

PHOTO ARTILLERY: In the Realm of the Lenses
 Ray Beldner, Kim Crum, Marta Edmisten, Gerald Förster, Gordon Magnin, Johnny Naked, Naida Osline, Christopher Russell, Austin Young, Carrie Yury

STEPHEN COHEN GALLERY • Jan. 15 - Feb. 13, Reception Jan. 22



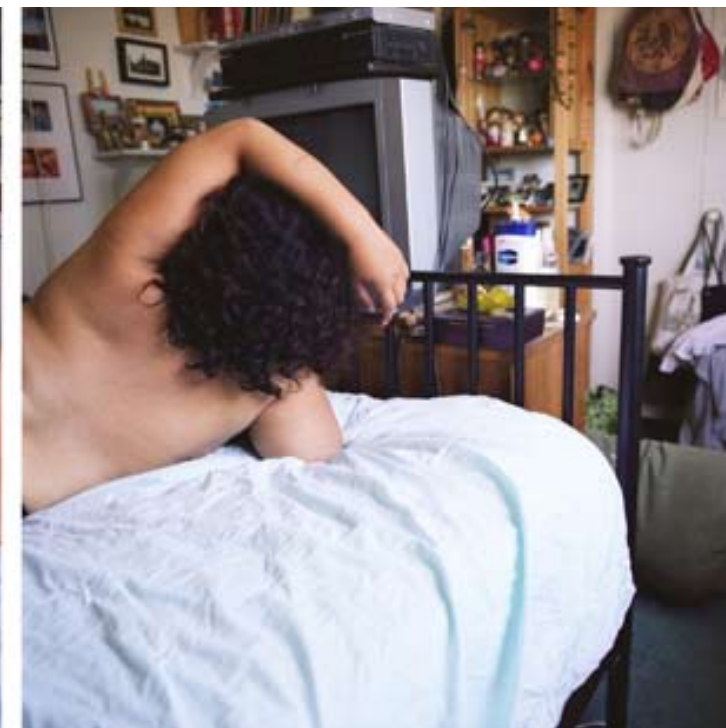
Ray Beldner, *Farm Boy*, Pigment Print, Edition 1/3, 36.5 x 53 inches, 2005



Naida Osline, *Untitled body images*, 22 x 18 inches, 2007



Carrie Yury, *Untitled (Ferris Wheel)*, Pigment prints on Sintra, 2007



“PHOTO ARTILLERY: In the Realm of the Lenses,” curated by Tulsa Kinney and Paige Wery, is a group exhibition of photo-based work that deals with sexual content. We asked the participating artists the following question in an e-mail, and here are their answers.

YOUR WORK INCLUDES SEXUAL CONTENT, WHETHER IT'S GENDER, SENSUALITY, PORNOGRAPHY OR ISSUES OF INTIMACY. COULD YOU DESCRIBE HOW THESE ISSUES ARE DEALT WITH IN YOUR WORK, AND WHAT DEGREE OF (GRAPHICALLY OR NOT) SEXUALITY YOU LIKE TO INCLUDE IN YOUR WORK:

RAY BELDNER: “Hot!” Because of my interest in how art is valued in our society, I mine porn websites for explicit images where artwork is used as the backdrop. The images are only cropped to highlight the art and to minimize the sexual acts. This reversal of priorities is often funny since the original photos are shot in places where the artwork is an absurd afterthought. In these porn-less prints, the bodies are incidental, intruding little upon our view of the art.

KIM CRUM: *F2M2F (The Dance)* consists of two main characters performing a sumo/salsa dance. The bodies represent the gender binary through contrasting pigments of skin, and “borrowed” genitalia. The switching of genitals along with the aggressive dance, denote the inadequacy of our current gender/sex binary arrangement while also commenting on gender blending. Sex, sexuality, gender, identity and the body are closely related in my work, and are often visually expressed through the symbols phallus and vulva.

MARTA EDMISTEN: Pornography is dealt within my work as far as issues of fantasy, hope and expectation of the completely unknown. The response to simple clues about fictitious girls brings about complex, sometimes meaningful fantasies from complete strangers. This reaction, whether brought on by loneliness, creativity or a combination of the two is fascinating and is made possible in part by the proliferation of the Internet.

GERALD FÖRSTER: In “Nocturnal” I have created intimate, sexually-charged scenarios between diverse couples within the context of elaborate and oddly disconcerting landscapes. I’m using these scenarios as a vehicle for exploring the powerful tensions between intimate physical contact and alienating physical context.

Each video/photograph is a nuanced study in the divided nature of human intimacy ... each is an elaborately constructed visual metaphor for the beauties and mysteries elicited in the open transgression of social taboo.

