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The Lost Boys | International Collaboration

Project Artist Francisco Diaz + Deb Young

On View: March 16th - April 30th, 2018

Reception: Thursday, March 16th, 2018 6PM - 8PM

Gallery Hours: Wed - Sat 11AM - 5PM And by Appointment

Location: 102 - 1688 West 1st Avenue,

Vancouver, BC Canada V6J 1G1

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*Innocence + Guilt - 2016, archival pigment print, 20" * 30" International Collaboration
Project Artists Francisco Diaz + Deb Young @ Z GALLERY ARTS*

The Lost Boys | International Collaboration Project Artist Francisco Diaz + Deb Young

(ESSAY ON THE PETER PAN SYNDROME)

By Drazen a alsic Ernecic

The International Collaboration Project Artists Francisco Diaz and Deb Young are pleased to announce exclusive representation by Z Gallery Arts, Vancouver British Columbia. Vancouver B.C for Lost Boys Series.

Francisco Diaz and Deb Young developed their photomontage series as a simulacrum of real life, with random photographs they put together to create a metaphorical story of growing up as a subversive act of life. The Lost Boys project starts as a conceptual artistic idea that talks about the process of becoming an adult, and it continues their interest in how childhood speaks so profoundly on who we will be as adults. It is storytelling about those particular times and moments just before our personality comes out, as we become an important and prominent part of society. We are all witnessing the emergence of our crossroads as the main point of our lives, but at that time we usually don't have to understand the mystery and insights of our transition. Sometimes, we are afraid of growing up because we find certain occasions as unknown, hard times, filled with dramatic moments. Inspired by escapism, controversy and mischievous stories of adventures and pranks of Tom Sawyer, Huckleberry Finn and Peter Pan, Diaz & Young find their personal stories and lessons through the The Lost Boys images, and turn the literature and fantasies into real life reaches of children's imagination.

Diaz and Young start The Lost Boys project as a story where growing up is a subversive act of life. The Lost Boys series is a metaphorical look at collectivism and individualism as social and cultural syndromes. The fact is that the fundamental social conflict of Western culture today is an issue of individualism vs. collectivism. With photographic manipulation, Diaz and Young explore the visual language, reviewing evidence of childhood and adolescent gatherings in a group that behaves as a system that shares attitudes, beliefs, norms, roles, and values. We can identify with that because we do share languages, history, and places. There is a link between patterns of our personal life and life in the community. The thing is that humans are social animals. We live and do things

together to improve our lives and survive. Does our life belong to us, or does it belong to the group, society, or the state? In expanding global politics and corporate businesses, we need clarity on this issue more than ever. Our children need that because sooner or later they could find they live in a dystopian world with a lack of personal freedom.

Diaz & Young's narrative photomontages present fiction as real, an important visual dialog that encourages personal questioning and social discussion. They create a subjective and organized image that talks about the question of personal freedom we all have to fight for, but first of all, we have to teach our children to be free and open-minded. Sometimes, an innocent, wild and uncontrollable adventure, alone or with the bunch of friends, could be one of the more important lessons of life. Wild barefoot shore running sometimes helps in the process. One's face covered with mud, too. Seemingly unrelated, but Diaz and Young did the same thing with their collaboration. They imbue this series with the importance of transformation through self-reliance. The result is a multilayered story as a metaphor for the journey and experience of new ways of transitioning - personal or humankind's. Even their artistic adventure starts with a leap of faith, because their collaboration pushed to the edge the bare concept of photography. In their life and career, Diaz and Young believe that art is about conceptualizing an idea that can influence the viewer and help raise a positive attitude and the level of understanding the world.

