

PHOTOGRAPHY THEN

Artists Chessa Subbiondo
Buck Ellison
Jesse Gouveia
Alyssa Kazew
Jack Pierson
Thomas Polcaster

Dates March 3 - April 15, 2023

Opening March 3, 6-8 pm

Location 136 Baxter Street New York, NY 10013

Featuring works by six artists, *PHOTOGRAPHY Then* is a show of the now. What is being brought to the forefront of image-making ? Is it a return to the cues from practitioners of the past ? Are we performing authenticity ? Who do you see ? What are you paying attention to ?

Subtle or overt signifiers of an ever-evolving American aesthetic have become increasingly important to position within the frame of a photo - then proliferated on the internet. Whether it be playing up on the poetics of leisure, the white picket fence idyllic, fascination with celebrity, or the sentiments of memories and goodbyes, *PHOTOGRAPHY Then* features artists that unpack themes of lifestyle in the United States. Staged and reimaged, the works reveal the uncanniness of our society.

The artists in the show challenge our collective memory by orchestrating familiar moments through grounding their subjects in humanity. The image in its production is a conceptual effort to reinstitute gestures of what once was, in addition to its subject matter, furthering the feelings of familiarity, and distracting the viewer from the contradictions of their premeditation.

The title equally contradicts itself. Delivering a pasquinade at the expense of institutional surveys that often promise to bring forth the newest perspectives of the moment but do not always deliver as promised since museum exhibitions can take years to form - thus losing intended urgency, potency, or relevancy. *PHOTOGRAPHY Then* focuses on image-makers that point to similar visual languages, however shown together, they are an examination of culture and industry, appropriation and representation. The exhibition satirizes the institutional frameworks that celebrate the now, while acutely and accurately predicting what the future for contemporary photography is and will / could be.

Chessa Subbiondo (b. 2001) is a Photographer and Creative Director out of Los Angeles, California. Chessa captures surrealism in American pop culture and has cultivated an understanding uniquely her own. She focuses on the art of “Amateur” image making with staged concepts of emotion and domesticity. Placing celebrities in the taboo and working for Magazines such as Vogue, The Face, and Office - Chessa shows the beauty in normality through her editorial and personal work. Recently finishing her first full length short film she has begun to move into the realm of directing.

Buck Ellison (b.1987) in San Francisco. He received a BA in German literature from Columbia University, New York, in 2010, and an MFA from the Städelschule, Frankfurt am Main, in 2014. Borrowing from the language of stock photography, Ellison produces meticulously detailed images that examine white American wealth. His large-format photographs portraying Ivy League students, WASP dynasties, and affluent homes are inspired by seventeenth-century Dutch paintings, specifically family portraits, that display an intricate set of coded signifiers and a particular attention to detail. Overall his tableaux showcases, in vivid detail, the mechanisms that quietly, even politely, obscure inequality in America.

Ellison has exhibited his work at Balice Hertling, Paris (2019, 2017); Carl Kostyál, Malmö, Sweden (2019); The Sunday Painter, London (2019); Kunsthalle Wien, Vienna (2018); Index—The Swedish Contemporary Art Foundation, Stockholm (2016); Columbus Museum of Art, Ohio (2016); and Museum für Moderne Kunst, Frankfurt am Main (2014).

Jesse Gouveia (b. 1992) delicate approach to the photographic medium displays interludes within Gouveia’s life, as well as that of the human experience in which you can often feel the first hand personal fabric within each image. Communicating a tableau perspective on the intimacy experienced with one’s self retrospection, through the consideration of patterns of habit, memory, and collecting. Gouveia investigates these details, common yet impactful moments, in the emotional development of our most present nuanced identity.

From re-creation to documentation, and to the presentation of experiences felt solitarily yet possibly shared amongst us, Gouveia steps between dimensions of memory and reconstruction. Enveloping the audience within technical large scale prints made with film-based cameras, the fragility and humanity of such scenes renders almost palpable. Gouveia’s work can be distinguished by his portrayal of the underlying familiarity and inner dialogue of what is to be in solitary moments as a part of the contemporary.

Alyssa Kazew (b. 1991, Mars, PA) received her BA from Pratt Institute in 2012 and currently resides in Austin, TX. Kazew draws inspiration from internet meme culture and popular icons such as the Scream mask and SpongeBob SquarePants. Her multimedia body of work is a wild expression of hedonistic joy, self-deprecating humor, performance art, and sex positivity.

Thomas Polcaster (b. 1998) is an American artist living and working in New York City. In his photographs, he obscures the line between diaristic and staged work. Polcaster references historical photography while engaging intimately with contemporary image culture and community.

Selected editorial work includes *Office Magazine* and *Gagosian Quarterly*.

Jack Pierson (b. 1960) Born in Plymouth, Massachusetts, 1960. Lives and works in New York, New York. Pierson graduated from the Massachusetts College of Art in 1984. Jack Pierson's practice employs photography, sculpture assemblage, installation, painting, and found objects, through which he explores the varied emotional undercurrents of daily life, from the intimacy of romantic attachment to the idealization of wanderlust. The artist's mode of non-hierarchical cultural compilation and a process of impulse-led editing allows Pierson to create personal and universal narratives across his multidisciplinary practice. They question what is staged and what is casual, a theme that is unquestionably his own, in which material, object, subject, fragment and life all coalesce.

Recent solo presentations include *Jack Pierson* at Museo Ettore Fico Torino, Italy (2021); *Jack Pierson: 5 Shows from the '90s* at Aspen Art Museum, Aspen, CO, USA (2017); and *Jack Pierson* at CAC Málaga, Málaga, Spain (2009). Select group exhibitions include *High Desert Test Sites 2022 (HDTs 2022): The Searchers* curated by Iwona Blazwick at Joshua Tree, CA, USA (2022); *Any distance between us* at RISD Museum, Providence, RI, USA (2021); *Photography's Last Century: The Collection of Ann Tenenbaum and Thomas H. Lee* at The Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York, NY, USA (2020); and *Be Seen: Portrait Photography Since Stonewall* at Wadsworth Atheneum Museum of Art, Hartford, CT, USA (2019).

Pierson's work is found in major public collections, including Art Institute of Chicago, Chicago, IL, USA; CAPC Bordeaux, Bordeaux, France; Institute of Contemporary Art, Boston, MA, USA; Los Angeles County Museum of Art, Los Angeles, CA, USA; Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York, NY, USA; The Museum of Fine Arts, Houston, TX, USA; Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum, New York, NY, USA; Walker Art Center, Minneapolis, MN, USA; Whitney Museum of American Art, New York, NY, USA, and Yale University Art Gallery, New Haven, CT, USA