

L'ŒIL DE LA PHOTOGRAPHIE

christian berst art brut : Tom Wilkins : My TV girls & Bad Timing

 loeildelaphotographie.com/en/christian-berst-art-brut-tom-wilkins-my-tv-girls-bad-timing

L'Œil de la Photographie

December 7, 2023



christian berst art brut gallery presented the photographic series *My Tv girls* by Tom Wilkins at Paris Photo, simultaneously a mirror exhibition is shown in the space the bridge, entitled *Bad Timing*, revealing a complementary yet essential aspect of this artist.

If the Polaroids constituting the collection, which give its title to this exhibition, *Bad Timing*, were originally intended to be part of the *My Tv girls* series, the captured moments ultimately did not correspond to the author's initial projection. Rather than destroying them, the author,

on the contrary, appears to attach a special importance to the results of this serendipity.

Consequently, each of these photographs is hand-titled by Tom Wilkins as “bad timing” on the lower white strip of the Polaroid. They integrate into the temporal mechanism set up by the author and contribute to the narrative of the self-fiction imagined by Tom Wilkins.

Since Horst Ademeit, it has been observed how the advent of the Polaroid freed the most scopophilic impulses. Both elementary in its use and offering the immediate delight of its photogenic “prey,” the Polaroid has consequently established itself as a vector of instant pleasure. Wilkins’s fervent quest for a feminine ideal allows him to create, through his snapshots, an extremely reassuring world steeped in the illusion of becoming a woman.

Who is Tom Wilkins? This is the question that Sébastien Girard has been trying to answer since 2011, when he acquired 911 enigmatic Polaroids, reproduced in the book *My Tv girls*, which he published in 2017.

“In 2007, Tom Wilkins, a collector, passed away at the age of 56 in his Boston home. Four years later, the executor of his will sought the services of a specialist in Barbie dolls and toys to assess the unexpected inheritance left by the collector. Tom Wilkins left behind a house filled with all sorts of objects. Papers, magazines, catalogs, DIY materials, clothing, lingerie, and, most notably, countless toys, scale models, military dioramas, electric trains, and Barbie dolls. However, the most intriguing discovery was found in one of the rooms: a box containing twelve albums, all bearing the same title: *My Tv girls*.

Inside these albums were 911 meticulously organized Polaroids, each dated, numbered, and captioned by the author. A self-portrait annotated by Tom Wilkins serves as the signature of the work. This self-portrait becomes the ultimate key to unravel the mystery shrouding this body of work and to attempt to solve the “Tom Wilkins enigma.” “

Sébastien Girard,

Photographer, collector, and publisher. He conceptualizes and publishes artist’s books based on his own photographic series as well as his collections of images. His books are found in private collections as well as in numerous institutions, including SFMOMA, Morgan’s Library, Tate Library, V&A Library, NY Public Library, and the Kandinsky Library.

What we know about Tom Wilkins can be told in one image: the self-portrait he left behind, which acts as the key to his enigma.

It is by sifting through and assembling these Polaroids, much like an editor, that Sébastien

Girard discovered the main clue hidden at the heart of the work: his signature on the white border of the Polaroid. This singular self-portrait appears to overlook the entire collection, revealing the complex dimension of the gender question.

The series My Tv girls is both unique and kaleidoscopic, wholly absorbed by its sole subject, carrying passion to the extent of methodical, diligent, and studious documentation. This work possesses the magnetism of the stars he appropriated by photographing. His action appears fascinated, infatuated, becoming as natural as a reflex through repetition.

At the turn of the 1980s, shot after shot, Tom Wilkins becomes a photogram of femininity, encapsulating the eager and comfortable voyeurism of the television viewer. Wilkins went to the extent of constructing a memory.

Tom Wilkins : My TV Girls & Bad Timing

Jusqu'au 14 janvier 2024

christian berst art brut

3-5 Passage des Gravilliers

75003 Paris

du mercredi au dimanche de 14h à 19h

www.christianberst.com

L'œil de la photographie
7 Décembre 2023

christian berst art brut
christianberst.com