substantive case, Mr. Cohen said.

On July 27, the committee voted 27 to 11 to impeach the president, with all the Democrats and six Republicans, including Mr. Cohen, in the majority. A week later, other court-ordered tapes were released that clearly implicated the president; Mr. Wiggins and most other Republicans came out against Nixon, who then resigned.

The panel focused only on the larger fundamental issues. It rejected impeaching the president over tax evasion or the bombing campaign in Cambodia.

Its successors ignored this precedent in voting to impeach Mr. Clinton for lying about sex, or proposing to remove George W. Bush for the Iraq war or his signing statements to interpret legislation, and now some Republicans are calling for proceedings against Mr. Obama for executive actions his opponents consider improper. "You look at the substance of these charges and you say, this is not serious," Mr. Cohen said.

Forty years ago, after the committee voted early that Saturday evening — and it was clear a president was going to be removed for the first time — I walked from the committee room in the Rayburn Building to the Capitol. The flag was flying, tourists were milling about, there were no troops in the streets. It was a seminal American moment. (BLOOMBERG VIEW)

EMAIL: pagetwo@nytimes.com