

Larry Clark

What Do You Do for Fun?

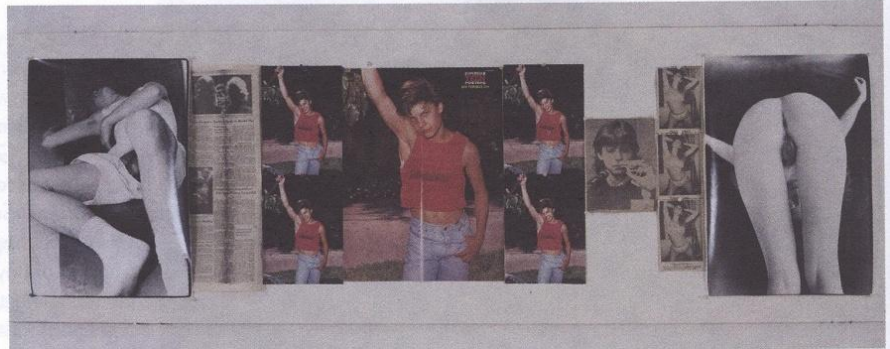
Simon Lee Gallery, London
10 February – 2 April

Jacques Villeglé

Trajectoire Urbaine

Alexia Goethe Gallery, London
11 February – 25 March

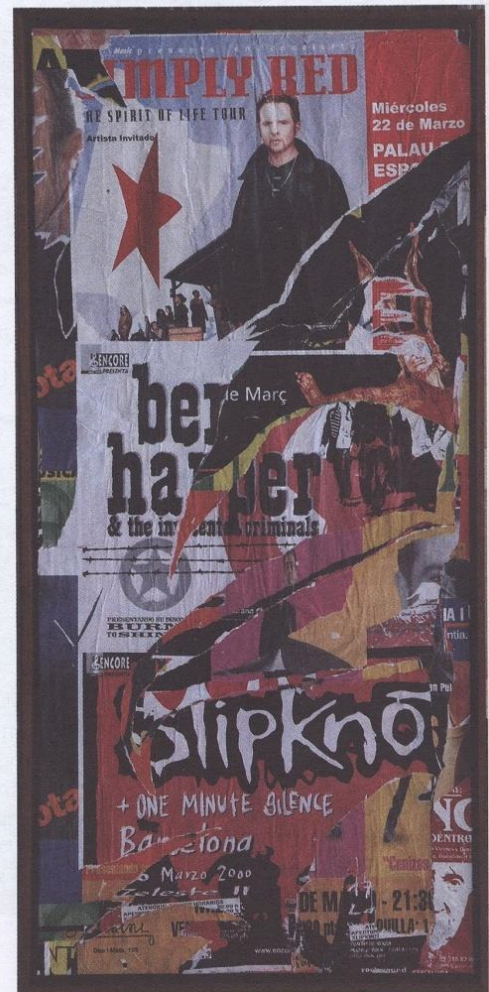
At first glance it might seem as if there is nothing, other than the coincidence of their having concurrent exhibitions in London, to link the work of relatively neglected Nouveau Réaliste Jacques Villeglé, the self-styled 'kidnapper' of layered accumulations of overpasted street posters, and Larry Clark, whose photographs, films and constellations of media imagery appear at Simon Lee, having been extracted (bar one new collage titled *I Want A Baby Before U Die*, 2010) from the *Kids* director's typically controversial 2010 retrospective at the Musée d'Art Moderne de la Ville de Paris. In part that first impression would be true. Although it is also the case that, despite the ways in which reviews sections like this one tend to treat exhibitions as discrete and solitary experiences, when you walk out of one gallery and into another, some cross-pollination often occurs, if only in the reviewer's head.



I mention this tidbit of realism not simply as a random insight into the realities of a reviewer's life but also because the bodies of work on show at Alexia Goethe and Simon Lee emerge from an initial desire to document the 'realities' of life: Villeglé by bringing the street into the gallery and Clark through his ongoing descriptions of the realities (often involving sex and drugs) that lurk beneath more innocent American media depictions of the teenage dream. But perhaps where the two bodies of work dovetail most interestingly is in the way in which they flirt with an element of purposelessness.

That's not only because in the Internet and Facebook age flyposting is not as prevalent as it once was (in the Goethe show it appears that Villeglé is increasingly having to travel to find his poster mille-feuille), while the photographic documentation of everyday teen life is a ubiquitous, normal and perhaps even necessary part of growing up. (And of course, the fact that Villeglé and Clark began developing their approaches to artmaking way back during the 1950s and 1960s, respectively, is relevant to any feelings of contemporary redundancy.) It's also because of the purposelessness inherent in each of their bodies of work. In the case of the Frenchman, given that unmediated realism is his stated object, you could argue that the artist might be better off leaving the posters in the street and directing gallery visitors to go see them in situ. In the case of the American, a sense of purposelessness seems often to be the condition that defines the lives he documents (not least in a work like *1992*, a collection of 200 photographs from that year, in which a modellike teenage boy strikes various suicidal poses).

Increasingly, both Clark and Villeglé's works look more than anything like archaeologies – Villeglé's various strata of posters advertising youth entertainments, overlaid seemingly almost from one week to the next, and Clark's variously tragic teen and childstars from the 1970s and 80s, among them Leif Garrett and the late Corey Haim. Perhaps what these shows demonstrate more than anything else is that youth and the cultures attendant upon it always move on. And that any record of 'living in the moment' always has one foot already in the past. *Mark Rappolt*



From top: Larry Clark, *The Perfect Childhood*, 1991, gelatin silver prints, newspaper, magazine collage, 74 x 224 cm, unique, courtesy the artist, Luhring Augustine, New York, and Simon Lee Gallery, London; Jacques Villeglé, *Barcelone*, 2000, décollage, 208 x 250 cm, courtesy Guy Pieters Gallery, Paris