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July 3rd, 2012 by [punkdaddy](#)

Interview



Photographs of people captured forever at a moment in time provide a window into the past from a present many no longer inhabit: Andy Warhol, Jean Michel Basquiat, Johnny Thunders, Jerry Nolan, Arthur Kane, William Burroughs, Willy DeVille, Joey Ramone, Joe Strummer, Lance Loud, Terry Ork, Robert Quine, John Belushi, Divine – all are Marcia Resnick subjects that have since died

Thankfully, Brooklyn-born Resnick carried her little 35mm Nikon F camera around downtown with her and snapped these artists and musicians, at work and at play in the clubs, bars, studios and streets of Manhattan, and now, 35 years on, we can look at the results and get a real feeling for what those times might have been like

Marcia Resnick's photographs can be seen in major museum collections all around the world, including the New York Public Library, the Museum of Modern Art and the Metropolitan Museum of Art in New York, the National Portrait Gallery in Washington DC, the Rijksmuseum in Amsterdam and the Getty Museum in Los Angeles. She has been published in the *Paris Review* and *Rolling Stone*, and numerous other books and periodicals. Resnick is currently working on a book called *Bad Boys: Punks, Poets and Provocateurs* about the scene in NYC from 1977-1982. It will include over one hundred photographic

portraits of musicians, Beat writers and cultural icons of that period. Biographer Victor Bockris has contributed texts which will be interspersed with the photographs. She will be showing the work upon publication of the book

As a photographer around the downtown scene, did you feel like you were a little on the outside of the “inside” – as a voyeur?

I often felt like a voyeur but I also felt like I belonged in the downtown milieu

Did you have your camera with you when you were out at night socialising?

Yes. I always carried my camera in those days. I would take pictures of people and events at the clubs. I would also make plans for people to come to my studio where I would take more photographs

John Lurie



Where was your studio?

My studio was a loft at 530 Canal Street on the 5th floor with a view of the Hudson River. It is now owned by Laurie Anderson

Were you making a living at this time from selling your photographs?

I was making a living primarily from teaching photography at various colleges in NYC, including NYU, Cooper Union, CUNY (Queens, Staten Island and La Guardia Community College) and Pratt

Out of Max's, CB's, the Mudd Club, etc, did you have a preference?

The Mudd Club was my favorite. It was more than just a music venue. It was an art statement. Evenings would be developed around themes, like "Mommie Dearest" when Mudd Club denizens dressed like Joan Crawford and blond battered children. It was a cultural meeting ground and a haven for performance art, theater, poetry and prose readings, painting, photography, film, dance and fun

Did you get into the Disco thing; Studio 54 and all the excesses that went on in and around that club?

I went to Studio 54 many times, but preferred the downtown clubs. And as to excesses... I was extremely indulgent back then

Your *Bad Boys* series of photographs were featured in the Punk Art Show at the Washington Project for the Arts, May 15-June 10, 1978. Was that when your career took off?

I actually was making, teaching and showing photography subsequent to graduating from Cooper Union and Cal Arts, where Alan Kaprow and John Baldessari were influences. I self-published three conceptual "artists books" of photographs (*Landscape, See* and *Tahitian Eve*) A book of my staged images about female adolescence called *Re-visions* was published in 1978, all before *Bad Boys*

How does one do that (and how many copies?)

Landscape, See and *Tahitian Eve* in 1975 using funds from a National Endowment for the Arts grant. Each of those were in editions of 1000. When I was ready to publish *Re-visions*, I sent out mock copies of it to people who seemed to have "alternative" attitudes to books and publishing. After about one year, I was contacted by the Coach House Press in Toronto, an "indie" type publishing company who did mostly poetry and fiction books. They were partially financed by government grants and printed the book in an edition of 5000

Re-visions



Bad Boys: Johnny Thunders and Alan Vega 1978



You mention John Baldessari as an influence. Cindy Sherman does too. What impresses you about John's work?

