

COLLECTOR DAILY

Allen Frame: Suddenly @Gitterman

By [Loring Knoblauch](#) / In [Galleries](#) / July 10, 2019

JTF (just the facts): A total of 8 photographic works, variously framed and matted, and hung against white walls in the main gallery space. The show includes:

- 6 chromogenic prints, 2017, 2018, sized roughly 22×28 inches each, in editions of 5
- 1 installation of 48 photographs, framed in grey/white, 2018, includes 40 vernacular photographs, 2 chromogenic prints (sized roughly 14×18 inches each), and 6 pigment prints (sized roughly 9×7 inches each), unique
- 1 installation of 7 photographs, matted and framed in elaborately carved wooden frames, 2018, includes 2 vernacular photographs and 5 gelatin silver prints (sized 12×15 inches each), unique

Comments/Context: For many contemporary photographers, vernacular images have increasingly become a rich source of artistic inspiration. Whether they are old family snapshots, flea market finds, photographs stored in formal historical archives, or other found pictures, the inherent lack of specificity in the images (the people, the places, and the context of the pictures are often uncertain) opens up possible entry points and narrative pathways that can then be explored or artistically reimaged.

Two works in Allen Frame's new show use vernacular photographs that he discovered during a recent year-long residency in Rome as the jumping off point for hybrid wall-filling installations that put the found images into dialogue with his own photographs. The open-ended mysteries of the anonymous vintage photographs offered Frame the opportunity to graft his own interpretations onto the scenes, and he then went on to expand those themes further, twisting past and present into intimately coupled meditations.

"Giuseppe" places a selection of snapshots of a 1960s-era Italian man at its core. The pictures (in both black and white and faded color) mostly capture the young Giuseppe in his swimsuit, posing on the beach or the rocks, standing near or on various boats, and swimming in the water. A few find him in his car, or stylishly clothed in all black or all white. And while other people appear now and then as sunny companions, none has the obvious appearance of a steady girlfriend or wife; Giuseppe is more often comfortably posed with other young men than with women, creating the setting that Frame considers further in his own images.

With the sun-soaked atmosphere of early 60s, set-in-Italy French films like *Plein Soleil* and *Le Mépris* bouncing around in his head, Frame's photographs in the "Giuseppe" installation linger on seaside bodies. Red-haired Dani swims in the sparkling blue water, seductively rests on a ladder, and takes in the view from the road, but she isn't really his primary interest. His images of Eduardo and Pietro have much more crackling charge. The

shirtless men (like Giuseppe) lie in the sun, drink cocktails, and walk in the grass, their muscled shoulders and forceful silhouettes drawing more direct attention. When placed in the context of the Giuseppe pictures, Frame's photographs recalibrate the tension of looking and being seen, that simmering mood making us rethink Giuseppe and the fragments of his life found in his snapshots. Seen as one integrated whole, time gets collapsed, creating echoes that and reverberations that connect the two sets of imagery.

Something similar happens in "Suddenly," another combined installation inspired by found imagery. Here two small images of a middle aged man seemingly touring Italian villas (or perhaps monasteries) lead Frame back to a 1958 play by Tennessee Williams. In the story, a gay poet travels through Europe with his young female cousin, whom he uses to attract the men he desires. In his own photographs (this time in sinuous black and white), Frame sets up a parallel arrangement – Olympia is ostensibly the primary model in his pictures, but it is a nearby boyfriend and another young man that seem to actually be of more interest.

As she wanders along on the beach in the afternoon in a floral dress, Olympia's natural beauty is unmistakable, but Frame stays back at a distance, instead getting closer in to Thomas who is goofing around in the sand. The strongest single image in the show places Olympia standing among a group of closed beach umbrellas, visually reinforcing her role as one of many; Thomas lies in the background as though bored by the arty posing (the shadows run across the beach in bold verticals), his nonchalance making him stand out. The aloof (Olimpia) and casual (Thomas) motif is reoriented in a pair of interior portraits, with statuesque Olympia in Madonna-like white amid open doors and bright windows and more awkward Marshall in the same space, with his pants cinched up with a tight belt and the doors now closed. Just as in the play, the woman is attracting attention, but the friction is really elsewhere.

The subtle codes of human attraction that inform the two installations are generally absent from Frame's larger color images. The pictures instead capture pauses – the in-between moments that happen just before and after something else. Ivana looks out of a widow that could be a painting of the Italian countryside, Ugo checks his phone as he walks down the repaired stairs of an older stone balcony, and Pietro sits on the edge of a swimming pool, looking to his right out of the frame. The photographs linger, and that slowness provides space for vicariously stepping into the lull.

In many ways, these pictures are all testing Frame's ability to find a particular emotional pitch and stay there, allowing it to blossom and expand into something more complex and intricate. In each of these works/projects, he's trying to capture invisible restlessness, and attempting to freight his understated scenes with a tiny slice of agitation. When he successfully plucks that string, his pictures shimmer with unseen vibrations.

Collector's POV: The works in this show are priced as follows. The two installations are POR, although the prints by Frame included in the sets are available individually for \$2500, \$3500, or \$3850 each. The larger color portraits are \$6800 each. Frame's work has little consistent secondary market history, so gallery retail remains the best option for those collectors interested in following up.