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## ***Yelena Yemchuk: Gidropark***



Yelena Yemchuk's 'Gidropark (#45)' (2008) at the Gitterman Gallery

Gitterman Gallery 170 E. 75th St. Through July 16

Yelena Yemchuk was born in Ukraine in 1970, when it was part of the Soviet Union. She immigrated to the U.S. with her parents when she was 11, became a successful fashion and portrait photographer here, and returned to Ukraine in the summers of 2005 through 2008 to shoot *Gidropark*.

*Gidropark*, which Ms. Yemchuk likens to a "Soviet version of Coney Island," was built in 1968 on the River Dnieper as a recreational complex. As a child, she spent summers there. Like so much else left in the collapse of the Soviet empire, it is shabby, and the people inhabiting it--children, teenagers, adults--seem somehow vacant.

Ms. Yemchuk demonstrates a sure sense of composition in these black-and-white images. The young boy standing in the water in "*Gidropark (#55)*" (2005) is simply framed so we can see the troubled expression on his face. The two teenagers in the photo "*Gidropark (#45)*" (2008), she with rings on three fingers of her left hand and a cigarette in her right, he with his left arm tentatively resting on her shoulders, look like the subjects in Bruce Davidson's famous 1959 "*Brooklyn Gang*." A young girl in a bikini doing a ballet split on the grass is ignored by the people in the background of "*Gidropark (#22)*" (2007). "*Gidropark (#54)*" (2007) is a wide-angle shot from overhead showing the texture of the ripples on the river and three diminutive figures isolated from one another in the water.

—William Meyers