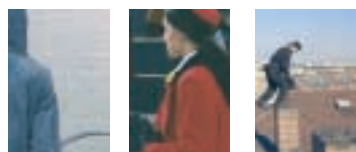


ARTIST'S CHOICE

In each issue, Art on Paper invites an established artist to introduce the work of a lesser-known artist.

The Contemplation of Sight Itself

The Photographs of Stephen Waddell



by Jeff Wall

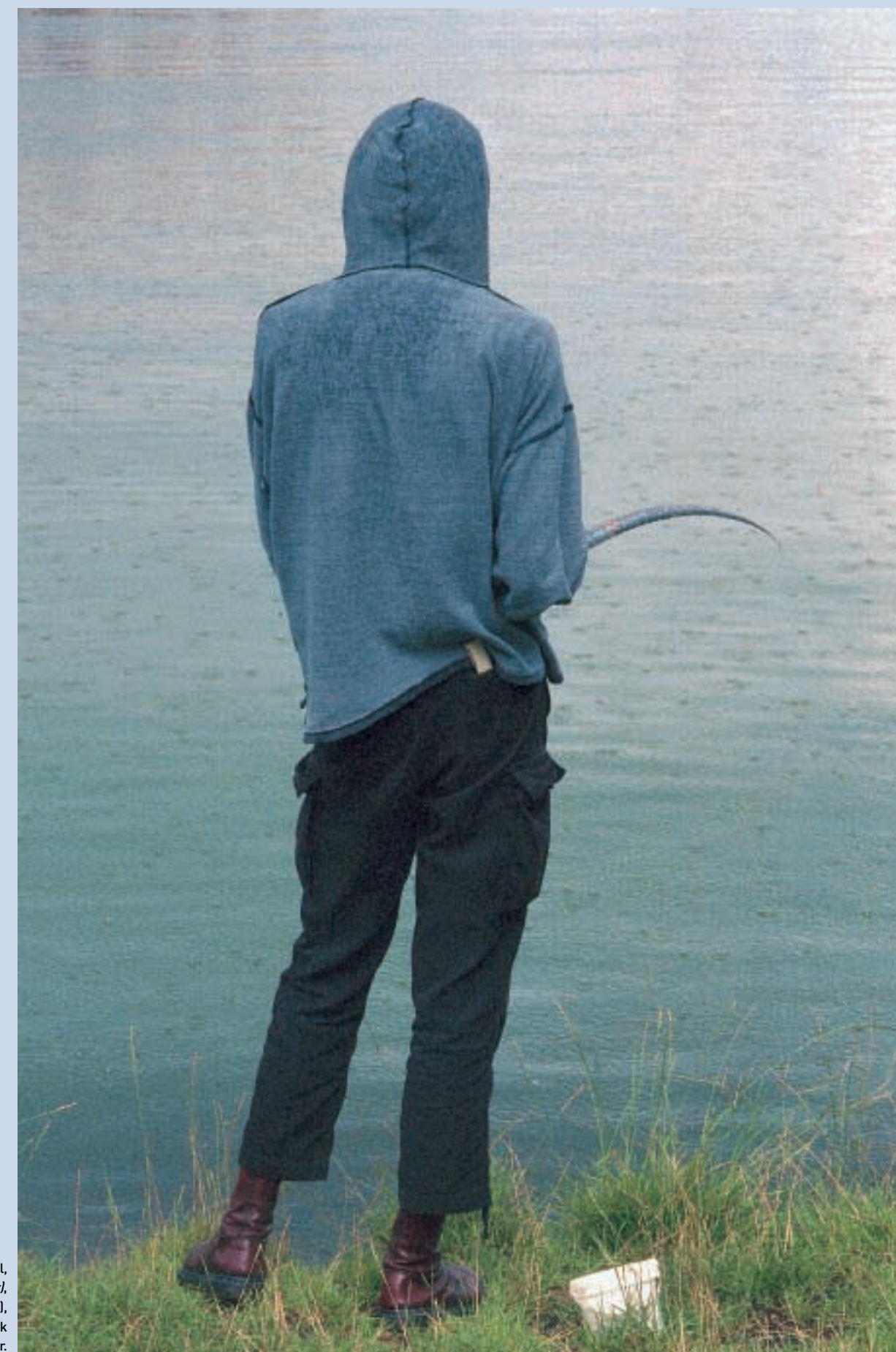
Stephen Waddell is one of those patient spirits whose art is devoted to depiction, to the contemplation of sight itself. This is neither the oldest nor the original form of art, nor possibly the most significant these days, but it may be the most stable, consistent, and richest in possibility. Its models are Velázquez, Cézanne, Manet, Atget, and Walker Evans.

Waddell's photographs are usually taken surreptitiously in public places. He started doing them as notations for paintings, since he is also a painter, but they have become an independent practice over the past six or seven years. I think the painter surprised himself to find out he was such a good photographer. As he has gotten more involved with photography, he has taken care to avoid complicating his technique. He concentrates on notation and suggestion, a delicate and circumspect observation of people in their labor, leisure, and their solitude. He almost never alters anything with a computer.

Waddell is an outstanding colorist and has a material, chemical feeling for color, both as pigment in painting, and as any and every colored object and creature he encounters with his camera. A photographer who works as Waddell does can't pick and choose the colors of the things depicted the way a painter can; he or she has to take them as they are and take them quickly. But there are still ways of composing in color, even under these conditions, and Waddell knows about these ways.

His pictures are sometimes rather big, sometimes rather small, but whatever the size, they are in the correct scale. This sensitive sureness of judgment is uncommon in the age of the unquestioned enlargement of photographs. □

Jeff Wall is an artist who lives and works in Vancouver, Canada. His most recent work will be seen at Marian Goodman Gallery in New York in April.



Stephen Waddell,
The Fisherman (Le Pêcheur),
color photograph (59 x 39 in.),
2000. Courtesy Monte Clark
Gallery, Vancouver.



Stephen Waddell, *Boarding*, color photograph (56 x 37 in.), 1999.
Courtesy Monte Clark Gallery, Vancouver.

Waddell's photographs are usually taken surreptitiously in public places.

Stephen Waddell, *A Chimney Sweep*, color photograph (46 1/2 x 56 in.), 2003.
Courtesy the artist.