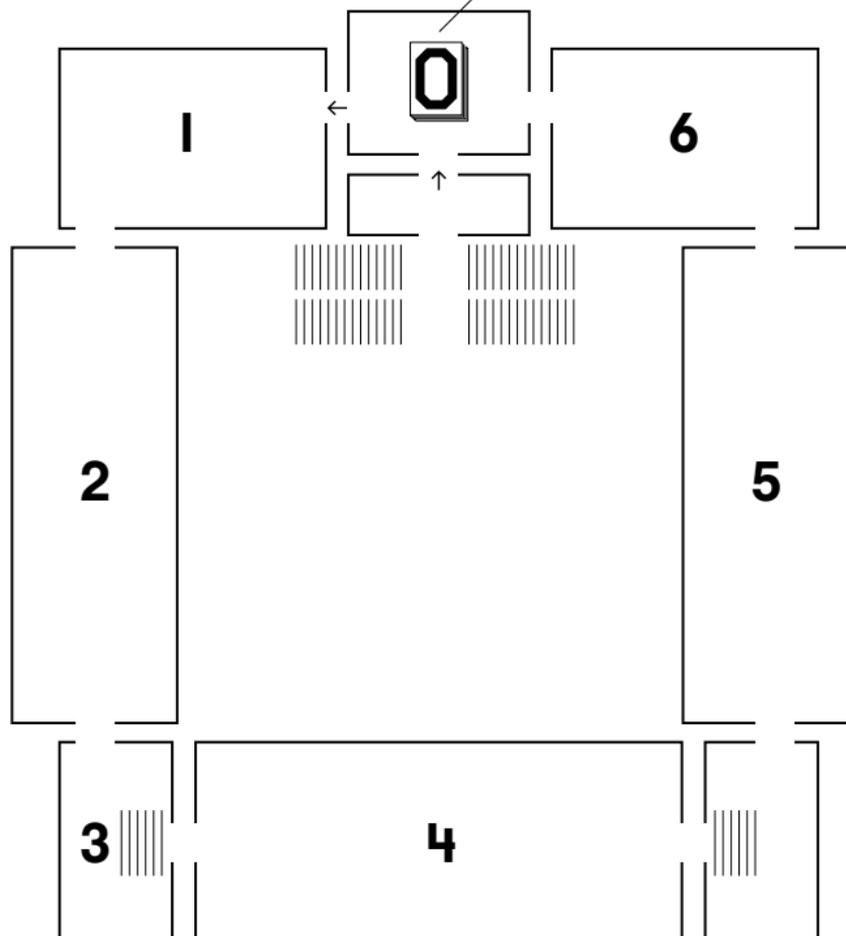


**Nobuyoshi Araki, Tim Barber,
Richard Billingham, Mark
Borthwick, Mike Brodie, William
Christenberry, Larry Clark, Barbara
Crane, Bill Dane, Corinne Day,
William Eggleston, JH Engström,
Walker Evans, Lee Friedlander,
Luigi Ghirri, Nan Goldin, Jacob
Holdt, Jerry Hsu, William Klein,
Jacques Henri Lartigue, Ari
Marcopoulos, Ryan McGinley,
Joel Meyerowitz, Slava Mogutin,
Daido Moriyama, Mark Morrisroe,
Ed Panar, Tod Papageorge, Walter
Pfeiffer, Jack Pierson, Stephen
Shore, Dash Snow, Alec Soth, Joel
Sternfeld, Gus Van Sant, Jürgen
Teller, Andy Warhol, Henry Wessel,
Garry Winogrand.**

**Only the Good Ones:
The Snapshot Aesthetic Revisited
23. 1. – 6. 4. 2014**

Exhibition guide

Gallery store
Exhibition catalogue
available here



The exhibition traces the snapshot, a photograph taken by an amateur for their own personal use, as a source of inspiration for other areas of photography – especially art photography in the American context of the past fifty years.

The snapshot, spontaneously capturing a commonplace moment, with minimal direction and little appreciation for technical, artistic or journalistic convention, forms a fundamental part of photographic production throughout the 20th century and is now proliferating globally on social media. Mention of the snapshot aesthetic today refers to a style that developed primarily in the United States between the 1960s and 80s and strongly defined the appearance of the 90s in the arts, magazines and advertisements on both sides of the Atlantic. The exhibition tracks the roots of the contemporary snapshot and reveals the history of the snapshot aesthetic outside the vernacular of photography, as the story of diary intimacy, the poetry of the everyday and the catchy undercurrent of the street, occasionally breathing fresh air into stiff artistic and commercial convention.

