

“...I’m beginning a new book to have a companion, someone with whom I can talk, eat, sleep, at whose side I can dream and have nightmares, the only friend whose company I can bear at the moment.” —Hervé Guibert

To The Friends Who Saved My Life,

...an exhibition prompted by the introduction of Francesca Woodman’s work to Heinz Peter-Knes and Danh Võ. They in turn suggested a parallel to Hervé Guibert, unknown to us at the time. About a year later, we learned that Nightboat Books, the companion enterprise to Callicoon Fine Arts, was newly engaged with Guibert translations, a publication plan that in turn prompted the gallery to introduce Guibert’s photographs to an American audience. Shared images and writings closed a circle that we hadn’t known of before, including our own works, those of Rona Yefman, an Israeli photographer living in New York, Heinz, Danh, and a single Francesca Woodman, as our starting point.

Guibert’s best known book, *To the Friend Who Did Not Save My Life*, is a memoir of crisis and roller-coaster years of rushing between doctors and lovers. With extraordinary recall and dispassion, that is, with a photographic voice, even towards his own diagnosis and decline, Guibert maps the early years of the AIDS crisis. In those times when human friends became “friend[s] whose company I can bear at the moment,” perhaps it was photography that eased them through the door.

Among the many formal similarities between Woodman and Guibert, it should be noted that both spent time living and photographing in Rome, where Heinz and Danh were recently in residence, and that the images Woodman and Guibert made there are steeped in its light and shadows. Rona Yefman did not know of Guibert, but she was known to us through her extended photo essay on her brother, and through a pair of striking one-minute films. Moyra’s bottles, Jason’s Polaroids and Rona’s sibling study, all keep the images close to home. Danh and Guibert absorb the Villa Medici residence through its physical effects upon its residents, past and present: the erotics of place carry by association, the knowledge of who was there before. So too does Heinz’s discovery of his own face plastered on the red-lit bathroom wall of a bar, and in his portfolio of black and white prints. Seemingly following an order that appeared in the unedited rolls of 35mm film, flared end frames included, Heinz’s box of prints return us back to the place of the photographer sorting the moments of seeing.

—Jason and Moyra

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