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"Game face: Photographer finds inspiration in slack-jawed boys"

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Gaming culture has revolutionized leisure time, and it's also had an interesting effect on the politics of growing up. "There was a time in high school when the star was an athlete who had a certain kind of physic and he had matured at a younger age and he had facial hair at a younger age," said visual artist Shauna Frischkorn. "With video games, you can still look like you're 12 in high school without facial hair and muscles and you can be a complete geek but you're really athletic with video games. I've seen kids with baby faces beating the crap out of big athletic dudes.

"It's changed that hierarchy — that pecking order."

Gaming culture is the focus of Frischkorn's "Game Boys" series of photographs, now showing through April 29 at Peter Hay Halpert Fine Art in New York City as part of the "A Privileged Age" exhibition.

Frischkorn shot the kids playing video games at her studio on the campus of Millersville University in Pennsylvania, where she's an associate professor of art.

Getting the gamers to her studio wasn't the easiest thing to do.

"It was hard at first because the parents had to sign a release, and on the surface it said that a woman is looking for boys to come to her studio to play video games," Frischkorn said. "It sounded a little suspicious."

Frischkorn was looking for young dudes because, at this point, gaming culture attracts mostly males.

"Girls might be more social and rather not sit at home in front of a computer," Frischkorn said. "There aren't many games that appeal to young girls."

The photographer faced more challenges once the kids were in the studio.

"They don't ever change the expression on their faces — I panicked and thought this is a bust," Frischkorn says. "Then I started to like that they didn't change their faces, that they had the same kind of expression through out. I'd have a flash right in front of their faces and they don't even see me.

"I started looking at the little nuances of expression. When they did something they liked, you'd see a tiny bit of a smile."

Frischkorn's work was featured in a Time magazine article on gamer culture.

"You don't see the kids' hands, you just see their faces," Frischkorn said. "They're looking at the screen and there is an ambiguity of you don't know what they're looking at. Some reviewers have said that the faces recall the old masters depiction of religious ecstasy. They are so similar to angels."

Angels won't necessarily be driven to violence because of the games.

"If the kids are violent, the games may make them a better shot, who knows," Frischkorn quipped. "I don't think it would make a good kid bad. If anything, it provides a good outlet for them."