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1970s suburban kitsch and the New York Disco scene - photos by Meryl Meisler

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“I realise now, I’ve been writing my memoir through photography,” explains Meryl Meisler, discussing her exhibition at Steven Kasher Gallery in New York. The show contains her earliest work from the Seventies, and combines shots of the kitsch interiors of her family and friends’ suburban houses with raucous nights on the then burgeoning disco scene.

Meisler grew up in North Massapequa, Long Island. The daughter of a printer, she was familiar with photography from a young age, and began experimenting with a camera whilst home on vacation from the University of Wisconsin, where she was studying illustration.

Her first subjects were her family and friends, who goof around joyfully in their living rooms. “My parents were first generation Americans who grew up during the Great Depression,” says Meisler, by phone from her home in New York. “They took advantage of post-war prosperity to purchase a 10-room home in the suburbs.”



They were also extremely adventurous. “They founded a thing called the Mystery Club, with 11 couples who went on daring outings. Imagine your parents coming home and saying: we went to a séance, we went to a nudist colony, we went to a gay bathhouse.”

Their exploratory spirit rubbed off on Meryl. Having just come out as gay, she was working as a freelance illustrator by day, and a go-go dancer by night. She also became involved in the disco scene and mixed with celebrities, feminists, artist and photographers at clubs like Studio 54 and CBGB.