

KATLEEN CLE

PHOTOGRAPHER

Antwerp Belgium

Katleen Clé

Born in Turnhout in 1974

Lives and work in Belgium, Colorado.

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BIO

Clé has a Masters Degree in Sculpture and Spatial Art from Sint Lucas Antwerp. In 1995, someone gave her a camera, and she started taking pictures. Together with a background in fashion and set design, three dimensional installations often shape her aesthetic. Her work has been featured in ad campaigns commissioned by Trix music center and in print and online music media.

EDUCATION

EDUCATION:

2006 - Aggregation, Royal Academy of Fine Arts, Antwerp

2002 - Master Degree Sculpture and Spatial Art, St. Lucas, Antwerp

1995 - Set design, Karel De Grote Hogeschool, Antwerp

1994 - Fashion, St. Agnes, Antwerp

EXHIBITIONS

SOLO EXHIBITIONS:

2010 - Portraits of Musicians, Tune Up, Antwerp
2003 - Portraits, Gallery Berta Roses, Antwerp
2001 - Portraits of Boxers, Fish and Chips, Antwerp
2000 - Ring Boxes, Pekfabriek, Antwerp

GROUP EXHIBITIONS (selected):

2019 - Blossoms, Elsewherstudio, Paonia, Colorado,
2019 - Fluorescence, Elsewhertstudio, Paonia, Colorado
2019 - Uncoverd, Elsewherstudio, Paonia, Colorado
2017 - Nelson, BC, Canada,
2016 - Middeltown, California, USA
2010 - Musicians, We are open, Trix, Antwerp
2006 - Toys, Zevendonk
2004 - Portraits, gallery Warm Water, Antwerp
2003 - Portraits, Move-Moment-Movement, SD Worx, Antwerp
2002 - Portraits of Girls, Congres, Antwerp
2001 - Me and Horses, Congres, Antwerp
2000 - Ruim Onderzocht, De Warande, Turnhout
1999 - Darkness, Gallery 111, Antwerp

MUSIC

It's no accident that Katleen Clé was the house photographer of the cutting edge music center Trix in Antwerp for four years. Given the amount of images produced at Trix, it could be her second home.

Her portraits of musicians, whether they're in front of an audience rocking out, singing softly in the spotlight, or backstage winding down, take place in the mind's eye of the subject.

She is more interested in what Cartier-Bresson called a "minute part of reality" than the photograph itself.

The pictures capture a private space where the internal dialogue of the performer is revealed in their glance.

The unguarded photographs enter the realm of a timeless non-physical moment.

The intimate angle of the portraits reflect Clé's own emotional connection to the musical performances she shoots.

THEATER

Theater is another aspect of Clé's professional work. Having been on both sides of the "fourth wall", her past experience as a set designer gives the pictures she shoots from the audience not only a replica of the scene but also insight into the director's visual intentions. If photographing performance is her current profession, then capturing solitude and isolation on the printed page is her art.

TOYS

Her other long term subjects include spooky still lifes featuring decaying toys she collects from skips and jumble sales. The long forgotten plastic farm animals encrusted with dirt and hair once entertained happy children and enjoyed a warm nest. The chipped cars used to be treasured playthings for some lucky little boy. Taken out of context and shot head on and up close, these items leave a lonely aftertaste and drive home the painful difference between façade and reality. The result is a healthy mixture of alienation and hospitality that leaves the viewer contemplating their own solitude.

MEN

Clé repeats this theme in portrait work by isolating her subjects from the world around them. A long term project of photographing men in their bath has produced a powerful series of images. While they also explore the aesthetic impact of water and steam on the skin, more intriguing is how Clé witnesses a vulnerable and intimate act and records it with her camera. In this way the individual, always present in portraiture, is stripped of ego and superficiality and forced to show itself, naked and alone.

MEN

MEN

"Our greatest pretenses are built up not to hide the evil and the ugly in us, but our emptiness.

The hardest thing to hide is something that is not there.

" American philosopher Eric Hoffer refers to the psychological concept of emptiness, however, the open spaces left in a photographic portrait around the subject can be equally revealing.

The rare modern day artistic images of a man in a bath, when not used in fashion photography to sell designer cologne or in sensually tinted soft-core sensationalism, inevitably refer to David's "Death of Marat" painting.

The political nature of the subject in historical context has faded, but the side story of vulnerability and betrayal; a woman visiting a man in his bath under false pretenses and then murdering him, is more universal.

What remains is the notion that a man in his bath is stripped of not only his clothing, but also his worldly position, façade, and power.

Katleen Clé's photographic portraits of men in their own baths are less about premeditated murder and more about capturing a moment of solitude and emptiness in the very personal environment of the subject.

While not consciously intending to create a particular image, Clé sets a process in place by joining near strangers in their bathroom and photographing their faces as they bathe.

By taking them out of the public atmosphere, the bath functions as an equalizer, and in the end, a mirror for the viewer, whether male or female. Along the way, the men let down their guard, and Clé's camera is there to record it all.

The way their skin changes colour and texture from the steam and the warm water, the contour of their drenched hair in repose, the way the red of their lips brightens when offset by white tiles, the wet eyelashes enrobing softened and generous eyes are all the result of the unique environment.

The faces are not melancholy or even overtly expressive.

It is the somberness and simplicity of the image, that which is not shown,

the space left open, that arouses a sense of loneliness in the viewer.

That moment that we ourselves let go of all pretext and identity and are left with the infinite

undefined may prove to be the most precarious one of all.
And one we are confronted with on a daily basis, in our own
bathroom.

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