

A DECADE OF COLLECTING

RECENT ACQUISITIONS BY THE HARVARD UNIVERSITY ART MUSEUMS

GARY SCHNEIDER

American, b. 1954

*Meditations*, 1993

*Gelatin silver prints, each 93.2 × 75.8 cm*

*Davis Pratt Fund, Richard and Ronay Menschel*

*Fund for the Acquisition of Photographs,*

*P1997.5.1-4*

Over the past decade, Gary Schneider has stretched the boundaries of portraiture in a remarkably diverse series of projects that traverse the photographic medium. In complex images that seduce the viewer with their luminescent surfaces, Schneider enlists the photographic process—from its chemistry and materials to explorations of light and time—as the linchpin of his work. Schneider's *Meditations* is a unique installation of four enlarged handprints, which stand as the artist's self-portrait. He created this work by placing his wet hand on an 8 × 10-inch piece of sheet film; the excess water and chemicals in the artist's perspiration interacted with the film, which was simultaneously "flashed" with light in the manner of a photogram. The negative was then developed, printed in enlarged form, and toned.

The incredibly layered and graphic prints made from these cameraless negatives appear to render substance but in fact are only a photographic trace of the hand's chemistry conjured through darkroom alchemy. At first glance, Schneider's handprints seem to exactly duplicate one another, but each is unique, printed and toned somewhat differently in order to create subtle relationships between the images' varying responses in the viewer. Through *Meditations*, Schneider questions traditional notions of identity in photographic representation.

—DMK

