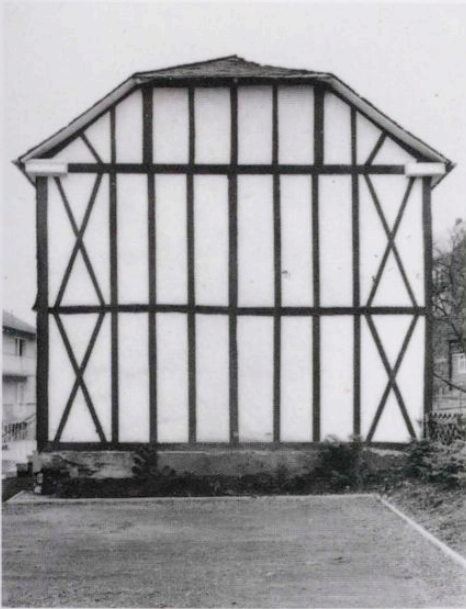


Art in America

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Variety Photoplays

Several young, newly prominent women photographers have more in common than their rising reputations. Trained in graduate programs in the late '90s, they tend to use adolescent girls as their subjects, prefer staged scenes to candid shots and often inject narrative elements into their pictures. Below, a look at five of these emergent image-makers.

BY PHYLLIS TUCHMAN



one another as an Andy Warhol painting is from a Roy Lichtenstein, or a Claes Oldenburg sculpture from a cast by George Segal. Gaskell creates suspenseful scenes, while Grannan is a portraitist. Kurland takes views of active youths in landscape settings. With wide-ranging interests, both Hoey and Marder work in black-and-white and color, often focusing on figures in rooms as well as outdoors.

Yet the five share more than just their thirty-something age. Each of these women attended the graduate photography program at Yale University during the late 1990s. While pursuing their own concerns, they share an esthetic nurtured by their professors in New Haven, and they work for the most part with staged realities.

Their prints balance rich color and clear light. When capturing a landscape, they include figures as well. Moreover, in their solo shows, the overall installation can be as distinctive and important as the individual pictures.

The images in "Another Girl, Another Planet" celebrated young girls on the threshold of adulthood. The show's cocurators, gallery partner Jeanne Greenberg Rohatyn and photographer Gregory Crewdson, a Yale professor whose teaching assistants have included Gaskell, Hoey and Kurland, selected 13 artists based in New York, Los Angeles and London, as well as Germany, India, Sweden and the Netherlands, who use adolescents and their slightly older sisters as models. Crewdson even invoked a snappy tune to celebrate the occasion by appropriating the title of the show from a lively track by The Only Ones, an English punk band popular during the late '70s. A short story by A.M. Homes appears in the smart catalogue.

All but one of the featured artists were women. With curatorial tongue in cheek,

prints by Gabriel Brandt, a classmate of Marder and Kurland, were included because he has a unisex first name, and his subjects, including Marder, were appropriate. Six of the exhibitors attended Yale.¹ Work by Gaskell is reproduced in the catalogue, though she was not in the show.

In the whitewashed, luminous gallery, the color prints sparkled. Heralding a new wave of photographers, the show called attention to the manifold ways a camera can deal with young adults. Some of the subjects, for example, were

Launch Time

When photographers Dana Hoey, Justine Kurland, Malerie Marder and Katy Grannan exhibited their prints in "Another Girl, Another Planet" at what was then called Lawrence Rubin Greenberg Van Doren Fine Art in New York in spring 1999, none of them had yet had a solo show. Today, just three years later, they all enjoy international reputations. Their images of teenagers and young women have been featured in museum shows, myriad art fairs and all sorts of publications. They have lectured on their work to audiences from New York to New Zealand.

Given the celebrity of this quartet and another colleague, Anna Gaskell, anyone who is not yet familiar with their accomplishments may wonder how much of their success is due to fortunate timing. After all, photography rules right now. As color prints blanket display rooms once monopolized by painting, a sizable portion of a younger generation has turned to the camera rather than to brushes and oils to best express themselves.

