

# KLOMPCHING GALLERY

## R. J. KERN

MAY 9–JUNE 30, 2018

**OPENING RECEPTION: Thursday, May 10th, 6:00–8:00pm**

**BOOK SIGNING: Saturday, May 12th, 1:00–2:00pm**

**KLOMPCHING GALLERY** is delighted to present an exhibition of photographs by **R. J. Kern**. This will be the artist's first solo show in New York, bringing together a selection of color photographs from his three critically acclaimed projects: *The Unchosen Ones*, *Out To Pasture* and *Divine Animals: The Bovidae*.

Kern's photography is firmly rooted in presenting the human affect on the landscape and an inquisitive exploration of humanity through man's relationship with domestic animals.

*The Unchosen Ones* is a well considered project, that takes as its subject, young people posing with the animals they have raised for entry into animal competitions at county fairs across Minnesota. These are not the winners, they are the animals and handlers who came in last place—unchosen for prize or victory. In each photograph, child and animal is equally well-groomed, are presented formally in front of a studio backdrop, but with the environmental context of the rural fair still in evidence. In these photographs, Kern extends beyond his immediate subject, and has documented the universality of the human condition; handlers quietly show indifference, defiance, upset, acceptance. In the exhibition, one large-scale photograph, *Kenzie and Hootie, Anoka County Fair, Minnesota, 2015* represents the project.

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"The Unchosen Ones stands, to be sure, as a document of these subjects, and of specific hot summer afternoons in Minnesota; I have no doubt that a hundred years from now viewers of these photographs will marvel at their truth, and greedily consume every fact and detail. This is what documentary photography is intended to do, but the best documentary, as this work is, transcends the specificity of time and place."

—Alison Nordström, PhD, Independent Scholar, Writer and Curator.



*Kenzie and Hootie, Anoka County Fair, Minnesota, 2015,*  
from the series *The Unchosen Ones*.

Following *The Unchosen Ones*, Kern went on to explore more deeply, what the cultural landscape is that forms the *home* of these animals. The sheep and goats depicted in *Out To Pasture*, are just that—retired from competition and commercial purpose. They are elegantly photographed, seemingly roaming free and existing in what appears to be an idealized sense of place.

Inspired by his family's heritage, the artist also traveled to Ireland, Germany, Norway and Iceland to explore his pastoral roots. Through his travels, he discovered the central role of goats, sheep and rams in the lives of his farming ancestors, as well as the land upon which they toiled. Light and composition is crucial to Kern's vision, which is inspired by landscape painters Albert Bierstadt, Thomas Sidney

Cooper, William Holman Hunt and John Everett Millais. His photographs that form the *Divine Animals: The Bovidae* are poetic, timeless and endearing.

The eight medium-sized photographs in the exhibit, representing the *Out To Pasture* and *Divine Animals: The Bovidae*, also clearly show the influence of the Pictorialist movement on Kern's practice. What is most striking and mesmerizing across the spectrum of Kern's practice, is his tenacity to successfully combine technical prowess, a personal imprint and use of recognizable photographic tropes.

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**LEFT:** *Mr. Hofsó's, Skagafjardarsysla, Iceland, 2014, from the series Divine Animals: The Bovidae.* **RIGHT:** *Dumb and Dumber, Freeborn County, Minnesota, 2016, from the series Out To Pasture.*

*"Kern's evocation of nature as a device to understand his own sense of self draws upon historical precedence: the use of animals as metaphor and the pastoral tradition. Yet the artist's broad concept—his exploration of identity—is firmly grounded in a contemporary context. This tightly knit series of images, which together characterize the author, is common to our age of social media. Kern's aesthetic, however, emphasizes clarity and projects a warm stillness that is a balm to an overstimulate society. This contrast, too—the ties to digital media and the rejection of its characteristics—deepens his pastoral project."*

—Lisa Volpe, Associate Curator, Photography, The Museum of Fine Arts, Houston.

**R. J. Kern** (b. 1978) is an American artist whose work explores ideas of home, ancestry, and a sense of place through the interaction of people, animals, and cultural landscapes. His work has been exhibited in a number of notable exhibitions, including at the MOMA Tbilisi, National Portrait Gallery in London and the Yixian International Photography Festival among others. Awards and accolades include CENTER 2017 Choice Awards, Curator's Choice Award (First Place), and the 2017 Taylor Wessing Photographic Portrait Prize (Finalist). Kern's work has been presented in a number of publications, including a feature in *National Geographic* (November 2017), with his *The Unchosen Ones* and *Out To Pasture* series. Public collections holding his work include The Griffin Museum of Photography and the Museum of Fine Arts, Houston. Kern lives and works in Minneapolis, Minnesota.

**Klompching Gallery** was established in Dumbo, Brooklyn in September 2007. Owned and operated by **Debra Klomp Ching** and **Darren Ching**, the gallery quickly established itself as a gallery with an extraordinary roster of artists from which to purchase some of the best examples of contemporary photography.

**The exhibition will open with a Reception on Thursday, May 10th, 6:00-8:00pm, with the artist in attendance.**

**There will be a book signing with the artist on Saturday, May 12, 1:00-2:00pm.**

**The artist is available for interviews upon request. All press and image requests should be addressed to Darren Ching at [darren@klompching.com](mailto:darren@klompching.com) or +1 212 796 2070.**

**For sales inquiries, please contact Debra Klomp Ching at [debra@klompching.com](mailto:debra@klompching.com) or +1 212 796 2070.**