

Bia Gayotto

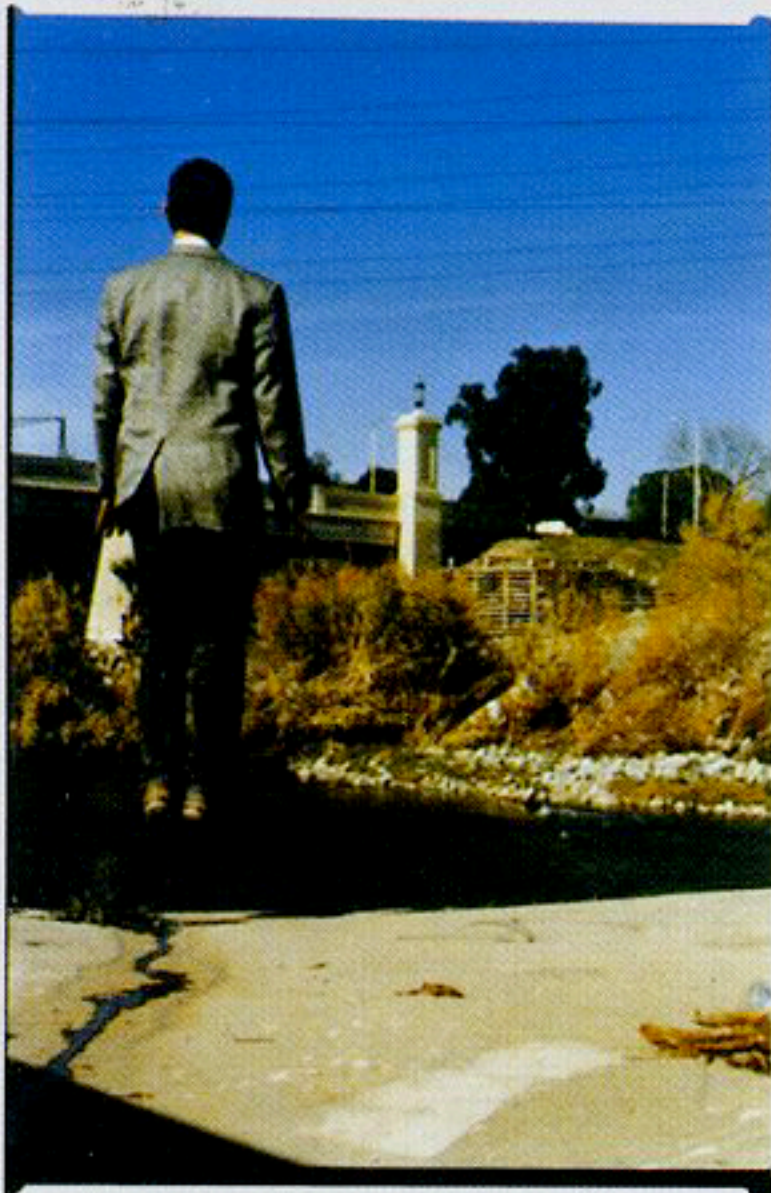
Bia Gayotto employs a collaborative process of chance operations in the creation of her photography. Friends, colleagues, and neighbors participate in the process either as subjects or as direct collaborators, and Gayotto sometimes uses other artists' works as reference. The unexpected outcome of this unusual symbiotic process becomes the artwork.

Like Italian conceptual artist Alighiero Boetti whose interest in systems and creativity led him to make works in partnership with a variety of people, including close friends, family members, art students, and Afghan war refugees, Gayotto is keenly interested in setting up a situation that at first glance may be judged simplistic, but in the end yields surprisingly original and varied results. In *Thirteen Friends Jumping* (1998–2000) Gayotto recruited some of her close friends who were then photographed in their favorite outfits as they jumped in various outdoor locales throughout Southern California (as well as Brazil). The idea for the creation of this series was very simple: once Gayotto decided on a certain structure for the photograph, she asked the participant to pick a location, positioned the camera, and then directed the subject to behave spontaneously in front of it. Judging from the results, *Thirteen Friends Jumping* was a fun project to work on.

As the person jumped, Gayotto maintained the camera in a frontal position, clicking the shutter twenty-four times (or the length of a 35-mm film roll); this exercise was repeated thirteen times. The unedited images were lined up, side by side, following the order in which they were taken, then framed as one work. Although conceptually different, *Thirteen Friends Jumping* recalls Robert Longo's *Men in the Cities Series* (1979–82) in its depiction of moving bodies; however, unlike Longo's contorted and writhing figures, Gayotto's subjects are having a good time, making the most of this opportunity while getting their fifteen minutes of fame. The artist's control of the photographic medium allowed her to successfully capture the bouncing bodies, freezing them in mid-air. As one follows the individual frames from left to right, the movement created by the photographic sequence brings to mind the stop-action photographs of nineteenth-century photographer Eadweard Muybridge.

With the introduction of randomness and chance into her work, Gayotto surrenders a certain amount of control. Like the American avant-garde artist John Cage, she welcomes uncertainty as a by-product of her work in the belief that chance can generate change and open new possibilities. By structuring her collaborations with people she is familiar with, she creates a comfort zone that enables a playful and spontaneous interaction between artist and subject. Cage was an optimist who believed in art's capacity to bring balance into the world. Gayotto shares his philosophy: ultimately her work is about friendship, trust, individuality, taste, and the taking and surrendering of control.

Alma Ruiz
Associate Curator
The Museum of Contemporary Art, Los Angeles
November 2002



Thirteen Friends Jumping: Daniel Marlos,
Los Angeles River, Highland Park, CA, USA, 1999
24 C-prints (Framed), 8 x 47" (detail)