

EXHIBITION REVIEW: MARIE TOMANOVA: FINDING MAGIC TOGETHER

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Marie Tomanova, *King Princess & Quinn*, 2020

Searching for a place of belonging is a struggle most of us go through during our youth, and hopefully, we'll all find it at some point. We're relegated to the people and experiences of the places where we grow up, and most of the time, we don't have a say in where that is. New York City is one of the most forward-thinking cities in America, and there are only a handful of places across the world where you'll find equal openness and acceptance. Marie Tomanova, in her new exhibition *Finding Magic Together*, shows what it's been like for her since 2012- making friends and exploring relationships with the people that are setting the norm for non-conformity and truth through expression.



Marie Tomanova, *Gracie*, 2020

Tomanova moved to New York City in 2012, and since then has been exploring what it means to be young in a city where anyone can be accepted, especially those who would be ostracized by popular society. In *Finding Magic Together*, Tomanova's images capture what the freedom of expression means to the people she surrounds herself with; people who don't care about gender normativity, or conventional beauty standards, or acceptable fashion, and even love. The people themselves are the magic she seeks to find.

Her models have a wide arrangement of races, genders, expressions, and vulnerabilities that shine through in these photographs. Each and every moment feels honest, and that's seen in the muse's eyes each and every time the subject looks into the camera. The world can be a cruel place for people who don't exactly fit in, and in all of these pictures, in every place where someone stands out and their expression is candid, you can tell through their eyes the honesty of their expression. There's no confusion or doubt anywhere; in a world that dislikes and ostracizes differences, these young people know that their honesty and their magic is more important and relevant than wide acceptance. I believe that's the magic that we're meant to see, the appreciation that we get from the people that we care about; the circles we gravitate towards are where the truest beauty in life exists.



Left: Marie Tomanova, *Ellia & Quinn*, 2019
Right: Marie Tomanova, *Nicky*, 2016

Ellia & Quinn look like a relatively normal couple, and they look happy together. It's an obviously candid moment, the two of them look like they're dancing and partying, but the girl who's looking straight into the camera looks as sober as someone can be; honesty shines through at any time. *King Princess & Quinn*, who may or may not be the same Quinn, look comfortable together laying on a couch and holding hands. They're two feminine presenting people who are unapologetically sticking together.

The muses in *Nicky* are staring straight into the camera; eyes gleaming and a smile from ear to ear, they're being a little crazy and loving every moment of it. They've got a bit of makeup on and they look extremely unique, but their joy comes straight through and their zeal is infectious. *Gracie* is another unique individual; with long red side pigtails and a short crew cut on top, a bobby pin through their lip and red eyebrows, the way that they stare straight into the camera screams that they don't care about how you judge them. The way that this person stands out from a crowd would never be in question, and I think the magic Tomanova looks for would come through them when or wherever they are. This whole collection is filled with people that don't necessarily fit in with normal experiences and expression, but I think that not only do we see the magic coming from them, we see that their unique differences make them perfectly human, and that might be the greatest magic we can find by just looking at pictures in a gallery or a book.

Marie Tomanova currently lives in New York and received a Master's in painting from the Brno University of Technology in the Czech Republic. You can see her other works in her book *New York New York*, or by visiting the C24 Gallery in New York City from now until December 24, 2021.

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