

NUEVA LUZ

photographic journal



THE QUEER ISSUE

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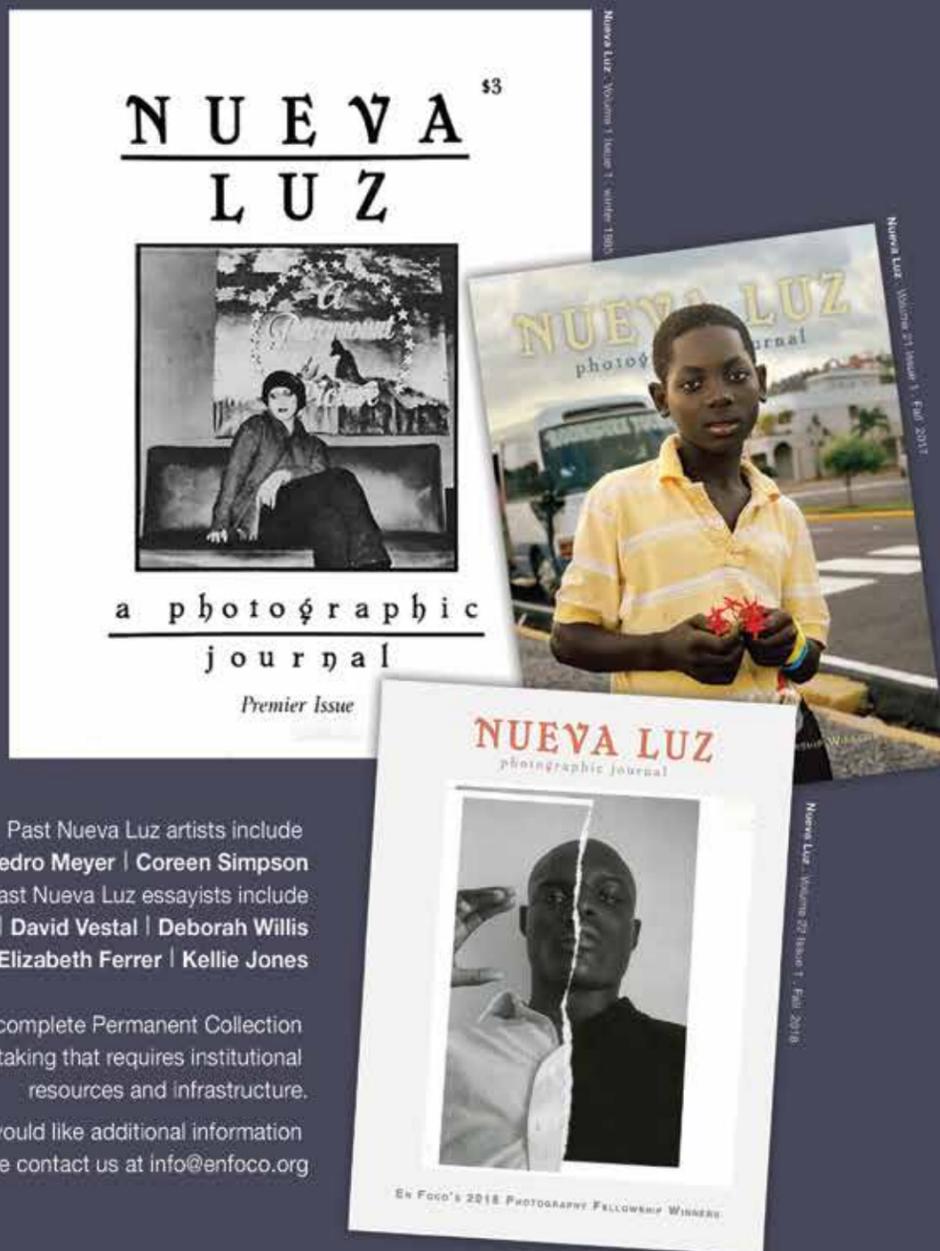
The En Foco Permanent Collection is a significant historical asset that contains original issues of Nueva Luz, nearly 700 photographic prints and slide registry, and historical documents from the mid-1970's to the present.

Nueva Luz was first published in 1985 and continues publication to this date, totalling 22 volumes with 65 distinct issues.

