

PRESS RELEASE

Zillman Art Museum - University of Maine

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High resolution digital images available upon request



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Admission to ZAM is FREE in
2023 thanks to Birchbrook

Zillman Art Museum (ZAM) announces New Exhibition

BANGOR – The Zillman Art Museum - University of Maine, located at 40 Harlow Street in Bangor, ME, opens a new exhibition that will run May 19 through September 2, 2023. ZAM is open Tuesday-Saturday from 10 am - 5 pm and brings modern and contemporary art to the region, presenting approximately 21 original exhibitions each year. Admission to the Zillman Art Museum is free in 2023 thanks to the generosity of Birchbrook.

MERYL MEISLER: NIGHTLIFE NYC, 1977-2023

May 19 - September 2, 2023

In 1975 Meryl Meisler moved to New York City. Two years later its most notorious and celebrated nightclub, Studio 54, opened its doors. Meisler immersed herself in the nightlife scene and began to make images of Studio 54's colorful pleasure-seekers, along with some of its most noted party-goers such as Andy Warhol. The photographer states, "When Studio 54 opened, my friend JudiJupiter got us on the guest list as photographers. The doorman took a liking and parted the door for us night after night. Studio 54's fabulous changing décor, DJs, sound system, and incredible crowds of diverse ages, races, ethnicities, sexual orientations, and gender identities were thrilling."

Fueled by the excitement of Manhattan's exploding club scene of the late 70s, Meisler photographed fashionable night revelers and celebrities at a number of other hedonistic havens that popped up throughout the City. Legendary clubs such as Copacabana, Paradise Garage, Hurrah, Xenon, GG's Barnum Room, CBGB, and erotic Go-Go bars, provided an endless and diverse array of extravagant subjects immersed in dance and party spectacles. Each venue had its own unique identity, clientele, and energy. Some club-goers who were unable to gain admission to Studio 54 or wanted a change of scenery explored the crowd, vibe, and music at other night spots. Meisler adds, "On nights off, club owners and cohorts would party at other discos." It was on one of these evenings that Meisler photographed Halston and Studio 54 co-owner Steve Rubell comfortably huddled together on a couch at the club Hurrah.

A monogamous relationship, full-time art teaching job, and the onset of the AIDS epidemic prompted the photographer's foray into nightlife culture to dramatically slow down around 1981. Meisler kept her collection of images to herself, as a sort of private visual memoir, until an encounter in 2014 at the drag & burlesque bar BIZARRE, in Bushwick. Many of the club's performers and the scene they created were reminiscent of the freedom and energy that abounded during New York City's nightlife heyday in the late 70s. This emerging scene with its emphasis on inclusion, costumed spectacles, and over-the-top revelry inspired Meisler to exhibit her earlier nightlife photos and, once again, document these venues of unbridled celebration.

Dance and performance take center stage in many of Meisler's current images taken at clubs like Bushwick's House of Yes and Bartschland's roaming parties. These new club scenes with drag queens and kings, bodacious burlesque performers, acrobats, magicians, dancers, and disco divas add to the continuum of NYC's nightlife culture — honoring and elevating the dynamic spirit set forth by prior generations of party-goers.

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