

The Dream of the 90s: Where Did All The Anger Go? 1993 at the New Museum

By Jennifer Kabat

... I remember slipping out of my apartment the following summer and going to hang out with Chloë Sevigny on the set of *Kids*, a block away. We were nominally friends. Movie stills are included in the show, as is a steel door ripped from Clark's apartment emblazoned with stickers. The door was included that year in an exhibit at Luring Augustine. But, romanticizing the life of a girl who discovers she has AIDS after having had sex once with a predatory teen hardly seems romantic at all.

A German artist Nadja Marcin has just made a conceptual version of *Kids*, chopped down to thirty minutes and with adults in the roles of Jenny and Telly and the movie's other teens. At first I didn't get it. The dialogue was in German, and this seemed an homage. But, why?

Marcin grew up romanticizing the film, and now putting adults in the roles is stagey, like Brecht's version of the movie, forcing this dissociative split between the two. She wrote about it to me eloquently, about being the same age as the kids of *Kids*, fourteen, when she first saw it. "The guy who took me to the movie was nineteen and thought he was Telly... I would soon wear the blue t-shirt with white stripes like Jenny. *Kids* started this wave in my German suburb. We all thought what was happening in New York was real, and being bored by the normality and stability of our surroundings, we started to simulate this 'American lifestyle.' This whole grunge feeling of noway-out was very attractive."

Marcin moved to New York for grad school at Columbia. Of course, the city was nothing like her teenaged expectations. Adults looked and dressed like *Kids*, and whatever urgency there was to that original moment – if it had even existed – was long subsumed into, as she puts it, "Commodities of lazy weekend life in coffee shops and at mediocre concerts next to the standard nine-to-five job in Manhattan. Pink hair is okay, but all significance is missing, the underlying feeling, the urge, the necessity ... It is all surface now... it is all fashion. It is emptied inside out."

Her German version revisited the original locations, literally conflating the adult experiences with her old memories and commenting on both. I think she recognizes that awkward grin, the conflicted smile held too tight. I see it in her own awkward relationship to her youth. Tragedy and farce. The Janus faces of 1993, then and now.



Larry Clark installation. Courtesy New Museum, New York. Photo: Benoit Pailley