The curator of the exhibition and author of the illustrated exhibition catalogue published by Galerie Rudolfinum is Michal Nanoru.



I

The naissance of the snapshot essentially dates back to the 1880s, when the exposure time was reduced to seconds and Kodak marketed its first roll-film camera. With sales in the millions, photography was suddenly accessible to the masses and common everyday life. It took three quarters of a century for the snapshot aesthetic to find acceptance in American galleries. In the period leading up to this breakthrough, photographers who were able to draw on the immediacy, urgency or countercultural associations of the snapshot assured a future for the snapshot exceeding amateur photography. Several typical works emerging from the darkness open the exhibition, reflecting the increasing number of photographs produced every day, while gradually shifting the borders of informality and strengthening the presence of the snapshot aesthetic in the mainstream. The snapshot is a family photograph and 'Only the Good Ones' presents an album of interlinked, mutually influencing communities. Apart from fundamental and typical snapshot aesthetic works, numerous borderline stances appear showing the most variegated snapshot works in an art context as possible.

JACQUES HENRI LARTIGUE's (1894–1986) passion for driving any variety of diabolical machines was matched only by his passion for recording this form of fun surrounded by family and friends. The son of one of the wealthiest families in France, who was introduced to the world at a MoMA exhibition in New York in 1963 when he was 69 years old, he left behind some hundred thousand photographs. Some are reminiscent of old slapsticks, while others are unexpectedly modern in their snapshot unaffectedness.

WALKER EVANS (1903–1975) was interested in interwar documentary photography, postcards and snapshots as

forms of folk art. His “documentary style” of photography as the belles-lettres of the snapshot aesthetic set the course for its often unclear position among categories of art, documentary and journalism, like the tendency to release provocative images from the bottom of the social ladder into the mainstream. “As if history’s essential lessons lay not in memories of great men or exceptional events but in the relics of everyday life. Evans’s distinct, one might say, democratic, emphasis on the common and typical is further sharpened by his penchant for the humble and unaffected – an implicit rebuke to the prosperity and pretension that he saw in the dominant American culture of the 1920s,” writes Peter Galassi. Evans’ calmness, straightforwardness and perspective, just like the lyricism of the small towns in the American South, were hallmarks of the beginning of the entire snapshot aesthetic.

In the 1950s, the haste, energy and blur of the snapshot suited Robert Frank (1924) and WILLIAM KLEIN (1928), photographers who resonated with the bebop chaos of modern America and did very well without the compositional and emotional organization of art photography during that period. When Vogue offered to pay for his photographs of New York, Klein, a painter, had almost no experience with photography. His New York is improvisation and rapture: a trip in the light fantastic, grimacing and blinking with countless light bulbs and glass like a carnival of the crazy, constantly in flight.

2

A reaction to the lack of a general, detached view in socially committed photography in the United States at the time, the snapshot aesthetic was already defined as a specific trend in the early 60s. It was especially promoted by John Szarkowski, who defined it and, as director of the photography department of the Museum of Modern Art in New York City, declared it a dominant movement in American art photography of the 1960s and 70s. Irony, a relaxed hand, and seemingly natural and familiar scenes conceal the irreproducible adroitness of the new street photography of LEE FRIEDLANDER (1934), GARRY WINOGRAND (1928–1984) and TOD PAPAGEORGE (1940). Looking at their photographs, fascinating with their endless stream of juxtapositions primarily provided by New York, inspires the question of what it would be like to sit on the promenade alongside these photographers.

The democratic aesthetic of the snapshot has paved the way to a range of various approaches. BILL DANE (1938) departed from the classic photography format and artistic process and mailed his pictures to individuals and institutions as picture postcards. As a result, primarily through contemporary humorous lyricism, he shared images with friends and “friends” a full thirty years before he even started to use the Internet.

The California-inspired spaciousness in HENRY WESSEL’S (1942) photographs found a perfect balance between emptiness and amazement at the world in its most humble, and again, often comical expressions.

Photographers experimented with snapshots in other places around the world in the 60s and, mainly, in the 70s. Japan, which was not at all independent of the American economic

and cultural boom, was engaged in its own tale of the confrontation between traditional and pro-Western culture. In the meantime, away from this turmoil, NOBUYOSHI ARAKI (1940) formulated his admission of domestic bliss, repeating shots of dinners, sex, mornings, and other honeymoon scenes. The almost virginal photographs in Araki's first book, *Senchimentaru na tabi* (A Sentimental Journey, 1971, later part of My Wife Yoko), form the basis of Araki's legacy as one of the most prolific and efficient artists working with the snapshot in its widest variety of forms. With the format, arrangement and even handwritten messages to the readers, Araki tries to evoke a simple and authentic family album.

