

Billy Sullivan: East End Photographs 1973-2009

Salomon Contemporary
East Hampton, NY

June 6 - July 4, 2010

Text by Max Blagg

Stephen, June 1973

1

Pretty boy in Picasso shirt dreaming of Madrid, Goya in the Prado and Cocteau at the corrida seated next to Pablo, observing the fit of the matador's suit of lights, trembling slightly as the Toledo blade slides between the bloodied shoulders of the bull.



Leanne, February 1974

2

Girl on a beach in winter, wild history stored in her ice-blue eyes, race memories reaching back to famine and slaughter, Viking longboats grinding into sand, hovels burning all along the coast.



Taylor, July 1974

3

Taylor running through his old soft shoe, his Shakespearean rag, a flower thief, a simple country girl, a fool for love, foolish virgin dancing in the cadmium light of an endless summer long since ended.



Jane, Max, and Emerson, September 1974

4

Aphrodite in Wainscott. The sun god approves of sweet Jane in her 'flesh that photographed like flesh,' cast up on the strand like a gift or a sacrifice. Velvet skin glazed with ultraviolet rays, she shimmers like water in the desert. Behind her glorious haunches baby Cain buries Abel up to his neck in wet sand.



Rose, Olivia, Max, and Olivier, May 1975

5

Memory concocted on the spot by light, ocean, turning dog, handsome father casually leaning into puzzled children tethered in a makeshift cage.



Gigi, June 1975

6

Slippery when wet. Gigi emerges from an orange haze, nipples red and loud as doorbells.



Max and Stephen, May 1976

7

Little boy blue in a sea of paint, blue afternoon beneath a bright blue heaven. One day like Icarus he will spread his wings and take to the sky.



Klaus, August 1976

8

Portrait of the writer as a young chancer. A cool libation and a page full of words hammered into pleasing patterns. Outside the door, the high season in its soaring glory.



Sam, Edo, Irie, and Max, August 1978

9

Tiny hose among the giant hoses at the Fireman's Fair in North Sea, invisible summer melting away like water on hot tarmac.



Klaus and Stephen, August 1978

10

Somewhere across the bay Joe Z. was catching stripers on wire line, no mercy, and the red sky promised every seasick sailor a great day in the morning. Meanwhile the artifactuists hunkered down in Margaritaville, stubbing out their smokes on priceless native pottery, plotting antic schemes for art world domination as the tequila burned its way down.



