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AUGUSTA EDWARDS
F I N E A R T

PUNKS
KAREN KNORR / OLIVIER RICHON STATEMENT

These photographs were taken in a couple of clubs, the Roxy, Covent Garden and the Global Village, Charing Cross in 1977. This summer Olivier and Karen re printed contacts and reconsidered their past work for a book project with GOST books. Thanks to Gordon Macdonald's enthusiasm, they discovered another twenty images that stood the test of time.

Girls figured prominently in Punk, Ari Up, Laura Logic, Palmolive, Poly Styrene and Siouxi were among many female musicians asserting their presence at gigs at the Roxy in a music industry dominated until then by cockpower. The photographs celebrate girl power of the 1970's.

Punks we met posed and performed for our camera, we visited the clubs several times over a period of about three months, meeting often the same people who had changed their look radically over a short period of time using a DIY aesthetic of clothes slashed and pinned together.

Working together enabled us to control the lighting – flash, often off-camera, as well as being able to establish an easier relation with our subjects. Our starting point was to get away from the candid photography strategy of the invisible but truthful hit and run photographer, as well as avoiding the rough grainy picture associated with that mode of working. We chose a direct confrontation with our subject. This is why our pictures are posed, affirming our presence instead of eluding it. We attempted to achieve such formal approach in order to emphasize punk symbolism and to make it more readable.

It was important for us to ask people to pose, so that they were aware of the camera without posing too excessively for the camera. In this sense, these pictures are portraits as much as documents. The architecture of the club can be compared to that of a darkroom where images are in the process of appearing. The club becomes a studio, a windowless space only lit by artificial light against a dark background. As the subjects are posing in near darkness, it places the camera and the photographer in the position of an almost blind person. The flashlight would reveal gestures and details that were invisible at the time of taking the pictures. Posing makes the portrait more picture like, it involves duration rather than the capturing of an instant. And yet, the flashlight arrests time and turns the pose into a snapshot.

Two major aspects of photographic practice have to be discussed (Thierry de Duve, 1977) in relation to time: the snapshot, which arrest time, and the pose, which embalms time. The snapshot is manic, one runs after the event, one shoots, and one collects fragments of reality. The pose belongs more to the melancholic and thoughtful side of photography. The subject's immobility, the interdiction of movement produces a petrified, statue like strangeness. The snapshot grabs time whereas time exposure embalms time.



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Photographic portraiture, or even photography as such, would be the art of representing absence and distance. The absent is always already an image. Absence is the image as well as its condition.

Publications

Karen Knorr - El Ojo Que Ves, La Fabrica and University de Cordoba 2011

About 70 Photographs, edited by Chris Steele-Perkins and William Messer, Arts Council of Great Britain, 1980.

Camerawork 12, Half Moon Photography Workshop, London 1979

The Village Cry, Rolf Paltzer and Beat Presser, Basel 1977.

Sounds, July 2, 1977.

Collections:

Arts Council of England

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