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Jona Frank *The Modern Kids*

Text by Bruce Weber

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Portraits of a group of young boxers based in Northern England

In the Fall of 2010, Jona Frank began to make portraits at an amateur boxing club just outside of Liverpool in a suburb called Ellesmere Port. All the boys tried to act tough for the camera and Frank was reminded of a line from the Arcade Fire song Rococo: »They seem wild, but they are so tame.« In the song they are singing about going downtown and watching the modern kids. It made Frank think about how these boys, in this town, are »in« their life. For them, everything is present. This is their 21st Century, their right now, but their faces evoke the past. Many of them, shirtless and sweaty, their hands covered with big, puffy, colorful gloves, look timeless, but the truth is they are like any adolescent who is trying on a role and attempting to find their place. Like the suburb of Liverpool where these photos were made, boxing has a foot in the past while grasping its contemporary purpose. Frank's photographs provide a record of a sport and a community whose presence is slowly fading.

The Modern Kids combines the qualities of formal fine-art portraits with the mystery and intimacy of the sport of boxing. Both heroic and violent, a boxing match is a story without words entered into by two opponents, physically and psychologically stripped down, and determined to express their power. »The pain is temporary, the glory is forever.«

Although some of the most gentlemanly people I have ever met are boxers, for Jona to go into a boxing gym as a woman is a very rare thing. I used to visit a gym out in Las Vegas called Johnny Tocco's that had a sign which read, "No Women Allowed." But Jona's boxers let her have this experience. They wanted to share their moment of glory with her, and she in turn made heroes of them in her photographs. These pictures will be placed on the mantles and the walls in their homes. People will take notice. Their hard work will matter. (Bruce Weber, New York, 2015)

Jona Frank is an award-winning filmmaker and photographer. She has exhibited her films and photographs internationally and her work is in several prominent collections including Getty Museum, SF MoMA, and Museum of Fine Arts Houston. Frank has published two books: *High School* and *RIGHT: Portraits of the Evangelical Ivy League*.

Bruce Weber is an American fashion photographer and filmmaker. He is most widely known for his ad campaigns for Calvin Klein, Ralph Lauren, Pirelli, Abercrombie & Fitch, Revlon, and Gianni Versace, as well as his work for Vogue, GQ, Vanity Fair, Elle, Life, Interview, and Rolling Stone magazines.

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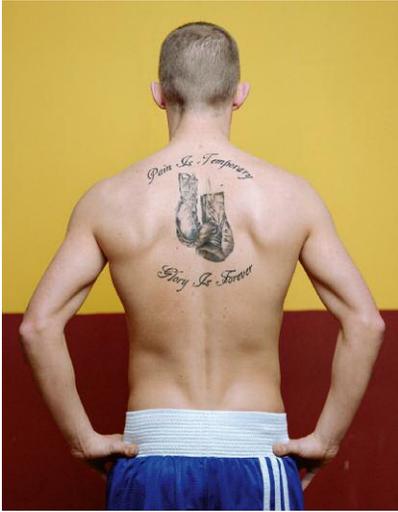
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