



SARAH BLESENER

THE MAKING OF A PATRIOT

February 20—April 1, 2018

Anastasia Photo is pleased to present, *The Making Of A Patriot*, Sarah Blesener's first exhibition with the gallery.

"Always remember, you are soldiers of God. And nobody in the entire history of the world has ever been as free as you are right now." – Opening words from Utah Patriot Camp.

In patriotic camps and clubs around the United States, roughly 400,000 American children are taught annually, often with military subtext, what it means to be an American. Serving children as young as eight years old, these camps range in specialization from Young Marines to training future border patrol agents.

Sarah Blesener's ongoing work examines the interplay of religion, love of country, and military-style training in the teaching of 'new Americanism' among youth across the United States. Over the last year, Blesener photographed patriotic clubs and camps in twelve states to discover this renewed embrace of the centuries-old theme of American exceptionalism and manifest destiny. Here, in this microcosm of a changing nation, youth straddle the vulnerability of adolescence and the simultaneous stripping of individuality. Blesener's aim for the series is to open dialogue around the nuanced and complicated ideals instilled in the future generation of Americans. The work on display is part of her ongoing series, *Beckon Us From Home*.

Sarah Blesener is a documentary photographer based in New York City. Born in Minneapolis, Minnesota, she studied Linguistics and Youth Development at North Central University. Upon graduation in 2012, she studied at *Bookvar Russian Academy* in Minneapolis, concentrating on the Russian language. She is a recent graduate of the Visual Journalism and Documentary Practice program at the International Center of Photography in New York. Her latest work revolves around youth movements and culture in Russia, Eastern Europe, and the United States. She is a recent recipient of the Alexia Foundation grant, and a current fellow with Catchlight, working with Reveal from The Center for Investigative Reporting. She is one of Anastasia Photo's Emerging Photographers.

Anastasia Photo specializes in Documentary Photography and Photojournalism. The gallery space also serves as a center for discussion and portfolio review. Anastasia Photo is open Tuesday through Sunday, 11am to 7pm. For further information or questions please contact Kaley Sweeney at 212-677-9725 or kaley@anastasia-photo.com