

# Accidental Evidence

Mike Mandel & Chantal Zakari

In 2024, we were on press in Istanbul, at Offset, for the fifth printing of *Evidence*. We had been working on the book for the better part of a year, updating many of the image files with new scans and rebuilding the layout from out-of-date software.

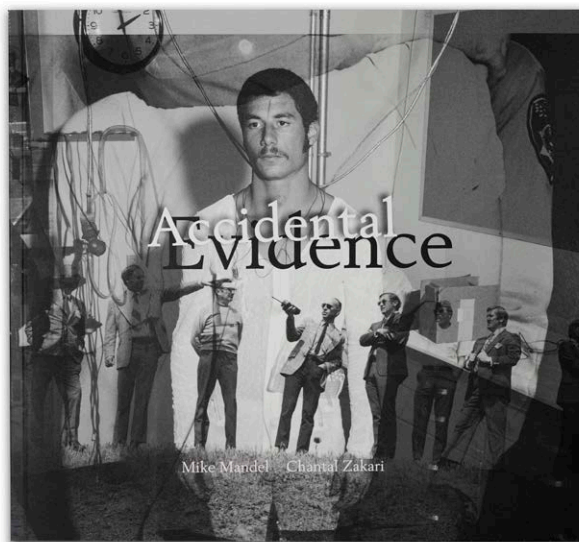
The experience of being on press is a restless combination of waiting and working. We sit in a vacant office awaiting the call to come to the press. When that call comes, Mike compares the printed sheet with the match prints. Adjustments are made, and then the press starts up again, and five minutes later, he reviews the changes. This could continue several more times until he is finally happy with the outcome, and then Mike signs the printed sheet, which is why the press sheet is called a signature.

A couple of hours later, it's the second, or maybe the third time we're down there, and Mike is busy evaluating a sheet. For a moment, Chantal wanders off from the viewing area and starts gathering sheets lying on a pallet around the corner. They are *Evidence* photographs printed on top of other *Evidence* photographs. These are the "make-ready sheets", the paper fed into the press at the outset that calibrates the ink levels and alignment. These sheets will be used repeatedly, image laid upon image with increasing densities of ink, until eventually, they become blackened waste material to be trashed.

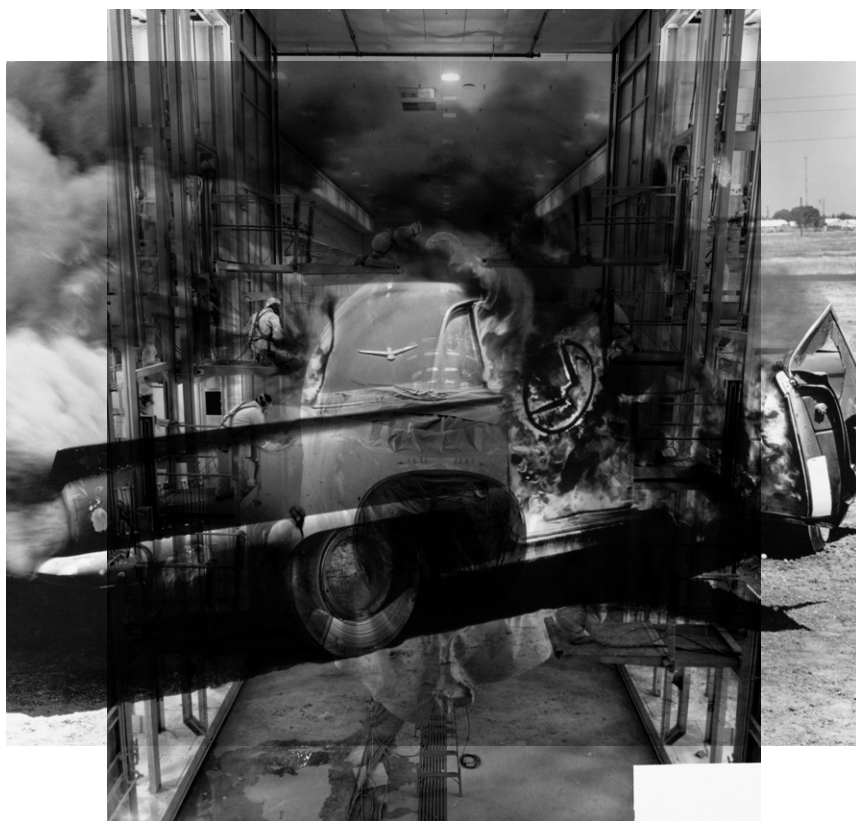
*Evidence* has been in print for nearly fifty years, and many in the photographic community are familiar with the images and the structure of the book. It is a carefully organized sequence of facing pages.

