

## 509

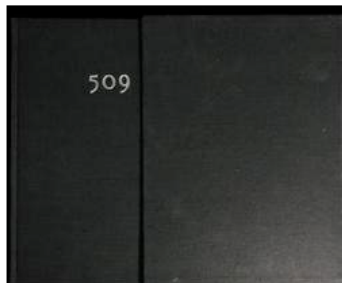
REVIEWED BY CHARLES DEE MITCHELL, PUBLISHED ON FRIDAY, JULY 30, 2010

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Pamela Pecchio | **509**

PHOTOGRAPHS BY PAMELA PECCHIO

Daniel 13 Press, , 2010. Hardbound with Slipcase.  
Unpaged pp., Color illustrations throughout, 9x12".



509 Photographs by Pamela Pecchio Published by Daniel 13 Press, 2010.



intellectual bona fides. The next is pure hoakum courtesy of the poet Edgar A. Guest, "It takes a heap o' livin in a house t' make a home."

I confess I registered Bachelard's name before I read the actual quote, and his keeping company with Mr. Guest in this context turns out to make a heap o' sense. The Bachelard quote reads in part, "But over and beyond our memories, the house we were born in is physically inscribed in us. It is a group of organic habits."

Confronted with an essentially text-free book, I scour it for any clue to what I am dealing with. On the colophon page of Pamela Pecchio's *509*, we learn that the photographs were taken in 2005 in Burlington, North Carolina. The book's title remains unexplained, and Pecchio's two epigraphs come from two radically different ends of the literary spectrum. First there is a fairly lengthy quote from Gaston Bachelard's *The Poetics of Space*, providing the project its



509, by Pamela Pecchio. Published by Daniel 13 Press, 2010.

So we are to assume, I supposed, that this is the house Pecchio grew up in, a tidy home on what looks like a lovely, wooded suburban lot. This actually turns out not to be the case, although no further information is provided by the book itself. The house belongs to her publisher, so the book is not an autobiographical exercise, but rather a sort of forensic investigation.



509, by Pamela Pecchio. Published by Daniel 13 Press, 2010.

One generation's tour through the vagaries of a previous generation's middle-class taste is dangerous photographic territory, rife with potential cliché and cloying sentiment. It is a project that is developing into its own genre, the book as a form of assemblage with the photographs acting as found objects. From their silence will emerge a sense of the lives lived in these rooms. But just how much can we learn from any one set of empty rooms that we haven't already picked up on from similar projects? On each such foray, the isolated family photographs and the overabundant knickknacks are unique to their location and yet most often repeat the same story: Generations are commemorated and stuff piles up.



509, by Pamela Pecchio. Published by Daniel 13 Press, 2010.



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But even if this type of project has become a genre, the photographic equivalent of the multi-generation family novel, there are clearly some who practice it better than others. Pecchio presents a gentle, engaging series of images, and she quietly reveals a great deal of information. From some of the collected memorabilia and old photographs, we know that the previous resident had a military background, and this may explain the shelves of history books. Much of the furniture has either been bought as antiques or passed down within the family. As the family grew the attic became a bedroom and in one room a sofa blocks a door. (Yes, it's hard to let things go.) And whoever made the decorating decisions really, really liked wallpaper. In one room they chose matching drapes.

To her credit, Pecchio never winks at or nudges the viewer, and she has not buried some secret for us to ferret out. Camera in hand, she takes

a measured inventory of this place and demonstrates ways in which  
the past maintains its hold on the present. —CHARLES DEE MITCHELL

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