

# JASON MCCOY GALLERY

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Alexandra Penney, *Alice T.*, 2018, Archival pigment print on Moab Fine Art paper, 44 x 56 inches

## ALEXANDRA PENNEY: VANISHING PORTRAITS

*100 Movers, Makers and Friends in the Arts and Letters*

October 24 – December 1, 2018

*Reception for the artist: October 24, 2018 from 6PM – 8PM*

Jason McCoy Gallery is pleased to present *Alexandra Penney: Vanishing Portraits*, an immersive installation featuring over 100 individuals whose contribution to the arts is as significant as it is varied. Here, leading contemporary artists, museum directors, curators, writers, collectors, art dealers and philanthropists make up a cohesive synthesis of talent and drive. Her photographs are typically digitally manipulated in her search to understand what has drawn her to each respective subject, and in recent bodies of work that digital dialogue combined with altered contexts has increasingly become a metaphorical manifestation.

*Vanishing Portraits* began in 2013 and remains ongoing, and while at first focused on the artist's close friends, the project has grown into a series including her personal extended circle. Taken in Penney's studio with a basic iPhone, the photographs are manipulated digitally and finished with a 'deterioration algorithm' in which each sitter seems to be coalescing into a larger universe. The untethered, ghostly space speaks to the disappearing importance and emphasis of the arts in today's dislocated cultural world, yet it simultaneously underscores the power of individuality. We are reminded that, through our individual selves, we hold a collective power to influence our surroundings and the outcomes of our futures.

Over the past decades, Penney's extensive oeuvre has included a variety of subjects, ranging from sex dolls, basketball, impermanent houses, imprisoned women, dissolving farmlands, 'vanity babies' and desiccating swamplands. While apparently nondiscriminatory with her subjects, upon further delving one can see that a consistent through-line in her work is a commentative social awareness.

**Alexandra Penney** was born in Boston, Massachusetts, studied Philosophy at Smith College and received an MFA under critic Harold Rosenberg at Hunter College/CUNY in New York (1982). After graduating, she attended the Art Students League, studied painting under Norman Lewis and opened her own studio in New York. She has worked extensively in the art and journalism worlds where she was a reporter for the *New York Times Magazine*, Editor in Chief of *Self Magazine* at Conde Nast where she conceived and executed the Pink Ribbon for Breast Cancer Awareness. She has been an editor at *Vogue*, *Conde Nast Traveler*, and *Glamour*. Her practice morphed from painting to photography after she collaborated with many distinguished photographers including Irving Penn, Richard Avedon and Duane Michals. Her work has been shown in numerous solo and group exhibitions in New York and Europe and multiple times at Art Basel Miami. She has received a New York Foundation for the Arts grant (2009), and was honored as Artist Laureate at the National Parks Service (2009-11). She has written several *New York Times* best-selling books, including *How to Make Love to a Man* (Crown, 1995, 3 million copies) *Great Sex*, (Putnam, 1998) *The Baglady Papers: The Priceless Experience of Losing It All* (Hachette Books, 2010) and the *Flowers of Evil*, (photographs, forthcoming). She lives and works in New York City.