Cultural, social and political influences on growing up are more important than we think. Today, growing up could be harder than ever, because people, in general, have become too lazy and too scared to live. We live online. Adulthood is awful, and the cruel real world is a scary place. Paralyzed with this horror, most people feel stressed and confused, trying to figure out what they could take out of life. Most of the would-be Peter Pans reconsider the meaning of adulthood before they have even lived their childhood, because they live most of their real life in a virtual reality. Today, we have a society of totally infantile adults that "lost the map" on the road to adulthood. Childhood is a time when we see and feel the world with our childish idealism, teens rebel against everything, and adult pragmatism is about our ability to balance idealism and pragmatism. This balance is the main framework of Diaz and Young's artistic statement. This issue is something that they point out in The Lost Boys images. They insist that growing up is about thinking, and this is the hardest and scariest part. Also, it is the most beautiful one.

The thing is that Francisco Diaz and Deb Young have that particular attitude on the subject. Their manipulated color photography embraces an aesthetic of the 19th century Romantic Movement, including historical nostalgia, social injustices, nature and landscape painting that defined the main stage. The cultural evidence is more than visible. Tom Sawyer, Huckleberry Finn, Peter Pan, Harry Potter and even Alice Liddell are like-minded. A specific development in literature as in art affected the work of Diaz and Young. All those stories are about a journey and kids who go looking for adventure, action, imagination and personal experience. Like the kids of The Lost Boys series, all those characters present un-ruled places and spaces that were

juxtaposed with confidence and curiosity. It is about the journey into new territory, basic instinct and the leap of faith. Diaz and Young's The Lost Boys series reminded me of the Lost Boys in Neverland and Peter Pan, at first sight. The Lost Boys are pre-teen boys who would not grow up. They enjoy the freedom and wild lifestyle. They are the boys "who fall out of their prams when the nurse is looking the other way" (James Matthew Barrie, 1904) with a strong desire for a mother, without knowing what exactly a mother is.

Diaz and Young's images today are more objective than ever. We live in times when lack of success has caused The Peter Pan Syndrome. He is everybody's hero. Thanks to Peter Pan and the Lost Boys most people love the fantasy of never ever growing old. He lures us into believing of never-never land. His eloquence in describing this great place of youth is quite inspirational. Images of a place and kids, who stayed forever young, have the sweet innocence of New Romanticism. People are fond of that kind of innocence. Peter Pan is not just a kid, but young men who refuse to grow up. Sometimes we all do this. He taught us that dreaming is good and friendship is not just a simple thing, love is pure and simple, and words are as important as actions. These kinds of hopelessly romantic attitudes exist in photos and remind us that showing affection needs actions as well as words. These concepts have both social and philosophical significance. Diaz and Young ask important questions about human behavior and relationships in a most romantic way. They tell us that we have to explore the world like a child, and then we will see how beautiful it is.

[References]

Lewis Carroll (1865) Alice in Wonderland

Mark Twain (1876) The Adventures of Tom Sawyer.

Mark Twain (1884) The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn

James Matthew Barrie (1904) Peter Pan

J. K. Rowling (1997 – 2007) Harry Potter I – VII

About the Artists:

The International Collaboration Project duo

Deb Young + Francisco Diaz

www.diaz-young.com

Deb Young is an artist-photographer based in New Zealand and Francisco Diaz is an artist photographer based in the USA. Young was awarded her Photographic Society of New Zealand Licentiate by the PSNZ Honours Board and Diaz graduated with his BA from Queens College and his MA from Adelphi University. Together the duo is known as The International Collaboration Project. They have been published internationally in magazines such as L'Oeil de la Photographie, Lenscratch, Dodho, Hi-Fructose, The Photo Review, F-Stop Magazine, Blur, Bleek, Silver Shotz and were named "International Photographers of the Year" at the 6th Edition Pollux Awards, the Fine Art and Documentary Photography Biennial held in Malaga, Spain. Recently, they were awarded the 9th Julia Margaret Cameron Award in Berlin, were selected as finalists for the 2017 Biennial Grant and they were awarded gold in the People/Children category at the Moscow International Foto Awards 2017.

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