

ENID CROW

The Brooklyn photographer has her first solo gallery show, survives a few disasters, and discusses what it's like to dress up as a man

By Jessica George Firger

Whether a body-conscious lady lying poolside, a mustachioed man mowing his suburban lawn, or an adolescent androgynous skateboarder, each Enid Crow photo tells a story. Her subjects observe what Crow describes as "undefined disasters looming beyond the camera's eye."

Crow says the genesis of her career can be traced back to middle school, when her parents sent her to

the Wendy Ward Charm School in Schenectady, New York. "All of the advanced Charm School girls got fancy black-and-white modeling pictures taken at a portrait studio, but my mother wouldn't let me do it because she thought it was a scam," Crow says. "So I made my own little photo studio in the basement, and I took my first pictures of myself



wearing Bonne Bell lip gloss, braces, and feathered Farrah Fawcett hair, resting my chin on my hand."

Since that first awkward self-portrait, Crow, who hails from Guilderland, New York, and is now based in Brooklyn, has taken thousands of photos, observing herself "from every angle like a scientist." In the last few years, it's a certain set of photos, the *Disaster Series*, that has become the focus of her work. "I started the series of self-portraits as characters observing disasters during a period of personal catastrophe," Crow says. "Over time, the series has become more comic on the surface and I've become more interested in playing ridiculous characters, but the source remains tragedy." Looking at these images, the observer is simultaneously terror-stricken and charmed by their humor and bewitching beauty.

An incredibly soft-spoken and even-keeled woman who almost never

screams in real life, Crow views the act of posing for these images as a "kind of self-help therapy." Despite her chosen medium, it comes as no surprise that Crow holds both undergraduate and graduate degrees in theater and performance from SUNY Geneseo and Northwestern University, respectively. Her biggest source of inspiration is the network of innovative photographers working all over the globe, naming Enid Hudson, Carla Williams, Lori Nix, Chloe Potter,

Meghan Quinn, Megan Holmes, and Maki Kawakita as a few she admires. Crow also cites nightmares, feminist cultural criticism, and gender studies as her other influences. Fittingly, Crow earned an artistic fellowship for 2005-2006 at the A.I.R. gallery in New York, the oldest gallery in the United States devoted to exhibiting the work of female artists, where Crow had her first solo show in May 2006.

Most recently, Crow's distinctly feminist lens has led her to create the *Manhood Series*, "a photographic stand-up comedy routine about the way that male gender is constructed." In these images, the artist is dressed in male costume and doing "man chores" such as "fixing an outboard motor, drinking a beer in a backwards baseball hat, and mowing the lawn." It's a project for which she has acquired — along with the 32 wigs she already owns — "five beards, eight moustaches, and one set of side burns."



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