But there is no easy explanation for the success Gaskell, Hoey, Kurland, Marder and Grannan other than the quality of their work and their conviction. Their photographs are as different from





Middleton, WI, 2000, C-print, 45 by 35 1/2 inches. Photos this spread courtesy Artemis Greenberg Van Doren.

*Right, Anna Gaskell:
Untitled #85
(resemblance), 2001,
C-print, 88½ by 56½
inches.*

*Far left, Untitled #87
(resemblance), 2001,
C-print, 30¾ by 37½
inches.*

*Near left, top,
Untitled #26 (override),
1997, C-print,
20 by 24 inches.*

*Near left, bottom,
Untitled #6 (wonder),
1996, C-print, 20 by
24 inches. Photos
this spread courtesy
the artist and Casey
Kaplan Gallery,
New York.*





Dana Hoey: *Trunk Lab, 2001, C-print, 48 by 60 inches.* Photos this spread courtesy Friedrich Petzel Gallery, New York.

characters in an implied narrative; others served as more neutral formal elements, and still others represented traditional portraits with a twist. An arcadian scene by Kurland in which swimmers frolic and converse in a sun-dappled cove contrasted markedly with Marder's film-noir-like image of a girl on a float in a swimming pool at night. In Hoey's *Monie*, a C-print appearing on the back cover of the catalogue, a young woman sitting at a table stuffs coins into penny wrappers, while another girl, lying on a bench, reads want ads. Visitors to "Another Girl, Another Planet" could experience alienation, anxiety, ennui and independence—all up close and personal.

The photographs, a number of which were mounted on aluminum rather than framed under glass, tended to be larger—say, 30 by 40 inches and up to 59 inches square—than prints predating the '70s. Yet they are smaller than the huge views associated with such German practitioners as Andreas Gursky and Thomas Struth, whose works rival in size paintings by Jackson Pollock.

Greenberg Rohatyn set the tone for the show

in the catalogue's introduction. "This gallery," she wrote, "represents the merging of two generations of partners, reflecting a range of interests and aesthetic sensibilities. One of the pleasures of this space is our ability to span these generations . . . by providing a venue for . . . the established as well as the emerging artist."²

When contacted about this article, Gaskell and Hoey, both of whom have experienced critical success on their own terms, asked not to be included. They prefer not to be identified as members of a group. They recognize no movement with which they can be associated. For them, there is no shared subject matter or formal language. To some extent, they are right; there are more apparent differences than similarities among the women featured here. That said, though, omitting Gaskell and Hoey from this piece would constitute its own kind of misrepresentation. Their protests recall those of such artists as Carl Andre and Donald Judd, who, during the mid- and late '60s, repeatedly maintained that they did not belong to a so-called Minimalist movement, even as they



Disaster Relief,
1998, C-print,
50 by 40 inches.



Waimea, 2000, Cibachrome,
30 by 45 inches.

Freedom Officers, 1999, selenium-toned
silver print, 16 by 20 inches.



Rebirthing, 2002, C-print, 48 by 60 inches.



participated in the movement's defining exhibitions, such as "Primary Structures" at the Jewish Museum. Several Pop artists expressed similar concerns about being banded together as well.

An article in the February 2000 issue of *Harper's Bazaar* introduced several of the same artists to a far wider audience than had the show 10 months earlier. Including many reproductions, a text (again) by novelist A.M. Homes and a two-page group portrait taken by Catherine Opie, "Hot Shots," as the article was titled, set the stage for further accolades and attention. With a crew of stylists, hairdressers and makeup artists on hand, Opie's subjects responded to the shoot as if they were cast members of Clare Booth Luce's *The Women* or, perhaps, fashion models. To be sure, those who sat for Opie—Hoey, Marder, Grannan and Kurland, plus Jenny Gage and Nikki S. Lee—vamped a bit, posed and play-acted the way they would want their own sitters to respond.

