

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE: May 6, 2014

The Back 40
New photographs by **Jeff Bierk**

May 22 – 25, 2014
Opening Reception: Thursday, May 22, 6PM – 12

87 Wade Avenue, unit B5
Toronto, Ontario



Brian "Bluenose", September 21, 2013
40" x 60", archival pigment print, Edition 1/1

Please join the photographer in celebration on the occasion of the opening reception of his solo exhibition, *The Back 40*, at 87 Wade Avenue, unit B5 in Toronto.

The conversation of consent in photography has traditionally been cold. Photographers like Walker Evans, Diane Arbus, Boris Mikhailov, and others are cited in innumerable essays as fodder for the discussion of ethical representation and the implications of an aestheticized image. The jargon is almost legal – cool, specific debates about the rights of the subject and the power of a photograph's document.

Jeff Bierk's *The Back 40* is a collection of photographs driven by concepts of consent in a very different way. The images, produced over the course of a little more than a year, feature recurring characters, the artist in situ, inside jokes, smiling eyes. And it is these smiling eyes that sharply channel a "decisive weight": Bierk's subjects – Jimmy, Bluenose, Ramzez, Carl, and others – who are not only the artist's inspiration, but active participants in the making of his photographs. The repeating images of these men in *The Back 40* show mature friendships, having evolved and deepened with age. In the context of the dialogue of photography and exploitation, Bierk's works respond with an almost absurd query: is it possible to have a non-consensual friendship?

Jeff Bierk honours a type of beauty, a lively energy, not necessarily articulable – it requires a trust in one's relationships and a leveling of ground in art and life. Bluenose, Ramzes, Carl, Jimmy, Jeff, and the rest will carry on with their lives on varying levels of precariousness – between incarceration, criminalization, exhibition – and will undoubtedly, and intuitively, produce more work as poignant as *The Back 40* as their relationships mature.

-Lili Huston-Herterich, 2014

<http://www.jeffbierk.com>

For further information, please contact jeffbierk@gmail.com.