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GARIS & HAHN

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Garis & Hahn present:
Identity of the Self



Gianni Forte, *Luca's Tricycle*, 2010, Neg Film Kodak Portra 400, Printed on Fuji Flex C-Type Glossy, 24 x 20 inches

Photography by Barbara Van Den Heuvel, Carlos Saladen-Vargas, Eti Wade, Gianni Forte, Mark Hamilton Gruchy, Martyn Gallina-Jones, Pommefritz Crew and Roland Serani

Opening Reception: October 24, 2013 | 6-8 PM
Exhibition Dates: October 24-November 23, 2013
Panel Discussion: October 30th, 6:30-8:30 PM

September 25, 2013 (New York, NY) -- Garis & Hahn is pleased to present *Identity of the Self*, a group show of photography, curated by Martyn Gallina-Jones, featuring a multi-national roster of artists, all members of the collaborative project known as [Photo-Soup](#). *Identity of the Self* will examine the creation and cultivation of identity in the global digital age. Through the diverse photographic work of these nine artists from six countries, the exhibition seeks to arrive at a more informed appreciation of the notion of identity and the existence of this complex thing we call "the self."

In our internet-shaped era, the concept of identity has become porous, divided amongst various, simultaneous "identities": usernames, handles, pages and constant updates, "likes" and comments; all engaging society and shaping our idea of the self with unprecedented awareness. *Who are we*, or perhaps more importantly, *who do we think we are?* *Identity of the Self* is a discussion of identity, as defined by the artists, as defined by behavior, as defined by society. In the physical, the metaphysical, the emotional and notional realms these artists tear apart and rebuild identity and the pervasive societal and personal energies that forge it.

Martyn Gallina-Jones has examined the role of identity--how the individual establishes it, and how it is shaped, absorbed or rejected by society--in his personal and professional life. Born Martyn Jones, he changed his identity to include Gallina in his name. Without formal legal procedure, he simply informed his community of his new name, and with their acceptance his new identity was established. He explains in his curatorial statement:

Any notion of identity is defined by the society around us as much as it is by ourselves. We put a great deal of energy into trying to establish who we are, we adopt the roles either consciously or subconsciously that seem expedient at any given time in our lives, and we do this within the context that society allows us.

As a reprieve from the constant flux and shift induced by the rapid accessibility of information, *Identity of the Self* allows for slow, careful contemplation and self-awareness, an examination available through the measured study of these artist's work, and their exploration of thinking and being in the post-postmodern day.

About the Artists

Barbara van den Heuvel is a Dutch visual artist/photographer, who incorporates other material into her photographic work, combining elements of photography, painting, collage, and objet trouvé. In her latest delicate and intimate work she weaves several layers of meaning into almost conceptual pieces, juxtaposing questions of identity. When does a person obtain identity? When does artwork obtain identity? What is our place in an expanding virtual world and how does this relate to the origination and appropriation of artwork? Her gentle, vulnerable works depict the pressures of this unfolding reality, while also inviting comforting warmth of times past.

Carlos Saladen-Vargas is, together with Gianni Forte, co-founder of Photo-Soup. His practice is

informed by an interest in the ontological and socio-political functions of photography and critically engages with issues attaching to spectatorship and dissemination of photographic works. Now based in Margarita Island, Venezuela, Carlos's new work embodies an evolving journey, encouraged, in large part, by being in contact with the island's local art production and tradition (*naïf art* as conceived by the avant-garde at the turn of the 19th century). This has led him to investigate two main lines inquiry. The first, relates to theories concerning the primordial origins of art as well as Primitivist attitudes in Western Art. The second examines recent Decolonial thought that attempts to dignify the ways of life, thinking and feeling of those cultures that became demonized by Modernity.

Eti Wade was born in London, and raised in Tel Aviv, returning to the UK in 1992 where she combines her art practice with a senior lectureship in photography at the University of West London. Her photography attempts to create alternative representations of suburban life. A particular strand of her practice is an investigation of the representation of motherhood. The self titled "Mother Artist" states that "Motherhood is often perceived as uncomplicated, joyous and fulfilling...What is omitted and obscured in these dominant forms are the realities of motherhood as experienced by most women..." Eti recently had a portrait of her younger son accepted by the National Portrait Gallery of the UK.

