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**"Game Boys" - Young faces in other worlds**

Oh, those reviled, violent videogames. Blamed for everything from the fattest generation of kids in the nation's history to the Columbine school massacre of 13, videogames are the same seductive salve that have put the sparkle in teenagers' eyes since they took over the arcade scene in the 1970s.

But it wasn't about the videogames for photographer Shauna Frischkorn, whose 20-portrait show, "Game Boys," features photographs of boys engrossed in the awesome act of videogaming. It also wasn't about the controversy that surrounds videogames. It was the simple act of watching that grabbed her.

"I've always been interested in the act of viewing and how people get really engaged with what they're watching," Frischkorn said. "When I'm at a concert, I always turn around and look at all the people when the house lights come up."

Because portraiture is such a basic, traditional form of photography, Frischkorn includes portrait projects in photography classes she teaches at Millersville University.

"A lot of the girls would photograph their boyfriends sitting on the couch watching television," Frischkorn said. "People would look at them and say, 'Look at the face - that's his videogame face.'"

The term stuck with her. Frischkorn's project began to take form and she started shooting the portraits of videogamers in summer 2002. But first, she needed models - models who like playing videogames. She networked at local schools after also getting some cold calls from an admittedly "creepy-sounding ad" she placed in the Merchandiser that began, "Do you like playing videogames?"

Next she set up several couches and televisions connected to videogame consoles in the university's photography studio. She rented a stack of videogames - everything from golf and racing games to "Grand Theft Auto: Vice City" - and photographed four to five kids at a time in four-hour sessions. In the end, she had taken about three rolls each of dozens of male models between the ages of 12 and 27. When she put them together, a pattern emerged.

"People think these kids are zoned out or they have a very passive expression on their faces when they're playing," Frischkorn said. "But they aren't passive as if they're just watching television. Their fingers and hands are working really fast and they're making split-second decisions with their hands and minds. They're actually being quite active."

Although 12 of Frischkorn's "Game Boys" portraits showed at the University of Southern California and five others in Philadelphia, Frischkorn said seeing all 20 lining the austere walls of the Lancaster Museum of Art made the difference.

"They've never all been together in a room like that before," Frischkorn said. "It has so much more impact when you see them all together."

She's right. But she wasn't aiming for uniformity when she began the project. Frischkorn originally planned to shoot the boys in their homes with their own surroundings as background. When the logistics made that too difficult, she put together the setup in the photography studio and elected for black backgrounds. She hoped the light from the television screens would be sufficient for the photos, but she eventually had to rig a flash to enhance the glow that lit the boys' faces. Frischkorn pulled the camera in tight and shot, taking special effort not to include their hands or game controllers in the portraits. Printed on glossy paper and mounted in simple, identical black frames, the boys all appear to be the same at first glance inside the museum's spacious gallery.

The result gives each kid a halo effect - an ironic twist considering that at the time the portraits were taken, some were more concerned with how much ammo they had left than how good they looked in Frischkorn's photos. In fact, Frischkorn first thought the portraits were too uniform.

"I was disappointed that their faces weren't changing," Frischkorn said. "I thought they would react more or give more expression than they did. But then I started liking that better. There's a uniformity to the look."

Frischkorn said her opinion of videogames hasn't changed that much because of the project at all - and her own adeptness hasn't improved since she began shooting. She still gets a quick "GAME OVER" when she tries her hand at videogames.