

Space Station Sixty-Five is pleased to present:

ROMAN MANFREDI

WE/US

Butches and Studs from working class
backgrounds within the British landscape



Mel, Margate, Kent. 2021



Sue, City of London. 2021

9 MARCH – 3 JUNE 2023

Wednesday – Saturday, 12 – 6PM

Additional viewing times available by appointment

Free, fully accessible

Space Station Sixty-Five

Building One

373 Kennington Road

SE11 4PT

Save the date: Press launch on Wednesday 1 March, 9AM – 6PM

Opening night: Wednesday 8 March, 6PM. All welcome



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We/Us is the UK's first visual art project celebrating the undocumented presence of Butches and Studs from working class backgrounds. Using film photography as a medium, Roman Manfredi explores intergenerational female masculinity through the structures of class and race within the British landscape. This extraordinary new solo exhibition by lens based artist Manfredi, co-curated by Ingrid Pollard, will be on show at Space Station Sixty-Five, 9 March – 3 June 2023. No ordinary portrait show, Manfredi presents forty-one framed photographs with an audio installation taken from interviews with the participants.

The exhibition counters the fact that there is very little, if any representation of British working class Butch/Stud lesbians within art and cultural spaces. Manfredi has spent the last four years gathering and developing relationships with participants from all over the UK.

Manfredi states:

“This project doesn't come from a place of theory, but rather a sense of everyday lived experience, moving away from the “I” of identity politics and into a collective “We” as a practice of involvement. It comes from a place of deep love and pride for my community, expressed through the viewfinder of my Hasselblad 500cm. Shooting on film as opposed to digital is an important part of the project. It's a different way of taking up space, a physical, visceral space. Many of the images go against conventional rules of composition. I wanted to make images that were carefully made and considered, yet still allowing room for 'failure', countering the rules of gender conformity that we so clearly defy. These images are a celebration. We stand before you inviting you to look back, to stand with us.”

British portrait photographer Eileen Perrier comments:

“As Roman's first major documentary photography project, the strength and dignity which is conveyed by her sitters, whose ages range from twenty-one to seventy-five, is extraordinary. It was important for Roman to produce the work on film rather than digitally, as Roman says, “we are always under the spotlight to hyper-define ourselves. Analogue is a way of rejecting the pressure put on gender non-conforming women to constantly define themselves.” This body of work needs to be part of the timeline.”

Manfredi has taken a particular and deliberate approach to this photography exhibition, intervening in the idea of portraiture as merely subjects on the wall to be consumed by the viewer. The project is Butch/Stud collaborative, intergenerational and intercultural at its core, with many of the participants being part of the production team, security team, workshop leaders, podcast creators, content creators and performance team. The very making of the show challenges the hierarchies of the art world. There is a wide ranging programme of associated events comprising live music, workshops, poetry readings, lectures, film screenings, podcasts, and specially commissioned merchandise. All the events will be posted on the SS65 website and social media.

SS65 Co-Directors Jo David and Rachael House say of Manfredi's *We/Us* project:

We need this work, this intersectional exhibition. The communities represented belong here and we welcome them. It should of course be seen by others too.

Roman Manfredi is both thoughtful and purposeful, with a clear vision of their unique project and how to bring it to fruition. We have very much enjoyed seeing the work develop and are keenly anticipating opening the doors of Space Station Sixty-Five to you.

This is work to spend time with. Made slowly, with multiple strands and in collaboration with the subjects, we don't know where the artist begins and ends, it's deep and complex.

Jo David and Rachael House. Space Station Sixty-Five co-Directors 2022 *We/Us* is a research project commissioned by Space Art, the contemporary art charity which sits behind SS65.

Manfredi concludes:

It is vital to me that the people I photograph/interview have a voice, that they are not merely subjects to be consumed in a gallery context.

"I mean, well the minute they talk to me they know. So, they hear my voice, you know. I'm cockney London. So, I think it's more when people hear you than just see you"

- Sue

Notes to editors

The definition of Butch generally refers to a specific and deliberate female masculinity within a lesbian framework. Stud is an American term used by many younger Black masculine presenting lesbians in the UK. These identities are working class in origin.

About Roman Manfredi:

"When I left school at 16, I bought a local paper and sought the most creative job I could find - a darkroom assistant for a photography studio. I bought a second hand camera from a bloke in my local pub in Kings Cross and took pictures of some mates in a nearby mannequin factory. It was here that my first creative outlet was born. Photography seemed like an accessible creative medium for working class kids at that time.

Since then, I've gathered moss, travelled, worked and come full circle. I use photography and film to learn about and become intimate with my participants and their surroundings. My work explores concepts of identity through the everyday lived experience, seeking for creative ways to instigate dialogue. I lift something of past Dyke-dom and my own personal history and experiences. I am motivated by

connective linkage and the need to contribute to archiving working class queer histories by working class artists.”

Manfredi’s film, ‘Everything That I’m Not’ (15:11 mins, 2017) has been screened internationally. It is an experimental documentary that centres three Butch/Stud and Femme lesbian couples. The viewer is invited to share intimate fragments of the couples; lives, expressed through their domestic environment. By slowing down the process of perception, moments within an everyday setting provide a backdrop to stories that aim to capture the essence of the Butch/Stud and Femme dynamic.

Manfredi studied Fine Art at Byam Shaw School of Art @ Central St Martin's, 2005–2008, and Royal College of Art, 2010–2012.

<https://www.romanmanfredi.com/about>

About Space Station Sixty-Five (SS65)

Space Station Sixty-Five (SS65), co-directed by Jo David and Rachael House, is an independent queer and artist-run contemporary art space in Kennington, South-East London, founded in 2002.

Ongoing curatorial practice includes research projects commissioning artists to make and exhibit new work, as well as showing overlooked and under-appreciated archives and other historical works. We also yearn to show things that we do not yet know or understand.

Recent exhibitions include SS65 relaunch with *Rebel Dykes Art and Archive Show, 2021* and *Queer Art(ists) Now* which was in partnership with Fringe Fest. Since 2021 SS65 has been the main activity of a new registered CIO, Space Art, which supports contemporary art activities within, and also outside SS65.

Space Art prioritises working with underrepresented artists and/or those whose identities or communities are underrepresented in contemporary art. This means that Space Station Sixty-Five audiences continue to be diverse, including many who are less familiar with all the machinations of the contemporary art world.

This project has been generously supported by Space Station Sixty-Five, Space Art and Arts Council England.



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