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1950s Beefcake Photographer Bob Mizer Is Finally Getting Some “Devotion”: PHOTOS

by Dan Avery 1/6/2014



Unknown. Photo: Bob Mizer/© the artist and Courtesy of the Bob Mizer Foundation

Bob Mizer is having a moment. The midcentury pornographer operated on the fringes in his lifetime, establishing a stable of naked boys for his Athletic Model Guild and *Physique Pictorial* magazine and facing public condemnation—and even jailtime. More than 20 years after Mizer’s death, though, the art world has begun to embrace him as a true master. As he and Tom of Finland are being feted [with a retrospective at L.A.’s Pacific Design Center](#), Mizer is the subject of another exhibition on the opposite side of the country: “Devotion: Excavating Bob Mizer,” running through February 14 at 80WSE Gallery in New York, is considered the first major solo presentation of Mizer’s oeuvre and includes never-before-seen images culled from recently unearthed archives.



Jim Carroll with Antlers, 1951.

Photo: Bob Mizer/© the artist and
Courtesy of the Bob Mizer
Foundation

The press notes explain:

DEVOTION delves exclusively in to the many recently unearthed and expansive bodies of work that Mizer produced privately for himself. A significant portion of the material serves as an unprecedented document of American cultural history, recording popular and subcultural “types” and “scenes” to emerge between the 1940s and 1990s including “nature boys”, beatniks, greasers, female and male body builders, beauty queens, soldiers, religious figures, magicians, circus performers, Hollywood actresses, gang members, cowboys, hippies, hustlers and their girlfriends, punks, new wavers, drifters, farm boys, surfers, druggies, construction workers, artists, activists, ex-cons, and would-be politicians...

Mizer also staged a unique series of photographs employing both AMG models and their girlfriends posed in abstract, surreal, and politically provocative tableaux, for which he often constructed elaborate sets and costumes. These photographs retain Mizer’s exploration of erotica; however, they complicate the functionality and more conventional appeal of the genre, instead evidencing the complexity of his own personal desires and imagination, through what is a clearly deeply intuitive and experimental process.

In addition to dozens of Mizer’s photos, “Devotion” includes slides, films, costumes and

personal objects Mizer used in his work. The show is co-sponsored by the Bob Mizer Foundation and NYU, and visitors can observe the curatorial process as students uncover new finds. (A selection of images discovered during the archival process are also printed, displayed and changed daily.)

“Bob is like three or four artists,” “Devotion” curator Billy Miller [told Vulture](#). “So much of it has been branded as kitsch and camp, but people don’t realize that it was once a subversive underground language.”



Untitled (Marine without pants), Los Angeles, 1973

Photo: Bob Mizer/© the artist and Courtesy of the Bob Mizer Foundation



Beau Rouge, Los Angeles, 1954

Photo: Bob Mizer/© the artist and Courtesy of the Bob Mizer Foundation



Unknown, Los Angeles, 1972

Photo: Bob Mizer/© the artist and Courtesy of the Bob Mizer Foundation



Tony Rome and Ron Nichols, 1971

Photo: Bob Mizer/© the artist and Courtesy of the Bob Mizer Foundation



Leonard Chambers (in flask), Los Angeles, 1950

Photo: Bob Mizer/© the artist and Courtesy of the Bob Mizer Foundation



Untitled (acrobats with child), Santa Monica, California, 1946
Photo: Bob Mizer/© the artist and Courtesy of the Bob Mizer Foundation



Ed Fury & Pudgy Stockton, Santa Monica Beach, 1951

Photo: Bob Mizer/© the artist and Courtesy of the Bob Mizer Foundation



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