

NOTES ON APPLE JUICE

. . . *it's very hard for me to define what the emotional and psychic connection is to witness something that itches so hard.*

David Wojnarowicz

1. Peter Hujar takes part in four works included in *I Only Have Apple Juice* . . . Most directly the colour photographs taken by him around East 14th Street in the summer of 1973, made for a feature proposed to the Village Voice by Vince Aletti, a feature that never ran.

Then there is Gary Schneider's 1980 film *Salter's Cottages* in which Hujar acts the role of the narcissist voyeur in front of the camera. See him pull a comb through his hair, all Brando gesture and hard erotic gaze, or watch the way he enjoys the camera enjoying his body as he dresses. Then, finally, watch him walk away from the still lens in the final scene, his rolling cowboy gait a parody of John Wayne in *The Searchers*. It's an almost unbearably pathetic scene from the perspective of the present.

He also features indirectly in Moyra Davey's 2022 film *Horse Opera*. His only lifetime monograph *Portraits in Life and Death* (1976) is glimpsed in the background of one or two shots, along with Anohni's album *I am a Bird Now*, which famously used Hujar's best known portrait *Candy Darling on her Deathbed* for its cover. Schneider also appears in the film, discussing his printing process and Davey made the work around the same time that she curated a show of her work alongside Hujar's photographs, a show that was curtailed by the Covid 19 epidemic. Echoes and hauntings.

Finally, he is there in Vince Aletti's untitled collage work, made specifically for this exhibition. He is at bottom left in a self-portrait, jumping in the air, and he is there near the top in a little polaroid, a personal photograph belonging to Vince. The object is slightly crumpled and Vince asked if we'd like to make a copy for the exhibition, but we preferred to use the original, marked as it is by time and human touch.

2. This is not an exhibition about Peter Hujar though. If he is so very present, then it is because of a set of relationships and admirations established around his work that have since become friendships. No, this is an exhibition that emerges from that favourite word of his sometime friend Susan Sontag - '*Sensibility*.' Sensibility shared is not simply about aesthetic or intellectual affinity or sympathy, it is about shared time in shared space, propinquity of bodies, of economies, of frames of possibility, of histories - histories personal, erotic, political, artistic. The way a particular ecology has its own typologies of speech and gesture. *Downtown felt wide open, full of possibilities. You didn't have to be rich or pretty, but it helped if you could dance.*

3. The bohemian nostalgic attempt to imprint one world on another – 19th Century Paris on 70's Manhattan, Rimbaud, Baudelaire, Artaud; and 70's Manhattan onto '00s Glasgow, James Chance, Larry Levan, Lizzy Mercier Descloux. The places are Glasgow and Manhattan. The bodies here or there. Spaces striated with stolen time. And then there's now. *Buildings disappeared into newness. I tried to recall spaces, but what I remembered was surfaces. Here and there money had tarried. The result seemed*

emotional. I wanted to document this process. I began to research the history of surfaces. I included my own desires in the research. In this way, I became multiple.

4. This is an errant exhibition about the errant part of an artist's work. The elements that sit to the side of the given or posthumously constructed corpus, the bits made with and for intimate others. The rich pickings.

5. A shared gaze. A strobe.

6. Magazine images are fugitive. They appear on newsstands, shop displays, gutters, teenage bedrooms, they proliferate and dissolve, caught out of the corner of the eye as you cross the street in rain. They are glanced, dissolving portals, glory holes, sites of rites, a route to the city's id.

7. A negotiation, a conversation, a slip of the tongue.

8. The anti-domestic bleeds into and out of the domestic here. A gallery, a nightclub, a refuge, a queered house.

9. Whenever you visit Vince Aletti, the first thing he does is to offer you a soft drink. For me it has always been San Pellegrino, "Can I get you some Pellegrino?" For France-Lise when she visited him in March, it was apple juice. "I only have apple juice." You then walk through to his 'living room', which is a living artwork, and a kind of spiritual hearth. Aletti has one of the most extraordinary collections of magazines and print media in New York. You navigate canyons of books and magazines to reach a desk and two chairs where you sit to talk. The chairs used to belong to Hujar, and you can see his apartment just across the street. On summer nights, Vince has written, "his strobe lit up the street like summer lightning."

10. The print magazine as an index of historical desire, of phantasy.

11. What leads us to the things we end up working on? Desire and mourning, like always and all things. Desire defines the work and is impossible to divorce from our response to it. Mourning becomes the law.