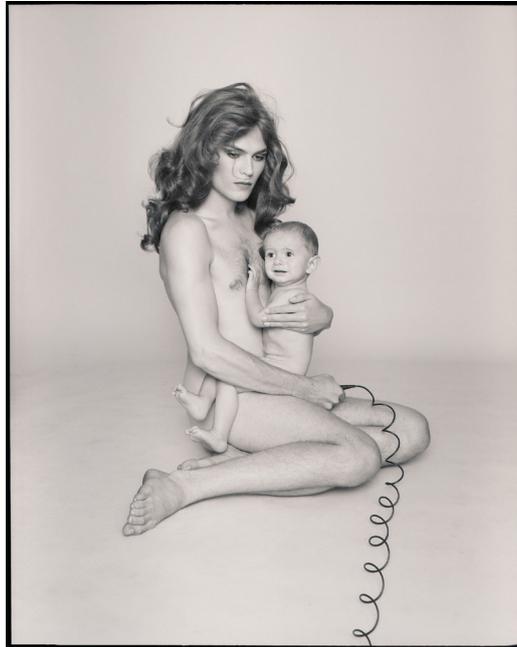


# THE RAVESTIJN GALLERY

AT

## UNSEEN



*Michael Bailey-Gates: Birthday, 2018*

Archival pigment print on rag baryta paper, mounted, framed with museum glass  
Available in three sizes, all within the same edition of 5 plus 1 AP

Press release  
**UNSEEN 2021**

Opening: Thursday September 16, 2021 by invitation only  
Fair: Vrijdag 17 september 11.00 – 21.00 uur  
Zaterdag 18 september 11.00 -19.00 uur  
Zondag 19 september 11.00 – 19.00 uur

The Ravestijn Gallery is proud to present Michael Bailey-Gates (b.1993, USA), Ferry Van der Nat (b.1965, the Netherlands) and K Young (UK) at UNSEEN 2021. Whilst each artist's approach is markedly different, they share a common underpinning gender, identity and sexuality. Although society has traditionally sought to define these ideas, today there is a growing awareness that it is those very definitions that are problematic; marginalizing, censoring and anchoring things that cannot be anchored.

If words struggle to speak for the fluid continuum of being, perhaps this strengthens photography's role in contributing to a more visceral conversation – showing not telling. This is the catalyst for bringing these three artists together, artists whose work give weight to the idea that photographs may be able to express, imagine and represent something that words cannot.

K Young creates meticulous collages that deftly reveal the constructed nature of gender and identity. Their work starts with found photographs — mostly from second-hand books and magazines. These sources of material are telling enough; pages where identities are shaped, reinforced and shared. Pages where we are told what is right and wrong, acceptable and unacceptable. K Young then takes these images and cuts them up, rearranges them, splices them, layers them and re-photographs them. What once were whole photographs are now a liberated fusion of bodies, furniture, interiors and clothing. They are tender yet humourous, sexual yet reserved. Whilst K Young's work literally deconstructs, and reconstructs, identities, it does so symbolically too. Through the act of freely mixing and matching identities, they suggest a different story than the one in magazines, tossing aside the belief that existence is fixed or singular. K Young brings this idea full circle by never showing an entire face. In doing so, they invite anyone to be whoever they want to be.

Whereas K Young alludes to ideas of gender and identity in their work through collage, Ferry Van der Nat is less implicit. In fact, Van der Nat's work is unflinchingly explicit. Working with the Polaroid Land Camera 103 and the Polaroid Big Shot - the same camera Andy Warhol used for many of his overtly sexual images - Van der Nat examines naked bodies with a candidly gay gaze. Nearly all of them are men: truncated torsos, faces, buttocks and private parts, sometimes erect.

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K. Young: *Red Sofa*, 2019  
Collage, mounted, framed with museum glass  
Unique piece

They are tightly framed images; skin, hair and limbs fill the space, illuminated under the bright flash of the polaroid. This combination of extreme proximity and the polaroid's immediacy gives Van der Nat's photographs their characteristic, erotic charge. As a viewer, such images push us to confront sexuality head-on — there is nowhere else to look. In a society that is still often uncomfortable with such openness, Van der Nat's photographs are a frank reply.

Michael Bailey-Gates uses photography to gracefully dissolve binary perceptions of gender, identity and sexuality. In their intimate photographs of themselves and their friends, the definitions we've been conditioned to use become futile. Man and woman; masculine and feminine; straight and gay; all ebb into irrelevance. Even gender itself seems somehow immaterial. Objects, postures, relationships, clothes and actions too are here playfully reclaimed by anyone.

But whilst Bailey-Gates confronts the conventions that continue to marginalise so many today, they do so without hostility. Instead, Bailey-Gates' photographs are joyous, where those in front of the camera are free to imagine, perform and exist as they wish.

At the heart of Bailey-Gates' practice is a desire to reflect a world where gender, identity and sexuality are boundless conditions; always in motion and attune to each individual and each moment. Bailey-Gates knows such a world is real, and in looking at their photographs, we are able to catch a glimpse of it.

For more information or to receive images please contact the gallery at [jasper@theravestijngallery.com](mailto:jasper@theravestijngallery.com). Or visit our website [here!](http://www.theravestijngallery.com)

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