



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

MERYL MEISLER NEW YORK **PARADISE LOST** BUSHWICK ERA DISCO

June 3 – July 9, 2021

Artist's reception:
Saturday, June 5, 2021
2:00 - 7:00 p.m.

ClampArt is pleased to announce "Meryl Meisler | New York **PARADISE LOST** Bushwick Era Disco"—the artist's first solo show with the gallery. The exhibition coincides with the release of the artist's monograph of the same title from Parallel Pictures Press (Hardcover, 272 pages, 130 duotones, 132 color photos, \$48). A complimentary show of related works will be mounted at The Center for Photography at Woodstock from July 3 – August 15, 2021.



Meryl Meisler's series "New York **PARADISE LOST** Bushwick Era Disco" is an intimate journey through the pandemonium and ecstasy of New York City from the 1970s to the early 1990s. Meisler documents a tumultuous time in the city's history marred by epidemics of crime, addiction, and AIDS, intensified by a paralyzing blackout and political and fiscal crises. Frequenting Manhattan's legendary discos that arose from the disorder, she captured hedonistic havens patronized by celebrities and revelers of the night. In contrast, daylight revealed the beauty of those who loved and thrived in burnt-out Bushwick, where Meisler worked as a public school art teacher and continuously documented her surroundings.

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Meisler's effervescent photographs are a personal memoir—love letters filled with compassion, humor, and angst as well—kept secret for decades until she retired from teaching. Meisler was headed to Studio 54 the night of the '77 blackout, and the next day, she and the world first heard of Bushwick—a hellish neighborhood where fires and looting had erupted. Later in 2013, at BIZARRE (a Bushwick drag/burlesque nightclub), Meisler noticed a disco ball



in the restroom along with another above the dance floor. This was an epiphany. Bushwick was now THE sizzling club scene, and in her mind the disparate worlds of Bushwick and disco collided becoming intertwined strands of NYC's story and her own journey. This is when Meisler realized her photographs of Manhattan nightlife and Bushwick daylight belonged together.

Meisler's two previous internationally acclaimed books, *A Tale of Two Cities: Disco Era Bushwick* (2014) and *Purgatory & Paradise SASSY '70s Suburbia & The City* (2015) were just the tip of the iceberg. The artist continued to dig into her archive, finding hidden treasures. *New York PARADISE LOST Bushwick Era Disco* takes an unexpected turn from clandestine clubs to the classroom where students and staff create a safe space to learn despite societal ills of poverty and prejudice. Meisler's street photographs radiate with the joys of daily life in contrast to a background of hardship. The nightlife images expose

the edgiest, darkest activities the artist has shared to date. Flash forward four decades, and Bushwick is a hub of new music, art, fashion, literature, nightlife, and creative thinking. However, many bemoan the gentrification of neighborhoods like Bushwick. There is a nostalgia and sorrow for what is lost in the process of change.

Meryl Meisler was born in 1951 in the South Bronx and raised in North Massapequa, Long Island, New York. Inspired by photographers such as Diane Arbus and Jacques Henri Lartigue, as well as her dad, Jack, and grandfather, Murray Meisler, Meryl Meisler began photographing herself, family, and friends while enrolled in a photography class taught by Cavaliere Ketchum at the University of Wisconsin, Madison. In 1975, Meisler returned to New York City and studied with Lisette Model, continuing to photograph her hometown and the city around her. After working as a freelance illustrator by day, Meisler frequented and photographed the infamous New York discos. As a 1978 C.E.T.A. Artist grant recipient, Meisler created a portfolio of photographs which explored her Jewish identity for the American Jewish Congress. After C.E.T.A., Meisler began a three-decade career as a NYC Public School Art Teacher.

Meisler has received fellowships, grants, and residencies from the New York Foundation for the Arts, Light Work, YADDO, The Puffin Foundation, Time Warner, Artists Space, C.E.T.A., the China Institute, and the Japan Society. Her work has been exhibited at the Brooklyn Museum, Brooklyn Historical Society, Dia Art Foundation, MASS MoCA, Islip Art Museum, Annenberg Space for Photography, the New Museum for Contemporary Art, New-York Historical Society, Steven Kasher Gallery, the Whitney Museum of American Art, and in public spaces including Grand Central Terminal, South Street Seaport, Photoville, and throughout the New York City subway system.

Her work is in the permanent collections of the American Jewish Congress, ARTPOOL Budapest, AT&T, Bibliothèque Nationale de France, the Brooklyn Historical Society, Book Art Museum (Poland), Columbia University, Emory University, Islip Art Museum, the Library of Congress, Musée de la Poste Paris, Smithsonian Institute, University of Iowa, and The Waskomium, and can be found in the artist book collections of Carnegie Mellon, the Centre Georges Pompidou, the Chrysler Museum, Museum of Modern Art (NYC), Metronome Library, and the Whitney Museum of American Art.

For more information and images please contact Brian Paul Clamp, Director, or see www.clampart.com. Summer gallery hours are Monday through Friday, 10:00 a.m. to 6:00 p.m. Saturdays are by appointment.

This exhibition was made possible in part by grants from LMCC, NYC Department of Cultural Affairs (DCLA), and The Phillip and Edith Leonian Foundation.



SPECIAL EVENTS

All events are free and open to the public.

Times indicated are EST. For Zoom registration, email info@clampart.com.

Thursday, June 17, 2021

6:00 - 7:00 p.m.

IRL at ClampArt & Zoom: "It Came From the '70s: On the Unmade Decade That Made New York"—James Panero, Cultural Critic, moderates Q&A with Senator Thomas K. Duane (NYS Senate, 1999-2012) and Meryl Meisler.

Saturday, June 19, 2021

11:30 a.m. - 1:00 p.m.

IRL meet at ClampArt at 11:15 a.m.: "Disco Photo Walk on the Wild Side"—Led by Meryl Meisler. See former disco sites. Bring your camera.

Thursday, June 24, 2021

7:00 - 8:00 p.m.

Zoom Pride Special: "Select Poems of Emanuel Xavier"—Award-winning Poet and Activist joins Meryl Meisler during Pride Week to share his personal experiences growing up in Bushwick, and will be reading from his new book, *Selected Poems of Emanuel Xavier*.

Wednesday, June 30, 2021

6:00 - 7:00 p.m.

Zoom: "'Burbs to Boroughs, Classrooms to Discos"—Presentation and conversation with Efren Olivares and Meryl Meisler.

Thursday, July 8, 2021

7:00 - 8:00 p.m.

Zoom: "Memories of a Disco Queen"—Performance by JudiJupiter. Jupiter and Meisler frequented and photographed the hottest clubs together. JudiJupiter is featured in many of Meisler's photographs.

Image 1: © Meryl Meisler; "Magnolia Tree," Gates Avenue, Bushwick, Brooklyn, NY, May 1983; Archival pigment print (Edition of 10); 17 x 22 inches, sheet.

Image 2: © Meryl Meisler; "Five Fashionable Rejects (With JudiJupiter)," Studio 54, NYC, October 1978; Gelatin silver print; 20 x 16 inches.