

## Ronnie Tessler / PHOTOGRAPHS

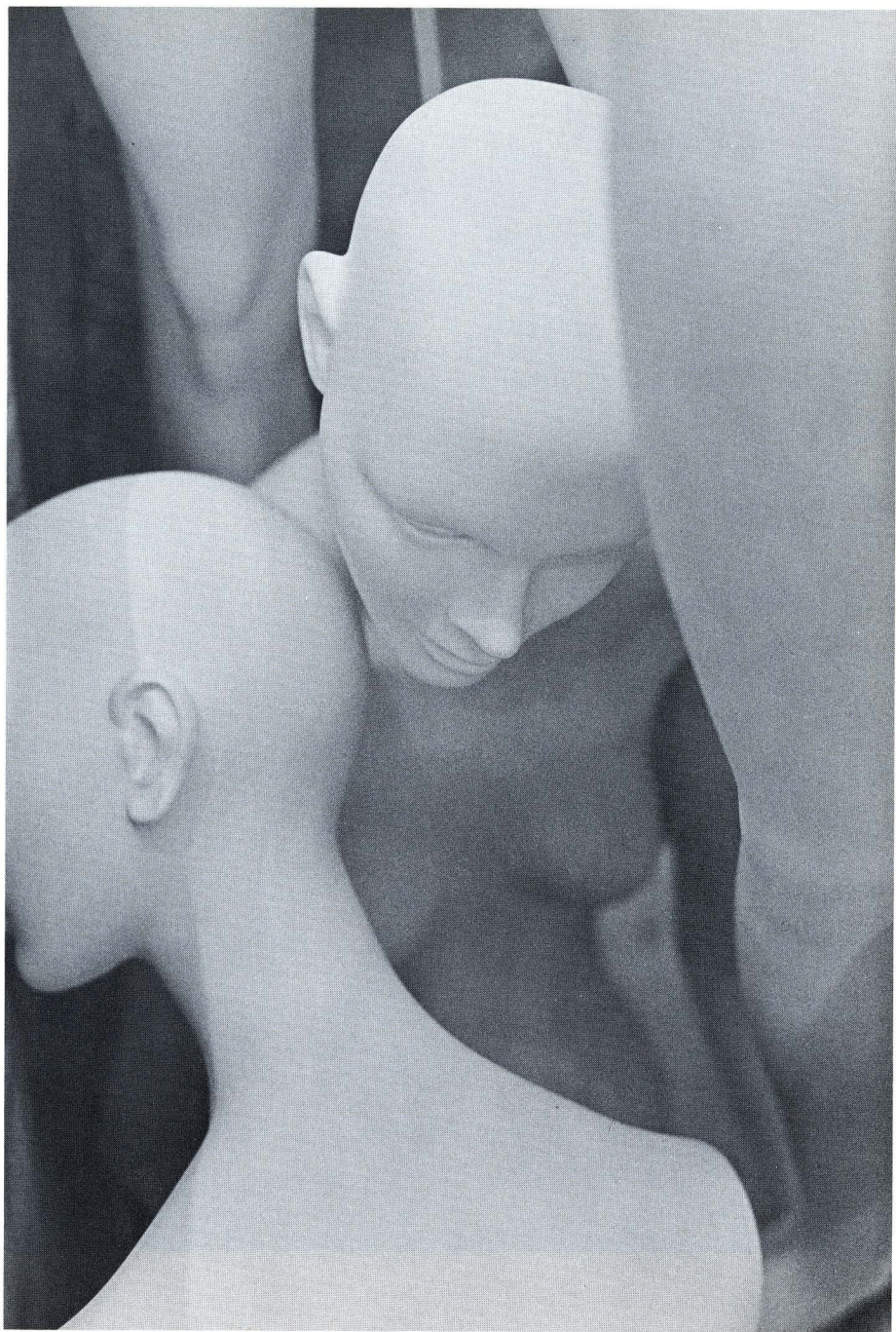
### UNTITLED WORKS

Sometimes when that's all I have time for or when I need to test out my perceptions, I walk around the block with my camera. The contact sheet results can always show me something. At other times I pursue a project like frumpy garden sculpture, tacky dancing studios, major-ettes, Dr. Ballard's mutt show. — RONNIE TESSLER.

### IMAGES

*Untitled Works*, 1975-6, black and white photographs.













## RODEO SERIES

I got into the *Rodeo Series* as an attempt to understand why anyone would enter into such a violent sport, facing death and injury every day.

The Rodeo is a macho thing for the riders themselves as they perform for each other (perhaps it is slightly homosexual in that regard), but most of all the Rodeo is an elaborate ritual.

Before they start a show, the riders do a series of very contorted exercises — rather supermanish, Charles Atlas things, sitting on their saddles on the ground stretching and pulling their limbs. They resin their chaps and gloves with tremendous ceremonial intensity. And finally when *that* is all over for a particular bareback ride (the rules and forms vary for each event) the man must come out of the chute with his arm waving free sitting way up high on his mount and spurring the horse's shoulders in a rotating motion. During the ride he can't change hands, which is almost impossible. For each ride there are points for rider and mount and afterwards the riders dissect performances with more zeal than we discuss a football game, offering tips and compliments to each other. And of course they pit themselves against the clock and the animals. They're all maimed. Ropers lose fingers; everyone has broken collarbones, legs and ribs, noses, lots of scars. Rodeos are dangerous and the possibility of death is always present.

And although many of the devices used to control the animals are not supposed to hurt them, occasionally you see horses go berserk in the chutes: they're bleeding and their faces are incredibly contorted. They use cattle prods on the bulls and they shit before every ride and the horses fart all the way through theirs. It's really violent and you can't help but sympathize with the animals. And yet when the rider rushes out of the stall on an animal you cheer for him because you want him to finish his ride and live. — RONNIE TESSLER.

## IMAGES

*Rodeo Series*, 1976, black and white photographs.



















