

# DE SOTO GALLERY

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE  
DECEMBER 2014

**Amy Elkins & Jona Frank: In Position**  
**January 24 - February 28, 2015**  
**Opening night: Saturday, January 24, 6 to 8 pm**



Left: Amy Elkins, Lucas, Age 12, 6th Year in Royal Danish Ballet School, Copenhagen, 2012, archival pigment print, editions variable. Right: Jona Frank, Kyle, Wirral Boxing Club, 2013, archival pigment print, editions variable

**De Soto Gallery is pleased to present *In Position*, an exhibition of photographs by Amy Elkins and Jona Frank on view from January 24 to February 28, 2015. Both artists will be present for an opening reception on Saturday, January 24 from 6pm to 8pm.**

Amy Elkins' *Danseur* project, depicting dancers associated with Royal Danish Ballet and Danse Hallerne, and Jona Frank's *The Modern Kids*, portraits of young boxers at gyms in Northern England, examine opposing sides of masculinity and societal expectations of gender. Fighting, with its emphasis on competition and physical strength, is the epitome of virility. While dance, though just as stoic and ascetic in its pursuit, is labeled effeminate. Elkins and Frank show the complexity of conceptions of masculinity with portrayals that are multifaceted – tender and tough, wild and tame.

Boxing and dance are classical sports, borne of a bygone era. They have long-standing conventions that adhere to formal technique, stylistic variations, and training methods. Many of Frank's boxers are shown in a standard starting posture – gloves up. Similarly, Elkins' dancers often stand in "bras bas" or "first position" – arms rounded in front of the hips. Commitment to either sport demands physical vulnerability, mental composure, and carries an unyielding pressure to perform. These endeavors are framed in the context of theater and spectacle where being part of a dance company or boxing club is a source of identity and pride.

With both disciplines, prejudices persist but norms are changing. Originally, ballet developed as a form of aristocratic entertainment. Modern boxing, on the other hand, struggled to achieve legitimacy and was illegal in many parts before the 20<sup>th</sup> century. Even now, an appreciation of dance implies a measure of sophistication whereas boxing is considered lowbrow, going hand in hand with the gaming industry. But, new characterizations of masculinity in the media are actively reshaping gender identities and changing what is viewed as acceptable. Elkins and Frank look at what it means to be a young man now and consider how these narratives play out on boys' bodies.

Studying gender differences and divergent models of masculinity is inherently an investigation into the "Other." Offering a female perspective on male identity and an American take on European subcultures is a further exercise in contrasts. Ultimately though, Elkins and Frank recognize that the art of sport is a means of expression and imagination, an engagement not unlike their own. For athletes, the instrument of their art is the body, their own and that of those with whom they are players. And, their practice – the ups and downs, the determination, the drama, the stage – is a metaphor for life.

**Amy Elkins** (b. 1979, Venice, CA) received her BFA from the School of Visual Arts in 2007. Her work has been exhibited in galleries and museums in the US and abroad, including Yancey Richardson Gallery in New York, Minneapolis Institute of Arts in Minnesota, and Kunsthalle Wien in Vienna, Austria. She is the recipient of the 2014 Aperture Portfolio Prize with an exhibition on view through Jan 2015. Elkins lives in Los Angeles.

**Jona Frank** (b. 1966, Camden, NJ) has exhibited her films and photographs internationally and her work is in several prominent collections including Getty Museum, SF MoMA, and Museum of Fine Arts Houston. Frank has published two books: *High School* and *RIGHT: Portraits of the Evangelical Ivy League*. Her third monograph, *The Modern Kids*, is in production and scheduled for release in 2015. Frank lives in Los Angeles.

Gallery hours are from Thursday thru Sunday, noon to 5pm, and by appointment. For images and additional information please contact: Shelley De Soto at [shelley@desotogallery.com](mailto:shelley@desotogallery.com) or 323-253-2255.