I sat in on Baldessari's "Post Studio Art" classes in graduate school at California Institute of the Arts in which he espoused that contemporary art could be something other than painting or sculpture. Meanwhile, I was teaching my own courses in alternative photographic techniques, "Fun With Photography", "Son of Fun With Photography" and "The Return of Son of Fun With Photography." Like Baldessari, I began making art by painting canvases. I then painted on my photographs and eventually stopped painting. I sequenced photographs in my conceptual books and paired photos with humorous narratives in *Re-visions* and in my *Soho Weekly News* column, "Resnick's Believe-it-or-Not." In Baldessari's early work, he painted text on canvas and even had other people do the painting. In 1970, he set all of his paintings on fire and put the ashes, baked into cookies, into an urn to memorialize the life and death of his attachment to art objects. His declaration "I Will Not Make Any More Boring Art" in 1971 reiterated his detachment from the art object. He was more interested in game

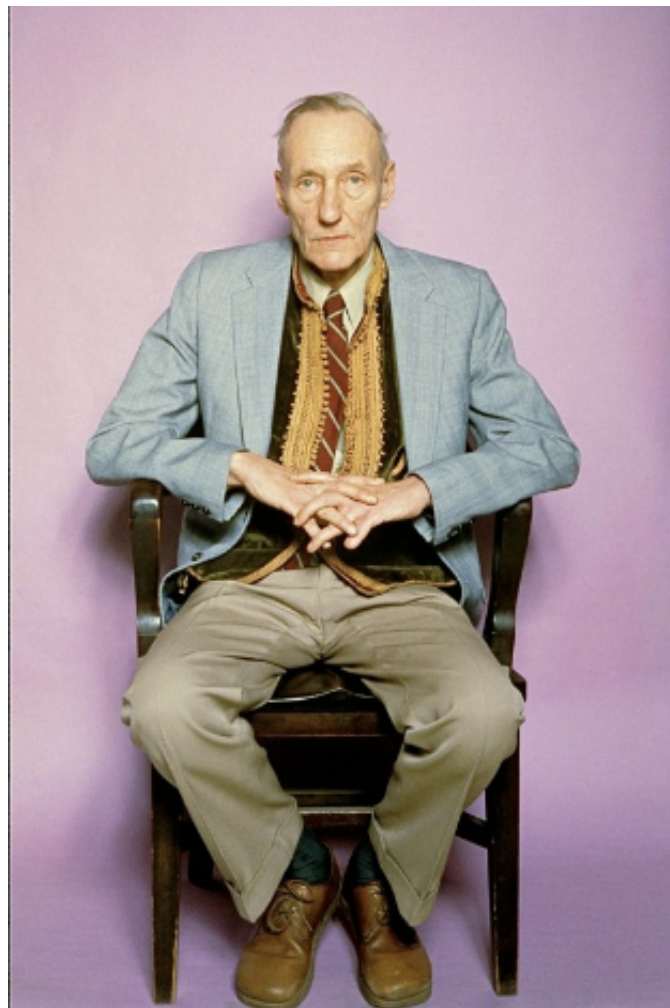
processes and sequences of behavior, which he recorded in photographs. He found irony in the rules for formal composition in art and employed the book form in his prolific body of work

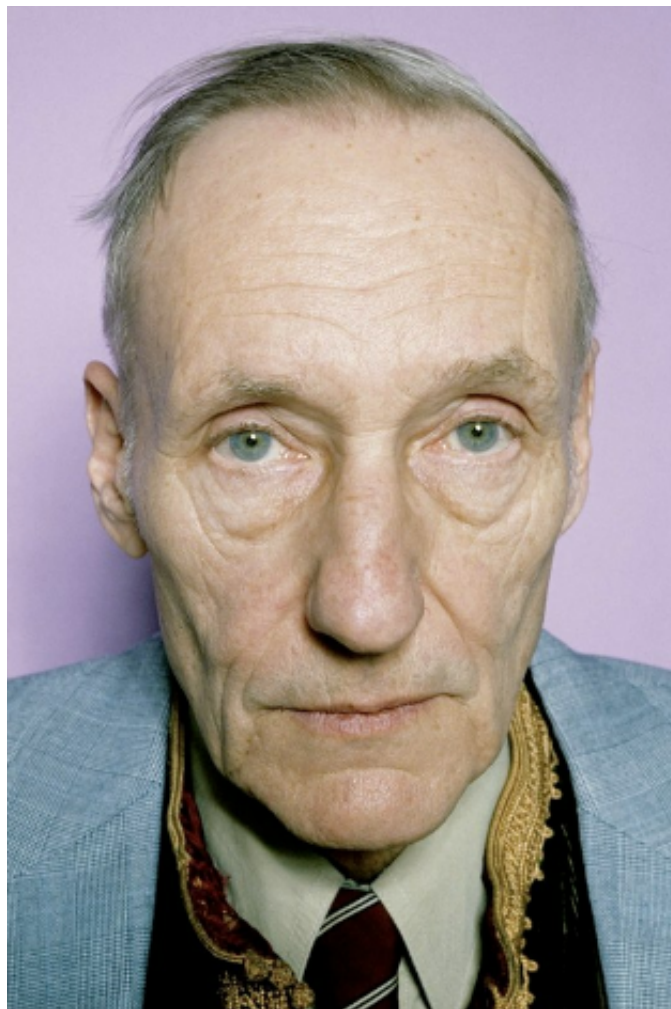
You were at the Nova Convention on Nov 30, Dec 1 & 2, 1978. Was William Burroughs a friend at that time?

