

ART XX

WOMEN IN THE ARTS

Monica Canilao

Scream Club

Enid Crow

Christa Holka

Invincible

Twincest

Maya Hayuk

Dawn Kasper

Christy C. Road

Nicole J. Georges

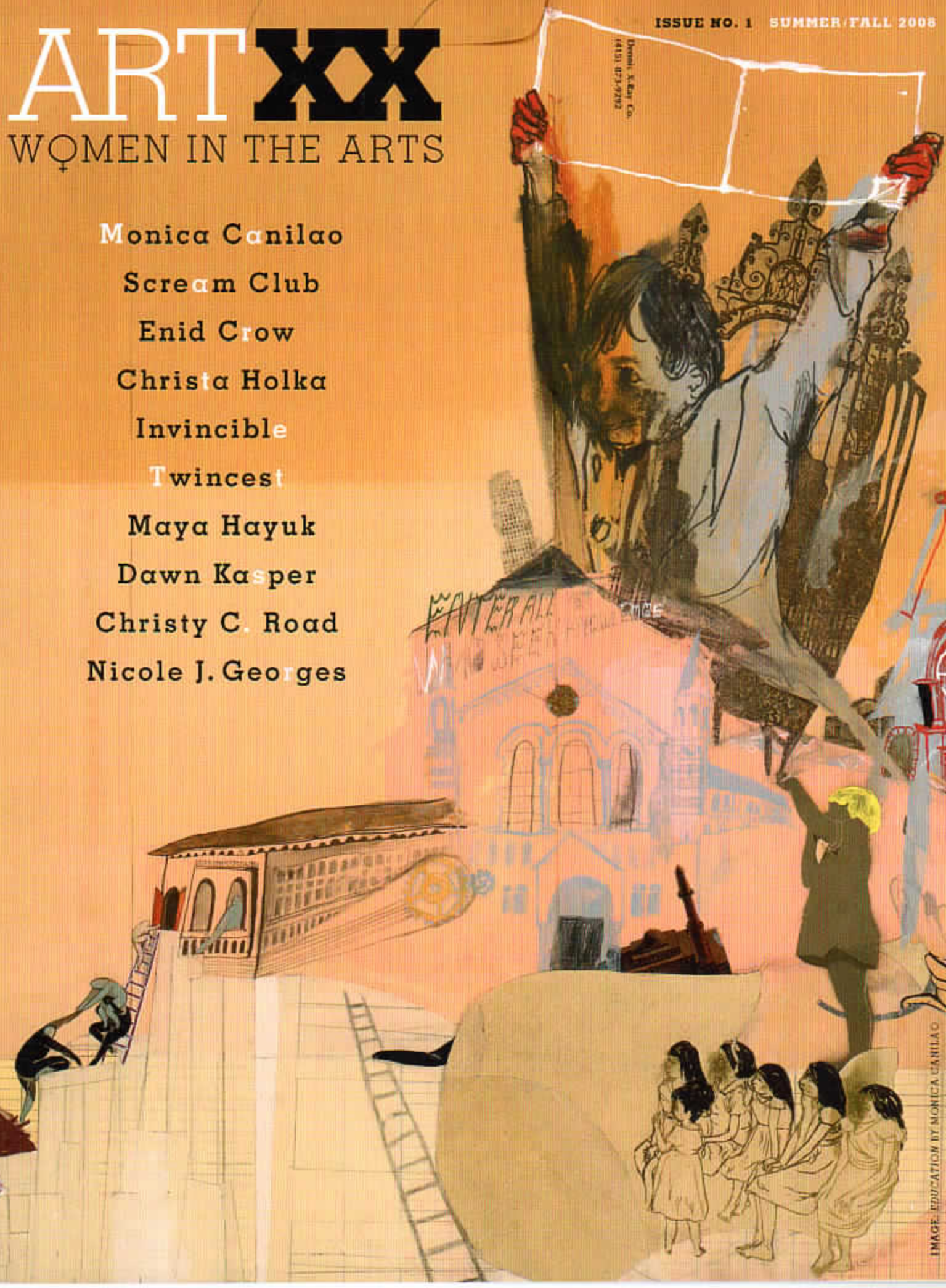


IMAGE: EDUCATION BY MONICA CANILAO

With the "The History of Moustaches," which is still in progress, Enid Crow has been exploring gender constructs, particularly highlighting activities in which women have traditionally not been involved. BY LENA SINGER

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a moustache and a muse







"The Ones We Love" is a photo project highlighting the work of young photographers from around the world. Each one was asked to submit shots of the person most important to them; all were required to have been taken outdoors in "a natural setting."

When clicking through the pictures posted online for the project, you'll see every color of wind-tangled hair blown across the pretty faces of girlfriends and best girl friends. Contemplative compositions of slightly out-of-focus young men and women gazing into or beyond beaches,

grassy country fields, the sky, freeways, junk piles. A few nudes, the closest to full-on being a handful of lovingly photographed bare breasts and butt cheeks.