Decades ago, for *Life* magazine, Gordon Parks photographed another group of young women early in their careers. With a headline proclaiming, "Women Artists in Ascendance: Young Group Reflects Lively Virtues of U.S. Painting," the May 13, 1957, issue carried five glamorous,

On the surface, Hoey's scenes often appear placid and serene. But they tend to have dramatic subtexts that bring you back for a second and third look: what's really going on?

color shots of Helen Frankenthaler, Joan Mitchell, Grace Hartigan, Jane Wilson and Nell Blaine posed with their paintings. Opie, an Iowan born in 1961 and now a tenured professor at UCLA, is knowledgeable about her field; she admires Parks and knows these images.

School Days

Many critically acclaimed photographers teach to earn a living. At Yale, Bard College and the Tisch School of the Arts at New York University (among other places), students have the opportunity to learn technique, form and history from distinguished practitioners. In critiques, discus-

Justine Kurland's photographs engender all sorts of emotions, but there's usually an elegiac quality to what she shoots, a presiding sense of sorrow for times lost but not forgotten.

sions range far and wide. At Yale, for example, department chair Todd Papageorge likes to quote poetry relevant to each student's concerns, while, as the frame of reference for his own dramatically staged photos, Crewdson will cite Hollywood movies. Want to learn how to light a photograph? One professor might suggest the old trial-and-error method involving laboriously altering setups this way and that, while another teacher might advise simply viewing a hokey how-to video. Yale's graduate photography program is restricted to eight incoming students a year, and the admissions committee favors those who have been out of school for a while.

After the death of Walker Evans, who was a professor in the graphics department in the

School of the Arts at Yale, a search was launched to replace him. Papageorge was appointed Walker Evans Professor in the newly independent photography division. As chair, he eventually recruited Crewdson and Philip-Lorca diCorcia, two of his former students, to join him on the faculty. Now it's their former teaching assistants who are in the news.

While a crew of Yale graduates have gained recognition, Gaskell, Hoey, Kurland, Marder and Grannan have been singled out for the purposes of this article for a variety of reasons. Working with different themes—aspects of genre, landscape, nudes and portraiture—each sets new parameters for the field. All but Grannan prefer to stage their photographs, carefully selecting wardrobe, props and other appurtenances rather than going for the candid or naturally posed shot. And they are as knowledgeable about the pioneers of their field as they are about what's happening today or what transpired in the recent past.

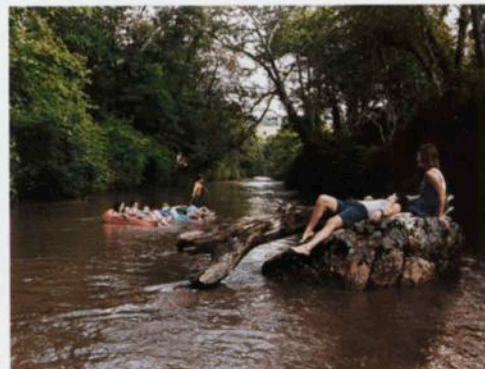
Anna Gaskell

Anna Gaskell's photographs often have the quality of narrative cliff-hangers. Why, you may wonder, has the girl in the short-sleeved yellow dress with a blue pinafore, white stockings and Mary Janes jumped so high out of the frame that



Justine Kurland: One red, one blue (Jenner, California), 2001, C-print, 30 by 40 inches.

Explorer (Floyd, Virginia), 2000, C-print, 30 by 40 inches.



Shipwrecked, 2000, C-print, 30 by 40 inches.





