

# THE NEXT IRASCIBLES

BY CAROL LEE



The New Irascibles  
1985

In 1985, the September issue of *Arts* magazine ran six group portraits by photographer Timothy Greenfield-Sanders capturing the early participants in the East Village art scene—artists, dealers and critics—whom the magazine dubbed “The New Irascibles.” Included were David Wojnarowicz, Futura 2000, Mark Kostabi, Kiki Smith, Colin De Land, Pat Hearn, Robert Pincus-Witten and PAPER’s own Carlo McCormick, just to name a few. The visual composition was loosely based on Nina Leen’s iconic 1951 photograph of Abstract Expressionists titled “The Irascibles,” which featured, among others, Jackson Pollock, Willem de Kooning, Robert Motherwell, Mark

Rothko and the lone woman, Hedda Sterne. Pincus-Witten, who wrote the accompanying *Arts* piece, astutely observed, “Only beginnings and ends are interesting,” while lamenting the transformation of the East Village from artists’ playground to gentrified bubble where, he said, “the art has improved” and “has become art.”

Fast-forward a quarter century later, we are straddling the end and the beginning of something else. When the economy took a nosedive, anxiety spread like wildfire throughout the art world, and the future of the art market, which had been insatiable for so long, looked uncertain. The *Caligula*-style orgy of consumerism, the work that fueled it and the flippant attitude that made it all sexy seemed horribly outdated. The return of the real boomeranged back—and about time, too.

Everyone in the scene can feel the tide changing, and something new is brewing in the air. And said scene, no longer limited to downtown Manhattan, has expanded into something mercurial and sprawling. Even when the times are riddled with uncertainties, creative minds are restless and resourceful. To quote Hunter S. Thompson’s famous line: “When the going gets weird, the weird turn pro.” So here, as an homage to “The New Irascibles,” we present a band of young, brave hearts, from Jersey City to the Lower East Side to Bushwick, who have been forging ahead steadily, creating their own momentum, movement, style and even a couple of new business models. They are The Next Irascibles, as photographed by Timothy Greenfield-Sanders.



The Irascibles  
1951

TOP LEFT: TIMOTHY GREENFIELD-SANDERS. BOTTOM RIGHT: NINA LEEN. TIME & LIFE PICTURES/GETTY IMAGES. CLOTHING: MARK KOSTABI. HAIR: MARK ANTHONY AT EXCLUSIVE ARTISTS.



GROUP AND INDIVIDUAL PORTRAITS BY **TIMOTHY GREENFIELD-SANDERS**

BEHIND MASKS: **BRUCE HIGH QUALITY FOUNDATION**

**NINA CHANEL ABNEY**

**JULES DE BALINCOURT**

**KYLE THURMAN**

**MATT MORAVEC**

**TIM BARBER**

**PATI HERTLING**

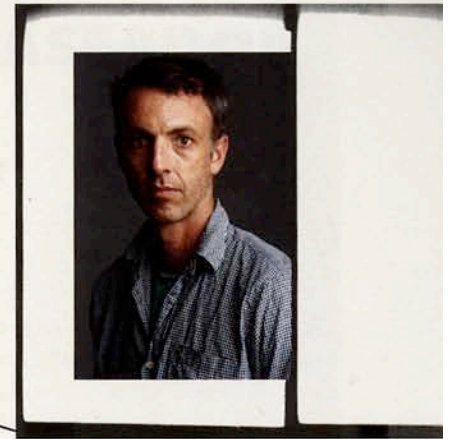
**AUREL SCHMIDT**

**JULIA CHIANG**

"Malpais Bad Lands," 2008



# JULES DE BALINCOURT



"Your Technology Fails Us You Me," 2008

Jules de Balincourt, painter and the owner of Starr Space in Bushwick, good-naturedly quips, "I hope I don't look too grey next to all the young people," referring to the group portrait. He needn't worry. At 37, de Balincourt may be the oldest in this particular bunch but his boundless energy and talent are ageless. It wouldn't be too much of a stretch to call him the "Mayor of Bushwick," once a scrappy neighborhood, now in transition thanks to the burgeoning art scene, where he has lived and worked since 2000 (except for the two-year exile in Williamsburg). De Balincourt initially bought the Starr Space building to use as a studio in 2006, the summer before he was included in the much-talked-about "USA Today" show at

The Saatchi Gallery. "It was originally a dance hall and marionettes theater in the '40s, then became a daycare center in the '70s and '80s. I realized the space was so conducive as a public space," says de Balincourt as he traces the venue's history. "Our very first event was a ping pong tournament. Since then, we've had over 40 local church parties, countless—sometimes painful—dance performances, animal rights punk shows and Obama benefits." Oh, and let's not forget the yoga classes and the farmers' markets.

Then there's the more private de Balincourt, the artist who paints ribbons of colors and imagined spaces, sometimes galactic and other times microcosmic, cast with abrupt shifts in moods. They are places both far away and reachable, dystopian and exuberant. The Paris-born de Balincourt was exposed to different cultures early on, having lived in Ibiza, Zurich, L.A. and Paris by the time he was eight. After his parents' divorce when he was in fourth grade, he and his mom moved to Topanga Canyon, where he experienced an ample dose of culture shock and was forced to adjust to Reagan-era accoutrements like Op shorts, half shirts, tube socks and Hulk lunch boxes. "I was heckled as being a communist because I wore weird French clothes and carried an aluminum-silver lunch box." But he survived and went on to study art at CCA and Hunter College. This winter de Balincourt will have a solo exhibition at Zach Feuer Gallery, where he's shown since 2003 and another solo show at the Mori Museum in Tokyo this spring. And that's not all. "I sometimes think of starting a commune somewhere in Central America, Northern California or getting lost somewhere upstate."



Performance at Starr Space, 2008