In contrast, *Accidental Evidence* embraces the interactions of images that invade each other. Photographs that appear in different sections of *Evidence* are now mashed together. Here, the picture of the glowing airplane is collaged onto the body of the man attached by wire to the clock. On another sheet, the plane is mostly obliterated by the deep black tones of an exploding T-bird. In yet another, the man and clock fit snugly into the white shirt of another man being restrained tightly in a chokehold by the police.

Some of the *Evidence* make-ready sheets were printed on top of another book's make-readys. *Evidence* images intersect the poetic landscapes made by photographer Faraz Ravi for his book *Seasons of the Fallen*, which



soft cover with french folds, 10x10.5"  
52 pages including a four-page gatefold  
offset printed 5 colors  
Eighteen Publications, September 2025  
\$50



was printed days before we arrived. In *Evidence*, images of the land are merely backdrops for experiments and tests. In contrast, the warm-toned flora from *Seasons of the Fallen* takes root. We start to collect all the make-ready sheets, and between press checks, we are no longer just waiting around; we commandeer a room to evaluate and cut out the pages that show promise.

Decades ago, Mike and his original collaborator, Larry Sultan, were introduced to the make-ready whenever they published a postcard of one of their billboard projects. They'd be on press at Mike Roberts Color Productions in Berkeley, California. Roberts was a long-time photographer and publisher of colorful landscapes of the West. Scattered everywhere on the floor of the pressroom were make-ready color collisions of motels, restaurants, and Western

tourist destinations. Larry and Mike thought all they needed to do was to come by regularly and collect these sheets, cut them up, and then bind them into unique books. It was an idea they had in their back pockets but never got around to.

In *Accidental Evidence*, photographs that appear in different sections of *Evidence* are now mashed together. Lists and texts meant to contextualize the photographs now intersect the images directly. We have embraced these little accidents and, in doing so, constructed a new sequence that playfully undermines the original. To recreate the richness of overlapping layers of ink *Accidental Evidence* is printed with five colors. As the book unfolds, layer upon layer of ink dominates the pages, and *Evidence* lies buried beneath.



For more information, pictures of the book and a sample PDF file contact: [mike@thecorner.net](mailto:mike@thecorner.net) or [chantal@thecorner.net](mailto:chantal@thecorner.net)  
 Info on previous work can be found at <http://thecorner.net>

*Accidental Evidence* will be available for purchase through the artist's website in September, Printed Matter Art Book Fair (Sep) and the ICP Photobook Fest (Oct).

**Mike Mandel** is a conceptual photographer known for his artist's books: *Myself: Timed Exposures* (1971), *Seven Never Before Published Portraits of Edward Weston* (1974), *The Baseball-Photographer Trading Cards* (1975), and *Making Good Time* (1989). In 1977, Mandel and Larry Sultan collaborated on the seminal photographic book *Evidence*, a book comprised of file photographs from engineering, corporate, and government agencies. A publication of Mandel's 1970s conceptual projects, *Good 70s*, was published by J & L Books and D.A.P. in 2015. In 2017, the San Francisco Museum of Modern Art exhibited a solo show of this work. In 2017 *People in Cars* was published by Stanley/Barker and Robert Mann Gallery. *Zone Eleven*, a series of surprising photographs by Ansel Adams retrieved from various Adams archives, was published by Damiani in 2021.

**Chantal Zakari** is an interdisciplinary artist, designer and a professor at the SMFA at Tufts University. Committed to the creation of artworks that are accessible to a wide audience, her studio practice has embraced the rapid changes in reproduction and distribution of book and printed ephemera. She has self-published several artist's books: *PicSpill* (2025), *Pictures from the Outside* (2023), *Arsenal News* (2020), *Drop Dead Gorgeous* (2020), and *webAffairs* (2005). Her work was shown at The ICP NY, ICA Boston, Lothringer13 Munich, FotoFocus Cincinnati, and other venues, and reviewed in Artforum, ArtPapers, Afterimage, Wired, Le Monde, Boston Globe, Lenscratch amongst others. Her work is in the collection of Yale University, the Addison Gallery of American Art, and her artist's books are in many private and public book collections.

Under the imprint of **Eighteen Publications**, together, Mandel and Zakari publish their collaborative artist's books. *The State of Ata* (2010) speaks to the clash between Islam and secularism in Turkey. It weaves together photographs, interviews, artists' interventions and archival imagery. *They Came to Baghdad* (2012) is a response to the Iraq War, and *Lockdown Archive* (2015) is a record of all the images uploaded to the web that relate to the military occupation of Watertown after the Boston Marathon Bombing in 2013. *Shelter in Plates* is a series of six commemorative plates that is a companion project to *Lockdown Archive*. *Accidental Evidence* (2025) is their most recent collaboration.