A group associated around Tokyo-based *Provoke* magazine, represented here by DAIDO MORIYAMA (1938) and work by other are-bure-boke (grainy, blurry and out of focus) artists, reacted to the postwar situation with extreme black-and-white contrast, compositions with burning on the edges and radical subjectivity. Klein's "shocking" New York led designer Moriyama to photography, but his book *Shashin Yo Sayonara* (Farewell Photography, 1972) said goodbye to photography in a hard-to-decipher stream of disoriented pictures. Even closer to the immediate intensity of the snapshot are Moriama's following voyeuristic book *Kariudo* (Hunter, 1972) and project Mo Kuni New York (Another Country in New York, 1974). Through a sort of hyperkinetic nosiness and the way in which they were presented – Moriyama produced them at a while-you-wait copy service and regularly changed the composition – they foresaw Marcopoulos' experiments forty years later.

Pop Art was fascinated by the banality of amateur photography as a part of post-war consumer culture, the flash reflected against the well-oiled surface of America, and ANDY WARHOL'S (1928-1987) obsessive Polaroids should be at the foundation of any serious thought about the intersection between the snapshot and art. Warhol's

obsession with using modern technology to record the tiniest details from his own life and refusal to order these in a sort of hierarchy, are among the societal traits he underlined that only strengthened in the future.

The embracing of the outside world reminiscent of the beginnings of Pop Art was accompanied by the first incursions of color into art photography in the United States in the 70s; until then, color had been considered a symbol of lowness.

JOEL STERNFELD (1944) was just exercising his light hand on model snapshots of motifs of jukeboxes, televisions, display cases, children, food, cars, rubberneckers, and sleepers on his way to a successful career with large-format photographs, and just like Joel Meyerowitz ten years earlier, he addressed his individual questions on the streets of the big city.

The contribution of SEVEN SHORE'S (1947) *American Surfaces* (1972-73) are primarily seen in three respects: as the breakthrough of color photography on the walls of American galleries, as the basis for Shore's unparalleled ability to organize space, humor and study of culture, and a nostalgic celebration of 70s design. The photographs were taken as a record of all the food Shore ate, the television he watched, the bed he slept in, the toilets he used and the people he met on his first journey of discovery around the United States. Though they strongly resemble the products of the social networks today, they were not a medium for letting the folks back home in New York know what Shore had eaten for dinner, but an investigation of how the world is seen. From time to time Shore wanted to take a screenshot of his field of vision, and in the times before the PC, the snapshot proved to be adequate technology. Sometimes a snapshot came along that was immediate, he explains. It wasn't trying to be art and it didn't follow the cultural rules of the snapshot, either. It was simply a very fresh view of the world. And the question he asked himself was how to achieve that and if it could be

learned. It's one thing for someone untrained to produce an immediate image, someone who maybe hasn't even been exposed to the world of snapshots, never mind the artistic world, but it's another thing for someone who has gone through the carousel of the contemporary cultural and artistic world, someone who has been visiting the Metropolitan Museum and the Museum of Modern Art since childhood. Can someone like that learn to take a photo that looks like just seeing? And that means focusing carefully on what seeing looks like and finding out if you can imitate it. Color, a feeling of naturalness, and culture – this is what gave birth to American Surfaces, Shore says. Was it hard to learn how to photograph as if it looked unintended? Surprisingly not, Shore says. He had shot his Mick-o-Matics (1971) before with a camera called a Mick-o-Matic, a big plastic Mickey Mouse head. With a camera like that it's very hard to do a serious artistic shot, he says.

With a plastic Kodak Brownie Holiday, WILLIAM CHRISTENBERRY (1936) sought sketches to paint and his own relationship to his native Southern architecture in Hale County, Alabama. But it took Walker Evans, who shot his well-known book *Let Us Now Praise Famous Men* (1941) in Hale County in 1936, to finally convince him that his Brownies developed at the local drugstore, a medium just as humble as his subject, were of intrinsic value.

Christenberry thus inspired WILLIAM EGGLESTON (1939), who investigated the snapshot's tendency towards abstraction, the possibilities for letting it absorb existential urgency, be burdened with the history of the American South yet be balanced with perfect harmony. His Los Alamos project was supposed to be exhibited without descriptions and hierarchy and thus copy the artist's "democratic" experience with the world, where nothing is more important than something else. Eggleston's conviction that if we look long enough at the ordinary, strange things begin to happen, was confirmed at the 1976 MoMA exhibition William Eggleston's Guide, nurtured by abstract expressionism, Pop

Art and the history of the snapshot. The exhibition met with a cool reception, but today it is considered the breakthrough of color photography on the walls of a sanctified, prestigious American institution.

