

HOUSTON (FEBRUARY 23, 2022) — Foto Relevance is pleased to present *Smoke Bombs and Border Crossings*, the gallery's debut solo exhibition of works by Nancy Newberry. Influenced by her Italian heritage and her Texan roots, the photographs in the show function as a contemporary Spaghetti Western, investigating the spectacle at the core of the Wild West. With meticulous attention to costume and uniform, the director artfully stages scenes of archetypal characters - American cowboys, Mexican charros, and soldiers costumed in marching band uniforms. *Smoke Bombs and Border Crossings* will be on view at Foto Relevance from March 26th through May 7th, 2022.



Nancy Newberry, *Character Study*, 2018

The Spaghetti Western genre, made popular in the 1960s by Italian director Sergio Leone and the iconic soundtrack of composer Ennio Morricone, notably diverged from traditional Western films by reinterpreting and questioning its own archetypes and mythologies. This critical lens led to the rise of the anti-hero, a complex protagonist who can neither be considered fully good nor evil, in direct contrast with the very literal black hat vs. white hat, good vs. evil trope popularized in previous Western narratives. In this new understanding of the world, informed by post-war conditions in Europe, heroes are often fallible and villains are sometimes redeemable. The earlier black-and-white approach simplified complex historical narratives into neatly packaged parables, and these narratives steadily worked their way into the popular conception of the real history of the West.

Newberry's work investigates the effect of these fantasy narratives in the creation of nationalism and cultural identities, including how those identities are performed through costume and language. The instantly-recognizable motif of the cowboy hat, prominently featured in Newberry's work, triggers an immediate association with Southwestern culture. Aesthetics and identity are wrapped up tightly, almost inseparable from each other. Newberry's work investigates the artifice and the real, the mythologies and the histories, the actors and the stage.

ABOUT THE ARTIST:

Nancy Newberry is an artist based in Dallas and Marfa, Texas. Her performative portraiture investigates individuation, specifically focusing on cultural and social systems of belonging. Her work is deeply personal, exploring narratives of identity, myth, and memory as the foundation of her practice.

She has received many honors and awards from both publications and institutions. Most recently she has received The Nasher Sculpture Center Artist Grant (2020); The British Journal of Photography Female in Focus Award (2019); The Griffin Museum of Photography, Richards' Family Trust Award (2018); Grand Prix Finalist, The International Festival of Photography, Hyeres, France; Descubrimientos PhotoEspaña Prize, Madrid; Kolga Photo Award, Tbilisi, Georgia; PhotoVisa Award, Krasnodar, Russia; FotoFest Discoveries of the Meeting Place, Houston; and The Taylor Wessing Portrait Exhibition at the National Portrait Gallery, London (2012, 2017).

Newberry has been profiled and published widely including in The Guardian, British Journal of Photography, New York Times, M Le magazine du Monde, i-D, PDN, and American Photo amongst others. Her work resides in major public and private collections, including The Museum of Fine Arts, Houston; Centro de Arte Alcobendas, Spain; City of Houston, Houston Airports; and Villa Noailles, Hyères, France. Her work has been exhibited throughout the US, Europe and China.

ABOUT FOTO RELEVANCE:

Since 2016, Foto Relevance cofounders Geoffrey C. Koslov and Bryn Larsen have focused on the exhibition and acquisition of museum-quality, contemporary Fine art photography and photography-based work. Foto Relevance is dedicated to providing a platform for an innovative selection of American and international photographic artists pushing the boundaries of photography. In addition to promoting the work of artists, Foto Relevance provides guidance, educating individual collectors and corporations in the acquisition and sale of art. Foto Relevance is a member of the Houston Art Gallery Association (HAGA). The gallery is located in the historic Museum District in Houston, Texas in close proximity to the Museum of Fine Arts, Houston, the Menil Collection, and the Houston Center for Photography.

Foto Relevance is currently open for walk-in hours Tuesdays through Saturdays from 11 am - 5 pm, or by appointment. This is subject to change as we stay current with local COVID-related advisories. Please call (713) 505-1499 or email info@fotorelevance.com for press and other inquiries.