I had already met Burroughs in the Tropicana Motel in Los Angeles in early 1978 and had been to the Bunker (his living quarters on the Bowery in NYC) before the Nova Convention. I documented the Nova Convention thoroughly. Burroughs was always enthusiastic about my photographing him

“Artists to my mind are the real architects of change, and not the political legislators who implement change after the fact”

William S Burroughs





Could you tell us how you came to get the Johnny Thunders with his hypodermic hat pin shot?

It is a little self-explanatory. The syringe was being used and it seemed like a good idea to decorate his hat with it!

Did you find Johnny Thunders to be a nice guy?

Johnny was one of the most charming people I ever met. He could manipulate people easily and some people were critical of him because of this. At times, I saw him behave badly to people he did not know but he was always well loved by his friends because he was genuine

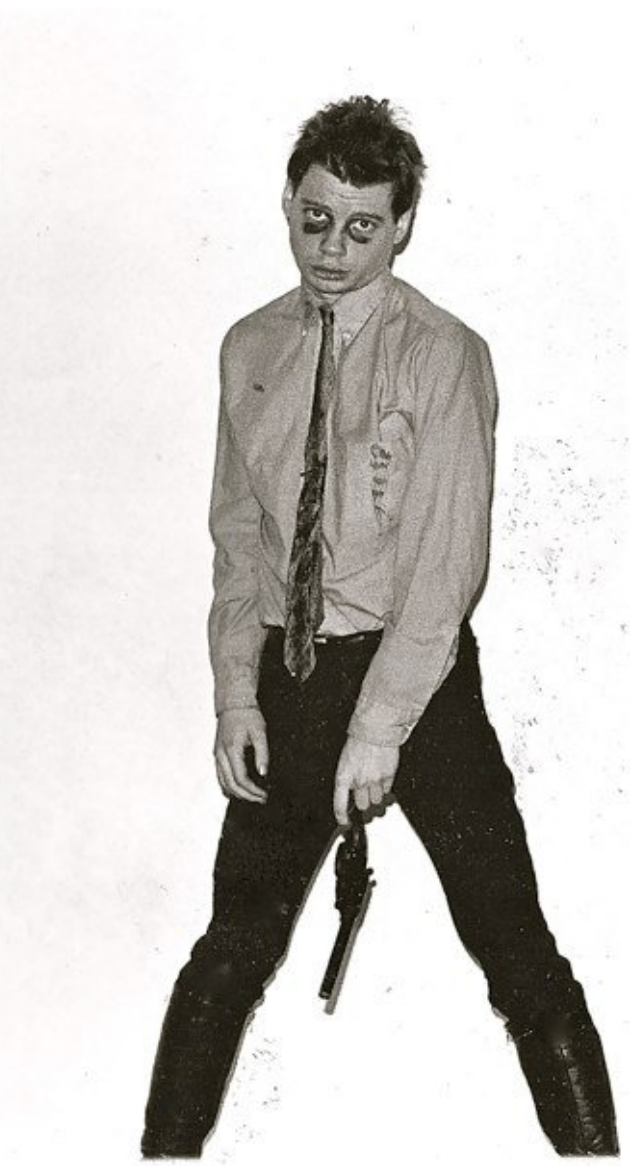
JT: One Track Mind



And the Haoui Montaug with a black eye shot? What happened to him?