JOEL MEYEROWITZ (1938) studied painting, worked as an art director and got involved in photography so quickly, he was not even cognizant of the fact that color was reserved solely for amateurs and commercial artists. “This photographer was moving around the room, snapping – click, click, click! – and he was cajoling the subjects – these two young girls – to keep moving, too. I was mesmerized. I knew nothing about photography except that it had to be still, but there was this guy moving constantly as he was shooting movement. Robert Frank never said a word to me that day, but he affected me deeply. I walked out of there and I literally saw the world differently. Everywhere I looked, there was movement and there was color,” Meyerowitz told The Guardian, about why he became a photographer in 1962. By the time he set out on photography expeditions on the streets of New York with Winogrand and Friedlander in the 1960s he was well aware of the exclusive status of black and white, but he suddenly returned to color and, like in Sternfeld’s work, color plays a major role throughout his prolific, large-format work.

Conceptualist LUIGI GHIRRI (1943–1992) followed parallel paths with Shore and Eggleston, but with an added interest in representing Italy and the visual humor of little snapshot details. In his remarkable compositions the viewer is never quite certain whether they are looking at a photograph or photo wallpaper; it is like leafing through a stack of photographs from a holiday in Italy that have been excluded from the album, and being challenged to a perception test at the same time.

In the 1960s and 70s, the availability of technology made it possible to conduct groundbreaking experiments in instant, immediate depictions of the fringes of society. A Canon Dial pocket camera made the socially committed, yet

uniquely personal documentary of Danish activist JACOB HOLDT (1947) possible. His journey hitchhiking through the poorest regions of the United States shows the extreme social inequality in the world's largest economy in piercing, excitingly beautiful colors that even Soviet propaganda had not yet discovered. The photographs were taken to document Holdt's voluminous publication *American Pictures* (1977). The author's tendency to visit areas with the highest crime rate – on his antiracist mission he mixed with both the poorest blacks and the KKK – and his resolution never to say “no” also gives the pictures a certain value of documenting an idiosyncratic performance.

3

The personal documentary of LARRY CLARK (1963), who started taking photos of his friends in small-town Tulsa, Oklahoma, in 1962 while he took amphetamines with them and had sex with them, was pursued by the police, fired shots from a revolver, or beat up an informant (Tulsa, 1971) is a continuing inspiration for artists influenced by home photography. Paradoxically, the scandal helped him get a government grant to continue his work, but he was delayed for over a decade by his heroin addiction and incarceration. With a voyeuristic distance that does not intend to do anything about the violence being depicted, *Teenage Lust* (1983), a painful sexual oasis typical for Clark based on the contrast of innocence and brutality, combine archive photographs of his teenage years full of “little rapes” with new photos of male prostitutes he met in Times Square. Whereas artists until that time had primarily adopted a relaxed distance from the snapshot, both Clark and Holdt made themselves the subject, thus opening the door to artists who decided to wash their own and society’s dirty laundry in public in the 1980s.

In the 1970s punk attempted to return to the original excitement of rock & roll and provided an opportunity to set earlier related expressions into a new interpretive framework. Broadly available technology and the opposition of the small, personal and instant against the grand, aloof and overproduced formed the ideological basis for expanding the snapshot aesthetic in culture.

With the utter closeness of her Polaroid snapshots *Private Views* (1980-84), BARBARA CRANE (1928) drove an uncomfortable wedge into the proxemics of summer festival goers. The format, volatility, color, fragmentation and replicated intimacy in the crowd seem to have come straight from Instagram, but thirty years before it was launched.

A specific form of the family album came into being in Zurich in the early 70s, where WALTER PFEIFFER (1946) organized his version of Warhol's *The Factory*, creating a pattern for a large part of related art in the 80s New Wave and beyond, especially for Wolfgang Tillmans, Jürgen Teller, Terry Richardson and Ryan McGinley. His combinations of open Polaroids of friends and sexual objects, celebrations of the male body, studio portraits, still lifes and rapid-fire photos from parties were not rediscovered until the turn of the century.

