

Chris Verene  
on *Camera Club* (1995–1998)

In the mid-1990s I sought out photography clubs that advertise (mainly in newspaper classified columns) for aspiring models, offering them the chance of a career breakthrough. Usually called “camera clubs”, they have been in the US since the 1940s and are often seen as groups of male photographers huddled around swimsuit models in studios and on beach locations – eventually earning them a somewhat negative reputation.

My project sought to document the photographers who join a club to gain access to women willing to pose in lingerie, swimwear and the nude. I joined these clubs in a number of American cities and surreptitiously made pictures of the men and their equipment while the models distracted them. I also conspired with a female friend who applied as an aspiring model. Together, we found that they were never a real route to becoming a fashion model, and such promises were often offered in lieu of payment.

These clubs, and my project as a whole, pre-date the internet and the advent of digital photography. Today, the camera club mentality has become web-based. The digital age has created a much larger group of amateur photographers who masquerade as serious professionals via layers of internet appearances and identities. Additionally, technology is such that images made by unskilled photographers appear quite slick, using instant digital cameras and auto-retouching tools.

The *Camera Club* project is unstaged, and is a real document of how the clubs truly function. It stands as a caution to young women, suggesting that they be careful who they trust when taking off their clothes for pictures, and that they should not always believe the stories such clubs tell.

*Chris Verene is a photographer based in New York. He is currently working on a feature-length documentary about The Self-Esteem Salon, and his book Family is published by Twin Palms.*

Anton Corbijn  
on Kohei Yoshiyuki's *The Park* series  
(1971–1979)

I had not been aware of Kohei Yoshiyuki's work until I saw a review of his series *The Park* about two years ago, which was accompanied by a photograph that caught my eye immediately. The infrared grittiness appealed to me, but also the image of people's backs in a leafy environment in darkness. It seemed that the picture was that of a documentary photographer, but I couldn't tell straightaway what was being documented. It was an odd image; what did it show? A frozen tension perhaps. I even felt that it had something forbidden about it, something I understood only after reading the review. This revealed that in the 1970s the photographer discovered that couples used parks in Tokyo to make out and that this was known to some men who loved to observe the intimate situations from close range – sometimes close enough to touch the couple. Kohei had used infrared flashbulbs so as not to disturb the scenes in front of him, making the photographs incredibly realistic and thus quite unsettling to view.

For starters, the images are far more erotic than most porno photographs, feeding through an (unfulfilled) desire to discover details about other people's sex lives. There is something left to discover, something not shown, which is rare these days where everything is being documented and mystery has all but disappeared. But that is not the real essence of Kohei's pictures. They deal more with voyeurism than with sex, and that topic makes them so incredibly interesting for us viewers, as we are voyeurs too. Though we are not in the photographs, we are right behind these people, trying to watch over their shoulders. The voyeurs are captured, but in a way so are we. Perhaps that is the eternal position of a photographer?

*Anton Corbijn is a photographer and film-maker, and the director of Control (2007).*





Chris Verene  
*Untitled (Red Back)*  
(1997)  
C-type print  
50.8x61cm



Kohei Yoshiyuki  
All *Untitled* from the  
series *The Park* (1971-1979)  
Gelatin silver prints  
40.6x50.8cm

