

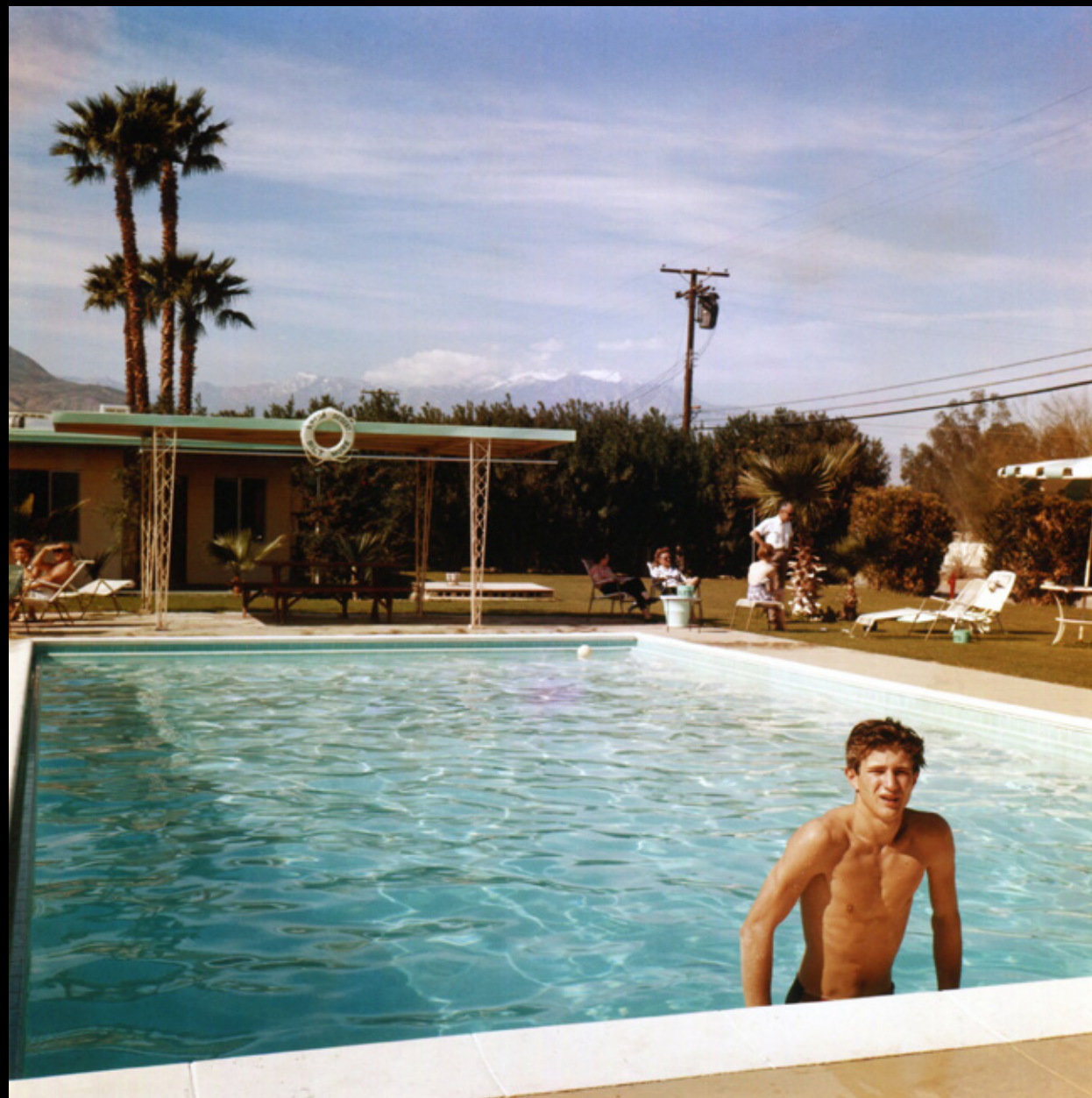
**BOYS!**

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Brian  
Paul  
Clamp

064



BRIAN PAUL CLAMP  
by GUSTAVO FORCADA

**GF** Although open to different artistic manifestations, CLAMP has focused mainly on photography since its inception. When and how did your interest in photography begin, both as a photographer and as an expert?

