



# Susan Copich

*Photography, Processing Normal*



Old Habits, 2011, pigment print, 30 x 20 inches



Happy Days  
2012  
pigment print  
30 x 40 inches



King Size  
2013  
pigment print,  
20 x 30 inches



TOY  
2013  
pigment print  
30 x 40 inches



Witching Hour  
2014  
pigment print,  
20 x 30 inches



Sugar Rush  
2014  
pigment print  
30 x 40 inches



Mommy's Little Helpers  
2015  
pigment print,  
20 x 30 inches



Monday Morning  
2015  
pigment print  
20 x 30 inches



Take 2  
2012  
pigment print  
30 x 20 inches



All American  
2015  
pigment print  
20 x 30 inches



Film Noir #1  
2016  
pigment print  
20 x 30 inches



Film Noir #3/CoffeeBreak  
2015  
pigment print  
30 x 20 inches



THE CUPCAKE  
2016  
video short  
<https://vimeo.com/313432788>  
Password: BROOKLYN



private  
2018  
pigment print  
40 x 30 inches



obscurus  
2019  
pigment print  
40 x 30 inches



bullet hole  
2019  
pigment print  
40 x 30 inches



interiors  
2016  
pigment print  
37.5 x 50 inches



whisper  
2019  
pigment print  
30 x 40 inches



the fall(RED)  
2017  
pigment print  
37.5 x 50 inches



exit strategies  
2018  
pigment print  
40 x 30 inches



woman in charge  
2016  
pigment print  
30 x 40 inches



SHUSH  
2019  
pigment print  
30 x 40 inches



distance between  
2019  
pigment print  
30 x 40 inches



still life  
2017  
pigment print  
50 x 37.5 inches



herstory  
2016  
pigment print  
30 x 40 inches



exposure  
2019  
pigment print  
30 x 40 inches



game changer  
2016  
pigment print  
37.5 x 50 inches



the uninvited  
2017  
pigment print  
40 x 30 inches



biding time  
2017  
pigment print  
40 x 30 inches



reach  
2019  
pigment print  
30 x 40 inches



BLUE  
2017  
pigment print  
40 x 30 inches



ozymandias  
2018  
pigment print  
37.5 x 50 inches

# Susan Copich

## Commentary

When Susan Copich's career as a dancer and performer was ended by a severe knee injury, she had to find a new medium to continue as an artist. In the process, she discovered a way to merge her theatrical training, her choreography and her vision under one umbrella: photography. Copich realized that as the photographer of her family, she was never in the pictures that she took and this left her feeling irrelevant and invisible. In response, Copich created *Domestic Bliss* (2010-2015), her first series of staged photographs. In this subversive series, Susan Copich is up front and center with her husband and two daughters as supporting cast posed in a contemporary tableaux vivant. As idyllic as Copich's scenes can appear complete with well-dressed children and attractive, upscale furnishings, there is always a dark twist: a gun in a child's hand poolside, a noose hanging over a breakfast table, or barbed wire dividing a marriage bed.

The *Domestic Bliss* photographs culminate in a short film, *The Cupcake*, 2016. This film, influenced by the darkness of filmmakers David Lynch and Mike Leigh, charts the nighttime ritual of an obsessive housewife in denial of the menacing forces that threaten her. *The Cupcake* marks the transition from *Domestic Bliss'* bucolic ironies into the more personal dark emotions explored in the subsequent photographic series, *then he forgot my name*.

In 2016, Susan Copich began shuttling between her hometown of Youngstown, OH, in the Rust Belt, and her home in upstate New York to visit her father as he descended into dementia. She discovered a derelict building in Youngstown and created the set for *then he forgot my name* ("thfmrn" 2016-2019), an exploration of decline, decay, and death of both her father and her town. Against a backdrop of peeling paint and broken glass, the camera lens shifted to female protagonists at times vulnerable and at others, invincible - all portrayed by Copich. A woman in a red ball gown has been pushed down the stairs. A nude odalisque seduces the viewer. A well-dressed siren coolly smokes a cigarette in an abandoned car. In *thfmrn*, the camera turns away from the exterior pastiche of the pretend life in *Domestic Bliss* to descend into the dark, interior hearts of isolated women in a crumbling world.

