Leo Holub's photography is biographical, which is to say that it is life-tracing. His pictures are concerned with the flow rather than the inert matter of reality — with sudden gesture, the flash of expression, the momentary conjunction of figures in motion. His work, unlike that of the painter or the ordinary still-photographer, is not a controlled combination of static shapes, nor is it a caressed surface or a bravura exhibition of technical mastery. The reality which Holub pursues does not stand still long enough to allow that. His camera is an instrument of capture, and the field in which he operates is time. From time's rapid passage, by lightning-swift decision, he cuts an instant. The crucial choice which he must make is not one of space, angle, or distance, but of moment; and the photographic image which results is not a composition in the usual sense — it is not an arrangement, but the record of an event. What qualities it has come from the significance and suggestive power of the moment captured. Holub's photographs seem to be full of lucky accidents; actually, these seeming accidents reflect intention and decision. They are no more guided by chance than the bullet which finds the heart of a bird in flight.

Camera in hand, Holub walks about the campus of a much photographed university. The landmarks of the cliché-littered college scene do not interest him, nor do the institution's official image, or the abundant beauty spots dear to art photography. The photographs which he brings home are not handsome set-pieces, but they have the virtue of intimate truth. The rare quality of Holub's portrait of the university is that it emphasizes the fleeting and perishable life in it, rather than the institutional facade. His
eye is not on the "physical plant" but on the population which hurries through it. Time in universities has a special poignancy. Its flow is marked by the rhythm of the academic year and by the come and go of student generations, and its substance is youth itself, constantly spent, constantly replenished. The buildings on Stanford’s campus are not old, yet how much life has already passed through them, unrecorded and gone forever! Reunion oratory and yearbook photography are petrifactions, deader than death; Holub’s photographs capture moments of living actuality. Because of them, something of the present life of our university will survive.

Leo Holub was born in Decatur, Arkansas, on November 25, 1916. After graduation from high school in Oakland, he studied at the Chicago Art Institute and the California School of Fine Arts, supplementing his scholarships by working in the Grass Valley gold mines. Subsequently he worked for various Bay Area designers, advertising agencies, and print shops, and taught drawing at the California School of Fine Arts. He is at present a Senior Planner in the Planning Office of Stanford University.

The forty-five photographs which compose this book are a selection from the more than two hundred exhibited at the Stanford University Art Gallery in the winter of 1964.

Lorenz Eitner
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