

**L'OFFICIELART**  
INTERNATIONAL

# Talia Chetrit Wants You to Look Closer

In an age of passive image consumption, the artist reminds us that photographs require our full attention.

03.13.2019

by Brienne Walsh



In technical terms, a showcaller is the person who, during a theatrical production, makes sure that all of the elements of the show run smoothly—from the lighting to the sound to the stage entrances. Show Caller is also the name of an app you can download that will identify the name of the person calling you, allowing you to avoid spam or otherwise unwanted callers. Both the true definition and the intent of the app can be used to describe the work of Talia Chetrit, who aims, in her broad range of imagery, to expose the machinations of the photographer in the creation of a photograph.



Chetrit has made a name for herself with imagery that is often unabashedly erotic.

*Showcaller* is, appropriately, the name of Talia Chetrit's first monograph, published by MACK in January. Encompassing a broad range of images taken between 1994, when Chetrit—who was born in 1980 in Washington, D.C.—first picked up a camera, and 2018, the publication is linked to the first retrospective of her work, which was held at Kölnischer Kunstverein in Cologne, Germany, in early 2018.



Without distinguishing between type or time period, the tome mixes a wide range of Chetrit's images: advertisements she shot for Helmut Lang and Céline; photographs of New York City streets taken with a long-range lens through an office building window; portraits of her teenage friends and her parents that have appeared in gallery exhibitions (including at Sies + Höke and Kaufmann Repetto); explicit scenes of herself having sex with her partner in a sunny meadow; and nude self-portraits that recall both Robert Mapplethorpe and Courbet's painting *L'Origine du Monde*. On paper, there's an obvious comparison between Chetrit and Nan Goldin, who also uses her own sex life and friendships as subjects. But Chetrit's images are far more clinical, even sterile, recalling the advertisements of the fashion collective Eckhaus Latta and portraits by Collier Schorr, who herself blends fine art with editorial and advertisement photography.





## In many images, Chetrit is her own subject, calling to mind the likes of Robert Mapplethorpe and Nan Goldin.

What link the visually disparate works together are Chetrit's stubborn reminders that images are performances. In *Untitled (Outdoor Sex #1)*, 2018, a wire connecting a remote button with the camera cuts a ragged line through the center of an image of Chetrit embracing her lover. The same button appears in *Self-portrait (all fours)*, 2017, in which Chetrit, with a stocking over her head, enacts a sexy image, rather than actually creating one. In *Ever (Stairs)*, 2016 (which initially appeared in the magazine *Hot and Cool*) the model, a young girl, assumes a pose so unnatural that the viewer is immediately made aware that someone—the showrunner—directed her the purpose of composition. The origin of these explorations into the artifice of sexuality, femininity, and the act to posing can be found in *Face #1, 1994/2017*. In the image, a teen licks a bright red lollipop; she is the simulacrum of Chetrit, who was 14 herself, and only beginning to explore her own sexuality.



In slicing open various photographic tropes—the selfie, the pornographic image, the fashion advertisement, the family portrait—with the precision of a surgeon, Chetrit forces viewers to actually look at her work. It's a rare feat in a time when most photographs just wash over our dulled senses in a never-ending scroll.