

Boys & Girls

A group exhibition curated by Alex Berns at No Gallery - 105 Henry Street #4. NYC, NY 10002.

Artists exhibiting: **Alex Bag, Beverly Buchana, Chris McFly, Duncan Hannah, Em Rooney, F.P. Boué, Genesis P-Orridge, Heji Shin, Matias Añón, Penelope Spheeris & Richard Kern**

December 16th 2021 - January 30th, 2022
Opening Reception: December 16th, 4 - 8 pm.

Exhibition text by Saul Ostrow.

Boys & Girls is a show about photography – focusing on what benign photographic images do. This is hinted at by the show's title Boys & Girls, which even when used by Tom Ford to name a lipstick line, sends a mix of messages. For those of a certain generation this phrase almost always ends with a celebratory, “all together, now” but, today, given the politics of identity have become a cultural preoccupation this phrase has negative socio-political and cultural implications.

While the socio-cultural are implicit in all the works in this exhibition, they are explicitly addressed in works such as by Penelope Spheeris' film *I DON'T KNOW* (1970/1971) in which a lesbian is excited by the idea that she can be in a relationship that can pass for being heteronormative, curator Alex Berns' Boys & Girls primary focuses on are the aesthetic issues this term conjures up; reminding us that feminine & masculine aesthetics are not merely a question of identity, style and fashion, but principally that of experience, desire, idealization and commodification. Consequently, Berns has gathered together photographs, video stills, videos and ephemera produced by a multi-generational cohort of artists who share a number of common characteristics and aesthetic proclivities.

Dominated by black and white photographs running from the gritty to the refined, the images that make-up Boys & Girls range from the traditional snapshot to the studio set up, what has been excluded is glossy commercial photography, and the now ubiquitous “selfie”.



While the narratives these works engage vary from the intimate to the comic surprisingly, the predominant aesthetic rather than being expressionistic, or romantic tends to the classical – the self-enclosed rather than purposeful or didactic. Yet even with this scope, collectively Boys & Girls do not form a homogeneous whole, instead, it is a partial index of what might be called portraiture.

Compositionally, most often the “subjects” occupies the mid-ground or fill the frame. Whatever they are doing, attitude-wise they are distracted or have turned inward – no one smiles for the camera nor do they acknowledge the photographer. Some of these images appear to be candid, others documentary, in some cases the subject adapting, or assuming an identity performs for the camera; for instance Genesis P-Orridge close-up of herself as a Hitler and Ava Braun hybrid, Alex Bags' still of Harriet Craig made-up to appropriate the image of Joan

Crawford to play a role in a film parody, or the Polaroid of the pro-fighter Diego Garijo in bizarro sheikh drag by Chris McFly. Inversely, works such as Matías Añón's photo of a boy with sunglasses reflected in a Gucci store window (2021), Duncan Hannah's nearly classical reclining nude “Michelle” or the banality of every day as portrayed by Beverly Buchanan's Leon and His Dogs (1994), all have subjects that are supplemented by ephemera, tropes, and anecdotes.

In the gallery, Boys & Girls has been self-consciously installed so

the proximity of one work to another will alter their relationships and breakthrough their isolation – to do this Berns uses the objectified gaze of the photographed subject to direct the viewers' attention from one symbolic moment to the next. By turning each metaphorically into a pinpoints on a map, Berns further hints at his true subject – the exhibition is a counterpoint, which antithetically demands its, audience to take-up certain responsibilities and recognize that whatever the images, be it Richard Kern's image of a sedate, young woman sitting on a settee posing with an AK 47, or *Untitled (4 seconds Underground)* (2010) by F.P. Boué they

all partake in a poly-vocal exchange initiated in the mid-1870s, with the advent of modernity, mechanical reproduction and their image-world, As such, each work in *Boys & Girls* explicitly serves an editorial purpose – so, while the inclusion of a posed snapshot of a motley crew from Warhol's factory, camping it up for the camera, or Heji Shin's cropped image of two white men having anal sex may not be considered portraits – with their inclusion the exhibition itself becomes more than the sum of its parts, critically demonstrating how each of these images in its own way, reveals something of photography's condition.

Founded in 2019 and located in the lowest of the Lower East Side, Manhattan – No Gallery is an exhibition space focused on emerging and mid-career artists.

Alex Berns is a curator and private art dealer specializing in obscure modern art as well as mid to late career contemporary artists. He has worked on shows with Key Club, 414 west 121st street and Gondola Wish, as well as staging numerous apartment shows under his own name.

Saul Ostrow is an independent curator and critic. Since 1985, he has organized over 80 exhibitions in the US and abroad. His writings have appeared in art magazines, journals, catalogue, and books in the USA and Europe.



Richard Kern

Cassandra (X is Y), 1990
Vintage silver halide print in original matt, (AP of edition of 10) 9¾ x 12¾ x 1½ in. (framed) RKE0001



Heji Shin

D'n A, 2018
Inkjet print, 1/2 + 1AP (metal frame by Pentti Monk-konen) 37½ x 25½ x 1 in. (framed) HS0000



Em Rooney

Three Generations at the County Fair, 2021
Silver gelatin print, wood, aluminum leaf, glass
11 x 8½ x 1 in. (framed) ER0001



Penelope Spheeris

I DON'T KNOW, 1971
Single channel video
20:15 min, open ER0001



Chris McFly

Lola Pisola (portrait of Diego Garijo), 2021
Polaroid, 4¼ x 3¼ in.
CM0001



Matias Añón

Untitled (window), 2020
C-print of Gucci store window (edition of 1 w/ 1 AP)
17 x 13 1/2 x 1 1/2 in. (framed) MA0002



Poster of Warhol Factory courtesy of Duncan Hannah

Gift from Rene Ricard to Duncan Hannah circa 1960's
17 x 13 1/2 x 1 1/2 in. (framed) MA0002



Alex Bag

Harriet Craig, 1998
Polaroid 4 x 3 in. - 11 x 8¾ x 1¼ in. (framed)
AB0005



Genesis P-Orridge

Eva Adolf Braun Hitler, 2002
Video still mounted on plexi (Edition 1/3) 15 1/2 x 11 1/4 x 1 1/2 in. GB0038



Genesis P-Orridge

Eva Adolf Braun Hitler, 2002
Single-channel video
8:45 min, edition of 5 GB0039



Duncan Hannah

Michelle, 2006
Slide film, 2 x 2in
DH0001



Beverly Buchanan

Leon and His Dog, 1994
Color photograph, 18 x 11 1/2 x 2 in
BB0001



F.P. Boué

Untitled (4 seconds Underground), 2021
Braced wood panel, black gesso, white gesso, customized plywood panel, image-less Cibachrome print, archival ink jet print, bookbinders' thread 16 x 9 x 2 in