

Karlheinz Weinberger's Working Men

At Situations, New York, the photographer's portraits of lovers and Elvis-obsessed Swiss youths share sartorial cues

J BY [JANE URSULA HARRIS](#) IN [REVIEWS](#) | 21 SEP 20

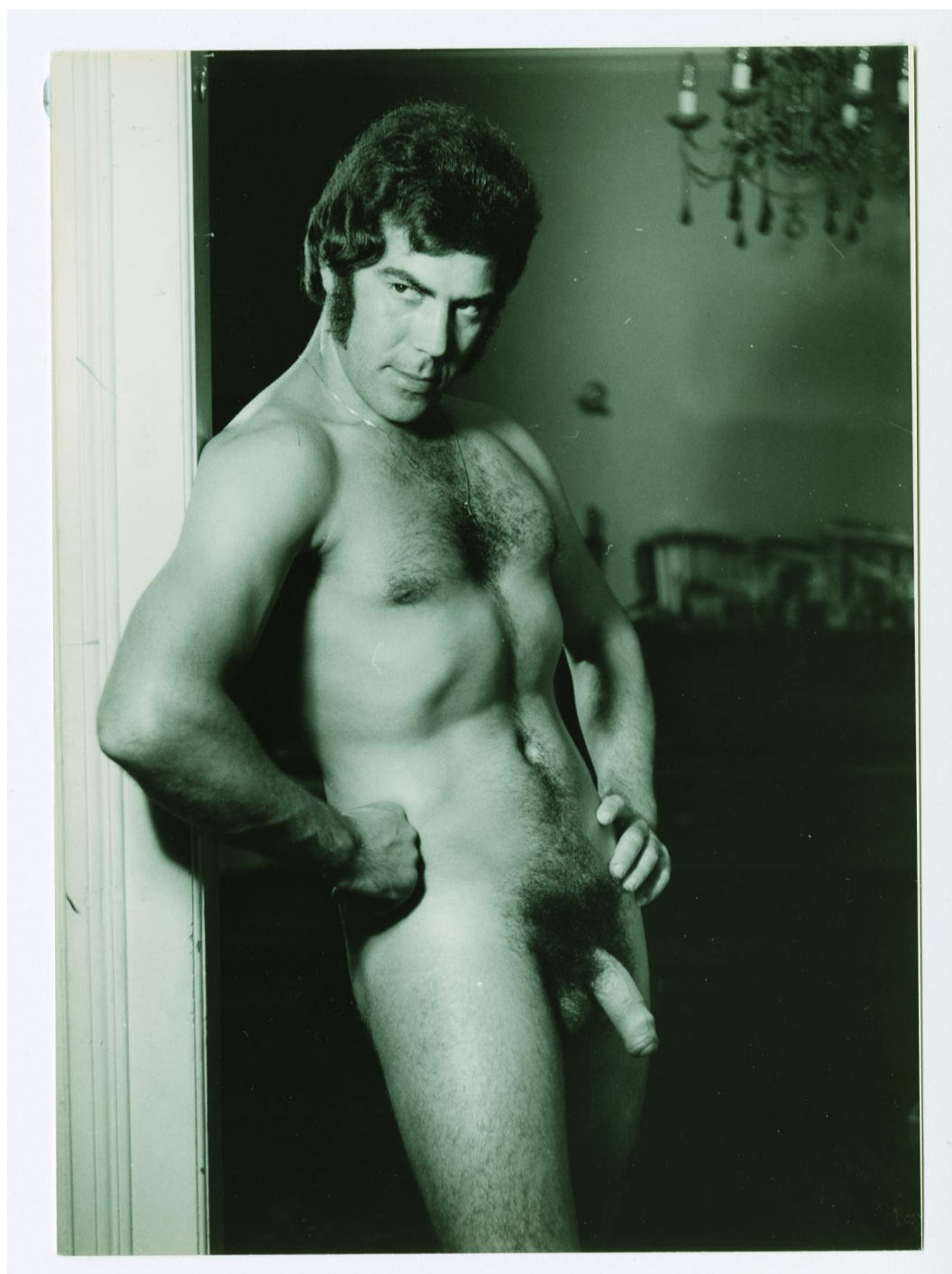


The self-taught Swiss photographer Karlheinz Weinberger took thousands of homoerotic photographs from the 1950s until his death in 2006 at the age of 86. His preferred subjects were working-class men – construction workers, wrestlers, bikers, car mechanics – whom he shot in their everyday surroundings and in his Zurich apartment.



Karlheinz Weinberger, *St. Petersinsel*, 1964, photograph. Courtesy: the artist, Situations Gallery, New York and New York & Artists Resources Management, New York © Karlheinz Weinberger Stiftung, Zurich

'Karlheinz Weinberger: Together & Alone' presents a vitrine of the apartment images made between the late 1950s and the mid-'70s using square format and 35mm cameras. Arranged in sequential groupings, the wallet-size prints document men in various states of undress, revealing a growing intimacy between sitter and photographer as each session unfolded. Aside from the occasional money shot, the poses captured are alternately classic, campy, femme and tender, and veer clear of the beefcake clichés of male physique magazines.



Karlheinz Weinberger, *Portrait*, Zurich, c. 1975, photograph. Courtesy: the artist, Situations Gallery, New York and New York & Artists Resources Management, New York © Karlheinz Weinberger Stiftung, Zurich

What emerges as well is Weinberger's growing fetish for the sartorial effects of his rough trade: the motorcycle helmets, wrestling belts, engineer boots and bandanas that his nudes don throughout. That fetish is arguably most pronounced in his portraits of the Halbstarcken (1958–63), on view in an adjacent vitrine. In these candid pictures, louche, Elvis-obsessed youth carouse in fairgrounds and campsites wearing the quiffs, moto jackets, horseshoe buckles and skin-tight jeans that Weinberger loved.



Karlheinz Weinberger, *Portrait, Zurich*, c. late 1950's to early 1960's. Courtesy: the artist, Situations Gallery, New York and New York & Artists Resources Management, New York © Karlheinz Weinberger Stiftung, Zurich

These bodies of work – created nearly contemporaneously and seen here side by side in black and white (colour versions exist) – offer a nuanced vision of the queer photographer who remains largely unknown outside his Halbstarcken images. And while Weinberger never took a self-portrait, he clearly found his image in the subjects he desired. Cruising the streets for blue-collar men, outcasts and rebellious teens, his business card said it all: ‘My favourite hobbies: the individual portrait and The Extraordinary. Always reachable by telephone after 7PM’.

Main Image: Karlheinz Weinberger, St. Petersinsel (detail), 1964, photograph. Courtesy: the artist, Situations Gallery, New York and New York & Artists Resources Management, New York © Karlheinz Weinberger Stiftung, Zurich

JANE URSULA HARRIS

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Jane Ursula Harris is an art historian and writer who has contributed to publications including *Artforum*, *Art in America*, *The Believer*, *Brooklyn Rail*, *The Paris Review*, *New York*, and others. She is a faculty member of the Art History department at the School of Visual Arts. She lives in Brooklyn, USA.