**BC** My first exposure to photography was when I was eighteen years old in Colorado. I decided to take a darkroom course. At the beginning of each class, our wonderful first-year instructor would devote fifteen minutes to the history of the medium. It was during these slideshow lectures, and later while getting my hands wet in chemicals, that I fell in love with photographs. In college I continued to take photography and art history classes as I could, and I earned a degree in Art History. I went on shooting and printing my own photographs through my 20s while I lived in New York City. It was at this time that I joined the Camera Club of New York (established in 1884), and soon began curating shows as a member of the exhibitions committee. Then, in 2000, after completing graduate school, I opened CLAMP. As I immediately became busy with the day-to-day operations of running a small gallery, my own photography came to a sudden halt. Not only did I lack the time, but as I began working with more and more talented artists, I realized my best contributions would be as a champion of the artwork of talented others.

**GF** What has been the biggest change you've observed in both the photographers you've commissioned or represented and the audiences who come to the gallery over the years?

**BC** The artwork continues to evolve and change all the time. Perhaps the biggest recent shift I have witnessed is very young artists no longer clamoring for representation. With the advent of social media, many artists prefer to manage their careers free of the commitments to (and benefits of) a commercial gallery. And, in turn, many collectors enjoy reaching out to young artists directly, no longer seeking the connoisseurship of an art dealer.

**GF** Do you think this could have a positive or negative impact on artists? Does a creator still need representation to validate his proposal and

guide his artistic career?

**BC** I think there are positives and negatives for artists who sell their own work. These artists do not have to share commissions on sales, but they also miss out on the services a gallery can provide through their connections and expertise. Artists spending time on sales and client relations miss out on maximizing hours in the studio producing work. If artists are good at sales and enjoy devoting time to promotion, billing, packing, shipping, etc., then gallery representation may not be necessary. But I think most artists still can benefit from the validation a gallery provides to collectors, museums, and the wider market, in addition to an experienced partner who can help not only with promotion and sales but career guidance, editing, networking, contract negotiation, publishing, and the like.

**GF** Did you conceive CLAMP as a loudspeaker, a transmission belt, so that queer photographic art, the history of our community, wouldn't fall into oblivion?

**BC** LGBTQ+ photography did become part of the gallery's program quite early. In fact, our second public exhibition titled "Boys of Summer: Photographs of and about Men" (2003) included work going back to the 1930s, largely by queer artists. However, our program has never been exclusively gay, and I allow myself the freedom to follow all of my interests and to include whatever work (in any medium) I deem consequential and worth attention. That being said, I am a member of the LGBTQ+ community, and my interests often lead me back to queer photographic art.

**GF** Do you think that, nowadays, queer photographers have managed to open a breach in mainstream art, or are there certain heteropatriarchal dynamics – also in the art world – that are very difficult to break down?

**BC** I am fascinated by the achievements of artists who paved the way for own freedoms in the present day, despite continual challenges to our hard-won rights. There are certainly many heteropatriarchal dynamics in play which still challenge out and proud queer artists. But I do see other painters, sculptors, and photographers commanding

impressive marketshare as unapologetically LGBTQ+ voices. Ours is certainly not the only gallery championing queer photography, but I have been at it for a long time now, so I have been able to build a respectable following. With that obviously comes a lot of responsibility as well.

**GF** What other galleries do you think are championing queer photography and that are worthwhile?

**BC** There are many galleries showing queer photography these days from blue chip spaces like David Zwirner Gallery (think Wolfgang Tillmans) to smaller non-profit outfits such as the Bureau of General Services – Queer Division housed in The Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual & Transgender Community Center in Greenwich Village.

