

STACY KRANITZ: "PHOTOGRAPHY HAS BROUGHT ME BACK TO LIFE"

By Clémentine Mercier Collected by
- July 5, 2019 at 18:46

Among the ten photographers in the running for the Prix Découvertes - an identification of emerging talents - the work of the American artist jostles with a mixture of crudeness and fantasy. Meet.





"Stacy as Christy" (2012) by Stacy Kranitz. PHOTO STACY KRANITZ. COURTESY OF TRACEY MORGAN GALLERY

For her first exhibition in France, American 43-year-old Stacy Kranitz shows an excerpt from ten years of immersion in the Appalachians, a poor region of the United States whose economy, based on coal mining, is dying. From Tennessee, where she lives in a cabin in the woods, the artist tells us about her immersive practice of photography, between documentary and autofiction.

What is your story with photography?

“My first big photographic influence was Leni Riefenstahl. I am Jewish so I guess at the time I needed to rebel against my family legacy by falling in love with this atrocious woman. I was 16 when his autobiography was published. I had a difficult childhood and I have always been interested in problematic heroes. I do not think my father - whom I love - is a good man: are not heroes supposed to be perfect? I studied cinema but I'm not good at leading bands. I'm better off alone after all. And photography is a pretty lonely activity. This work is the result of a solo adventure to shake up my beliefs.”



You speak of a dark childhood ...

“My childhood was bathed in violence. I grew up in Irvine, Southern California, a suburb. At home, the domestic space was filled with great violence under the varnish of a middle-class problem. Nobody was aware of what was happening once the door of the house closed. All my first photographic works are devoted to the catharsis of violence. Today, I want to leave behind this obsession, but the darkness is never far away.”

What do your images tell?

“In 2009, it's been ten years since I went to the Appalachians to observe the violence and its catharsis, where people are very poor and can not escape their condition. I traveled a lot and took all the roads in this region, I met lots of people. I lived in my car and slept in it, locking myself in a double lock. But it was very hot, so I had to go out in the morning to do my photos. When I arrived there, it was something else that I discovered. I also realized that everyone had been hurt by the photograph. The camera was provocative for them. I had the feeling that the Amer-



ican documentary tradition was completely dysfunctional. I wanted to work on this topic: how could the camera be both powerful and hurt? This thing that had hurt them was my working tool ... I was a dark and unhappy girl, the camera brought me back to life, offered me a way to communicate with the world. I wanted to talk about that and push the boundaries of those who had been traumatized. We had to open a conversation.”

By photographing people making love?

“Oh, that's a self-portrait. In the picture, it's me, my fantasies and my friend "Colby". I met there full of very pretty boys ... I add to my work self-portraits because my approach included my fantasies. There is always a conflict between the documentary process, the reality and the fantasies. In order to be totally honest with myself and others, I need to show my subjective part. This image also came from the fact that when you travel as a single woman you are a sexual prey. I wanted to prove to myself that I could choose who I wanted.”

Why this subject on the Appalachians?



“I believe that capitalism leads us to a dysfunctional relationship with poverty. I would really like to change the way we look at it. My friend Pat, a local bastard, lives so well in fact. I do not seek to fetishize poverty either. We are going to hard times with the disintegration of the middle-class. It's time to rethink the system.”

And the Appalachians in the Trump era?

"The Appalachians are constantly used as a pawn in political speeches. No politician ever comes from this region that symbolizes in the United States the worker on which the system is based. We have finally failed to create a society with secure jobs and progressive wages ... People are excluded from the American dream and I want to talk about it. That does not mean that I have the solution.”

Clémentine Mercier Collected by

As it gave me of Stacy Kranitz price discovery, Ground Control (Arles), until September 22.

(Translated from French)