The dirt of the 1960s and 70s, which the new prosperity ushered in by the Reagan era attempted to shed with layers and layers of hairspray and makeup, found its expression in the "Boston School." This group of diverse, yet allied artists had met at two schools in Boston. Like Larry Clark, who for some represented a direct inspiration, NAN GOLDIN (1953), MARK MORRISROE (1959-1989), JACK PIERSON (1960), David Armstrong (1954) and Philip-Lorca diCorcia (1951) all tend to show people naked and exposed, yet with a bit of stylization typical for depicting demimondes and 80s

Hollywood glam. The inner circle looks sexy and dramatic, as if in a film about itself. The 80s also brought the idea of identity as something mobile and relatively easily to control, especially in regard to gender and sexuality and particularly in LGBT communities, which most of the group belonged to. Their voyeurism, exhibitionism, stylizing, love and self-love, all mirrored by the media, heralded what the expansion of technology in the 21st century made possible on a massive scale – especially the selfie.

In *The Ballad of Sexual Dependency* (1986), Nan Goldin was able to reformulate the paradigm of the snapshot aesthetic for the next, very different generation, and largely become synonymous with it. She summarizes this realist convention in an interview for MoCA.tv: “The camera was like an extension of my hand. I just shot all day. I never moved anything. For me it was a sin to move a beer bottle out of the way. Because it had to be exactly what it was. And that was really bottom line about photography for me – was to show exactly what it was. ... I always hated people who talked about their cameras, their equipment and their printing. For me it was the content that mattered and not the quality of the print. I didn’t really care about good photography, I cared about complete honesty.”

Romantic colorizing and scribbling on Polaroids produced from two almost identical negatives – the so-called ‘sandwich print’ – a specific technique of Mark Morrisroe, is reminiscent more than anything of the imprint of time. In his artistry, Morrisroe has one foot outside the concept of the exhibition, but ultimately he retains a place in it with his spontaneity of the material, portraits of friends, lovers and prostitutes, his rawness and consistent placement of himself at the centre of artistic attention. In 1989, when at the age of 30 he was dying from complications associated with HIV, he ordered the ultimate snapshot, a “lethal” portrait of his last breath.

Jack Pierson also does not give the impression of a shooter, but rather a painter. The numerous books that he filled with

the essentially 90s tonality of random pictures of flowers, swimming pools and actors, as well as their similarity to Impressionism, the attempt to isolate the yearning reflection of the glow of Hollywood stars, will be familiar to every owner of a plastic camera. Besides his gay portraits, whose transparency is shared with Walter Pfeiffer, David Armstrong, and Wolfgang Tillmans, Pierson's tendency to combine sizes, styles and techniques, his uncertain position between glossy impersonal catalogues and intimacy, between legibility and obscurity, between the beauty of California and strange, emptied detail, have in recent times been echoed throughout radical cultural diversity.

A friend of the beatniks and the Red Hot Chili Peppers, groping in the sensitive areas of pop culture, GUS VAN SANT (1952) belongs to the same grunge aesthetic that later defined the 1990s, and constantly carries images of beautiful boys cutting a path through the peripheries of American life into the mainstream. Here Van Sant recalls the function of the snapshot as a quick note from the castings of his early films (1985-1991). The one Polaroid always shot at the end of the reading often contains the typical passive moment of waiting for the shutter, a short moment before eager young youth run off to become Hollywood stars (Keanu Reeves, Josh Hartnett). None of them appear out of place alongside the friends, counterculture legend (Ken Kesey) or street types that Van Sant often casts. And that is another reason to remember him – the snapshot, after all, is the amateur actor of photography.

In the 90s, all of these broad positions more or less hidden from the public, inspired photographers and stylists who, in reaction to the industrialized pictures of the 80s mainstream, looked for a more direct relationship with reality. Second-hand clothing, little or no makeup, skinny street models and photographs taken in unattractive locations suddenly defined British fashion photography. Within a few years the openness, initially inspired by Nan Goldin, had spread to all corners of emerging Generation X culture – from

various forms of documentary, which was dominated by RICHARD BILLINGHAM'S (1970) emblematic Ray's A Laugh (1996), in which he cast his powerless parents, alcoholic Ray and obese Liz surrounded by kitsch, as its tragicomic protagonists, to the grey areas between fashion and art photography (Jürgen Teller, Wolfgang Tillmans) and fashion photography and porn (Terry Richardson), to independent film (Gus Van Sant, Harmony Korine and Larry Clark as the director – co-producers of Kids, which was crucial for the 90s).

