

FAMILIAR FEELINGS

ON THE BOSTON GROUP

CGAC CENTRO GALEGO
DE ARTE
CONTEMPORÁNEA



EXHIBITION

CGAC (Ground and first floors)

24 September – 13 December

CURATOR

Manuel Segade

FEATURED ARTISTS

Diane Arbus

David Armstrong

Larry Clark

Philip-Lorca diCorcia

Nan Goldin

Mark Morrisroe

Jack Pierson

Tabboo!

Gail Thacker

Shellburne Thurber

Starn Twins

Kathleen White

INAUGURATION

24 September, 8 pm

PRESS CONFERENCE

24 September, 12 pm

Presenting all of the Boston Group active artists: David Armstrong, Philip-Lorca diCorcia, Nan Goldin, Jack Pierson, Tabboo!, Gail Thacker and Shellburne Thurber.

Since the mid 1970's, a group of American East Coast artists started defying the conventions of the photographic medium both from its technical and moral aspects, hence greatly influencing the means of representation during the late 20th century. The defence of veracity manifested itself through an unknown degree of exposed privacy by exposing socially non-legitimised ways of life, such as night-time characters, marginal lives, addictions, affections, sexual experiences and the genre or irruption of new models of social conformation. Its fundamental contribution consists in turning uneventful motives into interesting narratives, which up until then had not been regarded as subject matters in works of art.

During the nineties, this group was referred to as 'The Boston School' starting as a joke by artist Nan Goldin, later popularised by the eponymous exhibition at Boston's ICA in 1996. The fact remains that at a certain point in the mid seventies in New England, several artists got together

and went on to become some of the fundamental names in art in their country. Relating through personal affinities and by studying at the School of the Museum of Fine Arts or the Massachusetts College of Art, both in Boston, they progressively moved to New York in order to actively take part in the creation of the Bowery scene in an essential phase of development and consolidation of the city's artistic structures; along with gallery owners whom moved with them. They are all part of the generation, which created New York's art scene around the Whitney Biennial, the galleries market, SoHo's art studios and the East Village scene. Precisely Pat Hearn, artist and model featured in several pieces of the exhibition, opened an influential gallery in Manhattan in 1983 and later became one of the founding figures of the Armory Show.

At a sociological level, the exhibition of more than 150 pieces along with abundant documentation of the time, linked to the upsurge of the punk movement in the United States, turns these images into the portrait of a precise and essential moment in time: the last breath of moral and sexual freedom brought about by the sixties, just prior to the crisis represented by the outbreak of AIDS. On the other hand, the vindication of the subjectivity they take part in, became one of the main axes of the international artistic production of the nineties.

Regarding its narrative, the exhibition takes as its starting point two of the essential precursors for the history of photography: Diane Arbus, with a selection of images belonging to the end of her career, and Larry Clark, with a sample of his first and revolutionary 1971 work, *Tulsa*, openly portraying heroine consumption and gun possession within a group of youths in the city of Tulsa. It was precisely in that year when Nan Goldin started her first series of images: the black and white portraits of her transvestite friends of Provincetown, images with which she wanted to capture the possibility of creating a new identity based on the appearance and attitude of drag queens, with the elegance of *Harper's Bazaar* or *Vogue's* fashion images.

David Armstrong exhibits a selection of his famous black and white portraits comprising a memory of his youth with traces of a fifties revision, and also a series of colour images, unknown until now, which portray him as a "documentalist" of intimacy, parties and night life, somewhat close to Nan Goldin's coetaneous work, later becoming iconic for advertising photography. Philip-Lorca diCorcia reformulated the aesthetics of the snapshot by controlling light through the use of electronic flashes. The CGAC will exhibit early pieces, which illustrate the evolution of his capability to stage, a skill that would turn him into one of the essential names in the

critique of photographic representation. Very much in line with this method, Shellburne Thurber's work is presented in Spain for the first time with a large selection of her earlier works, portraits of relatives and the spaces they inhabit, discharging a melancholic construction of the personal memory.

Alternatively, Mark Morrisroe, artist deceased in 1989 due to AIDS at the age of 30, crafts photography as if it were a painting, experimenting with the medium and types of self-portrait to the extreme such as manipulating medical x-rays of his last days. Gail Thacker shows a different face of Pictorialism by reediting old polaroids turned into negatives in order to reveal the sheer drama of the physical decadence of the image. Jack Pierson's work combines a feeling of loss touched by a certain degree of romanticism through the learning process of the seventies' Conceptual Art, exhibiting a vast part of his learning portfolio, inaccessible to the public until now. Lastly, *Taboo!*, a kaleidoscopic character; painter, graphic artist, drag performer and photographic model who builds up his paintings and oils imitating photographic procedures. Mark Morrisroe's Super 8 earlier films, feature Pierson, *Taboo!* and Pat Hearn as actors, fulfilling the revision of that vivacious moment in time beyond mere photography.

Finally, the main core of the exhibition is constituted by the

now mythical diaporama with Nan Goldin's *The Ballad of Sexual Dependency* soundtrack, featured in collections such as that of the Tate Modern in London or the MoMA in New York, of which the latest version, newly arranged in 2009, is exhibited. The 700 plus images shown during its 40 minutes review the artist's autobiography and that of colleagues of her generation, from the spirited seventies to the consequences of AIDS and heroine addiction, in a way that allows the spectator to feel empathy, thus constituting a feeling of familiarity.

In conclusion, *Familiar Feelings* attempts not to vindicate the affinities of the so-called Boston School, but to identify a different type of emotional closeness or personal attitudes. From an exhibition perspective, it gathers several individual exhibitions, hence allowing for the full comprehension of each of the artists. All of this will allow the public to assume the link of that which is *familiar* with both a brief and more comfortable category transcending the traditional labelling of the history of art in order to vindicate possible alternatives and still suitable for subjectivisation.