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Sophie Rivera | Dawoud Bey | Pedro Meyer | Coreen Simpson
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Publisher's Statement

Colleagues and Supporters,

Each issue of Nueva Luz brings to the forefront a special cultural challenge; addressing a concern that En Foco's artists-of-color are confronted with, insights relating to a self-defined community within the larger notion of "color". There's a tendency to presume that all artists-of-color are equally confronted by the same inequities; that there's only a need for one remedy for all. Yet, within this color construct, there are many subgroups that vie to be heard and may be defined by class, sexual orientation, ethnicity, and dozens of additional factors, separately or combined. In this Fall/Winter Nueva Luz curated by En Foco's Artistic Director, Oscar J Rivera, the focus is on the queer photographers of color who have been marginalized and exploited by mainstream arts professionals and the public-at-large. The artists in this issue represent powerful voices that need to be heard and no doubt will resonate loudly. En Foco is hopeful that a lively dialogue will follow on our social media platforms, with highlights published in future Nueva Luz issues. In addition to the images, there will be an essay based on an interview conducted with the iconic Puerto Rican photographer Luis Carle, whose career spans the AIDS epidemic of the 1980s to the present. There are many voices such as his that are responsible for moving the AIDS crisis out of the shadows of the queer community to the forefront of public and health policy. The combined voices of respected artists like Luis Carle, and the new generation as represented by Oscar J Rivera, provide a broader context for us to ponder. As usual, there are many to thank for this Nueva Luz issue... Oscar J Rivera for his efforts in curating and managing the volume, Nestor Otero for his excellent graphics and creative design, and our new Director of Operations, Kimberly Rose, who brings rich experience and new insight to Nueva Luz and En Foco. Most of all, I want to recognize and thank the artists presented in these pages because I value their voices and commitment to social and cultural equity.

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Derick Whitson . *Untitled, Sugar (Chapter II) series* . 2018

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The Queer Issue

Mickalene Thomas

Ka-Man Tse

Derick Whitson

María José

Gabriel Martinez

OSCAR J RIVERA | CURATORIAL STATEMENT

“I’ve never been interested in being invisible and erased.” — Laverne Cox

Since 1974, En Foco has championed artists from diverse and often marginalized communities. Beginning with a focus on providing adequate representation and creating opportunities for Latinx artists, En Foco has grown into a platform for all artists-of-color. Nueva Luz premiered in 1985 and has grown to encompass 22 volumes, comprised of 65 issues featuring the work of hundreds of artists in its pages. While En Foco has been on the frontlines of the battle for equity and fair representation for artists ever since, certain communities haven’t been recognized for their contributions to the photography canon. Among those is the queer community.

Within the context of photography, the contributions of queer artists-of-color have been largely overwritten by their white, cis, male mainstream counterparts. Contemporary art history recognizes and teaches the efforts of Robert Mapplethorpe, Andy Warhol, Marcel Duchamp—among countless others—who academia refers to as the necessary gatekeepers of queer history. The efforts of queer people-of-color (QPOC) are seldom recognized, even though the true pioneers of queer art were QPOC.

The queer community has long faced societal, institutional, and cultural adversity. The list of hardships is a lengthy one that includes, anti-LGBTQIA legislation, restrictions on blood donations for gay men, to the ever-present stigma associated with HIV/AIDS. While queer people and communities-of-color have lived, and continue to live, disproportionately with AIDS, resources, support, and treatment are almost exclusively offered to white, cis men. The mainstream art world has been no different than the rest of the world, benefiting from the efforts and accomplishments of QPOC, while failing to offer recognition or support. Racial tensions continue to rise, fueling divisive politics that threaten the safety and liberties of QPOC.

The artists featured in this landmark issue of Nueva Luz are all queer artists-of-color, making work about and within, their collective communities. Mickalene Thomas creates imagery about the intersections of her identity. She creates photographs that feature and celebrate black women, many of whom she shares a connection with. Thomas’ collages challenge the societal and cultural lenses in which blackness, queerness, and femininity are viewed, by appropriating and reimagining classic imagery and placing black women in the foreground. Thomas uses visual languages of French impressionism, European modernism and Pop art to empower her subjects as powerful figures that contemporize the positions of black women in art history. Thomas’ collages are often “reimaginings” of her photographs. By altering the surface and context of the work, she reactivates the agency of the women she’s captured. The women become ethereal beings unhinged from time and space, and function as Thomas’ pantheon of goddesses, bestowing a level of beauty, desirability, and grace historically only afforded to representations of white women. Through her practice Thomas has created a platform to represent and immortalize her community; she’s created a renewed awareness and subjectivity for black women within the scope of contemporary photography.

Ka-man Tse uses the medium of photography to question ideas of home, belonging, family, and community. In the series “Narrow Distances”, Tse uses the act of collaboration and large format photographic practices to “slow down” the process and engage with her subjects. She questions what it means to look and who gets to do the looking—what it means to be seen. Within marginalized communities, histories are often forgotten, and Tse’s process allows for the collection of oral histories, memories, and a queering and highlighting of the banal and overlooked facets of life as well as selfhood. “Narrow Distances” uses the tensions between public and private space, to occupy and demand space and agency, as the agency of QPOC is often challenged and fetishized. Tse photographs those who are marginalized—who are taking care of their own—to reimagine space as a means to see her community; inherited and chosen, represented and recorded.