CORINNE DAY'S (1965-2010) art inspired one of the most popular word combinations on the British Isles in the 90s: "heroin chic." She introduced the world to fourteen-year-old Kate Moss in The Face in 1990. Her photograph of the model Rosemary Ferguson was a regular fashion photograph with the style and a credit of a designer (The Face, 1993). Except for a pair of gold pants, the only item being sold and the item that emphasizes the dire situation in the shabby apartment, it looks like other photographs from her book Diary (2000). Day, herself a model, documented in them the drab lives of young girls contrasted with the glamour of the catwalk. Her Diary, a version of the Ballad of Sexual Dependency in pastel colors, features crack smoking, tears, torn tee-shirts and depressing British carpets, walls and evenings. Her Diary also covers hospital visits with a brain tumor, which Day died of in 2010. It is difficult to tell what is enacted here and what is repeated. Day carefully stylized her shots, but at the same time sought the innocence that was best embodied by Moss in her celebrated first shots as an adolescent nymph shortly before she was devoured by the fashion industry.

JÜRGEN TELLER (1966) photographed Kate Moss within a year of Day's famous session with the model. A Bavarian of Czech descent transplanted to England, he entered fashion photography with the grunge wave, and in a way his photos of Kristen McMenemy in 1996 portended the end of grunge. The nude, seemingly bruised, yet sassy model with "Versace" scrawled on her chest stands before us

exhibiting all of the ambiguity in realistic photography of the time. The photograph also features most of the attributes of the next two decades of Teller's work: the style of the snapshot, the photographer's personal involvement, the model's individuality as a partner (a few meters further down is a McMenemy taken fifteen years later), the dramatic hyperbole, and especially the guts to call a spade a spade, even if you are a part of that spade. Here is commodification penetrating to the heart of culture, shifting gender roles, style clichés and the refusal to differentiate between personal statement and commercial contracts. Over the years, Teller cultivated his aesthetic into a combination of a kinetic, overexposed snapshot – he shoots manically with two cameras at once – and an Eggleston-esque sense for color and rococo richness of detail. Allusions to old art did not take away any of the gusto for tackling the lines of his own provincial background. Instead of adolescents, with increasing frequency his photographs feature children or old people, fatherly and motherly figures, usually family and friends and/or characters from the global avant-garde of luxury. The controlled provocation of the overripe, often deathly numb theatre of the ugly and the beautiful is becoming an increasingly important part of his autobiographical performance as a styled faun in shorts who can turn his own insecurities into an advertising campaign or gallery project.

5

The decline of analog photography at the beginning of the new millennium has increased interest in amateur work among collectors and museums, producing instant nostalgia. The new generation of artists dealt with the growing quantity of pictures differently – from intellectual reflection to commercial exploitation and hedonistic acceptance by the group around Vice magazine. Under the management of photo editors Ryan McGinley and later Tim Barber, the appearance of Vice was dictated by recognition of the history of the genre and the need to document, almost as a natural part of parties and adolescent experiments of the latest generation of New York artists (mostly Dash Snow, but also Jerry Hsu). In their most productive phase, they developed the snapshot into what it had been earlier: a fast, catchy undercurrent of the street emitted with the primitive force of an unpremeditated gesture, very well aware of its paperback pose. Just like punk rock, the snapshot transpired through a basic understanding of how to operate an instrument, and it uses its obsolescence as a guarantee that its values are based in experience. It calls for sloppiness, ostentatiously ignores neatness and the discipline's production values, deriving authenticity from its definition in relation to the world, which uses all available technology and means of power to manipulate. The snapshot is often interpreted as rebellion and as a criticism of the dominant aesthetic, but Vice's style, originally limited to a small enclave of independent music and design fans, quickly transformed into a style standard that, through social networks and digital technology, flowed into the broad wave of humanity. A great part of the popularity of the snapshot aesthetic consists of a search for an answer to the question: "How can one be innocent in the presence of the internet?" How can one preserve this innocence and how can one lose it?

JH ENGSTRÖM (1969) lives his life in alignment with his photographs. He floats between the underbelly of the city and the Swedish backwaters, in his books he mixes styles like the faded photographs of regulars on the wall of a Parisian bar; none of them is either handsome or young. One is monochrome, one color, but a sickly color as if infected by light. Perhaps only depression, stubbornness and photography as a way of life can produce images as heavy as bags under the eyes.

ALEC SOTH (1969) masterfully combines traditional large prints, zines, newspapers and a large format camera with the snapshot. The photographs at the exhibition come from the book *House of Coates* (2012). Together with a text by Brad Zellar, it tells the story of Alec's alter ego, Lester B. Morrison, who with numerous photographs taken with disposable cameras documents and simultaneously obscures his lone wolf existence in the middle of Minnesota. Characteristically for Soth, it connects a strong narrative, desire to flee and documentation of the American Midwest.

