

Juergen TELLER produces work that moves beyond the categories of beauty and ugliness in his quest to present a vision of the real. He is also one of the world's most famous fashion photographers, whose ad campaigns for the likes of Marc Jacobs and Céline remain true to his deadpan aesthetic. The Ukrainian photographer Boris MIKHAILOV documented the fall of the Soviet Union and, in his disturbing and controversial series Case History, showed raw, violent images of the poverty-stricken society that resulted. The pair, fans of each other's work, first met nearly a decade ago. GARAGE spent an afternoon with them at TELLER's London house, along with MIKHAILOV's wife, Viktoria MYKHAILOVA. We joined them as MIKHAILOV was leafing through a book of TELLER's photographs, stopping at an image of TELLER's friend Roy and his enormous nipples.

Sunday Aug 17



Boris Mikhailov by Juergen Teller

**Boris Mikhailov:** What is it? What has happened?

**Juergen Teller:** I think he uses a breast pump to make them big – you know, like for the baby. - Outside here is a tattoo.

**BM:** This is a good collection. Very successful, very clever.

**JT:** Do you know the German newspaper *Die Zeit*? These are the reader letters. They all hate it. My photographs are terrible, I'm full of myself. "I am disgusted by Juergen Teller's photographs!"

**BM:** Fantastic!

**JT:** At first, when I read them, I was like, "Oh my God, am I such a terrible person?" I sank in my chair.

**BM:** When you take pictures, do you push?

**JT:** Sometimes I have to push, and sometimes I'm shy and gentle.

**BM:** What's this?

**JT:** Contacts.

**BM:** You use film?

**JT:** Yeah.

**BM:** It's an old Canon? You use only this?

**JT:** Yes, only this. I don't use digital.

**BM:** For me it's easy to switch. Now they wouldn't sell this?

**JT:** They stopped 10 years ago. I have, like, 10 or 12 of them.

**BM:** I've never seen a flash like this.

**JT:** The flash is really fast [He starts shooting.].

**BM:** Fantastic!

**JT:** That's why I like it.

**BM:** Why do you have two?

**JT:** In case one breaks down.

**BM:** Does it make big-size pictures?

**JT:** *Ja*, big pictures.

**BM:** [Pointing to a photograph on the wall.] Araki!

**JT:** I bought it. He's good.

**BM:** I have only one picture from artist. It is from Leigh Ledare. He is young boy. He's great. He take real pictures about his mother. About how mother was young and he was model. And he is very good designer. Exhibition in Arles is fantastic, so beautiful.



Juergen Teller by Boris Mikhailov

**JT:** Can we do a picture?

[Boris puts his camera between his legs and -pretends to masturbate the lens. Juergen takes a photo of him. When everyone sits down to lunch — a bowl of clam pasta — Boris puts his camera under the table and takes a photo looking up Juergen's shorts.]

**JT:** Was the Shanghai Biennale good?

**Viktoria Mykhailova:** Boris decided to see other places, like small village, and I looked for the map and we came to this village and there were 6 million people. This is China village! It's more than all Ukraine.

**BM:** How did you feel about the Ukraine when you were there?

**JT:** It was exciting. In the Ukraine I only know Kiev, and I thought Kiev is like Moscow on Prozac.

**BM:** What is Prozac?

**JT:** Prozac is medicine to make you calm. Moscow was more crazy.

**BM:** Yes. Kiev is more relaxed. But Kiev is strange. I didn't like it before. All money came to Kiev and rest of Ukraine was not so good. I become angry, but after -Chernobyl my anger was broken.

**VM:** People of Kiev remained by the nuclear plant -sarcophagus, very welcome people, so open, full of cheerful energy. They do not cry.

**JT:** For me it's refreshing to go to places like that compared to the West. Here you live so much by rules and you can't bend them. If you're driving you get immediately a ticket, you get cameras. And there, you suddenly see a motorbike going down staircases or on the pavement. But it doesn't feel dangerous. Moscow felt sometimes not good but Kiev was okay. It's still shocking how much they drink. Businessmen in the morning, they go to the kiosk and have a glass of warm vodka.

**VM:** You can feel what kind of business they will have!

**JT:** I just came from New York yesterday. -Photographed there for one issue of a magazine – 32 movie actors. Exhausting.

**BM:** Good results?

**JT:** I hope so.

**BM:** You haven't seen it?

**JT:** Not all of it. You don't do commissions? Do you get asked? Do you get a client or a magazine who requests you for anything?

**BM:** Art projects. Not magazines.

**JT:** Let's say a magazine would ask you to -photograph me or David Hockney, would you be interested in doing it or not?

**BM:** I'd be interested but I'd be afraid. Because it needs special behavior.

**JT:** I'm always afraid. They say, "You've done it so many times, you must not be nervous", and I say, "I'm nervous" every time. It's every time new, every time nervous.

