



THE NEW YORKER

OCTOBER 12, 2009

GALLERIES—CHELSEA

"THE WORLD IN BLACK AND WHITE: VINTAGE PRINTS FROM THE NATIONAL GEOGRAPHIC ARCHIVE"

Yes, there are bare-breasted native girls and a few intrepid-looking explorers among the photographs in this big, fascinating show, but any "National Geographic" cliché is overwhelmed by the variety and the quality of work. Organized in thematic groups by photographer, the pictures record historic adventures (Herbert Ponting on Scott's voyage to the South Pole), faraway exotica (Joseph Rock in China, Frank Hurley and A. B. Lewis in Papua New Guinea), and previously unrecorded phenomena closer to home (George Shiras's early-twentieth-century Midwestern wildlife shots, lit by flash). In this context, homoerotic icons like Baron Wilhelm von Gloeden's neoclassical portraits of Sicilian youths read as anthropological studies, but the anonymous photographs collected in the Belgian Congo by Pierre Daye remain unredeemably colonialist. Through Oct. 17. (Kasher, 521 W. 23rd St. 212-966-3978.)