This is the innocence of nature. Domesticated Brit **MARK BORTHWICK'S (1966)** photographs are today only one of the products of rituals to which woods, meadows and bodies of water belong, as well as plastic bottles, candles, guitars, cooking and one's own children. He talks of photography as of the possibility of becoming part of the light that he so gladly lets fall on the film in a quantity representing a "flood of love and beauty." With Borthwick, the room for "error" is a means of circumventing his own civilized knowledge, of refraining from controlling the image and just "letting things happen."

MIKE BRODIE (1985) began working with a Polaroid SX-70, but when Polaroid stopped making this film he began photographing that which today has become *A Period of Juvenile Prosperity* (2006-2009) with a Nikon F3, a reflex camera from the classic journalistic range. This can be seen in the form, but simultaneously, all those disemboweled rats

and ingrained dirt from four years of cruising the States with a party of train hoppers maintain a purity of view and the best tradition of the grand story of being on the road, and creates a peculiar counterpoint to the synthetic stylization of McGinley, the gallery artist. Brodie left home at the age of 16. He never studied photography and today, as his photographs garner awards, he repairs cars.

Russian artist SLAVA MOGUTIN (1974) made a name for himself with a Russian ballad that sets next to each other voyeuristic snapshots of boys on the streets of Moscow and the practices of sadomasochistic skinheads (*Lost Boys*, 2003), and today primarily photographs his asylum in the New York S&M underground. At the exhibition he represents the important role that the snapshot has acquired as an instrument by which we define ourselves (sexually), but also as a sex aid. As Chris Boot writes for the exhibition *Gay Men Play* (2009), “Especially under the influence of porn, photography has become an everyday part of sex, used to describe our sexual selves for the purpose of attracting partners and for the voyeuristic and exhibitionistic pleasure of making and sharing sex pictures with our mates. Our sexual fantasies are expressed in the form of photographs.”

ED PANAR (1976) represents a very contemporary face of the community, approaching photography intensively and intellectually. He publishes in small publishing houses for a specialist niche, exhibits and maintains an extensive Tumblr site and website. Panar’s photography displays a similar sense of organization. Its humor is so dry that sometimes it is imperceptible, especially when he is dealing with the quiet world of otherwise forgotten things – like when the light is switched off in a child’s room and things come to life that no one has noticed. You will see meetings of blocks and scaffolding, a Batman costume and baguettes, two resting mops, a palm stretching out to turn a handle or a tape that has decided to be a scarf for a fire hydrant. Elsewhere, instead of personification, the spectator is treated only to lyrical geometry. Panar’s photographs, which have absorbed

Shore, Eggleston, Wessel and Ghirri, are, as someone wrote in a commentary on the book *Same Difference* (2010), “at once happenstance and at the same time expertly crafted,” which is in essence a subtitle for the whole *Only the Good Ones* exhibition. In his book *Animals That Saw Me* (2011), Panar’s varied qualities come together: modesty, sensitivity, cuteness, work with space and otherwise difficult to control boundaries of the comicality of animal photography.

The irony and humor that can be found in Friedlander and Winogrand, Dane, Wessel, Meyerowitz, Shore, Ghirri, Sternfeld, Panar, Barber and Snow caused something that is repeated daily in a diluted form on Facebook walls and is represented in *Only the Good Ones* primarily by professional skateboarder JERRY HSU’S (1981) *Nazi Gold*. His subjects are twisted – often literally, due to injury, in deformed sculptures or crude illustrations of celebrities; ideal material for people who seek awkwardness and kitsch amongst snapshots abandoned in the constant process of communication, for entertainment and a dose of honesty. The error returns as a hallmark of purity: in something so terribly executed there is something terribly truthful; the melancholy and derangement of the works of Frank, Arbus or Korine, in a much more cynical form, without hope that it could mean something in the abundance of information. Just the sadness of a poodle overpowered by an erection, a fate that entirely overwhelms him.

ARI MARCOPOULOS (1957) was older than *Kids*, a group he documented at the same time as Larry Clark, and the image that Aaron Rose presents in his introduction to one of Marcopoulos’s many books never ceases to amuse me: “Ari didn’t skate at the time, but he would always follow on his bicycle, so he could keep up with the skaters. All hours of the night, he would roll around lower Manhattan, the Brooklyn banks under the Brooklyn Bridge and through the midtown financial district following these packs of skateboarders on their runs.” He rode around New York like that for three decades, always there where the street style was shifting,

largely setting the standard for depicting street styles, from Basquiat to hip-hop, break-dance, graffiti, skateboarding and basketball. He crosses from color to monochrome, from family to celebrity portraits, from snapshot to more traditional documentary styles, landscapes and experiments with Xerox and zines, of which he published over fifty in 2012. The photos in them of simple graffiti and other symbols of the street, bollards, walls and gates look as if they were crushed by mistake, before they show themselves as abstract images of the buzzing energy of New York subculture.

