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ARTS & ENTERTAINMENT

ON PHOTOGRAPHY | By William Meyers

Experiments in Color, Style

Conspicuous

◆ Janet Borden Inc.
560 Broadway, (212) 431-0166
Through Jan. 28

The Tina Barney picture in this show is a dandy. The red-headed young girl in a striped polo shirt in the foreground of "The Granddaughter" (2004) rests her elbow on a china cabinet filled with porcelain figurines of 18th-century equestrians; her slightly out-of-focus grandparents (you see the resemblance in the faces) wear expensive dark clothes and peer forward with concern from an alcove in the rear. Ms. Barney is the Henry James of photographers, a master of style, social class and psychology. Hers is one of 11 pictures by 11 of Janet Borden's short but choice list of gallery artists.

Ms. Borden has been involved in the New York gallery scene since she arrived in the city from Rochester in 1978, and she opened her own SoHo gallery in 1988. The point of the title of this show is that each of her artists has a conspicuous style, and is not likely to be mistaken for any other photographer. The works here by Martin Parr, John Pfahl, Ray Mortenson, Jim Dow and the others testify to the fineness of her taste and its catholicity. The monochrome "Orange" (2002) by Neil Winokur, a single orange shot against a background the same color as the fruit; Mr. Mortenson's "Sapowet Point" (1998), a delicate black-and-white study of the east coast of Narragansett Bay, R.I.; and Hanno Otten's colorful photogram "Lichtbild 163" (2007) inhabit different aesthetic universes, but the same gallery.

Joel Sternfeld: First Pictures

◆ Luhring Augustine
531 W. 24th St., (212) 206-9100
Through Feb. 4

Joel Sternfeld (b. 1944) has been at it for four decades now, making him one of the



Joel Sternfeld's 'Nags Head, North Carolina, (#3), June-August 1975' (1975) at Luhring Augustine.

grand old men of fine-art color photography. His "American Prospects" (1987) and "Strangers Passing" (2001) are photo-book classics, and "Walking the High Line" (2002) was instrumental in the creation of the city's innovative park.

The 70 prints at Luhring Augustine are 8½-by-12¼-inch pigment prints run off last year from Kodachrome slides taken for four of Mr. Sternfeld's earliest color projects: "Happy Anniversary, Sweetie Face!"; "Rush Hour"; "At the Mall, New Jersey"; and "Nags Head 1975." These pictures, shot between 1972 and 1980, show the artist finding his way in an unfamiliar medium, finger exercises preparing for the major works ahead.

There are experiments with color such as "New York City, (#1), 1976," where the back of the woman's electric-lime-green dress, her pale flesh and the yellow of two taxis are set against the dark tones of a Midtown street. In many of the New Jersey mall pictures, Mr. Sternfeld takes portraits using a flash that separates his subjects from the background deep in shadows. And there is the deliciously sardonic wit of

"New Jersey, (#3) May/June 1980," in which a young woman in the foreground, in a position similar to that of the subject in Andrew Wyeth's "Christina's World," looks across the mall parking lot to the Sears Auto Service center. One senses Mr. Sternfeld's excitement at learning to do new things.

Judith Joy Ross: The Devil Today and Reading to Dogs

◆ Pace/MacGill Gallery
32 E. 57th St., (212) 759-7999
Through Jan. 28

Several of the pictures by Judith Joy Ross at Pace/MacGill involve children interacting with animals in troubling ways. The young boy in "Corey With bunny, Wildlife Camp, The Aark Foundation Wildlife Rehabilitation and Education Center, Chalfont, Pennsylvania" (2011) stares at the camera with a tentative smile and holds the animal in what appears to be baby swaddling. And why the precious "bunny" instead of "rabbit"? The more determinedly smiling teenager in "Grace With piglets, New Tripoli, Pennsylvania" (2010)

lies on her back in a pigpen near a sow and plays with one of her litter. There were pigs on a farm near where I grew up, and I cannot understand wanting to lie in their muck.

Ms. Ross (b. 1946) is known for her black-and-white portraits, especially those of girls and young women. These tend to be simply composed, but with considerable psychological insight. The works here are mostly in color and have more complex subjects, but the handling of the medium and the material is uncertain. For instance, in "Reading to dogs, Bethlehem Area Public Library, Bethlehem, Pennsylvania" (2011), the two most prominent objects in the picture are a young girl's bright red T-shirt and a woman's equally bright red tote on a chair off to the side. The bag especially distracts from a white poodle and a woman in white pants who are lost in the large space, though certainly they are important to the image's intentions.

Mr. Meyers writes on photography for *The Wall Street Journal*. See his work at williammeyersphotography.com