What ties all of Copich's work together is her extraordinary ability to challenge the viewer to be at once witness, audience and accessory. With nods to Cindy Sherman's costumed self-portraits and Gregory Crewdson's constructed scenes, Susan Copich takes the viewer on a journey as the observer of a deceptive reality to the participant in the heart of a profound experience. No matter what kind of objectivity is created by the staged tableaux of the portrait format, this is quickly overwhelmed by an uncomfortable intimacy, which inevitably illuminates the pain of living and the struggle for change.

# Susan Copich

## Biography

Susan Copich's creative life was all about moving, starting with ballet and modern dance as a child in her hometown of Youngstown, OH, and going on to earn a BFA in choreography and performance from Ohio State University.

Attracted by the "edgy scene" in San Francisco, Copich had a robust career as a dancer, performer, choreographer, and teacher until a knee injury took her off the stage. Seeking another form of expression, she started acting lessons and then began studying photography at the International Center for Photography. Copich found photography was able to incorporate all of her prior theater and dance training as well as explore her own powerful personal vision.

The sardonic *Domestic Bliss* (2010-2015) series began in the 2010s, when Copich felt middle aged, irrelevant, invisible, and needed a creative outlet where she had more control. From setting up dramatic tableaux vivants to clicking the shutter and obsessively reshooting to make sure her meaning is clear, Copich did it all. She acknowledges the influence of Cindy Sherman's highly theatrical self-portraits, Gregory Crewdson's carefully constructed scenes, and absorbing the darkness of filmmakers David Lynch and Mike Leigh.

*Domestic Bliss* came from realizing that she was missing in family photographs. In the subversive series, she took center stage with her husband and two daughters as supporting cast. As idyllic as Susan Copich's scenes can appear, there is always menace, a dark twist: a gun in a child's hand poolside, a noose hanging over a breakfast table, or barbed wire dividing a marriage bed. The series ended with the short film, *The Cupcake*, 2016, where the concepts of *Domestic Bliss* were transferred to the screen.

In 2016, Susan Copich began shuttling between upstate New York to her Rust Belt hometown to spend time with her ill father. Using a derelict building as her set, she began *then he forgot my name* (thfmm), a study of decline, decay, death of her father and her city. Responding to the #Me Too movement, the focus shifted to women, some vulnerable, some invincible, with Copich playing them all in these film-noir-like scenes.

Susan Copich has been featured in one-woman exhibitions and achieved recognition in numerous juried exhibitions in the U.S: PHOTOWORKS 2019, curated by James A. Ganz, Curator of Photography, J. Paul Getty Museum; the 2019 International Photography Awards, and the Outwin Boochever Portrait Competition. Copich has exhibited her work in solo and group exhibitions nationally and internationally: the National Portrait Gallery (Smithsonian), Washington D.C; Brownsville Museum of Fine Art, TX; Art for Peace Festival in Tehran, Iran; Moen Mason Gallery, Tucson AZ; and Sohn Fine Art, Lenox, MA. She has been an invited speaker at the Norman Rockwell Museum of Art and the Professional Women Photographers (PWP).

-Karen Chambers

# Susan Copich

## Artist Statement

The works included in this exhibition evolved over 14 years, beginning with studies in choreography and performance, with an emphasis on movement, at Ohio State University in 2006. A knee injury eclipsed that creative trajectory, and acting and photography took their place in 2010 with the *Domestic Bliss* series (2010-2015), and then more recently (2016-2019) *then he forgot my name*.

*Domestic Bliss* came as a result of feeling middle-aged, irrelevant and invisible. Inspired by Gregory Crewdson's constructed scenes and Cindy Sherman's self-portraits, this ironic series of photographs of a perfectly turned out 1950 homemaker, were about being in absolute control, and facilitating everything from lighting to directing to clicking the shutter to playing a conflicted homemaker at center stage. A marketing campaign "of sorts" for the ideal life, *Domestic Bliss* was staged as a highly controlled family tableau vivant. Personal obsessions with twists of darkness were deliberately inserted to add to the complexity, and create a stylized subtext, and often sexually suggestive undercurrent: a noose, a handgun, a child guzzling a bottle of wine, a hard body handymen in the house, cigarettes to calm the frayed nerves and excessive pastries presented and abundantly available for binge eating.

