

Women in Photography

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NAOMI HARRIS



White Party Couple, Cold Fusion, Aspen, CO. April 2005 | Images courtesy of M + B Gallery

STATEMENT

Swingers. They are your schoolteacher, your doctor, your bank teller, your police officer, and your neighbor. There is no type. They are not deviants. They are not porn stars. If anything, these are the most ordinary people in your community. You pass them every day in the supermarket, on the expressway, in the airport, in line at the post office. There is a growing phenomenon of these soccer moms and super dads who drop their kids off with the baby sitter and shed their persona on the weekend and satiate their sexual appetite by engaging in sex for sport with multiple partners.

According to NASCA (the North American Swing Club Association), the popularity of "swinging" is increasing, especially in the suburbs. Currently they estimate there are over 3 million "swingers" in the US. And it is this suburban sense of normalcy that attracted me to photograph this group of individuals. The idea that you don't really know someone just by their outward appearances; that what goes on behind closed doors can be beyond your wildest dreams.

Over the course of nearly five years I photographed nearly 40 parties, crisscrossing the country from Mahwah, New Jersey, to Pleasanton, California, from Big Lake Minnesota, to Washington, Texas. By photographing suburban and rural areas across the states I was able to show how different Americans approach this lifestyle and how their surroundings and community affect them.

While the Lifestyle became popular in the 60s due to the advent of the birth control pill and the Polaroid camera, it almost went extinct in the late 80s and 90s in the face of the AIDS epidemic. But it yet again had a major resurrection thanks mainly to the Internet. The ability to send messages, pictures and videos, even chat live gave this very private activity a new driving force.

I embarked on this project not to pass judgment but simply to document this rapidly growing phenomenon that exists in America today- the popularity for people to have open marriages and seek sexual satisfaction outside from their spouse.

It was important for me not to limit the photographs to only "action" shots but to combine it with portraiture reminiscent of turn of the century studio imagery. These make you question who these individuals are as they are traditional in nature but contemporary in setting and appearances.

BIO

Naomi Harris is a Canadian photographer living in New York City. In 2004 she participated in the World Press Photo Joop Swart Masterclass, in 2002 she was selected as one of Photo District News' 30 Emerging Photographers and in 2001 she was the recipient of the International Prize for Young Photojournalism from Agfa in Germany, honorable mention for the Yann Geffroy Award, and was a finalist for the 2001 W. Eugene Smith Grant in Humanistic Photography. She works for such publications as The New York Times Magazine, Marie Claire UK, The London Telegraph Magazine, Newsweek and ESPN. Her first monograph, *America Swings*, was released in the Fall of 2008 through TASCHEN. Naomi is represented by M + B Gallery in Los Angeles and will be having her first show there October 25 - December 06, 2008. naomiharris.com | M + B Gallery

WOMEN IN PHOTOGRAPHY

There are more women working in the contemporary photo world than ever before. Their methods, choice of subject matter, visual language, and processes run the gamut of artistic possibility. What unites them is their passion and the effort they devote to creating extraordinary bodies of work. *Women in Photography* is a showcase for this work. It is also a resource for photographers, editors, curators, gallery owners, and viewers alike to discover and enjoy the work of female artists. By mixing the work of emerging photographers with artists that have achieved high levels of success within fine art and commercial worlds, the project is designed to open a visual dialogue and create a venue to share work, support, and ideas.

Women in Photography is co-curated by amy elkins and cara phillips. It will present a solo exhibition of work from select photographers every other Tuesday of the month.

Women in Photography is sponsored by humble arts foundation, and designed by made by brown.