

# CLAMP

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

## *Simply Scintillating: A Retrospective*

Five Decades of Photographs by Meryl Meisler

September 14–November 4, 2023

---

CLAMP is proud to present "Meryl Meisler | Simply Scintillating: A Retrospective"—the artist's second solo exhibition with CLAMP and the first retrospective of the artist's five-decade career as a photographer, which began in 1973.

The work in "Simply Scintillating" spans from Meisler's early pictures of suburban Long Island to the frenetic clubs of 1970s Manhattan, to slices of daily life in pre-gentrification Bushwick, to the present, where Meryl has found herself back in the nightlife world documenting the contemporary party landscape through a lens informed by decades spent watching New York and its inhabitants evolve.

Regardless of whether her subject is a stranger on the Bowery, Grace Jones at a club opening, or a child in Bushwick putting on roller skates, Meisler maintains a perspective and voice as a photographer who does not shy away from the absurd and joyful. As the artist puts it, she has a "queer, quirky eye."

Mixing pictures from different eras and contexts is not a new strategy for Meisler, who once had an epiphany below a disco ball in a dance club in Bushwick. In that moment, she realized that her pictures of glamorous nightclubs and humble streetcorners in Bushwick made sense together—telling a wider and more complex story of the city. The clubs are no longer just downtown; they are now out in the neighborhood where Meisler used to teach.

A public school teacher for 31 years, Meisler only revealed her vast photographic archive upon retiring in 2010. This exhibition offers a peek into the archive, including vintage and contemporary prints surveying the artist's entire collection of images.

---



# CLAMP

Meryl Meisler was born 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 Cavalliere 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, the Center for Photography at Woodstock, Dia Art Foundation, MASS MoCA, Islip Art Museum, Annenberg Space for Photography, the New Museum for Contemporary Art, Everson Museum of Art, New-York Historical Society, Steven Kasher Gallery, the Whitney Museum of American Art, the Zillman Museum of 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, Smith College Museum of Art, 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, the Museum of Modern Art NYC, Metronome Library, and the Whitney Museum of American Art.

Upon retiring from the New York City public schools, Meisler began releasing large bodies of previously unseen work. Her first monograph, *A Tale of Two Cities: Disco Era Bushwick* (Bizarre, 2014), received international acclaim. The book juxtaposes her zenith of disco photos with images of the burned out yet beautiful neighborhood of Bushwick, Brooklyn in the 1980s. Her second book, *Purgatory & Paradise: Sassy '70s, Suburbia & The City* (Bizarre, 2015), contrasts intimate images of home life on Long Island alongside New York City street and night life. Her most recent monograph is titled *New York PARADISE LOST Bushwick Era Disco* (Parallel Pictures Press, 2021).

Meryl Meisler lives and works in New York City and Woodstock, New York.

---

Image: © Meryl Meisler: "Self-Portrait, My Childhood Bedroom Mirror, North Massapequa, NY," February 1976; Gelatin silver print.