Tom, Jay, Amy, Maripol, and Edo, September 1978

11

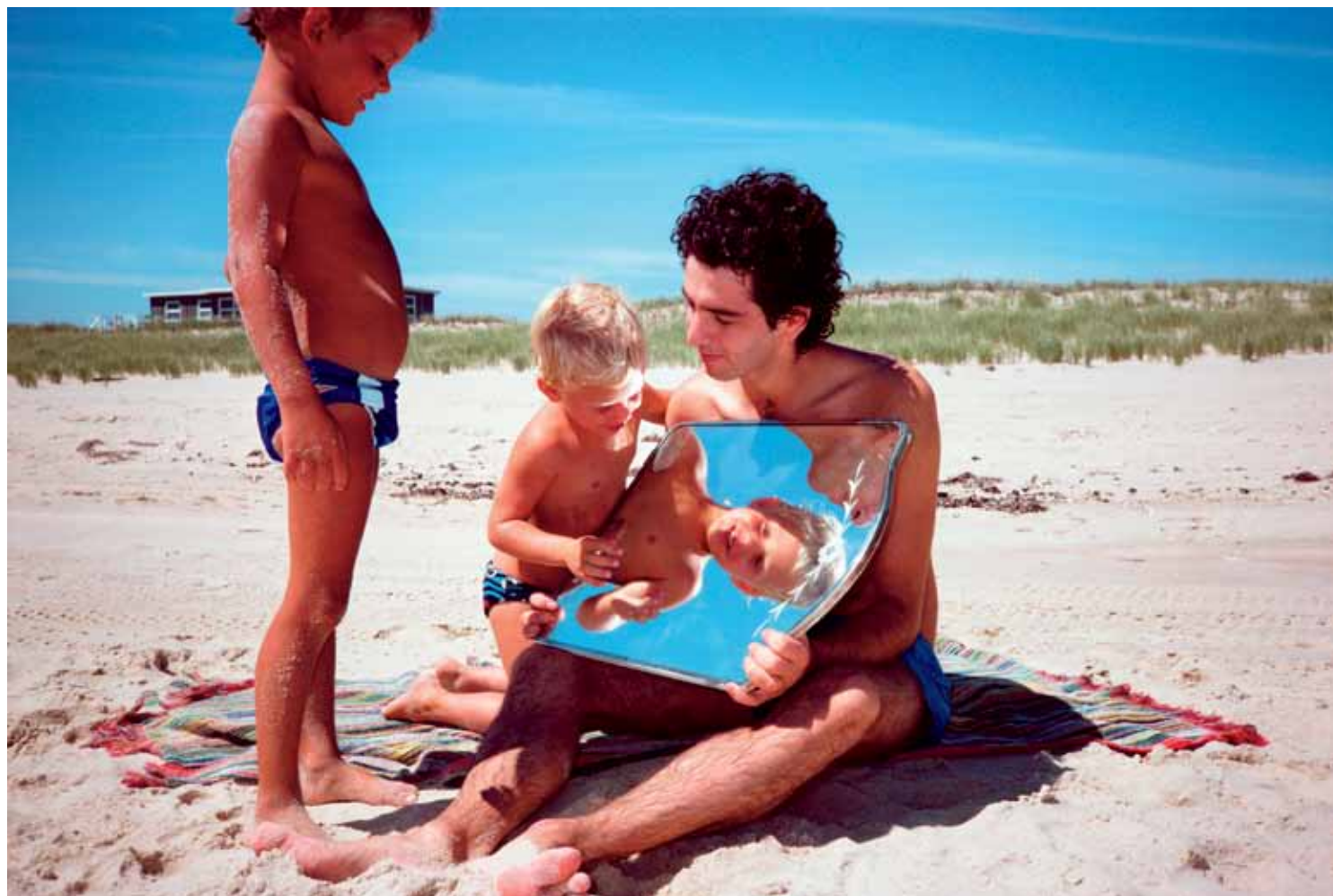
Sunstroked rogues in a pirogue sailing around their waterworld, enveloped by the blue domed eternity of a July afternoon. Nothing here can harm them, that green flash on the horizon still years away.



Max, Sam, and Edo, September 1978

12

Tiny Narcissus framed by the sky in a glass. Long ago the sun poured down, looking over their golden shoulders, overlooking nothing.



Billy al fresco, August 1981

13

Heedless in a prospect of flowers, the artist might be in Giverny or Little Gidding, he could care less, carefully configuring the elaborate plumage of a Spanish rooster.



Anne, September 1981

14

A smile as wide as Texas in the bar car bound for the upper reaches of Hamptonia. Handing out blessings and curses to all who sail with her.



Clarissa, July 1982

15

Clarion caller, wild mushroom trawler, shiny container of queer wit and wild wisdom. She finds art under rocks and paraphrases Kierkegaard for the less reflective. See how the sunlight strokes her face on the threshold of a fresh idea.



Max and Anita's Wedding, September 1991

16

“Memories are killing. So you must not think of certain things, of those that are dear to you, or rather you must think of them, for if you don’t there is the danger of finding them, in your mind, little by little.”

– Samuel Beckett



Marian, July 1994

17

Maid Marian bewitched at the garden party. Night vision goggles reveal two tiny wounds on her neck. Mosquitoes, or a vampire's kiss? Bliss is a brittle little moment.



Rachel, July 2002

18

Serpentine dancer inhales a sonic tonic. A spray of painted flowers covers her back. Deeper in the field, another English rose glows as she go-goes.



Clarissa and Mary, November 2007

19

Two blondes walking, painted toes concealed by sensible shoes, on a golden road among the goldenrod where Indian warriors once chased down deer. First tiny spikes of winter embedded in the edges of the air, church bells sounding across open fields.



Dustin, December 2007

20

Well-bedded boy reads *Resentment* for clues on how to behave badly. Ghosts of muses past sing through the walls. Don't mistake the cake for a free ride.



Casey, Rothko, Sam, and Ralph, December 2008

21

Hound dogs conjure an epileptic circle at Sam's command, canine brains datestamped with this moment of tricks with sticks. The French lad looks on askance from the edge of the pond. November light skates across thin ice.



Tiannis and Patricia, July 2009

22

Mother and daughter, bound by blood and love and seven varieties of female fury, texting and dreaming. Summer slides away like a boat from a dock.



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