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ART CLUB 2000: Selected Works 1992-1999



"Untitled (Times Square/Gap Grunge 1)," from 1992-93, a staged group portrait in which the artists from the collective Art Club2000 dressed identically for a fashion shoot.

The New York art world in the 1990s is not as notable as that of the tumultuous '60s, which produced Minimalism, or of the fiscally troubled '70s, which saw the rise of the loft aesthetic and a globally influential form of graffiti art. But the '90s was an important moment of transition, a period that the collective Art Club 2000 captured incisively in its photographs and installations currently on view at Artists Space. Formed in 1992 by the art dealer Colin de Land and a handful of Cooper Union students, Art Club 2000 took its cues from Dada, Pop Art, the Situationist International and advertising campaigns. Staged group portraits like "Untitled (Times Square/Gap Grunge 1)," 1992-93, depicts the young artists dressed identically for an "ironic" fashion shoot. (The Gap technically can't be "grunge.") Scruffier works like "Untitled (Starbucks Trash)," 1995, hark back to earlier black-and-white art photography, while focusing on an emblem — the disposable Starbucks coffee cup — of rising globalization. What might seem like insider jokes about art, branding and "lifestyles" ultimately resulted in cringe-worthy documentations of downtown New York's transformation into a retail mecca, with artists pushed out by gentrification. After all, unlike generations who battled the Vietnam War or the AIDS crisis, these artists were up against more insidious opponents, Starbucks and the Gap. The fight seemed futile: Irony rather than activism was their most potent weapon. Moreover, while Art Club 2000 was happening, Mr. de Land simultaneously help found the Armory Show art fair, contributing to the very consumerist phenomena that Art Club 2000 parodied, satirized and critiqued in their work.

-Martha Schwendener