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Derick Whitson’s series “Sugar (Chapter II)” employs performance and costume to combat notions of appearance and representation. Whitson argues that the presentation of current culture provides an over determination of the ego. The body is used to communicate ways of gratification and desire. He suggests that the standards and implications of contemporary photography platforms be celebrated, critiqued, and questioned within his work. “Sugar (Chapter II)” uses costumes and performance in the “club kid” aesthetic—an inherently queer representation of gender non-conformity and sexuality—to further question the roles of identity in race and gender.

The photographs of María José reflect her community and push back against the adopted narrative of diversity presented by institutions. José uses her photographs to capture friends, family members, QPOC, and other trans folks. She documents her intimate relationships and uses the portrait to present a reclaimed sense of personhood: a celebration of identity. She focuses on the agency of her subjects and provides a window into their private journeys toward authentic self. José also turns the lens inward to reflect on her own relationship to community, as well as womanhood through her relationship with her mother. José argues that diversity does not need to be sought; true, authentic diversity is accomplished by providing access and proper representation for all marginalized communities. Through her process the images authentically and empathetically examine queerness, family, community, politics, and romance with a trans-identity at the center.

Gabriel Martinez uses ritual, performance, and experimental photographic processes, combined with Cuban symbolism, to explore issues faced by queer people: queer history, sexuality, the stigma of AIDS. Martinez works across several mediums including printmaking, performance, and photography, to investigate the intersections of traditional masculinity, queerness, and nostalgia. Martinez’s work recontextualizes aspects of gay culture from the early 80s and 90s, uses sex-positive imagery, and pushes back against issues faced by QPOC during the height of the Gay Rights Movement and AIDS crisis, through the use of metaphoric representations of the aftermath of the disease. Martinez compels the viewer to consider all facets of his identity and experiences through his images. His appropriated imagery places an emphasis on the representations of gay black men in vintage pornography, introducing the tensions between race and sexuality, while celebrating the sexual liberation of the 70s, and ultimately, the foreshadowing of the AIDS crisis.

The artists featured in this special issue of Nueva Luz represent several experiences within the queer community. As QPOC, they represent integral voices within the fabric of both queer and art history. The works of all the artists are inspired by community or the longing to belong, by agency, the revolutionary impulse to exist authentically, and legacy, the desire to create a lasting record or history of their communities.

The legacy of QPOC is largely a history of being overwritten, forgotten, and ignored. Contemporary queer artists-of-color are redefining and queering history, while beginning to alter the notions of a queer legacy by reinforcing their communities, empowering their peers, and demanding the space and opportunity to be considered as part of the mainstream canon of contemporary art.

The works of Mickalene Thomas, Ka-man Tse, and María José, are driven by community. Thomas seeks to redefine notions of beauty, to empower black women. Tse’s imagery battles with the ideas of “placelessness” and welcomes community. José’s photographs of QPOC and trans women remove the layer of otherness placed upon her subjects, replacing the varnish of marginalization with an undeniable humanity and personhood.

Derick Whitson and Gabriel Martinez use the act of performance to question the societal implications of gender, desire, sexuality and shame. Whitson’s stylized club kid clowns dismantle the idea of gender through the use of a celebrated visual language that became ingrained in the counterculture of NYC nightlife in the 90s. Martinez uses nostalgia, vintage imagery, and the performance of experimental photographic processes as metaphors for lived experiences. Martinez charges his work with the sexual experimentation and liberation of the 70s, the decay of the AIDS crisis, and reflections of his own heritage and masculinity.

These artists focused on two major themes crucial for the survival of QPOC: community and performance. Historically, being either was a strike against one’s personhood. Being both queer and of color places you on the outskirts of two already marginal communities. The act of performative gender is ingrained in queer youth as a means of survival. With 40% of American homeless population being queer youth, many QPOC bury their authentic identities within the notions of traditional gender. Hiding themselves, their dysmorphia, and their shame behind the accepted idea of who they should be, to save themselves from the dangers of being queer—and of color—in a society where the government refuses to acknowledge, legitimize, or protect their queerness to date.

QPOC artists and their works are revolutionary. They’ve begun to deconstruct the accepted narratives taught throughout the canon of art history, and throughout American history. They’ve begun to carve out and occupy spaces previously denied to queer people-of-color. They’ve asserted their own agency and provided platforms for their subjects to be seen as complete human beings, not be othered by the straight, cislens of American art culture. Their works are a celebration, declaration, and exploration of the immeasurable wealth within the legacy and history of queerness—for people of color.



