



March 14 - April 25, 2020

Ruben Natal-San Miguel

Women R Beautiful



Ruben Natal-San Miguel, *Negesti*, 2019

Postmasters Gallery is pleased to announce a large scale solo exhibition of photographs by Ruben Natal-San Miguel.

Fifty years after Gary Winogrand's iconic—and problematic—series “Women Are Beautiful,” the white male gaze comes in for critique and review, a new look through a new set of eyes. In his own “Women R Beautiful” Natal San Miguel challenges and revisits Gray Winogrand's project for 2020.

Winogrand's notion of female beauty has been criticized as restricted and—in terms of race, age, and sexuality—very narrowly defined. Meanwhile, the process embodied in his photographs has often been recognized as invasive and objectifying, indifferent to the discomfort he imposes on his subjects. Natal-San Miguel's photographs embody a different gaze, a different perspective of different women, while still seeking to understand the concept of beauty in our age.

What Does Beauty Look Like?

-Mary C. Curtis

When we look into a mirror, what do we see? As much as each of us would hope to measure value according to what lies within, how much of that cold-eyed judgment flows from what society has sold as desirable?

How much confidence and power does it take to break away from all of that, to own the years and lived experiences and quirks and all the supposed imperfections that lead to the "perfect" person each of us was born to become?

The journey through healing to strength can begin with a father who tells his daughter, as mine did, that she was smart and pretty despite what the blond Barbies on the shelf insisted was true.

And the path can be smoothed with the help of an artist who places all women at the center of the frame, bringing his heart, as well as his eye, to every picture he takes and every project he commits to.

Who inspired Ruben Natal San-Miguel's "Women R Beautiful"? His mother—stunning, beautiful and strong and now gone—is just one photo, one image that can hardly sum up a life well lived. But her influence runs through the collection.

In "Motherhood & The Very First Water Splash," a new mother and a universal age-old ritual, performed everywhere, this time in The Bronx, is cooling off while sharing a moment with baby.

With their bright red coats, eager, shining eyes and open smiles, the "Easter Twins" look ready to lead the next generation. "3 Muslim Girls" don't have to show their faces; they hold hands, turning their faces not to the camera but to a world that is not always welcoming.

When I see my own image, a black woman, a journalist more comfortable sharing the stories of others instead of her own, slight embarrassment turns to the pride of representing my mission while wearing the beaded and bejeweled work of visionary artist and MacArthur Fellow Joyce Scott, another African-American child of Baltimore.

If viewers recall the work of Garry Winogrand, who found his subjects on city streets, in parks and at parties for his renowned "Women Are Beautiful" series of the 1960s and 70s, that's fine.

Fifty years later, Ruben Natal-San Miguel offers a newer, fresher, feminist, most contemporary, diverse and inclusive way to look at what a woman is and can be.

His collection translates into something meaningful, of the moment and celebratory, healing for the photographer and for all who view and are challenged by the beautiful women looking back at them.

The exhibition is dedicated to the memory of Olga San Miguel (1936-2019) and Jennifer & Abbynesh Schlecht (1977-2019) (2014-2019)