**GF** Regarding your relationship with the queer photographers you have represented or supported at CLAMP, what do you think is the most positive aspect (or aspects) they have gained from their relationship with the gallery? And what do you think has been their main contribution to your growth as a gallerist with them?

**BC** One of the most exciting dynamics that can develop between a gallery and a represented artist is the two growing in stature, maturity, and success alongside one another. Perhaps I am old-fashioned, but I do believe the artist/gallery relationship is one that works best in the long term. This is in direct opposition to social media and our culture of clicks and likes. When I look at artists on the roster with whom I have worked since nearly the beginning, I am quite honored. Being able to celebrate and share one another's successes is one of the sweetest rewards of nurturing exceptional talent.

**GF** Which artists have you been most satisfied with and proud of? And which exhibition has shocked you the most?

**BC** Lori Nix and Kathleen Gerber are a good example of artists we began representing early on whose career has grown alongside the establishment and growth of the gallery. I think one of the gallery exhibitions which surprised me the most was our first show for Peter Berlin. I had

At the dawn of the 21st century, Brian Paul Clamp founded one of New York's most glittering photography galleries. It was the year 2000 and a distillate of emerging talent rushed around the walls of CLAMP. A space that in barely two decades has become one of the nerve centers of the most effervescent artistic creation. His wide-angle gaze, wisely conditioned by his passion for photography, has allowed him to meander through the works of James Bidgood, George Platt Lynes, Peter Hujar or Amos Badertscher. And his instinct, fluid and permeable to interdisciplinary crossovers, has opened the doors of his gallery to exhibitions of painting, video and sculpture in addition to photography. The heart of the Flower District in the Chelsea neighborhood of Manhattan pumps art.



no idea what a following already existed, and I was delighted to see such enthusiasm from younger audiences as well.

**GF** Do you think it is far-fetched to think that the social advances and the conquest of civil rights of the LGBTQ+ community runs parallel to and intersects with the artistic freedom of its photographers?

**BC** I do not think it is at all far-fetched that social advances and civil rights might intersect with artistic freedom and production – and vice versa. Art is a reflection of society at large, while artists also serve as catalysts for positive social change.

**GF** Have you perceived a substantive change in physical galleries since the pandemic? What future do you foresee for art galleries?

**BC** Yes, obviously many brick-and-mortar galleries went virtual during the course of the pandemic. However, many artists still value the opportunity to present their work to the public in physical exhibitions. I do not see the digital influence of the market contracting, but I think there will always be a place for the presentation of art IRL. Perhaps galleries will start showing even more work by artists in the context of one-off projects rather than representational scenarios.

**GF** Have you developed a special instinct when it comes to determining whether an artist's work will be profitable (in terms of sales), or will betting on what you really consider appropriate always be related to risk?

**BC** It really is an important part of my job to be able to predict what artwork will be well-received and collected by the public at large. That being said, I am often wrong! It is more important to follow my instincts and show work that excites and stimulates me, and has something important to contribute, hoping that people trust or are at least curious about my judgment, and will come to see and discuss what I choose to put on display.

