

Three The Hard Way:
Joe Conzo, Joe Russo and Leanna Valente
photography exhibition
October 24 - November 18, 2015

BRONX, NY (October 16, 2015) - WALLWORKS NEW YORK is proud to announce our next group exhibition, *Three The Hard Way*, featuring photographs from Joe Conzo, Joe Russo and Leanna Valente. With work from three generations of photographers, this exhibition will showcase different perspectives of the human experience.

The show title comes from the 1970s film of three neighborhood kids who all take different paths to make it out of their situation. Each photographer has created their own path in the art world. Each chose to focus on subjects that are not easy to reach. Conzo, who is known for hip hop photography, is one of the most respected figures of the movement. Joe Russo, known for his photographs of musicians, also photographs art, as he is a former Graffiti writer. Leanna Valente has started to make a name for herself in the Street Art world with her instant photographs of murals in progress.

ABOUT JOE CONZO

Born and raised in the Bronx, Joe Conzo Jr. acquired a passion for photography as a young boy attending the Agnes Russell School on the campus of Columbia University. He continued his formal artistic education at the School of Visual Arts (NYC).

During his early development, "Joey" bore witness to the volatile state of South Bronx community activism, and to the vanguard world of New York's Puerto Rican cultural music scene. On any given day, he could find himself at the heels of his grandmother, the late Dr. Evelina López Antonetty (a dynamic leader and passionate activist), engaged in a defiant act of civil disobedience for the educational rights of minorities in the South Bronx. On another day, he'd find himself clinging to the shirt-tail of his father, Joe Conzo Sr. (longtime confidant and biographer for the legendary orchestra leader and musician the late Tito Puente), behind-the-scenes with the giants of Latin music like Machito, Charlie Palmieri, Johnny Pacheco and Ray Barretto. These two vivid realities would have a profound effect on how Joey viewed his environment through the lens of a camera.

Coming of age as a young man and as a budding photographer, in the mid 70s, proved to be baptism by fire, during an unprecedented chapter of New York City urban decay. Joey was a part of a generation that had refused to be erased by corrupt politicians and a disparaging educational system. His talents had found their niche within the collective acts of defiance that boldly re-invented the very world that left them for dead. This socio-cultural movement would eventually be recognized in American History books as Hip Hop.

In 2005, Joey was approached by noted New York musicologist and curator Johan Kugelberg, who was engaged in some research of his own into the roots of hip hop culture. The meeting between Conzo and Kugelberg resulted in the publication of a seminal book on hip hop culture. "Born In The Bronx: A Visual Record of the Early Days of Hip Hop" (2007) has received worldwide acclaim, and has since been translated into the German language. In 2008, the entire collection of images featured in the publication became part of a permanent archive housed at Cornell University.

ABOUT JOE RUSSO

Joe was born in Brooklyn, NY on 1972. He grew up in New York's graffiti, music and skateboard subcultres. It wasn't until after he graduated with his BFA from Marist College in 1995 that he would decide on a career in photography. His girlfriend at the time bought him his first "real" camera and he taught himself how to use it. He relentlessly tries to capture raw energy, beauty and emotion of each of his subjects.

Joe was always into going to see live music...and now he was sneaking his camera into the venues to shoot. Over the course of 20 years, he has shot some of the biggest names in the music business--Aerosmith, U2, BB King, Madonna, AC/DC and Van Halen to name just a few.

When Joe isn't shooting music, you can find him documenting the Arts. As a former graffiti writer, he has always stayed connected to the movement as well as befriending many of today's biggest Graffiti and Street Artists...both on the streets and in galleries.

Joe's work has appeared in many publications, both national and international, including People Magazine, US Weekly, Juxtapoz, Live Nation, Premier Guitat, Broken Records Magazine, Jambase, ArrestedMotion and Rolling Stone to name a few. You can also find his work inside many musician's CDs. He currently lives in Jersey City, NJ.

ABOUT LEANNA VALENTE

Leanna Valente is a self-taught photographer, mixed media artist and art blogge rwhose latest work for the past 2-1/2 years is titled "Instant Art Exposure." Her love of graffiti and art on the streets began while growing up in Buffalo, NY and later in New York City. Leanna's education includes a B.A. from SUNY Buffalo in Public Communications and additionally course work in art and design from F.I.T. (NYC), Atlanta College of Art/SCAD (Atlanta, GA) and from local independent artist fellowships in New York City, Miami and Atlanta. Since 2000, she has participated in dozens of gallery shows and solo exhibitions throughout the country selling out collections.

"Instant Art Exposure," (her trademarked instant photo series), began in May 2013 and will be ongoing with a first book in the series due out soon. Her focus is to capture artists at work / in progress on film or digital and has been shooting art in general since the early 2000's. She often incorporates her other staple of mixed media art among the photos creating a unique, solid body of work across the photography / contemporary art spectrum.

Her work, including mixed media paintings and photography, has been prominently displayed and sold to a variety of collectors through alternative spaces such as Starbucks, Tischman Speyer, the Swiss Hotel Group, Georgia Pacific, AT&T Corporate, Bo Concepts NYC and many private collectors. Her work and art writing has also been featured in Gothamist, New York Times, Time Out Magazine NYC, VNA (U.K.), Graffiti Tours and additional art blogs and publications throughout the country.