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CLAMPART

RACHEL PAPO

DESPERATELY PERFECT

February 12th – March 14th, 2009

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SERIAL NO. 3817131

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In the Project Room

ClampArt is pleased to present two exhibitions of work by artist, Rachel Papo—a selection of her new photographs from the series, “Desperately Perfect,” in the main gallery; and a suite of her images from “Serial No. 3817131” in the Project Room, which coincides with the release of her monograph of the same title from powerHouse Books.

Rachel Papo traveled to the renowned Vaganova Ballet Academy in St. Petersburg, Russia, in order to shoot “Desperately Perfect.” Having studied ballet herself for nine years as a young girl, the artist’s vision is one of ambivalence. She vacillates between reverence and detachment when capturing sight of the frustration and struggle inherent in the intensely competitive world of ballet. These students begin studying at the school at age ten, but can be expelled at any time should they be deemed the wrong height, weight, or body type. Papo’s photographs are a record of the preparation and often futile struggle which audiences rarely see. While some of the world’s most celebrated dancers have emerged from the school, including Mikhail Baryshnikov, for example, most of these students can look forward to little more than a life of low pay and hard work. As Papo writes, “[T]hese students obsessively strive for a level of perfection that is always out of reach.”



In ClampArt’s secondary gallery space, Rachel Papo’s earlier body of work, “Serial No. 3817131” will be displayed. Again inspired by her own experience as a young woman, Papo photographed the lives of female Israeli soldiers. She writes, “At an age when social, sexual, and educational explorations are at their highest point, the life of an eighteen-year-old Israeli girl is interrupted.” She continues, “She is plucked from her home surroundings and placed in a rigorous institution where her individuality is temporarily forced aside in the name of nationalism.” As artist and writer Charles Traub observes in the foreword in the accompanying book, youth is always the victim of conflict and war, and Papo knows it, sees it, and records it, reminding us that we cannot be innocent onlookers.

Rachel Papo’s work has been exhibited internationally, and is represented in the permanent collections of the Museum of Fine Arts, Houston; Museum of Contemporary Photography, Chicago; Griffin Museum of Photography, Winchester, Massachusetts; and the Tel Aviv Performing Arts Center; among others. For more information and images please contact Brian Paul Clamp, Director, or see www.clampart.com. Gallery hours are Tuesday through Saturday, 11:00 a.m. to 6:00 p.m.

Image: © Rachel Papo, “1st Class Boys (#12),” St. Petersburg, Russia, 2007, Digital C-print (Edition of 5), 40 x 30 inches.