This series ended with *The Cupcake*, 2016 where the concepts developed in *Domestic Bliss* were transferred to the screen and absorbed the darkness of filmmakers like David Lynch and Mike Leigh. That same year, my father descended into dementia in Youngstown, OH, and *then he forgot my name* series was undertaken during return trips to the Rust Belt from bucolic upstate New York.

The backdrop for *then he forgot my name* was a derelict building which served to define the themes of decline, hometown decay, and loss of a parent. The #MeToo movement added yet another dimension, and red, white and blue colors were used to define not only political pessimism, but irretrievable loss and sadness. These self-portraits capture women alternately as seductive odalisques, enraged hags, and fragile ciphers both in and out of control. Eclipsed and stolen glimpses amid peeling paint, layers of a glass sometimes broken, exit doors ajar and shafts of revealing light from unseen windows, all added to these film-noir-like scenes in these not-so-fictive portrayals from the cycles of life and death.

# Exhibition Fact Sheet

## SUSAN COPICH: *Processing Normal*

Copich addresses social and psychological taboos not directly but by exposing the visual conventions that sustain them. This puts her, conceptually, in the company of some of the most provocative camera artists of our time: Tina Barney, who artfully and edgily documents her own affluent New England milieu; Cindy Sherman, who has made role-playing in the media a commentary on role-playing in life; Jeff Wall and Gregory Crewdson, who use stilted setups to evoke inner dramas; Sally Mann, who has photographed her children to haunting (and morally controversial) effect. Amid these and other contemporary photographic currents, Copich makes her distinct way, telling exemplary woman's stories through striking pictures.

NUMBER OF OBJECTS:	31 photographic prints and 1 video. Sizes, dates and media are featured on this pdf presentation. ( <a href="http://www.ktcassoc.com">www.ktcassoc.com</a> , Curators, Artists' PDFs)
SPACE REQUIREMENTS:	180-200 running feet depending on installation and selection.
PARTICIPATION FEE:	Round-trip shipping, wall-to-wall insurance of 50% of retail value, in-transit and on-premises.
INSTALLATION:	Work will be sent ready to hang; standard 2D wall hanging apparatus required.
TRANSPORTATION:	The exhibiting institution will provide all shipping and insurance for the exhibition and cover all related costs. This will include full responsibility for delivery to venue following and return to artist at the conclusion of the exhibition. Work must be fully insured during transport and on premises.
COMPLEMENTARY SUPPORT MATERIALS:	Katharine T. Carter & Associates will provide a \$200 credit towards the production of a color announcement card, 200 complementary catalogues, and museum wall text. All pre-written press materials, to include biographical summary, artist statement, petite essay, press releases, media releases, pitch letters and radio/television spots, to be provided by Katharine T. Carter & Associates.

**TERMS:**

All publicity releases, invitations/announcements, catalog, exhibition brochure, and other printed materials concerning the exhibition shall carry the following information: "The exhibition was organized through Katharine T. Carter & Associates." Copies of any printed matter relating to the exhibition shall be sent to Katharine T. Carter & Associates at the close of the exhibition. The critics' essay may be quoted provided there is attribution.

**CONDITIONS:**

1. Exhibiting institution must provide object insurance to cover replacement costs should items be damaged or stolen while on premises. Minimum insurance required: 50% retail value. Should loss, damage or deterioration be noted at the time of delivery of the exhibition, the artist shall be notified immediately. If any damage appears to have taken place during the exhibition, the artist shall be informed immediately.
2. Security: Objects must be maintained in a fireproof building under 24-hour security.
3. All packing and unpacking instructions sent by (artist) shall be followed explicitly by competent packers. Each object shall be handled with special care at all times to ensure against damage or deterioration.
4. As stated above (see space requirements), the number of works to be exhibited can be dictated by the space and needs of the exhibiting institution.
5. Exhibitors may permit photographs of the exhibition and its contents for routine publicity and educational purposes only. Exceptions may be made pending discussion with the artist.

**CANCELLATION:**

Any cancellation of this exhibition by the hosting institution, not caused by the actions of the artist, shall entitle Katharine T. Carter and Associates to an award of liquidated damages of \$3750.00. The hosting institution further agrees that any suit brought to recover said damages may only be brought in Columbia County, New York.

**Contact and additional information:**

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