Also tackling the complexities of parenthood is Italian **Gianni Forte**, Saladen-Vargas' partner in founding Photo-Soup. For the past four years he has been working on a project called "Fatherhood" after realizing that as a new father there were certain behaviors and attitudes that society expected from him; clear messages contained in news and advertising media about the normalcy of engaging in the ritual of creating the "Kodak Moments." As an artist, his response was to seek to counterpoint this snapshot mentality by creating other imagery of his very personal, often anxiety prone journey through fatherhood that expresses the tension of when the acceptable, safe, and intimate becomes alienating or even taboo. The work reflects Gianni's inner conflict of personal identity as he accommodates his new role, and "the theater and gateway of uncanny moments and memories" that for him are represented by the objects and spaces of childhood that from an early age shape our relationship with ourselves and the world around us.

Mark Hamilton Gruchy was born in Kingston, Jamaica, relocating to the UK with his family in 1973 and now lives in London. He produces intense, powerful portraits, which arrest the viewer, forcing a confrontation between subject and audience. The finished pieces belie their origins and offer insight into his process. He describes his demeanor while in the presence of the subject as cold and impersonal, though his subjects are often family members and close friends. In his words the actual capture of these digital photographs is perfunctory, the warmth and compassion that his portraits convey comes later, at the computer. The center of his creative process is the dialogue he has with the raw material of the photograph shot earlier, in front of the screen, with stylus in hand, as he works, and reworks the image, a practice that goes back to his artistic roots as a photorealist draughtsman.

Martyn Gallina-Jones was born in Liverpool, England, and currently lives in Brooklyn, NY. His work as a portrait artist is driven by his nature as a social creature, with a broad interest in people and their stories, often examining the boundaries between the private and the public. Gallina-Jones's current work has as its starting point a visual interest in the formal uniforms of civilian and military service personnel and the way these garments, through their decorative insignia, are imbued with hidden information pertinent to the careers and experiences of the wearers. Subsequently he extended his observations of "insignia" into the realm of everyday clothing and grooming by creating portraits that he referred to as "Street Style Portraits," portraiture that examined the mechanisms by which individuals support their "identity contract" with society at large. Most recently, he has become interested in creating portraiture that presents not only the visually available "insignia" of personality, social standing or group affiliation but also that which is hidden or private and that might be revealed through his notion of Extended Portraiture. Gallina-Jones intends to create interactive works of portraiture that can respond to the viewer through a computer interface, revealing text based data that speaks to the portrait subject's life and experience.

Pomme Fritz Crew is the collaboration of two Italians, **Mauro Manuini** and **Massimiliano Boschini**, established in 2004 with the aim of promoting, organizing and spreading activities focused on photography and art. Intrinsic to the project are ideas of identity. They describe their wish to remain discreet as individual artists behind the appellation:

The concept of group (within the art world) having crossed all the artistic movements of the Nineteenth century, begins to acquire new features during the Sixties in conjunction with the theories of the "death of the author" and reaches our days evolved and modified--it offers a plural identity behind which various real identities could be hidden.

Photography from the series "We are all photographers, we are all models" (included in *Identity of the Self*) is the result of setting up photo equipment in a Mantua, Italy institution for the mentally ill and encouraging everyone, staff and residents alike, to create portraits of themselves and each other. As we view these photographs we must bear in mind that notions of identity, autonomy, the personal or the private are under threat in an institution like this, where very little evidence of individualistic expression exists. As a result the very personal attributes of dress, hairstyle, and personal space decoration are largely absent.

Roland Serani is Albanian, living in London since 1994. Most of his work emerges from encounters with the work of the Surrealists and French intellectuals where, for Serani, "their psychological depth of spirit creates a poetry of suggestion, which is then rendered visually." He builds worlds of allegorical tableau using props and available objects to realize complex iconography. Intensely interested in difficult, often taboo subjects such as fetishism, voyeurism, the role of women in society, and the attitudes of a patriarchal society, Serani is compelled to represent issues of private contemplation and obsession in his art, almost in catharsis, as a way to exercise control over troubling attitudes and behaviors that he encounters in daily life.

About Garis & Hahn

Garis & Hahn is a gallery-cum-Kunsthalle that mounts exhibitions focused on conceptual narratives and relevant conversations in contemporary art. By displaying an array of carefully curated artists, the gallery endeavors to provide accessibility, education, awareness, and a market to the art while engaging both the arts community and a broader general audience.

Gallery Hours

Tuesday – Saturday 11-7

Location

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