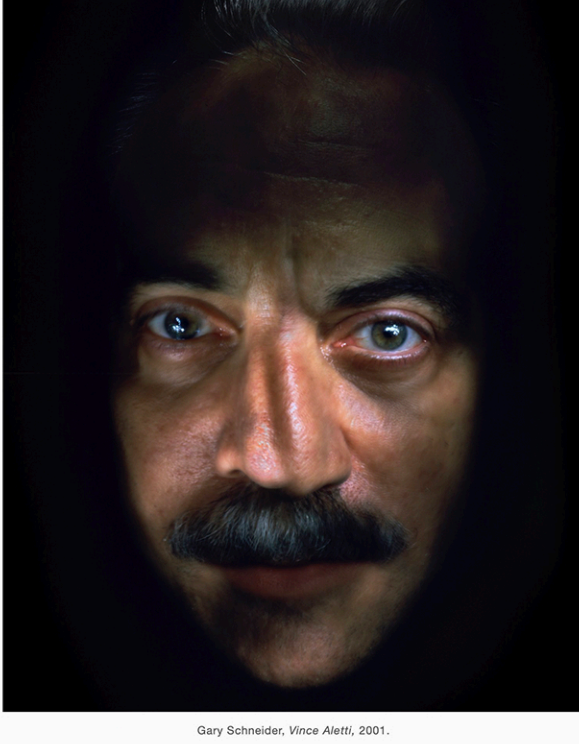


VINCE ALETTI: GUEST EDITOR

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Gary Schneider, Vince Aletti, 2001.

If the portraits on these pages look odd, it's because they were not made in a moment like conventional photographs. Instead, they were made over a period of time sometimes as long as half an hour, accumulating information second by second. During that time, the subjects were asked to stay very still. Because that was not always possible - since we're twitchy, impatient, and liable to drift off - many of Gary Schneider's most arresting photographs involve accidents. The furrow running down the center of my nose (opposite) came about because I shifted my head at some point and the camera faithfully recorded both positions. Many of Schneider's subjects appear radiant and undisturbed; others come through mottled, mysterious, skewed - as expressive as Picassos.

Time and movement aren't the only variables in the meticulous process Schneider has refined over the years. He began making portraits in this style in 1989, working in the dark with subjects reclined on a mat below an 8x10 studio camera with a huge accordion-like black bellows. The armature of a hundred-year-old steel camera stand holds the whole apparatus steady just above their head. Once the lens is focused and the lights are off, Schneider kneels by his sitter's head and gradually, carefully illuminates their features with a small pen light. This method of sketching with light - steady but skittering and often accompanied by Schneider's whispered counting, so he knows how long he's lit an ear or an eye before moving on - is hushed, hypnotic, and soothing. For the self-conscious sitter, it's an experience that undermines any prepared performance. Our usual repertoire of on-camera expressions are useless here, melting into one another in the extended exposure. But if this is a ritual performance on both sides of the camera, it's not about submission or losing oneself; it's about participation, diving within, and revealing oneself.

Schneider finds his inspiration in the early days of photography when long exposures were necessary and marvelous accidents were common. Though her results are more theatrical, Julia Margaret Cameron is a model of soulful concentration. Many decades later, her gaze is returned by her sitters with undimmed intensity. Funny how intimate and confiding you can get with a camera when the person behind it is so present. Gary whispering in your ear may not be a seduction, but there's so much love and care in his process that you feel uniquely revealed.



Gary Schneider, Dorothy Ko, 2008.



Gary Schneider, John Erdman, 2021.



Gary Schneider, Moyra Davey, 2020.



Gary Schneider, Peyton Smith, 1994.



Gary Schneider, Ugo Rondinone, 2021.



Gary Schneider, William LaCasca, 2008.



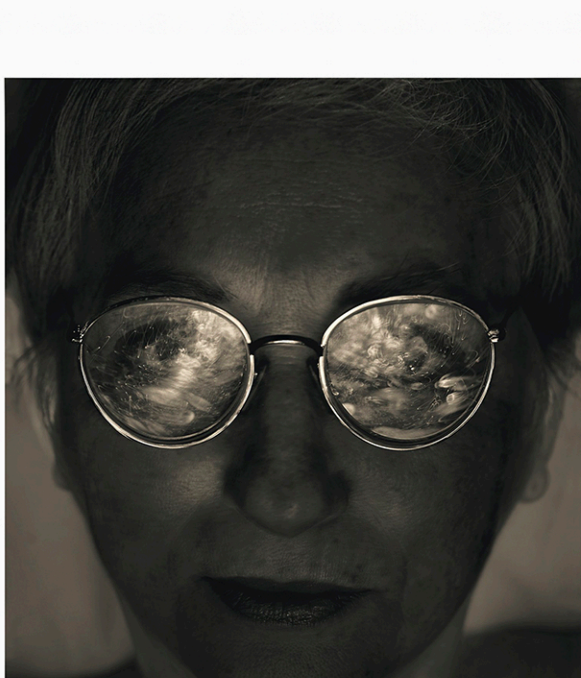
Gary Schneider, Alex Kwartler, 2020.



Gary Schneider, George Pitts, 2001.



Gary Schneider, Helen Gee, 2000.



Gary Schneider, Shirley Soffer, 1991.