

Over the years I've favored different photographs in *The Americans* - mostly my favorites have been from among Frank's shots of groups of people. Last month I was visiting Los Angeles and *St. Francis, gas station, and City Hall* kept coming to mind as if the picture was offering to serve as a kind of template or filter through which to ponder the city. In the image, I love how St. Francis has his cross held to the hazy, setting sun and I love the modest flowers somebody placed at his feet and that are reaching to the light. To me Francis seems to take little notice of his immediate surroundings; his focus and intent goes beyond the gas station and beyond city hall - it's all on the sun. I think the picture speaks of the difficulty and unlikeliness of seeking transcendence in our shabby world, but also suggests that a state of transcendence is, after all, out there and possible. If I were to try to duplicate this picture today, I might try to slip in someone with a leafblower.