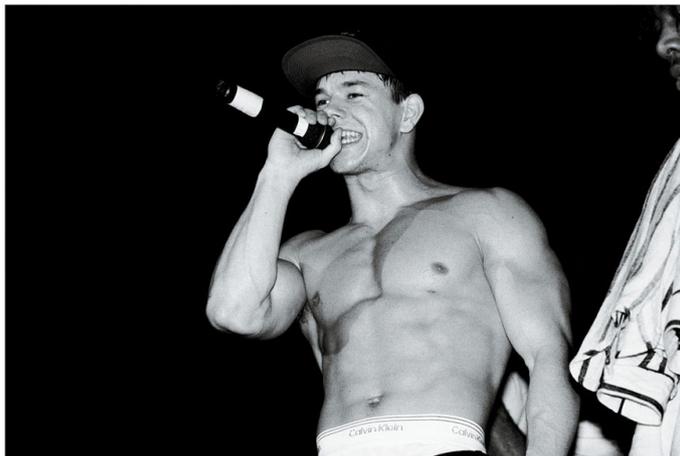


## Art in America



Robin Graubard: Mark Wahlburg,  
n.d., black-and-white ink-jet  
print, 7¼ by 11½ inches; at JTT.

Robin Graubard's life is essentially the bohemian existence a certain swath of New York transplants had in mind when deciding to move here—the kind filled with recollections like, say, seeing Joey Ramone play an intimate set in an East Village commune. The life glimpsed in the 85 photographs in “jungle,” the artist's first show at JTT, seems impossibly cool, with just the right amount of turmoil and unrest.

The last line of Graubard's self-written press release read: “The sun the moon the stars are eternal you and I are not.” The document was a bullet-pointed, chronological biography in which Graubard encapsulated entire years with blunt details: “hit by a car,” “ran away from home,” “made jewelry,” “filmed Ramones and Talking Heads,” “got a day job,” “went running,” “health trauma and recovery,” “Ramones clip used in iPhone 6 commercial.”

Graubard built her impressive body of work while traveling around the world and photographing personally and professionally. The works spanned over 40 years and were displayed in clusters and linear sequences, some in frames and some nailed to the walls. New ink-jet prints, large and colorful, were hung alongside old ones. Though Graubard dug deep into her past for the show, it rarely felt overwhelming or like the work was cramped and competing for your attention. She seems to have lived without boundaries, and the installation conveyed a sense of her freedom. Punks, rude boys and plutocrats like Donald Trump were among the subjects of her older works, and were all given equal weight on the wall.

The new images were taken in a tropical setting, but in each picture the sky is gray and there's little sense of leisure. Zoomed-in photos of airplanes in flight and security checkpoints mingle with shots of palm trees buffeted by storm winds and teenage girls standing around after surfing. The same girls are shown roaming a supermarket. While the conventions of island photography might have you expect to see these girls picking coconuts from a tree, they're shot instead amid fluorescent-lit aisles of packaged products. The mixture of dark clouds, surveillance apparatuses and beach scenes in these poignant and deliberate snaps creates an undercurrent of tension.

The 18-minute video *Rough Cut* (2015) could be a metaphor for the entire exhibition. It's comprised of shots of tourists and locals filming an angry ocean on a foreboding day. What we see is the calm before the storm. Maybe Graubard is looking back on this body of photographs just as the storm's spectators, having captured nature's tumult, review their evidence later just to know that they survived something. It's kind of like being hungover and looking at your own Instagram from the night before and thinking, “Well, this is the life I chose.”