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AL'S EMPORIUM

Rich Kids of Instagram a Class-Warfare Assault

By Al Lewis



I had to call a shrink to get my head around the new Tumblr blog, Rich Kids of Instagram.

Dr. David Reiss, a California psychiatrist who has performed more than 10,000 psychiatric evaluations, walked me through the website, where exhibitionist brats post photos of themselves in yachts, mansions, Ferraris, Bentleys, helicopters and jets.

The site has garnered a lot of headlines since its July 13 launch. It shows kids clubbing with \$4,000 bottles of Champagne, images of their \$43,000 bar tabs and loving photos of their American Express Centurion cards.

"They have more money than you," the site boasts, "and this is what they do."

"There's no cleverness," Dr. Reiss said. "There isn't even a sense of humor, really. .. It's narcissism without boundaries....And there is a very dark underside to all of this."

Many Americans believe class warfare is about the poor chiding the rich. At Rich Kids of Instagram, it's the other way around.

One photo shows a young man with a fine horse in a well-appointed stable: "Do you have a horse in your backyard? Didn't think so." Another collection of shots, also featuring pricey Champagne bottles, reads: "Our everyday is better than your best day." Another shows a rich kid blasting off a lake with a jet pack: "Get on my level."

"It's not a joke. It's not informing anyone of anything. It's in your face, and in that sense, it's pathetically hostile," Dr. Reiss said.

The site is indeed a photographic celebration of money-grubbing misanthropy. One shot shows a \$9,000 Versace gold-plated AK-47 assault rifle, posted amid a summer of mass shootings. "It's ominous," Dr. Reiss said.

But is it a symbol of class warfare? "That's a pretty good interpretation," he said.

Most of the website, however, is dedicated to the more-mundane mantra: "I'm rich, screw you." It's photos of teenagers in cars that cost more than many other people's homes.

"Cars have always been an externalization of the ego," Dr. Reiss said. "This is just, "I am what I own." A lot of these kids have very weak esteem. Their identity is in what they have, rather than who they are."

There are shots of kids and their jets, or perhaps their parent's shareholders' jets. "I wonder if the IRS is monitoring this site," Dr. Reiss said.



Another recurring genre is people in their swimming pools.

"If you went to a deep, analytic basis, often a pool represents the unconscious. It says, "I don't really know who I am." But I doubt these photos are really going there. It's purely a sign of wealth. It's "This is what I have that others don't." I don't think they're really thinking beyond that."

Some photos show daring jumps from multidecked yachts and the roof of a mansion. There's even someone doing a backflip from a helicopter. It's unbridled risk taking and a symbol of people falling out of control, Dr. Reiss said.

"There's a lot of hostility, anger and rage underneath," Dr. Reiss said. "A lot of these kids are empty, scared and hurting."

Many of the photos depict people alone. Even when there are others in the shots, they're distracted with devices. There is a haunting sense of isolation, even with pricey toys like a gold-plated iPhone.

One photo shows a young man in an elaborately appointed rec room adorned with a giant elephant head. "Even when you have everything, you still need something even bigger," Dr. Reiss said.

Another photo portrays a naked Barbie doll snorting cocaine as if to say, see, even our dolls can afford to do blow.

"There's a lot of implied sexuality. No boundaries. No shame," Dr. Reiss said.

Many of the shots are blatantly homoerotic. One titled "Champagne shower" shows a nude boy diving from a pier, flying through the air like Peter Pan, as an older kid pours Champagne from the pier to the gaping mouth of another swimmer in the water.

I used to joke that some people are so intent on flaunting their money with the latest fashion, that they should sew money together and wear that. It's no longer a joke. Someone on Rich Kids of Instagram has done it,

Perhaps it should be renamed KidnapMeForAFatRansome.com.

Alexa Dell, daughter of Dell Inc. (DELL) Chief Executive Michael Dell, posted a photo of her brother feasting on the family jet on the way to Fiji. Bloomberg Businessweek dug up some regulatory filings showing Mr. Dell spends \$2.7 million a year on family security. I bet he was pleased with this. Alexa's social media posts have even included GPS coordinates.

It all begs the question, where are the parents?

"The parents may be just as proud as the kids having it out there," Dr. Reiss said. "That's where we're living right now. Self-promotion is the name of the game and people have no shame."

Some of these kids are angling for reality-TV shows. Some want to be the next Paris Hilton. Evolution once favored cooperation and philanthropy. Now it favors the opposite traits. And blatant self-aggrandizers have become some of the most successful people on the planet.

Some of these kids may go to Harvard and end up serving as your senator. Or maybe they'll get a gig at a too-big-to-fail investment bank.

"A normal 17-year-old looks for a car to buy," reads the caption beneath a photo of an offering document. "I



look for shell corporations."

A shell company is valuable mostly as a tool to take a dubious private company public. "He's already playing a sociopathic game," Dr. Reiss said.

This website, Dr. Reiss said, is only going to play to people's worst impulses. "It says, "Envy me. I don't have substance, but I have a horse..."

"These are the same people who are going to turn to drugs and self-destructive behaviors as soon as something goes wrong," he said.

And they'll probably be in charge of something big when they do.

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--(Al's Emporium, written by Dow Jones Newswires