

Bill Jacobson

ROBERT KLEIN

Boston

Bill Jacobson's out-of-focus gelatin-silver prints used to be so overexposed they read like charcoal smudges. Some of those photographs hung in this show, providing sharp contrast with his more recent images of underexposed nocturnes filled with gravitas and grief.

Most of the pictures in the "Thought Series" are portraits. As with his earlier prints, they strive to capture a passing moment, the rest stop on the road from life to death. Jacobson has spent much of the past decade fashioning elegiac photographs that confront life's transitory nature and depict the very flesh of grief. He continues to wrestle with that theme here.



Bill Jacobson,
Thought Series
#1638, 1995, gelatin
silver print,
24" x 20".
Robert Klein.

Thought Series #2319 shows a man's face tilted upward, his eyes closed, lips pressed grimly together. His aquiline nose dominates the image, pulling it into a formal play of line and shadow as the line of the nose drops to the hollow of cheekbone and eye. The man's look of nobility is underscored by his utter stillness. With the sharp angles of his face blurred by the soft focus, it feels as if we've already lost him and are looking at his death mask.

Jacobson intersperses these darker moments with figure studies, like *Thought Series* #2202, which shows the grace of lines and hollows in the posture of a bowed, seated man. Two photographs leave the figure behind and capture the quiet of lapping water. While these don't stand out on their own, they act as a welcome respite in an otherwise intense and rigorous exhibition.

—Cate McQuaid