Preceding each collection of six photos is a handwritten introduction from the photographer, announcing his "soul mate," her "rainbow boy," her "dream," his "nightingale."

Brooklyn-based photographer Enid Crow introduces you to the artist Justin Duerr, her now ex-beau, like this: "Justin likes boys and girls. When I put on a moustache, he would become aroused and want to kiss me."

And the photographs that follow: Justin and Enid (with moustache) in trucker hats and plaid button-down shirts, sizing each other up on a park bench; Justin and Enid as sailors, making out near a coastline; Justin and Enid (grinning through a thick moustache) posing in front of what appears to be their first brownstone as a couple; a bare-chested Justin pinning a rapt Enid-as-moustachioed-park-ranger to a tree; the two of them

as (male) nurses standing outside a hospital; and finally, as gentlemen of the Belle Epoque, sharing a kiss in a darkening wood.

Enid Crow's photographs nearly always feature her in costume, in a posed, theatrical scene. Most often, they're self-portraits taken with a male-themed series: the "Faggots" series, showing her as a man; "The Ones We Love," "The History of Misses," a relative of "Faggots" that includes several self-portraits of Enid as a man wearing an array of over-the-top moustaches; and the "Disasters" series, photographed after 9/11, featuring a multitude of characters expressing homophobia in prominent, but unknown, catastrophes.

Almost all of Enid's work also relates in some way to feminist ideas. She openly admits that at times emulates Cindy Sherman and Nan Goldin, both of whom challenge stereotypes of gender and identity by mirroring them back at the world in somewhat aberrant, just-off-veneer ways. The originals.

Enid Crow, though, seems to be a bigger



than the women she's inspired by—many of her pictures are really funny, appearing to be taken from a benevolent and slightly dark sense of humor. "I really embrace humor as a tactic," says Enid. "I often crackle herself up when describing a character or scene from one of her photos about. 'I think the pieces I do are funny, although there's a lot of sadness and anger behind them, using humor is an effective way to connect to people in who might otherwise be hostile to me.'"

Enid's "Faggots" series, for example. From a message that her then-relationship with Duert, a homosexual, would have been legally and socially discriminated against if he had fallen in love with a man, she made a series of photos that are thoughtful and quite intimate but pretty funny. "It was so important to me," says Enid. "It's really funny, but what provoked it was the anger and anger at the state of things in the world."

Enid's "The History of Moustaches," which is a series of photos. Enid has been exploring gender roles, particularly highlighting activities in which men have traditionally not been as involved. She has been photographing herself as a man doing those activities—hunting, construction work, and going to "beer parties," for instance.

At a "Sports Party," Enid, in moustache drag

wearing a baseball cap and holding a bottle of Grolsch, stands with a muscular middle-aged guy wearing a white sweatband on his wrist. They give the camera bemused looks while a group of other middle-aged guys in t-shirts and shorts drink beer, eat tortilla chips and watch "the game" around a patio table in the background.

"They were my brother-in-law's friends," Enid says, "and I asked if they would mind if I put on a moustache and if I took a picture with them."

After the shoot, one of the men approached Enid and asked her what she was doing. When she finished explaining, "he started talking to me about his concerns about social issues, like the environment and things like that," she says laughing and sounding pleased about the connection that was made.

Though Enid, now 38, has been taking photographs and making other art continually since her teens, she is by day an attorney (and aside from a juris doctorate from NYU, she has master's degrees in education and theater and performance arts). She also is an activist for animal-related causes, devoting free time to advocacy for animal rights organizations in New York City. (Recent pro bono work has included drafting legal memos on the abolishment of horse-drawn carriages in NYC and creating limits to the amount of time dog owners can keep their pets tied up outside.)

She dabbles in conceptual fashion, exhibiting clothing this past spring in a feminist fashion show at New York's A.I.R. gallery, the country's

first visual arts cooperative for women.

Enid is one half of the band *The Vivian Girls Experience*, as well, the other half of which is Duert, whom she continues to collaborate with. The band appears in concert dressed as Henry Darger's *Vivian Girls*, and most songs are specifically about the girls and their adventures in Darger's written and visual work. An upcoming "mini-album" (which they expect will be finished at the end of summer 2008), however, is about pigeons, perhaps inspired by a pigeon Enid recently rescued and now keeps as a pet.

A small series featuring the pigeon is in the works for another invited photo project. Enid is also completing a separate series called "Happy Workers," in which she dressed up as what she conceived to be people fitting of the name. In captions included with the pictures, characters declare things like, "It's all about the teamwork!" and "I've never missed a day of work in 24 years!"

When coming up with new characters, Enid says a lot naturally relies on the availability of a good costume. If a costume is too hard to find or too hard to make, an idea for a character doesn't come into being. Sometimes she gets lucky, though. Recently, after having wanted to shoot a motorcyclist photo for the "History of Moustaches," she happened upon a crucial costume element while walking down the street: "I found a motorcycle helmet in the trash! I was so happy that day."