



**Sponsored: Thomas Roma: In the Vale of Cashmere**

**Steven Kasher Gallery** is proud to present *Thomas Roma: In the Vale of Cashmere*. This exhibition of Roma's most recent project consists of an intricate sequence of 75 black and white portraits and landscapes photographed in a secluded section of Prospect Park where black gay men cruise for sexual partners. This is Roma's first major New York exhibition of new photographs since his acclaimed solo exhibition *Come Sunday* at the Museum of Modern Art in 1996. The book *In the Vale of Cashmere* will be published by powerHouse Books in conjunction with the exhibition.



*Photo by Thomas Roma – Untitled (from the series In The Vale of Cashmere), 2011  
Gelatin silver print, printed ca. 2011  
11 x 14 in, Edition of 4; Signed and dated by photographer verso*

Roma is one of the most critically acclaimed photographers of our times. A Bard of Brooklyn, Roma is a poet-photographer who has been making profound images about the people and places of his native city since 1969. Fourteen books of his photographs have been published, almost all of them taken in Brooklyn. With *In the Vale of Cashmere*, Roma brings us into a little known Eden, one that has been quietly thriving for decades. Roma's portraits of men set in an uncanny urban wooded landscape carry a history of New York and Brooklyn that predates and parallels the gay rights and civil rights movements. Roma brings us into a secret world, giving

us the opportunity to consider the individual with sensitivity and respect while also engaging in a larger discussion of race, gender, sexuality, and class in an increasingly gentrified New York.

In 2008, Roma decided to bring his camera to the Vale of Cashmere, a section of Prospect Park he had frequented decades ago. Over the course of years of weekly visits, he approached the men there, introducing himself and explaining why he was taking pictures. Nine out of ten times Roma's request to make a portrait was declined; it was from that tenth ask that the intense portraits in this exhibition come. *In the Vale of Cashmere* was created as a memorial to Carl Spinella, one of Roma's closest friends, who died in Tom's arms of AIDS in 1992.



“Untitled” (from the series *In The Vale of Cashmere*), 2009  
Gelatin silver print, printed ca. 2009  
11 x 14 in Edition of 4; Signed and dated by photographer verso

Roma first met Spinella in 1974; a year later they were roommates living on Dean Street in Brooklyn. Spinella had been instrumental in bringing Roma to his native Sicily in 1978 so that Roma could discover his ancestral roots. (These images were later published as the book *Sicilian Passage*.) Their bond was so close that Tom often would drive Spinella to the Vale of Cashmere and sometimes pick him up at the drop-off site, an act of faith in a time before cell phones, when who knows what could happen in the woods. It was to those woods that Roma returned alone in 1996. Tom's son Giancarlo (named after Spinella) was a baseball player who played up to 120 games a year, many at the Parade Grounds in Prospect Park right across the street from the Vale of Cashmere. Roma noticed his son sometimes played better when his father was not around, and started taking walks in the Vale in memory of Spinella. Eventually his photography began there.

***Thomas Roma: In the Vale of Cashmere*** will be on view from **October 29th – December 19th, 2015**. **Steven Kasher Gallery** is located at **515 W. 26th St., New York, NY 10001**.