**VM:** A lawyer in Rostock asked other photographers to take pictures one time a year, and they asked Boris and after New Year's we came.

**JT:** To do family pictures?

**BM:** Four people and dog.

**VM:** It was a lot of people, so he did something totally different.

**JT:** What did you do?

**BM:** Vita drank many vodka.

**VM:** It was a concept and Boris was thinking what to do.

**BM:** I didn't know and then I panicked and when I panic everybody panics, and I think what I should do. Okay, drinking. Then I asked them to get naked. So I took pictures this way as I can.

**VM:** And they became normal, the pose face!

**BM:** It was good but I don't want to repeat it.

**JT:** That's the problem with me. I start to drink too when I'm nervous. The evening before or something. Or then the shoot is going really well, and I'm so excited about how well it went and I drink again. I can't photograph when I'm drunk. You think, "Oh my God, this is great", but it's just rubbish every time. I can do it with a hangover.

**BM:** How many do you do in a period of three months?

**JT:** It depends what season it is. In the spring and autumn I'm doing a lot of fashion advertisement and then in summer or winter it's less. More exhibition or other things. I want to do less. I need more time for myself. What took you to Japan? This was your idea to go or did somebody invite you?

**BM:** It's never my idea. If somebody select me, I go. Now we're thinking about new things, how to change. I saw an exhibition on Dali. They make picture of construction, like a factory, like a car. It's not possible to make picture now, because he's more strong. Now I take factory as not interesting for art. It's interesting only for journalistic, but the journalistic way is not so nice.

**JT:** I stumbled across this. He found these pictures on the internet. So it's not his pictures, but it's beautiful. Do you know Google Earth? A car drives around and photographs every city in the world, and there was this guy sitting for three years in front of the computer picking these stills.

**VM:** And the computer put together?

**JT:** It looks like a William Eggleston photograph.

**BM:** If it's not Eggleston, why do you do this like -Eggleston? There are so many examples of beautiful already, we don't need it. Who will buy this picture? Where would you put this picture in your home?

**JT:** It's a good question.

**BM:** A collector could buy it, but price and small size does not work. The whole picture is fantastic, nobody make it, it's unique, but who will buy it? This is stupid photography.

**JT:** Too many photographers.

**BM:** Too many.

**VM:** Put poison in their pasta!

**JT:** Who do you like as a photographer?

**BM:** For instance Daido Moriyama is great, and -Eggleston is very good, too. Nobuyoshi Araki. I like many because today bad -photographers not -possible to be famous. There are too many. Cartier-Bresson very good. All classical is good. New artists, for me they're great.

**JT:** Tell me about what you're doing for GARAGE.

**VM:** We've created a story.

**BM:** About past, when my mother was young. Past in Russia. It's in a journalistic way. If you don't know how, it's not art. In Soviet time, many photographers, everybody work, engineer or whatever, different kind of jobs, and this meant being independent. Now a photographer must make something for wall, because a book is nothing. A book gives no money. You're very good, Juergen, you get invited for magazines, for some other jobs and advertising. This isn't how I organize. I must think about wall – book nothing. These pictures done in a journalistic way – I cannot do it otherwise, but I all the time now think about big-size wall. Our problem, your and mine, is a little bit less because we have a name and a name can sometimes be used for collector or for a museum.

**JT:** Was it difficult for you to sell your work?

**BM:** Not easy, no.

**JT:** Ten years ago I was like, "Nobody is buying this", and then 10 years afterwards they're like, "Oh that, yeah!"

**BM:** Three exhibition and nothing, But this exhibition good. Blue series, nobody buy before. Now everything okay.

**JT:** You were never interested in photographing all this oligarch world?

**BM:** I was interested, but not now.

**JT:** When?

**BM:** At the beginning. They have money before, they like being at the center of life. They like people taking pictures of them. After they buy camera, they stop showing themselves. And it's a bit

dangerous now, because if you're not interesting my picture is something ironical. But after little time people like you, because you make something ironical.

**JT:** But you pay everyone in your photographs.

**BM:** Everybody I pay.

**JT:** You didn't pay me.

**BM:** I will give you some change. I didn't take your face!

**JT:** How much did you pay them?

**BM:** Not big money. Ten dollars approximately, five -dollars. Then it was good money.

**JT:** So you always walk around with a lot of cash!

**BM:** Sometimes I have problem.

**VM:** We had some problems in Berlin. We were invited east and we spent one day in company of children and then somebody told Boris, "Don't take picture here, it's not possible, it's a public space", and after an hour the police came and asked about the films. So we give the films. And Boris said, "Please go to the police, I would like to get these films back." And I'm thinking, "Please Boris, forget about this." Then we go to Alexanderplatz, and there was this special young guy who goes, "Would you like to get your films back?" After six months we got the films back with a notice from the -police saying it's okay for art. I said to Boris, "This is the only evidence that you are an artist."

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