

# NOLA DEFENDER

BLOOD • ALCOHOL • CONTENT

## CLICKS AND POPS



*Second Line, by Lee Friedlander*

Photography is a lot like poetry: anyone can do it, but very few can do it well. There's a fine line between a notebook filled with angsty free verse, or a Tumblr overflowing with Hipstamatic camera-phone shots, and the kind of art produced by the kind of talent that appeals to a larger, more discriminating audience. At Tulane University's Newcomb Art Gallery, three concurrent exhibitions of photography show the power and range of the camera when it's in the hands of a true professional. While the styles and subjects of Andy Warhol, Thomas Roma, and Lee Friedlander vary, their ability to engage the viewer results in a satisfying, if slightly incoherent, gallery experience.

Warhol's the big name here, represented in "Pop Shots: Polaroid Portraits by Andy Warhol," which features a room full of the iconic 4.25x3.5 inch snap shots, these taken with a Polaroid Big Shot, a short-lived camera with limited range that was designed specifically for taking up-close portraits. The snaps in the exhibition are all studies for the artist's signature silkscreen and acrylic portraits, which are synonymous with the Pop Art style. Subjects include the likes of Wayne Gretzky, Ric Ocasek, and Diana Ross, alongside anonymous women, all framed in similar poses. The repetition of size of style gives the show a disconcerting sense of sameness, a feeling of mass production, though attention to individual portraits often reveals a grace and intimacy that belies one's initial perception of the room as a whole.

The Warhol show's main attraction is a dozen photographs of Tina Freeman, a New Orleans photographer who commissioned a portrait from Warhol in 1975. Doug McCash talked to Freeman for his [Times-Picayune review](#) of the show, and she reveals some of the details of her sitting. The photos, though, speak for themselves, showing Freeman in variations of the same pose, filtering the subject's vulnerability through

the artist's detached gaze. The finished portrait hangs alone on one gallery wall, side-by-side images of Freeman recast as a screen print colored in pop art pinks and pastels. The print adds energy to the original photograph, but it loses some of the intimacy in doing so, which gives viewers a full perspective Warhol's process and product, from Polaroid to portrait.

While Warhol tackles people and portraiture, Roma and Friedlander spend more time on context and community, capturing individuals in the places that define them.

"Pictures for Books: Photographs by Thomas Roma" showcases work from four of the artist's book-length collections. Photographs from *Found Brooklyn* for example, depict the landscape and inhabitants of Roma's home borough. His black-and-white images of the neighborhood, including one of three young boys setting fire to an egg crate on the sidewalk, and another of a teenage couple making out on the trunk of a Lincoln, capture the ways people interact with others in the public sphere. Another collection shows an African-American congregation, sometimes in quiet prayer, other times rejoicing, exploring the role of worship and the shared experience that can define a community.

Closer to home, "Jazz People: New Orleans Portraits by Lee Friedlander" combines both approaches, as the show features portraits of New Orleans musicians of the 1950s like Snooks Eaglin and Isadore Barbarain, and also street scenes from Mardi Gras parades and second lines, capturing both the people and the spirit of the city. A pair of pictures of the Preservation Hall Jazz Band illustrates the duality of tone in the exhibition: one is a posed portrait, and beneath it is shot of the band in action, as if the staid figures in the first photo have suddenly come to life in the second one.

On the surface, the work of these three photographers is all over the place. However, each artist's approach to documenting specific people of a specific place and time succeeds in tying together the exhibitions and making the whole show more than the sum of its parts.

*An opening reception for all three exhibitions will be held on September 14, 5:00-7:00. The opening will include food, drink, and jazz selections performed by students from the New Orleans Center for Creative Arts (NOCCA).*