



2001 (negative); 2003 (print)

Chromogenic print

Image: 6 7/8 x 10 1/8 inches (17.5 x 25.7 cm)

Sheet: 8 x 10 3/8 inches (20.3 x 26.4 cm)

ZOE STRAUSS

American, born 1970

LET'S LOOK

What is going on in this picture?

Describe the **setting** of this photograph—time of day, season, and location.

LET'S LOOK AGAIN

How do you think each boy is feeling?

Where do you think the boy in the air will land?
Then what will happen?

SOUTH PHILLY (MATTRESS FLIP FRONT)

This young boy is in the middle of a daring flip over a pile of worn mattresses. His arms swing out to his sides, helping him to complete his rotation. The boy's perfectly vertical body and round face create the shape of an exclamation point that hovers over the blue horizontal line of the top mattress. How did he jump so high and where will he land? Will the mattresses cushion his landing, or will he soar right over them?

In the **background**, another boy in a white T-shirt looks on. He holds his hand up to his mouth, perhaps reacting to his friend's acrobatic moves. The pavement, sidewalk, and red brick building with graffiti tell us that this scene takes place outside on the street or perhaps in an empty lot. The mattresses are missing some of their stuffing and the pile has shifted to the right, suggesting this game may have been going on for a while.

Zoe Strauss, the artist who took this picture, believes that "an important role of art is to mirror what is happening in the world." She often photographs what is most familiar to her: the people and places in her neighborhood in South Philadelphia. This particular photograph is part of her larger project to document life in the city. During the ten years that she worked on the project, Strauss held annual outdoor public exhibitions of over two hundred of the photographs. Each of these pictures tells a story, and together they present an intimate **narrative** of Philadelphia.

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