

BOOK

## Cig Harvey: You Look At Me Like An Emergency

Fine-art photographer Cig Harvey's monograph *You Look At Me Like An Emergency* is the title of Schilt Publishing's most recent publication. This crafted book, with its catchy red cover, fuses seventeen short vignettes written by the artist, with seventy-four vividly colored photographs, which take the viewer on a literal and visual journey into Cig Harvey's world.

*'My photographs are typically concerned with fragility. I use photography to legitimize these 'in between' moments of struggle, uncertainty and doubt. My photographs are declarations of faith and beauty in life. They are an attempt to create order out of chaos and beauty out of pain.'* says Cig.

After looking at the first few pages of *You Look At Me Like An Emergency* the viewer is likely to be struck by Cig's unique sense of color and the tension between the accessibility and mystery of her photographs. The world presented to the viewer in this book is full of unanswered questions and secrets, derived from often confusing, surprising, puzzling or disturbing elements within the images.

A woman standing on a desolate, giant channel marker in the middle of the sea, a bowl of delicious looking red cherries left on the floor, a young girl staring out of the back window of a truck amidst a full blown snow storm or a female fig-

*In the middle  
of the ocean  
HOPE is a noun.  
I have seen stars  
touch the horizon  
out of both eyes  
simultaneously.*





ure, barefoot and in a wonderful, turquoise dress, hovering in front of a closed pool bar. The dream-like quality and the uncertainty of whether these photographs have been staged for the camera, often leaves the viewer wondering. It's as if she seeks out locations, light or weather that isolates and provides a stage for the gaze or gesture of the subject.

*You Look At Me Like An Emergency* resembles a personal family photo album, featuring photographs of seemingly ordinary objects and situations, which through Harvey's curious and unique eye, bold coloring and an unlikely charm are brought to life. The book is divided into three chapters, marking a trio of distinct periods in Cig's life and art. The first chapter features predominantly her early work in which she often turns the camera onto herself, becoming the subject of her own photographs. These photographs introduce us to the character 'Cig Harvey', her past stories and experiences, unresolved questions and issues. The photographs are often physical close-ups, intensely vibrant and seem to address an inner conflict.

With the beginning of the next chapter a shift is evident: the camera is turned outward, recording Cig's present life, her immediate surroundings, family and friends. She says 'I choose to photograph people I'm surrounded by, so that I can recognize that moment when I don't know them and make the picture. In that frame our relationship is somehow compromised and the familiar becomes foreign. I am interested in what is universal and timeless in a portrait. This part of her work portrays the journey of life, with all the inherent chaos and challenges that it involves, but also how through all these difficulties her own sense of self became stronger.

In the third and final chapter the pace of the book changes again. Cig uses the camera to describe a new life with her husband and the home they create together. *You Look At Me Like An Emergency* takes the viewer on a metaphorical and literal journey that deals with relationships, rejection, loss, love and a search for a place called 'home'.

The perfectly composed and technically flawless photographs possess an openness and accessibility that not many photographers manage to convey in their work. Through simple and uncomplicated composition and a great sensibility, Cig's photographs seduce the viewer, and their richness in narrative leave a lot of room for imagination. At first sight one might think that these staged mysteries tell a story, offering answers to questions posed, but one realizes quickly that they do not really require rational decoding: the photographs in *You*





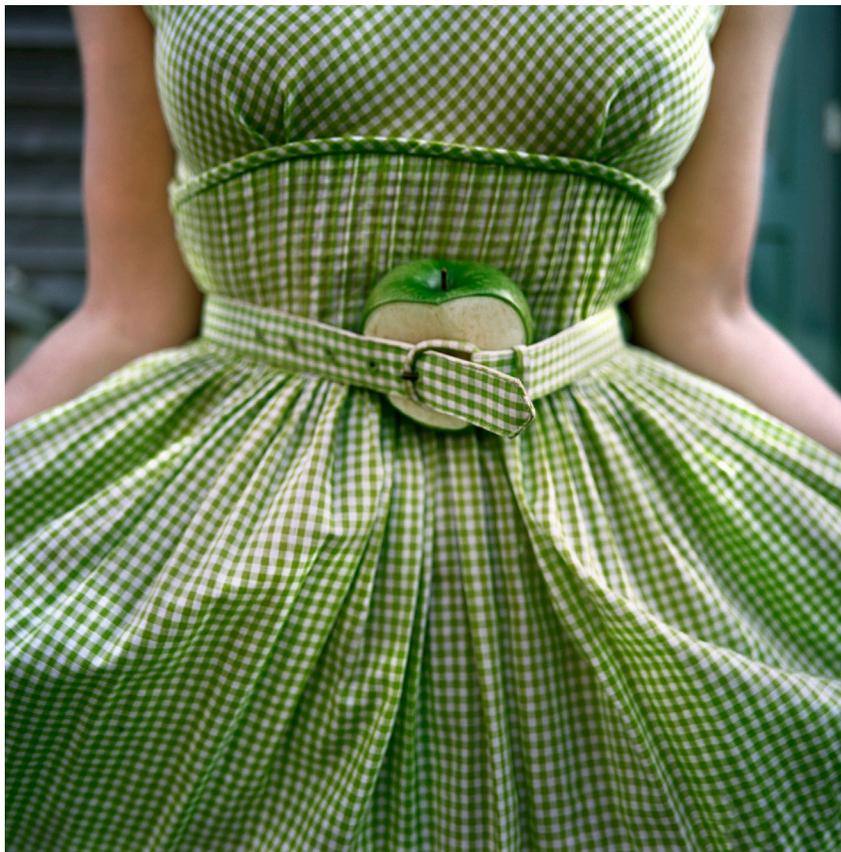
Look At Me Like An Emergency are best taken whole and without too much interference.

*'Making a photograph is such an opportunity to say something about the world' Cig was once quoted as saying, and although she herself definitely plays the leading role in this tale, You Look At Me Like An Emergency touches upon many universal quests that we can all relate to.*

Cig Harvey was born in England in 1973. She fell in love with photography at the young age of thirteen. She now lives on the coast of Maine and in Boston, Massachusetts and is a full-time Assistant Professor of Photography at the Art Institute of Boston at Lesley University. She teaches workshops and lectures on her own work and process at institutions around the world.

Cig Harvey is represented by Robert Klein Gallery in Boston, Massachusetts, Joel Soroka Gallery in Aspen, Colorado, Dowling Walsh Gallery in Rockland, Maine and Robin Rice Gallery in New York. Her work has been widely exhibited and is held in permanent collections of major museums including The Museum of Fine Arts, Houston and the International Museum of Photography, George Eastman House, Rochester, NY. In Spring 2012 Cig Harvey's first major solo show will open at the Stenersen Museum in Oslo, Norway from 8 March – 29 April 2012.

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**LINKS**

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