

The easiest thing to miss in these works is the daylight. We take it for granted, but it is a central and consistent character across the series of large-scale photographs taken by Doug Ischar between 1986 and 1987 at the San Francisco gay bar The Eagle. The potency of the outdoor, sunlit gathering was a key theme of Ischar's work in the 1980s, when he sought out such queer communities as they began to be increasingly public and extensive. The daylight made these works possible. Out of self-preservation, gay men have often found safety in the night. In such places as the yard at the Eagle, however, they thronged to the daytime. For Ischar, the daylight created the possibility of photographing the fast-moving glances, encounters, and couplings that made up the sexual and social ecology of this popular event. It drew hundreds, and the outdoor gathering became the arena for friendship, love, pride, lust, humor, posturing, and desire. Each week, Ischar would make the six-hour drive from Los Angeles to be a participant in this, at that time, nearly unique congress. The scenes changed rapidly, and he struggled through the crowd to find im-

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ages of the ever-shifting juxtapositions and confluences that drew them all there. To capture these moments in a photograph, Ischar needed that light. Indoors, the artificial light required for a photograph would have inhibited the revelry, making it self-conscious. What was new and thrilling about these gatherings was the invasion of the daytime. The natural light in which this community formed offered the possibility of seeing it in all of its variety and complexity. The cast of characters was made up of the expected and unexpected, all mingling together, being seen and looking with intent. Ischar understood the complexity of these moments, and these works are not mere documentation of a vibrant queer community. They are highly structured and visually dramatize the ways in which coming together created a range of unexpected allegiances, sympathies, and possibilities. They show how moments of reflective determination and headlong abandon could echo each other. The fact of this community or of its vibrancy were not new, but the occupation of the daylight made it possible to see it more holistically. Ischar understood this well, making these photographs out of and about this community's flourishing in natural light. He marked that importance with the sunglasses that crop up again and again in this series of photographs. Sunglasses, after all, make it easier to see in the light of day.

— David J. Getsy