

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

JOHN ARSENAULT | BARMAID

January 7 – February 13, 2016

Opening reception:
 Thursday, January 7, 2015
 6:00 - 8:00 p.m.

ClampArt is pleased to announce “Barmaid,” an exhibition of photographs by John Arsenault, the artist’s fifth solo show at the gallery. The exhibition coincides with the release of the artist’s first monograph, which was published by Daylight Books (Hard-cover, 10.3 x 10.2 inches, 104 pages, \$50).

The site of the leather bar the Eagle LA in the Silverlake neighborhood of Los Angeles has been home to many highly popular establishments over the decades—The Shed (1968-1972), The Outcast (1972-1983), and the famous Gauntlet II (1983-2005). The Eagle LA, opened in 2006, follows a long-standing tradition of leather, uniform, and fetish set forth by other Eagle bars around the country.

For nearly two years, artist John Arsenault worked as a bar-back at the Eagle LA (or as a “barmaid,” as he affectionately referred to his position). Over the course of that time, he shot thousands of photographs—largely with his iPhone. A visual diary of sorts, the collection of images includes customer and employee portraits, interior shots of the bar itself, and a wide array of self portraits.



In one of the two essays included in the monograph, Larry Collins writes: “Édouard Manet’s 1882 impressionist masterpiece ‘A Bar at the Folies-Bergère,’ in the Courtold Gallery in London, is the touchstone for John Arsenault’s ‘Barmaid.’ It is a painting featuring an expressionless young woman in heavy makeup, seen behind a white marble bar with sparkling glass and foil, bottles of red and green liqueurs and champagne, a bowl of tangerines and a vase of roses.”

He continues: “The key photograph in Arsenault’s ‘Barmaid’ is found somewhere in the middle of his group of fifty images. It re-creates Manet’s painting closely, casting Arsenault himself as the barmaid, but now at the Eagle LA, 133 years later. Arsenault stands impassively, just as Manet’s model does, with a bowl of limes instead of tangerines, an intense orange backlight as compensation. Behind Arsenault hangs a large painted mural of leathermen engaged in an erotic dance. The Folies-Bergère was like the Eagle in many respects: a place of entertainments and erotic negotiations. In Arsenault’s collection we also find a photograph of the pink rose, a nod to the pink rose in Manet’s painting. Arsenault has bared his furry chest to us, whereas the young woman has a floral posy at her décolletage. Manet’s painting represents a nightclub, a circus even, with a trapeze artist above the crowd, all reflected in the mirror



behind the bar. A hallmark and strength of Manet's greatest paintings is that much is left unexplained, not meant to be decoded."

Raised in a small town in northern Massachusetts, John Arsenault moved to New York City in 1997 to pursue a degree in photography at the School of Visual Arts. He now resides in Los Angeles. Arsenault's photographs are represented in the permanent collections of the Nerman Museum of Contemporary Art in Overland Park, Kansas and the Museum of Fine Arts, Houston. Several of his photographs are presently included in the exhibition "Art AIDS America" (curated by Jonathan David Katz and Rock Hushka) at the Tacoma Art Museum in Washington, and will travel to The Bronx Museum of the Arts in New York City in June 2016.

For more information and images please contact Brian Paul Clamp, Director, or see www.clampart.com. Gallery hours are Tuesday through Saturday, 10:00 a.m. to 6:00 p.m.

Image: ©John Arsenault, "Silhouette of a Leatherman," 2012, Archival pigment print, 13.5 x 13.5 inches (Edition of 5).