**GF** How have you seen the market for queer and gay photography change over the past 30 years?

**BC** The market for queer photography has skyrocketed over the past thirty years. I do not

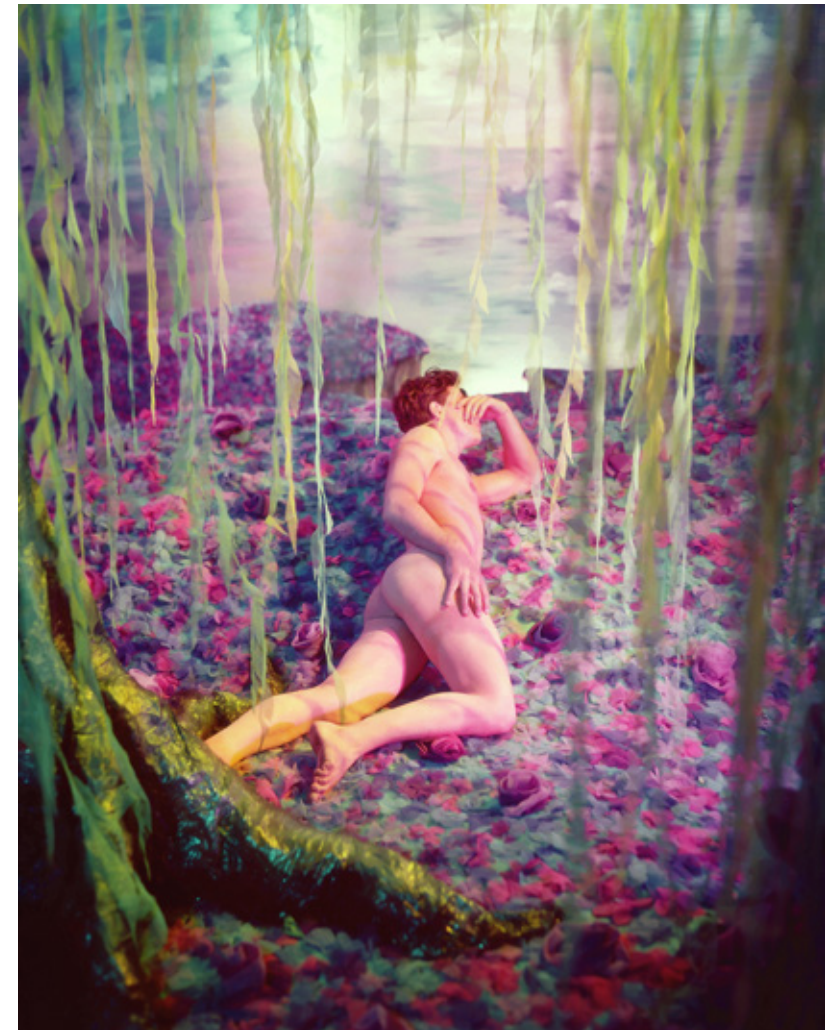
think there is necessarily a higher percentage of gay artists now than there were previously. I think they simply are not so compelled to self-censor, and the LGBTQ+ collecting public is no longer afraid to hang queer work on the walls of their homes.

**GF** Is LGBTQ+ photography a growing market, or is it showing signs of stagnation or contraction? Is there a specific type of client profile? What do you think about young buyers?

**BC** LGBTQ+ is definitely still a growing market. While the market for gay photography has been going strong since the 1990s, it has now expanded to include all the other voices beneath the broader queer umbrella. The clientele is no longer older white men in urban hubs, but a wide range of people in all size cities across much of the world. While it seems some of the younger generation has been slower to move into collecting than previous generations, this may be due more to economic factors in the world today rather than their interest and enthusiasm. Perhaps the best way to encourage young buyers is by introducing reasonable price points.

**GF** What advice or suggestions would you give to queer and gay photographers starting out today?

**BC** I would advise artists not to rely solely on social media platforms for their identity and self-promotion (I realize this is easier said than done in many nations around the world.) The “community standards” of social networks do not reflect my community, for example. Diversify and determine how to present your work beyond an endless feed, thinking about other websites and digital platforms, physical exhibitions at non-profit and commercial galleries and museum spaces, pop-ups, apartment spaces, and wherever else one might gain exposure. Take advantage of promotional opportunities afforded by projects such the programme devised by Ghislain Pascal. **BOYS! BOYS! BOYS!** presents itself as a champion of younger queer voices. It is not tied to one physical location and can be nimble. As Ghislain Pascal has new inspiration and ideas for promotion, he can act quickly and decisively to promote queer and gay artistic photography.









072



"In train tunnel under" Wilkins  
avenue."

Best Friends

"No Fear"

1998

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