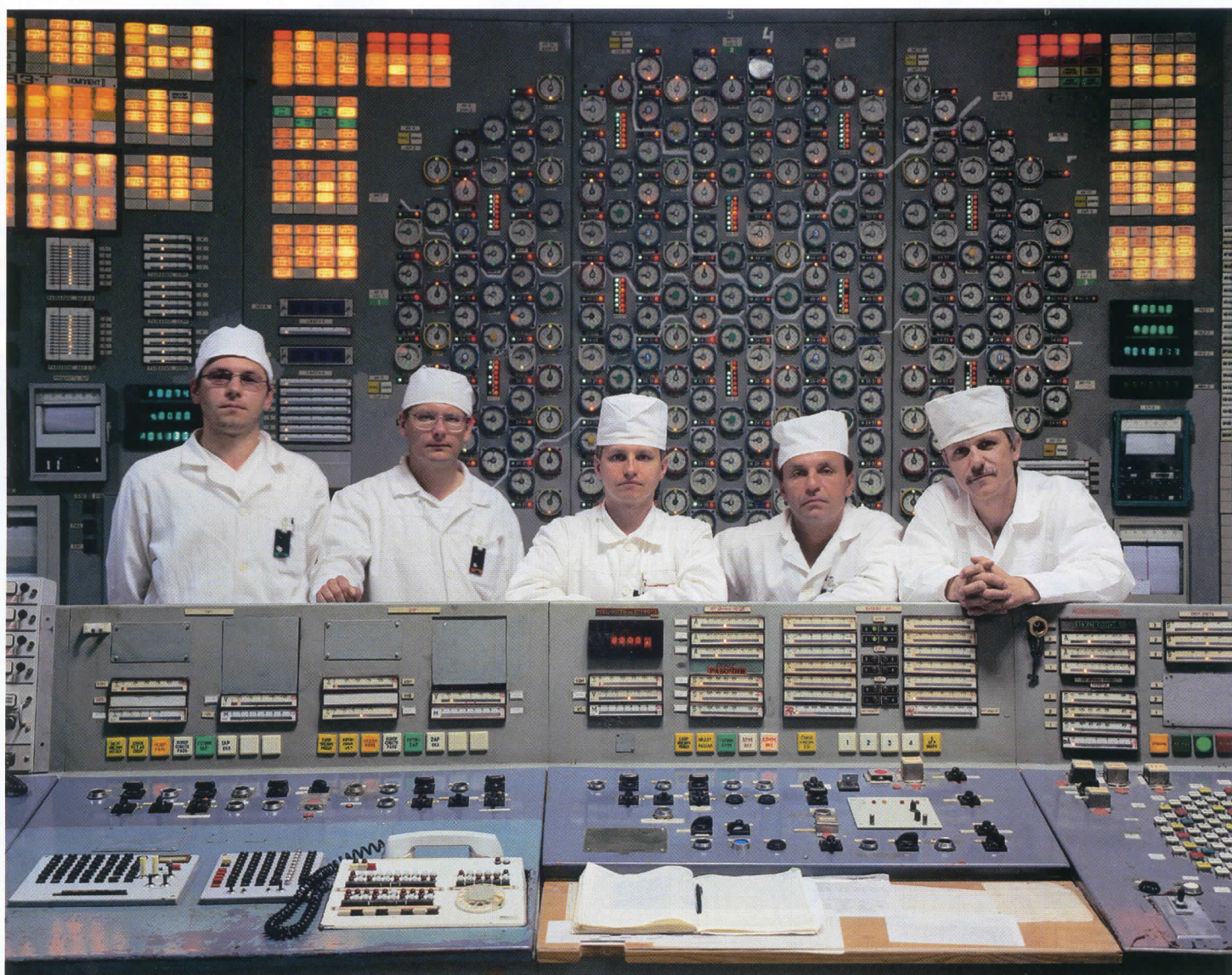


100 Suns by Michael Light (Alfred A. Knopf Publishers, \$45) It is hard to call the images in this stunning book beautiful, given that they depict 100 of the 216 above-ground nuclear tests conducted by the United States in the 18 years after Hiroshima. Despite the fact that they were made by military photographers strictly for the record, they pack an emotional power that matches the explosive force of their subjects. Chosen from declassified government files, the full-page, often full-spread images need no editorializing; they are captioned only with the name of the test (John, X-Ray, Wahoo, Checkmate), its yield (in

kilotons, or, later, megatons), its location (Nevada or the South Pacific), and its date. Some show the familiar, spectacular mushroom cloud; others capture the bomb a split-second after detonation, when its fireball looks more like a virus seen under an electron microscope. All are bone-chilling, but the scariest images include human figures, usually unwary soldiers in the foreground of a distant blast. But one photograph shows only the viewers: goggle-wearing officers gazing at an explosion while seated comfortably in Adirondack chairs, all bathed in a supernatural light. —R.H.

Zones of Exclusion: Pripyat and Chernobyl by Robert Polidori (Steidl & Pace MacGill/D.A.P., \$50) Decay is the focus of Robert Polidori's recent work, but the word takes on a radioactive meaning in his second monograph. In his first, *Havana*, the photographer pictured the charming if politically charged disrepair of Cuba's colonial architecture. In *Zones of Exclusion* the decay comes from 18 years of abandonment since the world's worst nuclear accident, at Russia's Chernobyl reactor. Shot in 4x5 by existing light, Polidori's richly detailed images show not just the facility's ruined corridors and control

rooms (a few still staffed by white-robed nuclear caretakers) but also the ghost city of Pripyat where its workers once lived. In Pripyat, apartment buildings stand neatly robbed of their window glass, mocked by a rusted ferris wheel; hospital operating rooms are frozen in time, looted of ceramic tile and surgical lights; and kindergarten classrooms are strewn with limbless dolls, toy tanks, gas masks, and the occasional portrait of Lenin. "Does any generation have the right to risk the safety of so many future generations?" asks Polidori in a short afterword. His eerie pictures provide the answer.—R.H.



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DEADLY
LIGHT

BAD
SCIENCE

B O O K S



Americans in Kodachrome

Ten years ago we visited printer Guy Stricherz in his Manhattan studio, where we learned that he was hoarding materials needed for the defunct dye-transfer process in a couple of restaurant-sized refrigerators. He needed that stash for an ambitious project: to make large-scale dye-transfer prints from a growing collection of 35mm Kodachrome slides. Spawned by a single 1952 slide of Stricherz's own family, the collection was culled from thousands of Kodachrome snapshots dating from that durable film's 1940s-through-1960s amateur heyday. Solicited through newspaper ads, discovered in friends' attics and closets, sometimes purchased at flea markets, the pictures have an appeal that goes beyond simple nostalgia for the rounded styling of Philco TVs and early Frigidaires. The images Stricherz found combine an unpretentious, spontaneous aesthetic with Kodachrome's tactile sharpness and rich color palette.

Ninety-five of these pictures make up **Americans in Kodachrome 1945-1965** (Twin Palms, \$60). They show Mom serving bundtcake in a two-toned kitchen, families ogling new appliances or gathered around a table pristinely set with maraschino-cherry-topped grapefruit halves, and kids getting outdoor baths in galvanized washtubs. Smiling girls show off their birthday Barbies, six-shooting boys their new Roy Rogers regalia, farmers their prize piglets and corncobs. "The book is a photographic portrait of ordinary Americans during that mythical time between the war that we won and the one that we lost, when everything seemed possible," says Stricherz. "The Kodachrome transparencies are like minute and fully colored fossils, mirroring reality in exquisite detail." —R.H.