GORDON MAGNIN: Most of the sexual images we encounter are digital constructs, images manipulated to the point where they blur the boundaries of photographic representation. In a way, these images become our reality because they tap into our emotional responses of fantasy and desire. When using pornographic- or fashion-based images in my work, I attempt to manipulate these manipulations to reconstruct, distort and alter the desired response of the original source.

JOHNNY NAKED: Although not all of my work includes “sexual content,” it does almost always contain the nude human form ... which I have come to learn basically means “sex” for almost ALL of the population, and subsequently is labeled “sexual content” by most, as well. And by this designation, it is often regarded as base and puerile. This reality has spurred me to create works that challenge society’s judgements, with a general goal to expose beauty where only dirtiness exists in the hearts of the close-minded.

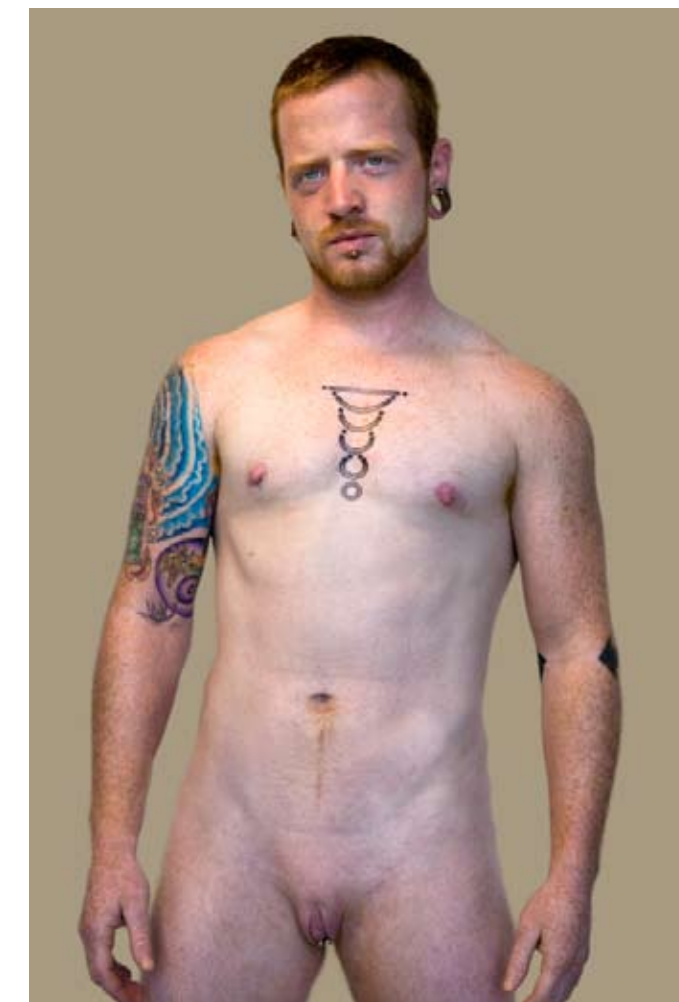
NAIDA OSLINE: These images combine parts of my body with plant materials in an intimate gesture. I am currently working with psychoactive plants. Taking psychoactive plants is the closest thing you can get to having sex with a plant. Before that I composed images of flowers. Flowers are all about sex. They are the sex organs of another life form that we smell and give as gifts.

CHRISTOPHER RUSSELL: The work in the show is a hidden-camera document of public sex, so graphic sexuality is very much to the point. Within that project, landscape provides a boundary between fantasy and convention. This twining of sexuality and landscape continues in my work, to the point that I’ve written of a forest child who masturbates onto trees and detritus, and have even stained printed images of trees with my own semen.

AUSTIN YOUNG: While transsexuals, drag queens, and androgynes have always been a subject of my photographs, I’ve veered away from overtly sexual content in my work. This new series of nudes is no different. For me, transsexualism represents the ultimate euphoric act of self-annihilation and rebirth.

Queer theory, feminism and gender issues do not inform my work. I’m interested in personal freedom and I find that if we take one step outside of ourselves, we can see reality from a different perspective — hopefully an enlightening one. I’m interested in the human spirit, and the impression that a person leaves — once they’ve left the room. I’m not relating to contemporary art — but a history of portraiture and pop culture. I love visual confrontation and find it exciting that a simple, straightforward nude portrait has not lost its ability to hold my attention.

CARRIE YURY: Sex is central to my work. Not sex as in sexuality, per se, but sex as in the sexes: Men are people; women are bodies. Gender inequity never ceases to incense me, so I make work about it. ©



Austin Young, *Tyler*, 40 x 60 inches, 2009