

Trigger Magazine

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Jan Ebeling + Shauna Frischkorn: A Privileged Age

Jan Ebeling + Shauna Frischkorn: A Privileged Age features 4 large-scale colour diptychs by Ebeling, contrasted with 7 large-scale colour photographs by Frischkorn. This is the first time either series has been shown in a New York gallery. Selected pieces from these projects have been shown previously at the Goethe Institute in Riga (Ebeling) and The Art Alliance in Philadelphia (Frischkorn). This is Ebeling's first show with Peter Hay Halpert Fine Art, while Frischkorn's work has been included in earlier group shows at the gallery. Ebeling is a young German artist; Frischkorn is American.

Ebeling's portraits depict teenage athletes, shown close-up in the first panel, and then standing full-figure in the second panel. Ebeling's photographs explore the role sports play in a youth's life, forming his sense of self as he moves through puberty into manhood. This is a time of intense personal development, in which aspects like gender, sexual identity, and ego gain increasing importance. Ebeling traveled around the world, photographing athletes in a wide variety of disciplines, including swimming, basketball, soccer, wrestling, skiing, ice hockey, fencing, running, boxing and bull-fighting. Each is posed after practice, while still flushed from exertion, first alone and then girded in his uniform, in situ, surrounded by his teammates. These images speak to a young man's desire to establish his individuality and to carve out a place for himself within the team. This rite of passage moves a youth from the protective embrace of home and family and situates him in a larger social context. Ebeling's portraits reveal the specific athlete while examining the nature of adolescent maturation.

Frischkorn likewise chooses to focus on young men. Her series, titled "Game Boys," depicts youths in the thrall of playing video games. Each boy's face is etched with an expression that seems to be a mixture of religious fervour and sexual orgasm. Deep in concentration and, ultimately, oblivious to the presence of the photographer, the boys drop their assumed artifice and reveal themselves. The aura of the television screen provides Frischkorn's pictures with a Caravaggesque sense of dramatic lighting, and allows her to infuse the images with a feeling of rapture. The boys in her photographs bear facial expressions akin to that seen in Bernini's Ecstasy of St. Theresa, and while the saint's euphoria may seem to exist on a higher plane than what these boys are experiencing, the youths clearly undergo a contemporary form of transverberation.