

CHANGING FOCUS

The world's biggest photography festival captures a medium's transformative ways. **BY AMY BAKER**



↑ With *Invasion 2008*, Martha Rosler makes a provocative statement about politics and the role of the media from both a feminist and anti-war perspective. Her *Great Power* series is part of Contact's feature exhibition, *Still Revolution*, on display at the Museum of Contemporary Canadian Art (page 57).

→ At Angell Gallery (page 55), Toronto-based photographer Geoffrey Pugen presents *Another Side of You*, a collection of works exploring the bizarre boundaries between fact and fiction. *Morning After* is just one of Pugen's beautifully manipulated images that ask the viewer to consider fictitious constructs that are whimsical, yet strangely revealing.

Photography is arguably the modern world's most popular and accessible form of visual expression. As such, it is constantly challenged to progress with the times and the needs of its innumerable devotees, all the while remaining true to its primary intent—to document life, from the extraordinary to the mundane. Technologically, the medium has evolved from its pioneering daguerreotypes to instant film to the present-day ubiquity of digital cameras and photo-sharing websites. It has advanced in spirit, too: First as an inexpensive way to preserve one's portrait, then as a means to reveal exotic locales and, of course, a vehicle for artistic interpretation. Now, with their border- and class-defying proliferation, photographic images can act as educational tools and help advocate for social and political change.

This capacity for change, coupled with photography's resilient nature, is explored in this year's **Contact Toronto Photography Festival** (page 54) and its theme, "Still Revolution." In its myriad forms, the medium has drastically transformed the ways in which images have been created, disseminated and viewed over the past two centuries. Throughout this month, their impact is evident at more than 220 venues across the city—neighbourhood cafés, commercial art galleries, TTC subway stations and even at Toronto Pearson International Airport. The largest event of its kind in the world, Contact features the works of over 1,000 local, Canadian and international artists and welcomes an estimated 1.5 million visitors in a celebration of photography's power to shape—and in some cases, revolutionize—the way we see the world. **W**



↑ Donald Weber's *Orthodox Church, 2008*, captures the essence of loss at Vorkutlag, a gulag settlement in northwestern Russia. In his *Pikto* (page 56) show, entitled *White Nights, Russia After the Gulag*, Weber documents the landscape and lives of the descendants of former *zeks* (inmates) and prison officials.

TIP

For a list of exhibitions, call 416-539-9595 or see www.contactphoto.com. You can also pick up the official—and highly informative—Contact Festival magazine at periodicals retailers and participating venues throughout the city.