Cyclone, 2001, C-print, 30 by 40 inches. Photos this spread courtesy Gorney Bravin + Lee, New York.

you don't see her face? Why is one adolescent holding the nose of a similarly clothed girl who lies on the ground with her eyes closed? Why, in the same series, is another Mary-Janed figure putting on or taking off her white panty hose—that's all that's visible of this figure—in a beautiful wildflower-filled field with a stand of trees in the background? Gaskell's luscious prints, with their skewed perspectives, eerie light effects and artificial elements—fake clouds and such—make viewers eager to see the next frame and then the next, hoping for one that will make clear what is really going on. None ever does.

Gaskell's scenes can leave you anxious and uneasy. Something is happening, and you can't quite make out what is amiss. These prints are unsettling in a way that recalls novels such as *Wuthering Heights*. Isolated from a context and conveying a sense of urgency—they are, after all, right in front of you—these prints engender moods you don't experience in a darkened movie house. Gaskell pictures the unfathomable.

In "Wonder," a 1996 series partly inspired by Lewis Carroll's *Alice in Wonderland*,³ Gaskell uses identically dressed twins for models. When she aims her camera towards the ground, she tersely conveys what the world seems like to

girls who don't look you in the eye but instead gaze down at their white-stockinged legs and patent-leather-shod feet. In some instances, limbs are stretched as if they were taut lines. Gaskell renders faces not as portraits but as vehicles reacting to what is taking place before their eyes (and usually outside of the photo). She makes you feel as if you are witnessing the reactions to a disturbing scene, because anxiety is what you read in the whites of eyes, pinched cheeks, stringy hair.

Gaskell, who was born and raised in Des Moines, briefly attended Bennington College before getting a BFA from the School of the Art Institute of Chicago. She earned her MFA from Yale in 1995. She possesses an astonishing narrative imagination, and, for the past few years, she has continually established story lines of high drama. Her use of a limited number of strong colors, the way she manages light as if producing a stage play, and other elements of a formal nature reveal her singular talent.

For Gaskell, color is a formal property that modulates situations. Blondes wear yellow pinafores. Women in blue tops appear against blue skies. In a number of melodramatic prints from the 1999 series "by proxy," the white dresses of the staff of a nursing unit blend with ersatz

snow, as well as billowing clouds. If you are only viewing Gaskell's images in catalogues, such as the ones that accompanied exhibitions at the Museum of Contemporary Art in North Miami in 1998 (before traveling to venues in Oxford, England, and Oslo, Norway) and at the Aspen Art Museum in 2000, you're at least twice removed from the experience of her work. Size is one formal element that Gaskell exploits to great advantage. She varies the dimensions of her prints so that a room in which they are displayed achieves an environmental character.

In her latest prints, featured in a recent show at Casey Kaplan in New York, Gaskell continues to court the macabre. Once again, she eloquently uses the poetic device of synecdoche, focusing on hands, legs and other body parts to evoke the whole figure.

Dana Hoey

Anyone who attended Dana Hoey's "Directions" exhibition at the Hirshhorn Museum and Sculpture Garden the winter before last found a varied and mature body of work, unusually accomplished for someone only a few years out of graduate school. Hoey, who got her MFA at Yale in 1997, was already making worthwhile prints in 1995. A remarkable series of 40-by-30-



Malerie Marder: My Mother and My Boyfriend, 2000, C-print, 48 by 60 inches.

inch color prints dating from 1998 features young women in threatening situations. In *Disaster Relief*, a woman in a white summer frock who is walking her dog by a construction site comes upon a bare foot sticking out from behind a coil of plastic ventilation tubing. Given the setting, the viewer assumes that the foot belongs to a victim of foul play.

The following year, Hoey executed "Phoenix," a captivating group of smaller-format, black-and-white pictures of two young women cast as bounty hunters pursuing their man across the state of Arizona. Her loose narrative is enacted in a range of settings. Some "scenes" are landscapes devoid of figures. Others are filled with action, uncertainty, downtime, excitement. People are shot from this angle and that, near and far. Besides contrasting rustic isolation with urban malaise, the photographer achieves a documentary quality that suggests that everything is happening in real time, right here, right now.