Haoui would sometimes have to tackle unruly people as a regular “doorman” activity. This time, someone got violent and voila...he got a black eye. Because I was working on Bad Boys, when people got black eyes they would often get in touch with me to photograph them

Haoui Montaug (with shiner) James Chance



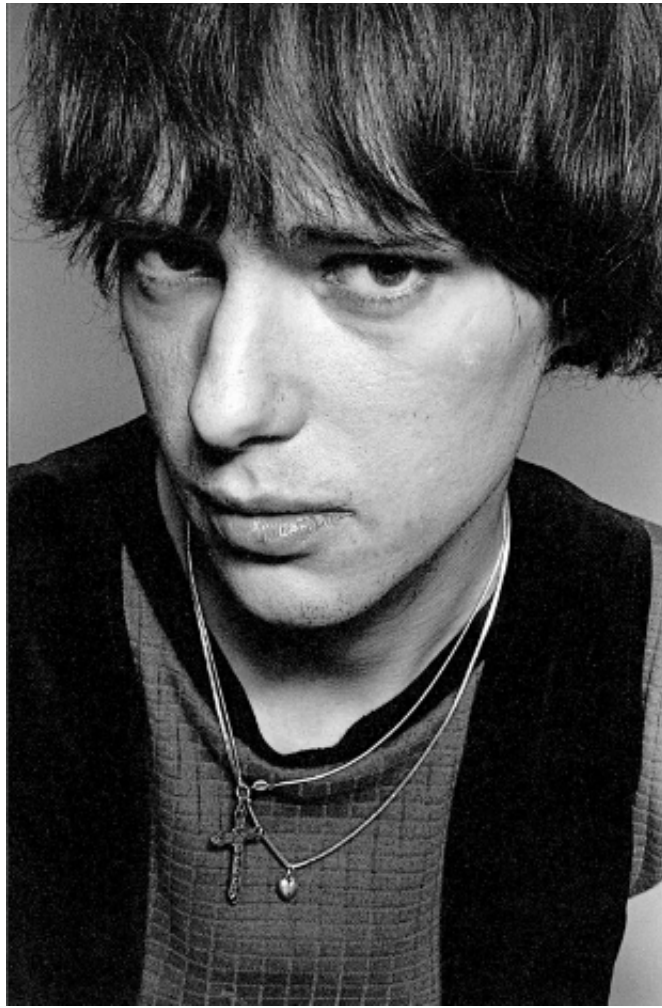
I read somewhere that Lester Bangs tried to ‘educate’ you about music? Did he turn you on to some good stuff?

Lester and I both had broken down turntables and used a quarter as a counterweight on the tonearm to make the needle connect with the grooves of our vinyl records. As a result, we both had badly scratched records which we could easily lend each other. I benefited most from this arrangement because Lester had an incomparable collection of both contemporary and early rock, blues and jazz albums. Lester was extremely knowledgeable and generous about his knowledge

John Lurie says he might have thrown out millions of dollars worth of Jean-Michel Basquiat paintings when he was clearing out his apartment. Did you ever have some of his work?

No. I never owned any Basquiats. I once had a Keith Haring subway drawing, but someone stole it off my wall

[Richard Lloyd](#)



Richard Lloyd lived with you for a while. That must have been exhausting. I did a phone interview with him recently. He's a very 'energetic' guy...

Richard was always getting into interesting sorts of trouble. For example, he would smoke regular green tea, as opposed to pot, in public places, which perplexed the police who could not arrest him for a nonexistent transgression. With Richard, there was never a dull moment!

