

# Vinca Petersen: Raves and Riots

Exhibition: 4 June - 27 August 2021  
Monday - Friday 11am - 6pm



*To me, the same thing sometimes happens on a demonstration as in an illegal rave. They're both slightly edgy gatherings...you get a sense of the normal world being suspended, and you experience these brief, totally free moments.*

- Vinca Petersen

Edel Assanti is pleased to present Vinca Petersen's first solo exhibition at the gallery, *Raves and Riots*. The exhibition will take place at Edel Assanti's interim Fitzrovia space at 46 Mortimer Street, opening to coincide with the first edition of London Gallery Weekend (4-6 June), a new peer-led initiative originated by Edel Assanti in collaboration with a community of London galleries.

*Raves and Riots* brings together a collection of seminal diaristic photographs drawn from a period spanning 1990-2004, documenting the artist's experiences as part of the free party and traveller community. The images juxtapose the sense of escapism and euphoria of this unique cultural moment with the oppressive political climate which outlawed the lifestyles of those responsible for Britain's rave scene.

Leaving home aged seventeen, Petersen moved to a London squat and quickly became immersed in the free party scene that exploded across Europe in the 1990s. She began taking photographs as a means of recording experiences of a subversive new way of living as part of a community of travellers and close friends.

The free party wave enraptured Britain's young generation following the explosion of rave, techno and ecstasy in 1989, when crowds of up to twenty-five thousand gathered in countryside locations for illegal all-night parties. Whilst the movement was born of music and hedonism, it quickly became a vehicle for civil disobedience and defiance of authority, as portrayed in images of Petersen and her friends attending protests contesting the political backlash against their way of living. The 1994 Criminal Justice Bill created a hostile environment for the squatters, travellers and rave organisers that made up the artist's immediate social circle. In response, Petersen and those closest to her adopted a nomadic lifestyle, transporting powerful sound systems across Europe in truck convoys, setting up parties in countryside locations on the outskirts of urban areas. Petersen remained on the road until a few months before the birth of her son in 2005.

Despite the movement's iconic significance, photographic documentation of the rave scene is sparse, as the community was wary of outsiders taking pictures for fear of legal repercussions, so cameras were routinely confiscated at parties. Petersen's photographs do not merely document a movement, but acquaint us with a cast of personalities and narratives that expose the precarious existence embraced by her community in order to preserve a distinctive sense of freedom and expression. Working with inconspicuous cameras, Petersen's insider's perspective is at times contemplative and unflinching, and elsewhere frenetic, glimpsing the spontaneity of moments in which the artist barely looks through the viewfinder before clicking the shutter. Whether through empathetic personal proximity to her subjects or atmospheric immersion in each scene, Petersen's implied presence and participation in the world she depicts is an underlying constant.

**EDEL ASSANTI**

46 Mortimer Street, London, W1W 7RL  
art@edelassanti.com

The selection of images in *Raves and Riots* transcend the euphoria of transitory moments that characterised the era, encompassing the ambition, relationships and struggles of an aspirational community fostering an existence beyond traditional systems of organisation, control and hierarchy.

For London Gallery Weekend's central London focus day on Friday 4<sup>th</sup> June, Vinca Petersen will be signing copies of her acclaimed monograph, **No System**, at the gallery between 3-6pm. The publication chronicles a ten year period of trans-European travel and nomadic life on the road.

As well as archiving thousands of photographic images, Petersen has attempted to document a way of life: its flyers, posters and clothes; her work constitutes an archive that records the techno-fuelled raves and lives of the travellers who organised them, but also a creative response to breaking barriers between individuals. Petersen's work has been exhibited at Tate Modern, Turner Contemporary and the Victoria and Albert Museum, Dundee, and her work is also held in the collection of the Victoria and Albert Museum. From 2021-22, Petersen will have a series of institutional exhibitions at the Martin Parr Foundation, Bristol; Northern Gallery of Contemporary Art, Sunderland; Victoria and Albert Museum, Dundee; Newlyn Art Gallery & Exchange, Penzance; Grundy Art Gallery, Blackpool. Petersen lives in Ramsgate, UK.

EDEL ASSANTI

46 Mortimer Street, London, W1W 7RL  
art@edelassanti.com

# EDEL ASSANTI

*Vinca Petersen: Raves and Riots*

4 June - 27 August

1. *Fly Agaric*, 1996, C-print, 20.3 x 25.4 cm
2. *Milan, New Year's Eve*, 1997, C-print, 50.8 x 76.2 cm
3. *River Conversation*, 1994, C-print, 50.8 x 76.2 cm
4. *Pink guitar*, 1994, C-print, 20.3 x 25.4 cm
5. *Riot Boy*, 1998, C-print, 50.8 x 76.2 cm
6. *Riot Girl*, 1998, C-print, 50.8 x 76.2 cm
7. *Girl and Rig, Rotterdam*, 1996, C-print, 20.3 x 25.4 cm
8. *Pink Girl and Riot Cops*, 2000, C-print, 20.3 x 25.4 cm
9. *Speaker Man*, 1996, C-print, 20.3 x 25.4 cm
10. *Riot Cop Kiss*, 1997, C-print, 20.3 x 25.4 cm
11. *Lone Raver*, 1997, C-print, 20.3 x 25.4 cm
12. *Sleeper II*, 2001, C-print, 20.3 x 25.4 cm
13. *Warehouse Rave, France*, 2001, C-print, 50.8 x 76.2 cm
14. *Where Next?*, 1997, C-print, 20.3 x 25.4 cm
15. *Convoy*, 1996, C-print, 20.3 x 25.4 cm

