

# LOVE

## JACK&JILL

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Image 1: *Circuse*, 2010. Aneta Bartos.

New York-based photographer [Aneta Bartos](#) and painter [Nick Weber](#) create moody, sensual artworks, where subjects are portrayed at their most vulnerable. Last year, the duo were brought together by rare book collector John McWhinnie, who recently passed away under tragic circumstances. Today, they're opening their joint exhibition *Jack&Jill* in McWhinnie's honor, at 144 Tenth Ave NYC. We caught up with Bartos to find out more about her work, and how she, Weber, and curator Anne Huntington have banded together to realize McWhinnie's vision.

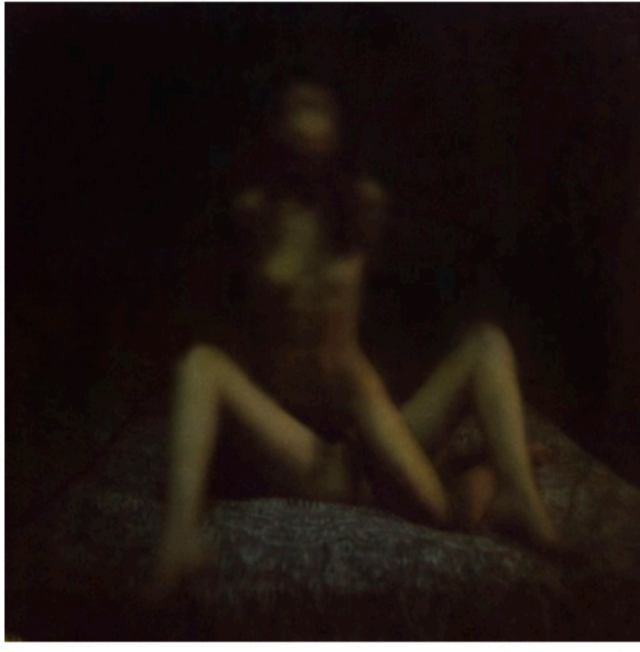


Image 2: *Creature*, 2011. Aneta Bartos.

### LOVE: What have you been working on lately?

Aneta: Actually, quite a few things. We've been working on the *Jack&Jill* show since summer. At the same time I was commissioned by Neville Wakefield to do this art installation for a new restaurant that's just opened called ACME. I made a peephole photo rotating device for it, with five of my prints mounted on acrylic disk to be viewed through a door. I have been also working on a new photo project, *Spitler Monkeys*, and a video project, which remains a secret until spring.

### So, how do you pick your subjects?

For my latest show, I've been photographing males masturbating, so picking those is very different to picking subjects for projects that are less intimate. For this particular project, it was quite challenging to find the right subjects, and I ended up asking people that I already knew — not necessarily people that I've had a sexual relationship with though. For example, I shot my assistant, which was very challenging for him to do it in front of me, and for me too. I would never ask somebody from the street that I didn't know at all, because this kind of work requires trust and respect.

### Right.

I ran into some quite uncomfortable experiences doing this, because sometimes even though I knew somebody, they'd assume that we would end up having sex afterwards! I ran into all sorts of challenges. I think, generally, guys that don't know me very well might see my work and assume, "Oh, wow. She's a really liberal crazy girl. Maybe I'm gonna get some." It's really not about that! It's funny that people would assume that I'm this sexual deviant based on my work.



Image 3: *Krpt*, 2007. Aneta Bartos.

### Totally. I feel that photographing men masturbating is viewed in a completely different way to photographing women masturbating.

Yeah, definitely. We think we live in such a liberated world, but actually it's really not. We're used to only seeing women portrayed in a sexual way, so when people see this kind of photograph, they assume that it was taken by a homosexual, right? In a way, it's a political statement of power and dominance for me. I think, a lot of people see the hard-on as being the last male mystery, and people get quite uncomfortable when it comes to men showing themselves in a vulnerable position. Men aren't ready to be exposed in the same way that women are, and society isn't necessarily ready to see it either.

### Right.

I feel like we're suddenly moving forward though, and things are changing a lot, don't you think? I was researching, and I was wondering who's done a project like this before, and it turns out that women have been photographing or painting men masturbating, but whoever tried to come out with that kind of work was criticized. Basically, they kept all that work hidden and never really showed it. For example, a woman called Aura Rosenbourg photographed guys masturbating, but just their faces. Also, Ariane Lopez-Huici photographed men masturbating and she was denied showing those works in her retrospective in New York. She wanted to include that work and they said, "No." And that wasn't very long ago! No woman has been praised for this kind of work.



