



SALON 94

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my DeSana at Salon 94



Jimmy DeSana, Sweatshirt, 1980-1982. Image courtesy of Salon 94.

On Friday, June 21st NY Arts Magazine attended the opening of Party Picks at Salon 94 Bowery, which encapsulates a dynamic selection of Jimmy DeSana's incredibly visceral oeuvre. DeSana is most well known for documentation of the New York punk scene and the celebrities that represent this aggressive, yet equally titillating cultural movement. However, labeling DeSana as a mere commercial, punk photographer greatly depletes the artifice that secretes from his images. It would marginalize his role in the New York art scene as *passé* instead of as an artist whose work continues to resonate.

In *Pliers* (1978), we must confront the dramaturgical aspect that DeSana consciously interweaves into his works. The scene is clearly constructed, yet the image seethes with pain, flamboyance, and eroticism. It is in this space—caught between the limits of the photographic medium and the performance within these confines—that DeSana wants to keep us. It is here that we become isolated with the image.

As DeSana's style matures, this space becomes more tangible and alluring. In *Sweatshirt* (1980-1982), DeSana's range and stylistic language has grown and is at its most vocal. Much like *Pliers*, our need to understand and to dissect, collides with the subversive playfulness of the image. DeSana teases us and invites us into this Lynchian bathroom where the banal meets the fantastic. If we were to cage our imagination, we could be able to deconstruct the image easily. We could say these futuristic helmets were put on nameless heads, we could say that underneath this fetal construction lies two separate human beings.

Yet as we gaze at the elegant, yet deformed hunchback figure, something alien grips us. These conjoined beings with celestial helmet-heads are presented in isolation from the world around them. It is as if we are peering into a terrarium. Our cheeks squeak against the plexiglass barrier; as we observe something that is so familiar, yet inorganic and completely synthetic. Our perception of the body is disrupted.

DeSana simultaneously rips apart both what we know and what we expect in the photographic image. Reconstructing it as a space that provokes us to enter, to explore, and to discover. His work challenges us with the syndicating of our most intimate selves, and the private space where the body's agency and coinciding uncertainty congeal.

By Elizabeth Ashley Temple