



Susan Meiselas, *Vient Lounge*, 1995, c-print, 20 x 30 inches

## the naked truth

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hous projects  
31 howard street, floor 2  
new york, ny 10013  
t. 212.941.5801  
f. 212.965.0207  
info@housprojects.com

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hous projects proudly presents *The Naked Truth*, a group exhibition curated by Ruben Natal-San Miguel, featuring: John Arsenault, Juliana Beasley, Jen Davis, Amy Elkins, Mark Fields, Aaron Lee Fineman, Gerald Forster, Nan Goldin, Natasha Gornik, Naomi Harris, Zach Hyman, David LaChapelle, Robert Mapplethorpe, Ryan McGinley, Susan Meiselas, Duane Michaels, Marilyn Minter, Jaime Permut, Josh Quigley, Herb Ritts, Guillermo Riveros, Maria Rutherford, Carrie Shultz, Luke Smalley, Pierre St. Jacques, Chad States, Will Steacy, Bert Stern, Phillip Toledano and David Wojnarowicz.

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To be naked is defined as being bare without overlying matter, vegetation, foliage, hair, feathers or shell. It also encompasses the sentiment of being defenseless, unprotected, and exposed. Or it can simply be an adjective to describe a plain, simple and unadorned condition, such as the truth. Often in the truth we bare ourselves and reveal the state or character of a situation or our individual self. We place a belief that it is a verifiable and indisputable fact, proposition or principle and even assume there are obvious, accepted truisms and platitudes that exist.

In the exhibition, *The Naked Truth*, Ruben Natal San-Miguel curates work that exposes people in the most intimate of moments and settings. His visual survey spans 50 years of nudity, voyeurism and sex in America portrayed by photography and video. The irony is in the bareness, sexuality or intimacy captured in these works there are layers within of truth as well as layers of mystery. When do you know what the truth is? How do we analyze and digest what we see and hear to its distilled honesty? Is there really a totally naked truth? Moreover, the exhibition looks at society's attitudes and taboos and how tolerance has or has not developed over the past five decades.

The exhibition opens with two pieces from Bert Stern's 1960's series of Marilyn Monroe in her last sitting before her untimely death 6 weeks later. She glows and plays with scarves, radiating the youth, beauty and allure she embodied. The underlying facets and issues she battled that were essential truths in her daily life are invisible in her smile or anywhere else on her nude body. In reality, they were also unclear to those who knew her well and the record of her private life is essentially unwritten or recorded. Her era was not one of over sharing, discretion was upheld and respected as well as the lines between public and private life only starting to blur. In blunt contrast, the works by Jen Davis records her communications with a young man via Skype and web cam. The digital age has ushered in programs and opportunities for there to be zero difference between what we do behind closed doors and what we do in the online domain and even in public. Suddenly, inhibitions have been shed and propriety redefined. Suddenly, a stranger can come into your living room, bedroom or kitchen for platonic or x-rated interaction. The dialogue is not heard in Davis's work, but the inference can be physically seen in the body language, facial expressions and clothing of the subjects. Is this a more honest state of existence than past generations endeavored in?

Also in the exhibition, Marla Rutherford's highly stylized works look as if she has dropped her subjects onto another planet. Choosing her locations first and foremost, she takes individuals garbed in fetish costume and places them where the misconstructions about their interests or professions are somewhat neutralized. Rutherford believes that in a photograph through color, lighting, or patterns you can strip anyone and render them equal. Sharing in Rutherford's quest to reveal our connections with each other, Pierre St. Jacques uses video to show moments, glances and gestures that take a small moment and open it up into a larger one. In his piece in *The Naked Truth*, a young woman undresses in her apartment and a man enters. Deciphering whether his presence is routine, a welcome surprise or out and out criminal is up to the viewer as the truth in this moment is up for interpretation.

Revealing a similar sentiment, but with a not so subtle approach is Zach Hyman. In 30 seconds he takes 10 photographs of volunteers who bare it all in the most public of New York locations from Chinatown to St. Patrick's Cathedral or the subway. Never without bail money on hand or a lookout at his back, Hyman's work borders on sensational, but he chooses this method because "(he) wanted to feel the excitement of a crowd witnessing a naked body and to disassemble the thought that nudity equates to sex." Onlookers have quaked or screamed in shock and criticized the subjection of innocents to blatant nudity, but most have been nonplussed and went on their merry way. The models describe it as liberating and wish they could do it more often. Moreover, David LaChapelle's imagery seeks to use people from the most popular of icons, such as his muse Amanda Lepore, to the most marginalized in order to present "personal ideas of transfiguration, regaining paradise and the notion of life after death" that we all share. Ultimately, his goal like all of the artists in *The Naked Truth* is inclusion and acceptance of lifestyles by one another from the mundane to the extreme. In the end, we are all humans no matter our exterior impressions.

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