Image 4: *Together*, 2011. Aneta Bartos.

### Are you worried that you'll be criticized in the same way?

Not really, because times are changing. I've been getting really positive responses. I think the fact that I show the vulnerability of the man has helped — it's not just a straightforward shot. There're a lot of different emotions that I'm showing, and even though you see hard-ons, they're not as vulgar as they could be. ... Maybe I don't know. I was going to show these photos with Nick Weber for this show, but then I changed my mind and only included two of them. I want that series to be for a solo exhibition.

### How did you start working on this exhibition with Nick?

This is kind of a sad story, because the whole mastermind behind the show was John McWhinnie, who just died. I had an exhibition a year and a half ago, and a friend of mine mentioned that John had been bragging about my work, but I didn't know who that was. I just thought, "Oh, good. Someone likes my work." Then another friend of mine mentioned it, and told me that he had a rare bookshop, which sold me on the idea of meeting him. I'm such a visual person, so I love rare things that haven't been seen by many people. When I met him, he spoke and it was poetry coming out of his mouth. He was describing every one of my images so intimately, and he was dissecting my work, and I was just stunned. It was like he knew exactly what I was thinking. I was so impressed with his critique, and I don't usually listen to people. With John though, I felt like he was the first person who really connected with my work.

### Wow. So what happened next?

Well, we were always chatting, and we developed this work-relationship, and a few months later he said, "You know, I have this painter that I show, who paints the same subjects that you photograph in moody, sensual, ambient tones. I think if you guys have a show together, it could be a killer." So, he threw it out there, but then he became more aggressive about it, and he said, "I really think you should meet Nick," who was having exhibitions in the East Hamptons. So, that was in July; he invited me to the Hamptons, and I came to meet Nick, and I stayed over for the whole weekend. I was like, "I don't know if I want to have an exhibition with a guy who works with similar subjects," you know?

### What changed your mind?

I met him, and he was so genuine, and honest about sexuality. He showed me his vulnerable side, which was so refreshing to see in a man. That weekend made me feel like we were brother and sister!

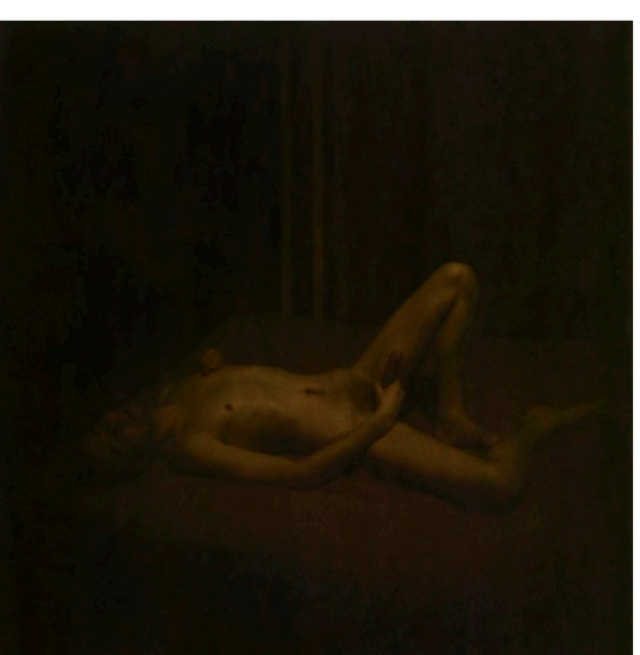


Image 5: *Tom*, 2011. Aneta Bartos.

### Really?

Yeah. It was really intense! Then, we started talking about the show, and John asked Anne Huntington, who I'd worked with before, to curate it and the three of us began working on ideas. It was only two months ago that we decided what we wanted to show.

### How did you come up with the name for the show?

We were brainstorming and Nick came up with "Jack and Jill", which is a nursery rhyme, right? Well, we decided to go with the naughtiest, Freudian interpretation, where two kids are trying to explore and reach a higher power of sexuality. You know — down with shame! In the show, their naughtiness is like holiness, because they're leaving society behind, and as they approach the summit, man and woman become one. But just like in the tale of Adam and Eve, they fall from grace. Nick and I are like the artistic brother and sister in this show, and we're trying to provide honesty about sexuality, so that we can empower... You know what? The show's all about sex! [She laughs]

Text & interview: [Zoe Baily](#)