



**ARTIST**

Les Krims

**TITLE**

Eight Photographs

**DATE**

1972

**DIMENSIONS**

14.5 in H x 11 in W

**MEDIUM**

Artists' Books

**IMAGE NOTES**

A boxed portfolio of eight offset prints with an introduction by A.D. Coleman. Gift of Tom Bryan.

**CATALOGUE NUMBER**

2015.060 - 2015.069

**CURRENT LOCATION**

3D-4

**DESCRIPTION**

Donated By Tom Bryan, 2015

**INTRODUCTION TO LESLIE KRIMS PORTFOLIO**

**BY A. D. COLEMAN**

**THE MOST EXTRAORDINARY** thing about Les Krims, I often think, is his disarming ingenuousness. There's an apple-cheeked, impish, Norman Rockwell quality to his appearance which is no less real for its utter improbability. He epitomizes the variety of boy-next-door on whom schoolgirls ( and their mothers) develop mad crushes, and no doubt managed to bring daughters home far past curfew without incurring paternal wrath. Perhaps this residual, boyish innocence—and the confidence it engenders—accounts for the presence in his photographs of those same mothers, fathers, and daughters. For they are real people, the ones in Les Krims' uncanny snapshots; these are not professional models, but friends and relatives, and apparently they trust this photographer in a way that few of us ever trust anyone in our entire lives. How else can we explain their permitting him to pose them in the most peculiar situations imaginable, frequently engaged in acts of perversity so outrageous that, upon viewing the results, one would expect them not to ask for copies ( which they do) but rather to impound and burn his negatives? Only by recognizing that his work is entirely devoid of malice, and that no matter how deep and dark a truth he ferrets out and underscores, Les Krims never violates a confidence.

On the other hand, it may be that my strongest impression of Les is based on the absolute uniqueness of his vision. Excepting a few images created by Edward Weston during World War Two, I know of nothing even vaguely resembling Les Krims' way of seeing, and so for comparison am forced to fall back on Ionesco, with whose method ( and madness) Krims has a decided kinship. That mildly perplexed pair of senior citizens, for example, from whose couch (Is it plastic-covered? It must be. . . . ) a gigantic balloon has sprung with inexplicable inexorability—are they not, surely, American incarnations of the Old Couple in The Chairs? Almost always, there is an ambiguous abnormality in this photographer's images; whether it takes the form of balloons or nudity or plucked chickens ( or a less definable, even invisible shape ), the anomalous is everpresent, intensified by the banality of the setting. No matter how ordinary it may seem on the surface, the moment is unfailingly seized like a puppy by

the scruff of the neck and shaken till its surreal teeth rattle.

Then again, perhaps it's the distinctive quality of Les Krims' prints that first comes to mind. I tend to conceive of them as snapshots, not only because they are frequently created within the context of a home but also because there is a familial feeling to them. Krims is certainly aware of this—it is, in fact, intentional, and he re-inforces it through his casual, off-hand staging, the simplicity of his compositions, and his use of Kodalith, whose sepia tonality recalls an earlier, less sophisticated stage in the medium's development. There is nothing in the least amateurish in these photographs, though; their ease and spontaneity is the ultimate in artifice. It is no small accomplishment to take pictures which could have come from the pages of a middle-class family album, yet which, simultaneously, reveal the hallucinatory absurdity of normalcy with such cheerful and merciless accuracy. Ultimately, however, I find that I can't separate creator from creation or product from process. What moves me most about Les Krims, as a photographer and as a person—in short, as an artist—is that he is the most durably comic photographer around and, at the same time, profound enough to scare the living hell out of me.

1970 Doubleday & Company, Inc. Printed in the United States of America

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## **LES KRIMS**

### **BORN**

1942

### **BIRTHPLACE**

Brooklyn, New York

### **GENDER**

Male

### **CITIZENSHIP**

United States

### **CULTURAL HERITAGE**

European-American

### **LIGHT WORK RELATIONSHIP**

Workshop, 1973

Light Work's first Artist program Workshop, 1976

Light Work Gallery, 1978

### **LIGHT WORK PUBLICATIONS**

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