

**NIGHT OUT WITH  
LARRY CLARK**

# A Tranquil Moment Between the Storms

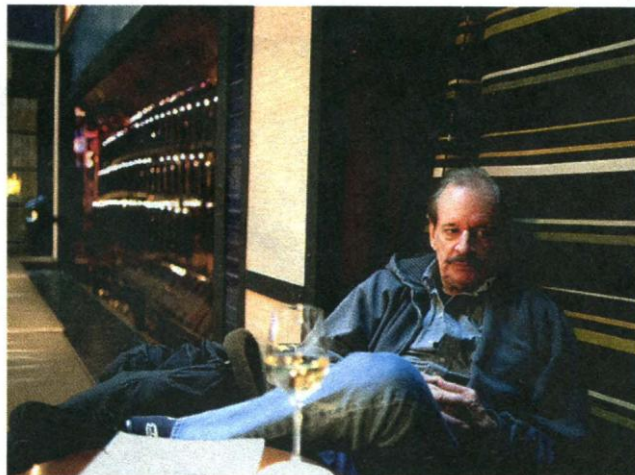
By RUTH LA FERLA

"I've had many, many vices," said Larry Clark, who has made a career of filming and photographing wayward adolescents shuffling through life in a haze of heroin, marijuana and random sex. He may well have been referring to his own errant youth. But now, if a vice remains, it is the occasional tippie.

"I'll have a glass of Sancerre," he told a waiter at the Tribeca Grand Hotel, its lounge cozily familiar to Mr. Clark, who lives in the neighborhood and who uses the place as a home away from home.

These days it is also a refuge, a retreat from the fuss surrounding Mr. Clark's most recent works. A film, "The Smell of Us," about (surprise) wayward French adolescents, is scheduled for release in the United States this month, and it made waves in France, ruffling critics with its voyeuristic tendencies.

Another, "Marfa Girl," which follows a group of aimless teen-



CHRISTIAN HANSEN FOR THE NEW YORK TIMES

Larry Clark, the filmmaker, takes refuge from the storm surrounding "The Smell of Us," one of his latest works, which caused a stir in France.

agers in West Texas, will open in theaters in March.

His photographs, cultural artifacts of the mid-1960s, are much sought after. "Tulsa," a photo anthology documenting the mispent youths of Mr. Clark's fellow Oklahomans (guys toting guns, girls shooting up), today is priced at \$1,500 or more.

A pop-up sale, which runs through Wednesday in Chinatown in Los Angeles, has been attracting fans young and old to buy one of Mr. Clark's vintage drugstore prints, priced at \$100 each.

It's a lot. So a slushy Wednesday night last week found Mr. Clark at his usual spot. "I like this place — it's intimate," he said, relaxing amid the veined marble tables, nailhead-studded leather chairs and worn carpets that lent the space the dusky air of a gentlemen's club.

A phalanx of waiters danced in attendance, circling the filmmaker at frequent intervals, addressing him with reverent formality.

Mr. Clark, a picture of ease in fleece jacket, loose jeans and gray button-down shirt, seemed to take little notice. Pitching aside his wooden granddad cane, he settled into a corner banquette in a mood to reminisce.

"Thirty-five years ago, there were no street lamps in the neighborhood. There was nothing, zero," he said like a knotty frontiersman. Referring to the area's even-

tual gentrification, he added, "In around '86, they started kicking everybody out, after we built everything up."

He said this without rancor, though there were hints of the censoriousness that even seeps into his most decadent films. Sure, he chronicles the exploits of drifters, dropouts, underage Lotharios and assorted emotional anarchists.

Yes, he has trained his lens on plenty of naked young bodies, kids preening, coupling, messing with guns. But his movies read as cautionary tales, no transgression or unthinking indiscretion likely, sooner or later, to go unpunished.

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none-too-subtle message? "There are always consequences for your actions," he said. "That's life."

A stern judgment, but at 72, Mr. Clark is keenly aware that whatever one's age, one's grasp on life can be tenuous, an insight that has softened him. (He's been thinking about filming old people.)

There was a quaver in his voice as he described events surrounding the filming of "Wassup Rockers," a 2005 film that follows a group of young Latino skaters from South Central Los Angeles. He stayed close to his subjects, rounding them up and taking them skating on Saturdays for more than a year.

During that time, one boy was killed. "He was standing on a corner, just selling tapes, and someone drove by and shot him," Mr. Clark said, the recollection of that random act of violence — so like many in his films — bringing him to tears.

He collected himself as he talked about "Marfa Girls." Well acquainted with the West Texas town of that movie's title, he is aware of its chic as an artists' colony. Not that he sees it that way.

"It's still 1950s in Marfa, Texas," Mr. Clark said. "A couple of years ago you couldn't buy a condom there. There are no jobs in the town. There's one Dairy Queen. But the kids do have Internet access. They're aware of the world. And all they want to do is to get out of West Texas."

The filming drained him, he said. "After 'Marfa Girl,' I told myself, 'I just can't do this anymore.'"

He laughed a bit sourly as he sipped his Sancerre.

"And now," he added, brightening, "I just want to do it again."