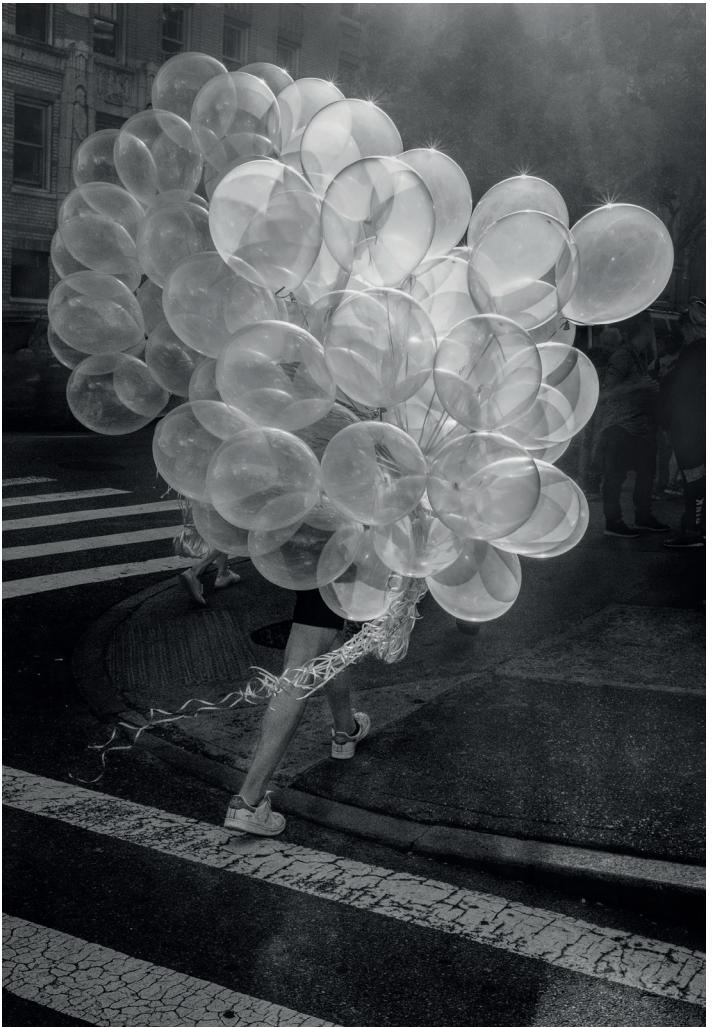


AMERICAN CONNECTION

Nina Welch-Kling has honed her view of the Big Apple into a uniquely descriptive portfolio of fragmented environments and noir-ish shadows. She talks to Susan Burnstine about her curiosity, diptychs and pandemic inspiration.



Balloons



Man without Head

New York City-based photographer Nina Welch-Kling's captivating street images capture a classical elegance of both days gone by and days to come. Her distinctive style calls to mind greats who blended elements of fine art and street photography, such as Helen Levitt, Saul Leiter and Ralph Gibson, but the conversations in her diptych series *Duologues* introduce a novel approach to the genre.

Welch-Kling is originally from Schweinfurt, a small town in southern Germany. She moved to the United States in 1987 to earn her BFA at the Art Institute

of Chicago and master's in architecture from UCLA, then married and had two daughters. In 1995, she moved from Los Angeles to Manhattan where she raised her children and focused on painting in oil and watercolour. When she began photographing subjects to use in her paintings, she found the process more interesting than painting. She had studied basic photography in college and loved the magic of the darkroom, then fell back in love with it when she attended her first online digital photography class in 2010.

She began attending in-person classes at ICP in New York City and became completely hooked when studying with photographer and educator

Natan Dvir, as well as taking classes with Christopher Giglio, her teacher and mentor to this day. 'Despite the initial hesitation to get close to people and the challenges to visually simplify a busy street scene, I couldn't stop going out and exploring NYC with my camera,' she says.

Welch-Kling's shooting style imbues a psychological perspective that can be interpreted as being a voyeur or an outsider in a new or unknown land. This is not to infer that her observations are dark, but instead her approach appears to emerge from an immense curiosity for all that is new in her surrounding world. She frequently shoots from a fragmented perspective, never

allowing viewers to perceive the entirety of her environment, and she typically captures subjects from behind, which enhances the ambience of mystery and wonder.

'I have been living in NYC for over 25 years and I still wonder how a girl from a small town ended up living here,' she says. 'I often feel like a kid in a candy store when exploring the streets – a different light can make something familiar look sparkling and exciting. I believe my photos leave the viewer with a sense of mystery and room for interpretation. A detail of a person invites viewers to wonder and wander in their own imagination; a place to mix one's own experiences with the interpretation of the photo.'



Welch-Kling's decision to pair images in the *Duologues* series initially grew out of a class assignment focusing on diptychs. 'While looking at my work through a narrower lens, I realised that my photos could be categorised into different prototypes and that rhyming different elements created another layer to my investigations. Each pair looks at different ways to relate one photograph to another – a detail, a shape, a gesture, an emotion,' she says. 'I try to find different relationships without repeating themselves. The paired photos are not easily interchangeable, yet there might be multiple meaningful rhymes that could occur. I keep a collection of photos that can be matched together – photos that have distinct elements but can stand on their own.'

Living in New York City during the height of the pandemic created many challenges for street photographers so Welch-Kling considered new creative pathways while quarantining with her husband, daughters and cat, and that led to her present series, *Darker Days*. 'I started to go on night walks through the empty, cold streets of my neighbourhood and tried to capture small moments at home during the day. I still feel somewhere in the middle between lockdown and



free-roaming and my current photography reflects that,' she says. Additionally, she's been experimenting with a hand-created digital pinhole camera which she's used to photograph her neighbourhood with 'a new set of eyes'.

Recently, Welch-Kling's work was included in a monograph entitled *Women Street Photographers*, published by Prestel. She posts frequently on Instagram and can be followed at @ninakling.

ninklingphotography.com

ATLANTA

HIGH MUSEUM

Until 1 August

Underexposed: Women Photographers from the Collection

high.org

BRONX

EN FOCO

Until 16 October

Dos Mundos: (Re)Constructing Narratives

enfoco.org

BROOKLYN

BROOKLYN MUSEUM

Until 8 August

John Edmonds: A Sidelong Glance

brooklynmuseum.org

DALLAS

DALLAS CONTEMPORARY

Until 22 August

Paolo Roversi: Birds

dallascontemporary.org

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FORT WORTH

AMON CARTER MUSEUM

Until 8 August

An-My Lê: On Contested Terrain

cartermuseum.org

LINCOLN

SHELDON MUSEUM OF ART

Until 3 July

Barriers and Disparities: Housing in America

sheldonartmuseum.org

MONTCLAIR

MONTCLAIR ART MUSEUM

Until 13 June

Fragile Freedoms: Maggie Meiners Revisits Rockwell

montclairartmuseum.org

NEW YORK CITY

NEW YORK HISTORICAL SOCIETY AND ASIA SOCIETY

Until 25 July

Dreaming Together

nyhistory.org

PORTRLAND

BLUE SKY, THE OREGON CENTER FOR THE PHOTOGRAPHIC ARTS

Until 26 June

2019 Curatorial Prize Exhibition: What a Body Moves Through