Hoey, a 35-year-old native of San Francisco who earned her B.A. from Wesleyan University, has a flair for offbeat subject matter. And lately, she has been combining her natural gift for setting up a story or expressing a philosophical outlook in ways that make direct reference to Manet,

Courbet and Gauguin. In her update of *Olympia*, entitled *Tribeca* (1999), an older, clothed woman and a naked young man of Asian descent sit in a loft space furnished with modern appointments. Another group of compositions wryly reflect Gauguin's Tahitian idylls. In Hoey's *Waimea* (2000), a Fujiflex print taken in Hawaii, two island girls in jeans and casual tops, their hair blowing in the wind, rest beneath a broad band of blue sky on a field of green that, upon closer inspection, turns out to be AstroTurf. The scene, which may have been inspired by Gauguin's similarly peopled and positioned *Femmes de Tahiti* (1891), is a pointed commentary on how things change.

On the surface, Hoey's scenes often appear placid and serene. But they tend to have subtexts that bring you back to take a second and a third look. In her best pictures, she uses color to advance her story. Viewed against practically monochromatic grounds or simple shapes—say, restroom stalls or fields of green or passages of blue sky—the figures wear hues that pop out of the



Untitled, 1998, black-and-white photograph, 20 by 24 inches.

backgrounds, as do their bodies with their bent elbows or billowing tresses. Hoey's palette calls attention more to the figures than to the props.

Hoey's two videos—one shown at Friedrich

Petzel last December and another completed a few weeks later—reveal other routes she is exploring. In the former, two young women learn how to mud-wrestle from a professional, and, as the camera follows their twists and turns, the figures, whose bodies are soon covered in mud, come to resemble a pair of Hellenistic wrestlers. In her other video, in which two swimsuit-clad young women appear

in a wading pool, the shadows of leaves create a richness of effect worthy of Matisse. As the camera circles the protagonists and they are again glimpsed from multiple viewpoints, they, too, take on a sculptural quality.

In her latest body of work, featured recently at Petzel, Hoey revealed her gift for monumental effects. Her large-format prints seemed even grander, as she let figures in close-up occupy much of the frame.

Victor Marder, 2000, C-print,
40 by 50 inches.



Justine Kurland

It's easy to be distracted by the arcadian lushness of Justine Kurland's landscapes. With a gentle touch, Kurland sets you down in the middle of a mist-shrouded scene or brings you deep into a shadowed cove. Pale light streaks across her skies. Kurland, who is 32 and graduated from the Yale program in 1998, often chooses to shoot in places that local residents treasure—you have to know someone who knows someone to find this meadow or that plateau. Her wide-open vistas and enclosed, sheltered areas range from leafy forests to desolate hilltops with a barren tree or two.

Taking as her models men and women whom she knows well, Malerie Marder can more readily establish the particular situation, mood or emotional chord that she would like to achieve.

In another day or age, Kurland might have made a name for herself as a bona fide landscapist. As it is, her work sometimes evokes that of Carleton Watkins and Ansel Adams, but she doesn't see herself as working within this genre. One reason is that she peoples her pictures, and these figures are just the right size to be noticed, neither too small nor too large in terms of the interior scale of the print. Then, too, for models she favors teenage girls in all sorts of situations except those in which they must stand still. Whatever they are doing—tossing balls, swimming, applying lipstick, removing leeches—they do unselfconsciously. Viewers of these prints may feel as if they are intruding.

Untitled, 2000, C-print, 48 by 60 inches. Photos this spread courtesy Artemis Greenberg Van Doren, New York.



Looking at Grannan's subjects, you eventually begin to suspect that the most exciting thing to happen to these people in a long time may just be her taking a photograph of them.



Katy Grannan: Mother and Son, Poughkeepsie, NY, 1999, C-print, 64 1/2 by 46 inches.

