

MUSÉE
VANGUARD OF PHOTOGRAPHY CULTURE

EXHIBITION REVIEW: WENDY EWALD WORKS, PROJECTS,
COLLABORATIONS 1975-1996

By Emma Coyle, June 11, 2018



There is something freeing in seeing the world from a different point of view. To see children enabled to share their world while also managing to create a venue in which the viewer can explore their own relation to the scenes captured. This spring, The Steven Kasher Gallery brought the sublime work of Wendy Ewald to New York, showing Wendy Ewald: Works, Projects, Collaborations 1975-1996, which featured dozens of images from her collection of collaborative projects.

Ewald is known for the way she directs photography. It brings to mind theater directors, who tell their actors how to play the roles but the performance rests firmly on those performers shoulders. Ewald goes into communities and teaches children how to take pictures and use cameras and directs them but then they go into their everyday lives and capture unique moments. They bring her project to life.

STEVEN
KASHER
GALLERY

While looking at each photograph, there is a sense of discovery. One that adults are not privy to once they have set aside childhood. Ewald directed some of the children that she worked with to explore their “dreams or fantasies” and photograph them. In images like *The Devil is Spying on the Girls*, which she spoke about in the May/June issue of *photograph*, there is an uncomfortable presence haunting the black and white photograph.

It is so easy to forget the fears of childhood and think of it as something magical and unburdened, but Ewald’s project manages to encapsulate the full lives of children. Both the feeling that there is a monster under the bed and the sense of freedom. It is a delicate balancing act that is served best by having the children introduce us to their world themselves.

Wendy Ewald’s projects are mysterious and outside of adult life. No matter how close one gets to the subjects, they escape, evading understanding, and the viewer is left wondering what happened in the moments before and after the picture was taken. And they are left with the knowledge that those places will always remain in their imagination. Ewald is able to find a uniform aesthetic even though the photographs are taken by a large range of children over many years and that is just as magical as the dreams explored within them.