All sorts of apparitions appear in the photographs of TIM BARBER (1979) – a burning minivan, the imprint of a face in snow, smoke over a hotplate, a view captured across a noisy hall, a flash of light – what is wanting for symbols of transience? The melancholy of loss of innocence, the search for Paradise lost and the vain effort to grasp the fleeting moment – everywhere the fragility of the word ‘moment’ is especially apt and everywhere it is linked to adolescent steps crossing from childhood to adulthood. In the last wave of the snapshot, Barber has held several key jobs: as photo editor for the style-setting magazines Vice and The Journal, a model for Ryan McGinley, curator, publisher, founder of the Internet gallery and online community Tiny Vices (now Time & Space) and a prolific and distinctive photographer.

The attempt to distill innocence by crystallization is exhibited in the work of RYAN MCGINLEY (1977). McGinley absorbed the whole history of the snapshot aesthetic and transformed it into a unique style in which an unforced feeling remains, even though he has moved on to almost classical forms. His graphic, though clearly sensitive, snapshots of New York escapades earned him a solo exhibition in the Whitney Museum in 2003 at the early age of 25 (*The Kids Are Alright*). McGinley, however, gradually became dissatisfied with waiting for moments in motion and in the great American tradition he set out on a trip across the United States. Today he conducts expeditions to waterfalls, swamps and prairies, and with the aid of artificial smoke, a trampoline and sparklers he arranges scenes for spectacular images of spontaneity. He brings wild animals to his studio and tries to bring the enchantment of a disco ball to a meadow. Although the ensemble of models and assistants more resemble a naturalist version of Gregory Crewdson's photography, i.e., the antithesis of snapshot simplicity, and his photographs are increasing in grandiosity, they retain an impression of incorruptibility and some look as if they had come straight from *Teenage Lust*. Compared to Clarke's, McGinley's images remain relatively chaste and seek utopian purity rather than being absorbed with its senseless demolition. McGinley shot his *You and My Friends* series, following up on the early photographs of Morrissey fans, with the aid of a long-focus lens and exclusive access to music festival grounds, but formally they also bear, in the vibration of the kids' faces, the exposed, intimate spirit of the snapshot.

The fact that McGinley's refined depictions of vulnerability could arise alongside the Polaroids of DASH SNOW (1981-2009), who, together with McGinley and the painter Dan Colen formed a trio that only ended with Snow's death in 2009, is

evidence of the multifaceted nature of both the snapshot and the generation that created and consume it. Snow, the son of a wealthy family with an art collection who did not finish high school, died at the age of twenty-seven from a heroin overdose. Attired only in ever increasing tattoos, he appears in the majority of the Polaroids; as a junkie with limited income, snapping pictures to remember where he was the night before – or the night before that, or a week earlier, because his parties never ended – he accumulated thousands of them. Snow's works most of all give the impression of the documentation of the updated performance of the mayor's rebellious son, who hangs out with a bunch of male prostitutes and petty thieves in Van Sant's movie *My Own Private Idaho* (1991). And paradoxically, Snow's instant life as a renegade and clown is the greatest denial of life in society and proof of the impeccable absurdity of existence.

– Michal Nanoru, curator

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EVENTS

Thursday, January 30, 6 pm
Michal Nanoru
guided tour of the exhibition

Thursday, February 20, 8:30 pm
Harmony Korine
Spring Breakers
Aero Cinema

Thursday, February 27, 6 pm
Michal Nanoru, David Korecký, Page Five and others
The Photo Book Replaces the Magazine: Photography publications in the age of the screen
discussion

Thursday, March 6, 6 pm
Michal Nanoru
guided tour of the exhibition

Thursday, March 13, 6 pm
Pavel Turek
Sleep, Sex and Death: Snapshot on the border of private and public sphere
lecture

Thursday, March 20, 6 pm
Filip Láb
The Unbearable Boredom of Snapshot
lecture [in Czech]

Thursday, March 27, 6 pm
Michal Nanoru
guided tour of the exhibition [in Czech]

Thursday, April 3, 6 pm
Walter Pfeiffer
Interview with Michal Nanoru

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Program changes reserved.



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OPENING HOURS

Tue–Wed, Fri–Sun 10 am–6 pm,

Thu 10 am–8 pm, closed Monday

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