Kurland, a high-school dropout who worked her way through art school and college classes before earning her MFA at Yale in 1998, also takes photographs of girls in gritty urban settings. Quite a few of her subjects are shown in garbage-strewn areas near highway overpasses. Abandoned cars anchor some scenes, and in others slums face the towers of a resplendent city miles away. In these pictures, the photographer exercises her social consciousness. Kurland engenders all sorts of emotions, but there's usually an elegiac quality to what she shoots. In her prints you might time-travel from the worst scenarios—the dump-like sites—to ones so magical that they seem to belong to a poetic realm of the imagination. Yet Kurland has traveled there for us, and this meadow, that lake do exist in our present-day world. She makes astute use of seasonal shifts and changing light conditions. Nature's palette changes as well. Kurland puts her viewers in sight of timeless vistas of land and sea, but the ephemeral is a constant companion.

In a body of work created in New Zealand last spring, Kurland contrasted schoolgirls in uni-

form with the sort of sublime landscapes associated with 19th-century American painting. Her prints radiate natural light and color, free of both hyperbole and supplementary lighting.

Malerie Marder

Marder photographs figures. Many are nude. Often, family and friends pose for her. She herself is a recurring character in her repertory company.⁴ Taking as her models men and women she knows well, she can more readily establish a situation, a mood, an emotional chord that she would like to achieve. Especially when she is using black-and-white film, she can evoke Ingmar Bergman in her moody tableaux.⁵

Though she is only 30, Marder (who holds a B.A. from Bard College, where she studied with Stephen Shore and Larry Fink before going on to get her MFA from Yale in 1998) has already carved out a niche for her prints. Whether she's shooting indoors or outside, she makes viewers especially aware of light, artificial and natural, as well as space: the walls of a room, tree lines in nature. Her early prints make much of contrast, revealing a range of emotions as she moves between dark and light. In her photographs, men and women stand, sit and recline with an air of fateful permanence. (In this, she is unlike her colleague Gaskell.)

Marder carefully coordinates the impact of a display room filled with her pictures. Blue, red or yellow threads through the photographs in "Because I Was Flesh," her first one-person show, held at Lawrence Rubin Greenberg Van Doren Fine Art during late spring 2000. In a picture of actress Erika Christensen made on assignment for the "Fashions of The Times" section of the *New York Times* (Aug. 19, 2001), she also exquisitely calibrated an arrangement of red, white and blue.

Marder's pictures seem more old-fashioned than most of the others' work. It is rooted partly in a blend of '40s film noir and '50s foreign film, partly in European painting of the 19th century—Courbet, for instance. This is surprising because Marder's subjects, many of whom pose nude on beds, in shower stalls or just standing in a room, also bring to mind the scenes of suburban adolescence that Eric Fischl and some of his Neo-Expressionist colleagues painted during the '80s. An untitled print from 2000, in which a nude Marder lies on a beach near rock formations that resemble a mini L'Étretât, evokes the Neo-Classical Cabanel's *The Birth of Venus* (1862).

There is something decidedly sculptural about Marder's men and women, too. Her figures have the feel of three-dimensional forms, which is partly the result of the way she lights them, as well as the angles from which she shoots them. And like an artist such as George Segal, she makes viewers conscious of the everyday environments in which her friends pose. Like other precocious painters, sculptors and photographers, Marder will inevitably take her work in other directions. A large recent

print in which she mashes her face against a closed set of glass patio doors tellingly reminds viewers that at times artists who hit their heads against obstacles come up with great images.

Katy Grannan

Since earning her graduate degree from Yale only two years ago, Katy Grannan has compiled an impressive portfolio of portraits. One group comprises pictures of young men and women who answered "model wanted" advertisements she placed in local newspapers. Another body of work features soldiers barely out of their teens who fought in Chechnya. And a third

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Andrei, 21, March 2001, 2001, C-print, 64 1/2 by 46 inches.

Brother and Sister, Poughkeepsie, NY, 2000, C-print, 44 1/2 by 35 inches.