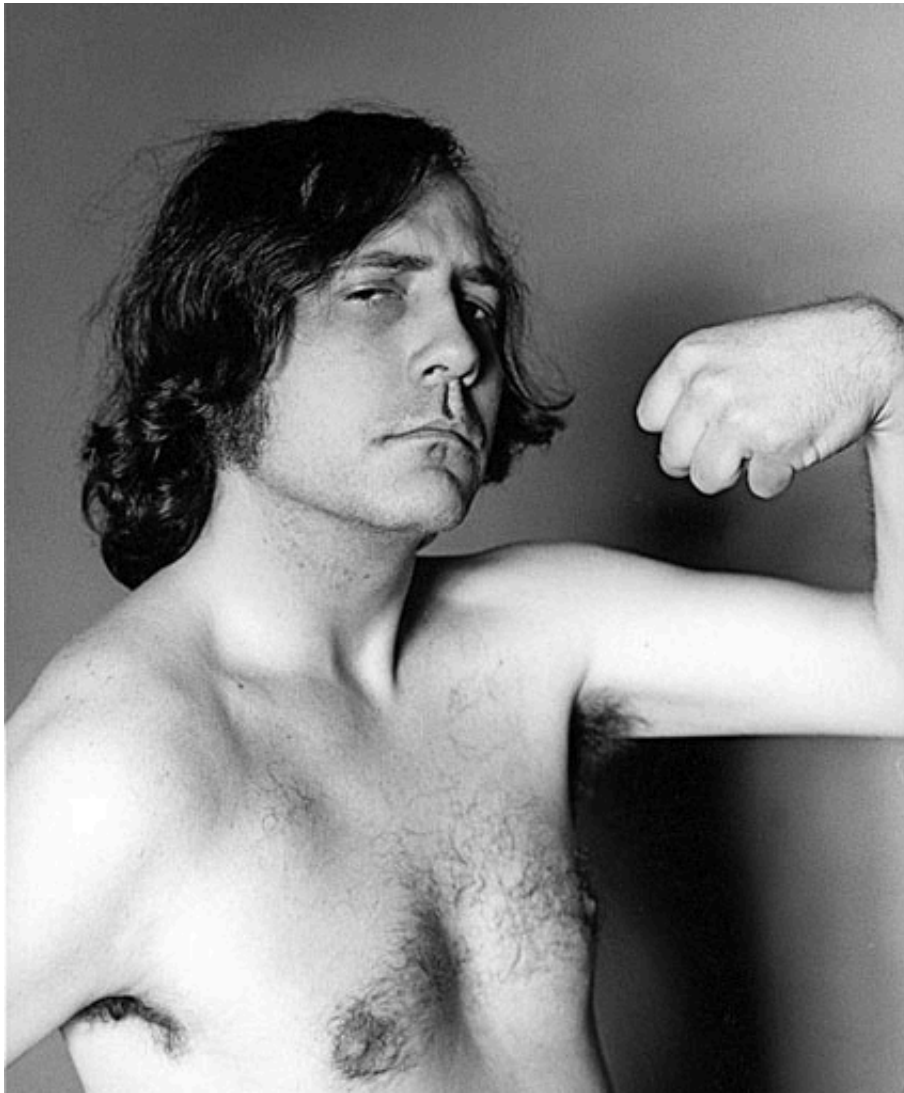
Jean Michel Basquiat



visit Marcia's website:

[marcia resnick](#)

Lester Bangs (cropped)



4 Comments

- *the G* says:
[July 8, 2012 at 3:29 pm](#)

About 30 years ago, I was on an express bus (then called the Command bus) on my way to school, going from Brooklyn into Manhattan. I had an MC5 button on my leather jacket. A guy leans over and says “MC5, you like them?” So I said “yeah”. He said “My sister was married to one of them.”

“Which one?”

“Wayne Kramer.”

“Who’s your sister?”

“Marcia Resnick, the photographer.”

I knew her name from a wedding dedication to her and Wayne from a live Johnny Thunders tape.

And that’s my Marcia Resnick story!

Marcia—love the photos!

Punkdaddy—love the interviews!

–the G

[Reply](#)

- [punkdaddy](#) says:
[July 9, 2012 at 3:38 pm](#)

Thanks G. That's almost a MC5 story too. Yeh, Marcia got some amazing shots

[Reply](#)

- [Paula Maliandi](#) says:
[July 11, 2012 at 3:10 pm](#)

Marcia and I graduated the same year from James Madison High School in Brooklyn. We were part of a kind of inner circle of cognicenti at the HS, but I never imagined that quiet, brilliant Marcia would become a photography icon. Bravo, Marcia. Hope you're well.

Paula

[Reply](#)

- [Jean-Pierre Ady Fenyo](#) says:
[July 11, 2012 at 3:34 pm](#)

Marcia Resnick's photographs capture the uncontrived personal emotional essence of those who have exposed themselves to her powerfully sharp perception of true reality. There is nothing about them that suggests any effort to alter or fabricate an image, because that would be contrary to what she herself is all about. Like other truly great masters of her art Marcia's own personality... confidently playful and relaxed... is essential in allowing those she portrays to feel free to let go and naturally express themselves! Any elements of conscious angle, shadow, light, composition, etc. are subtle and minimalist. No doubt there is the unseen social skills that are key to reaching that point of trust that is so prerequisite to making such memorable photographic images. She was there, then and with it! In the moment! – Jean-Pierre Ady Fenyo, Philosopher, Poet and Conceptual Artist.

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