

DEANNA TEMPLETON: 29.04.2017 - 24.06.2017

Eight Years of Skinny Dipping, Shot by Deanna Templeton by Charlotte Jansen on blog AnOthermag.com on May 3th 2017

Eight Years of Skinny Dipping, Shot by Deanna Templeton

The California-based photographer has been capturing her friends swimming nude for almost a decade, and now the works are coming to an Antwerp exhibition



Ever since the 1990s, Deanna Templeton has been one of few female street photographers in California documenting youth cultures and life in public spaces. Piers in particular are a favourite, and she regularly shoots the locals at Huntington Beach where she lives with her husband, former pro-skater and artist Ed Templeton, as well as parks and punk shows. Places, in short, where all kinds of people meet.

Though she has been working for several decades, there's a sense of timelessness in Templeton's pictures, partly due to the fact she always shoots on film. It's also in her instinctive understanding of the things that connect us, no matter what age we are, something of herself she recognises in her subjects that the viewer takes part in too: the shared joy and pain of adolescence, the desire for love and freedom, to look good and have fun. As Patti Smith wrote of Robert Mapplethorpe in *Just Kids* – like all good artists, she transforms time, rather than simply reflecting it.

This spring marks a busy moment for Templeton. This week her painterly, abstract portraits of the human subject go on display in exhibition *The Swimming Pool*, which is taking place at Gallery Fifty One in Antwerp and will run until June 24. It is also released as a glorious photo book, showing Templeton's interests in other aspects of photography and presenting the body, while still being quintessentially Californian in aesthetic. Later this month, Londoners can see works from *What She Said* – portraits of girls juxtaposed with excerpts from the photographer's own teenage diaries – at a group show at 71A, alongside other artists who met through independent Zine imprint the *Deadbeat Club*, and from in late-May Templeton will also be showing at Photo London. While in London "Ed and I will be taking some day trips to beach towns, to check out some English piers," she says.

It's safe to say that Brighton isn't quite Huntington Beach, but no doubt the pair will capture its weirdest and most wonderful everyday moments nonetheless. Ahead of this slew of European exhibits, we asked Templeton about *The Swimming Pool* series, how to make nudity comfortable, and being a woman in the street photography world.



On how The Swimming Pool happened...

"Back in 2007 my husband Ed decided to take a little skinny dip in our swimming pool. So I decided to grab my camera and shoot a few photos. I think I rattled off ten shots. When I got my proof-sheet back from the lab a week later I really liked what I was seeing. Some of the images looked like pencil drawings and others had really beautiful shadows and light bouncing off the body through the water.

I think what also grabbed me was the quietness of the images. I'm generally a street photographer, and at the time I was also working on a series called Scratch My Name on your Arm; this series was about how young people were getting autographs on their body instead of a piece of paper or T-shirt. It was very chaotic to shoot, the autographs turned into logos and then the logos turned into kids just writing messages on each other, and there was a lot of running around to get these photos, a lot of interaction. So when I was looking over the proof-sheet of my husband swimming it gave me a sense of calmness. It was a nice balance to the project I was currently working on."

On the reason for the nudity...

"When I decided to pursue this theme I put out an open call to friends, and friends of friends, to ask if anyone would be down to swim for me nude. The reason behind everyone being nude was that I wanted a blank canvas: I just wanted the body, the light and the water. No distractions. Which also meant that I was looking for people with little to no tattoos. Which isn't very easy these days."

On the swimming pool as a subject...

"I think what I really liked about the swimming pool being my subject was the quietness, the controlled environment, and the one-on-one interaction I had with all the swimmers."

On how she directed the shoots...

"When I first started shooting this series I was shooting everything. I was looking at this project as a collaboration with the swimmers. I would tell them to swim however they liked. And in the beginning some of the images would come back totally distorted, almost like a Francis Bacon painting – there were double bodies, faces in front of faces. But as the years went on I started gravitating towards the images that went back to what first caught my eye; the ones with just the light reflecting onto the bodies, the shadows and the bubbles that the swimmers would produce. So I changed my approach and started to give a little more direction."

On the female gaze...

"I feel like as a woman I might have a more sensitive eye. But then that is such a blanket statement, I mean am I actually going to say that men can't be sensitive? I guess all I can commit to is my gaze, and through my gaze I try to be sensitive and compassionate to certain situations. But I'm not a sap either, if I see something that I don't agree with. If I find something important enough to create some kind of dialogue with, then I'll still shoot it. Maybe my gaze is my own conscience."