

Arthur Tress

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Brooklyn-born photographer Arthur Tress initiated his brown study of the unconscious in the late '60s, interviewing children about their dreams and then staging their fantastical scenarios for the camera. Making a directorial incursion into documentary photography at a time when the genre had yet to see such theatrical proponents, he fabricated subtle, delicate, pleasurable images from a signature mix of Surrealist horror, Pictorialist miasma, and Futurist rupture. The selection of nineteen black-and-white prints here, ranging from 1968 to 1982, offer a titillating dip into the macabre and the glorious: In one image, a boy aiming a toy machine gun is curled menacingly inside a blown-out television set in the midst of a hardscrabble field; in another, three children, acting out a dream of flying, are silhouetted atop a chain-link structure. In *Boy in Burnt-out Furniture Store*, 1969, a gorgeously incoherent arrangement of frames (window spaces and wall holes) and the illusion of depth and luxury afforded by a painted backdrop render the boy of the title nearly invisible. Although Tress is, sadly, absent from contemporary discussion of staged photography, much is owed this idiosyncratic master of premeditation.