Oscar J Rivera was born in Brooklyn, New York, studied photography at Parsons The New School for Design and is a founding member of the Poor Brown Kids Art Collective. His work covers a range of themes including personal relationships, sexuality and gender identity, as well his quest to define his latinidad. Rivera often creates bodies of work that incorporate found artifacts, vintage photographs, and his own work to create diaristic approaches to storytelling. He was previously a Studio Art Mentor with Studio in A School, and worked within several summer programs teaching art to Children in NYC public schools. Rivera received a scholarship to attend the National Conference on Race and Ethnicity in Higher Education to develop programming on campus at The New School. He currently is the Artistic Director, and Curator at En Foco. Rivera is currently curating an Anti-Violence, Interactive Theater and Digital media based project across local venues in the South Bronx.

Photograph Kimberly Rose

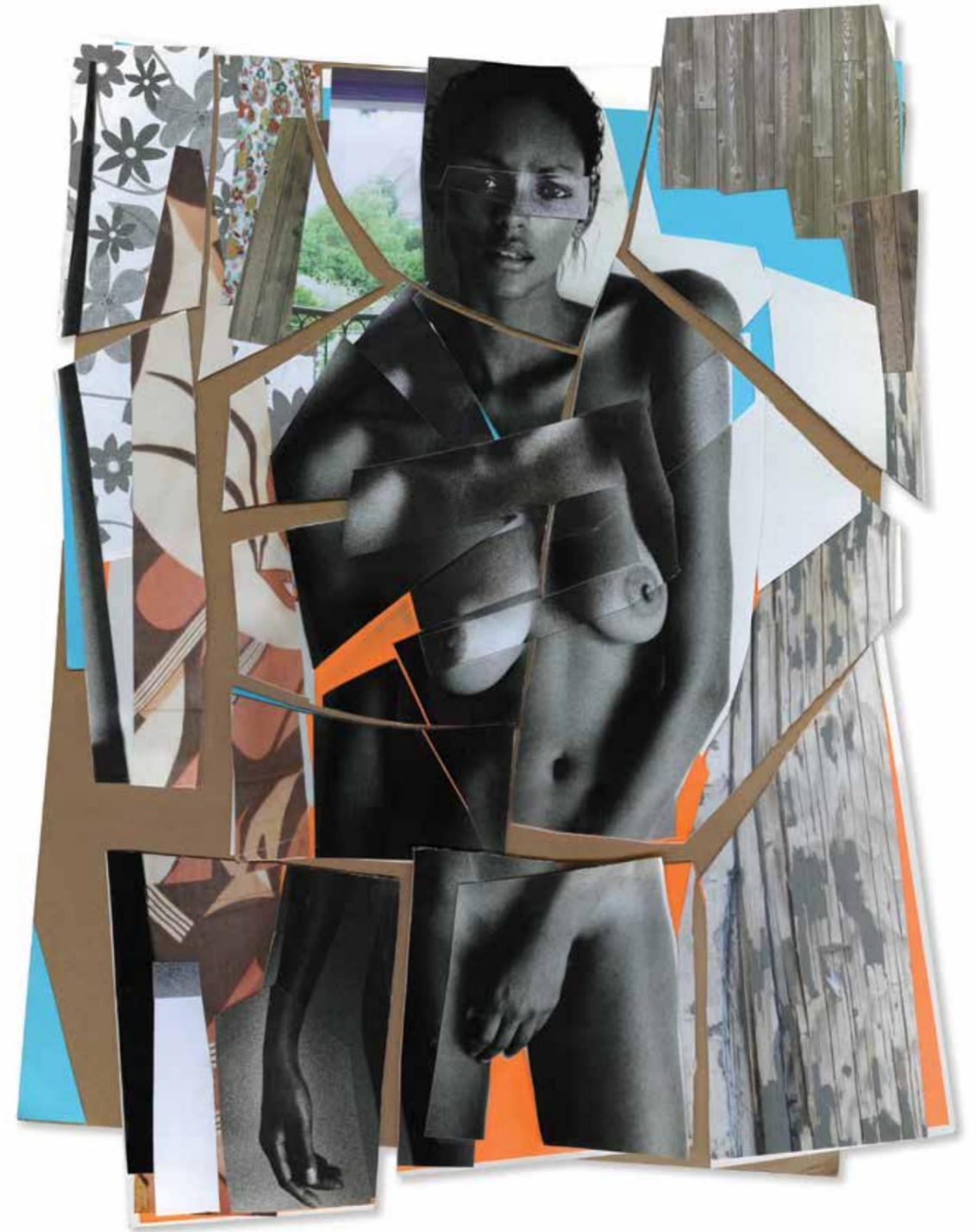


Mickalene Thomas is a 2015 United States Artists Francie Bishop Good & David Horvitz Fellow, and 2018 New York Academy of Art Honorary Doctorate recipient. She is a distinguished visual artist, filmmaker, and curator who has exhibited extensively both nationally and internationally and is known for paintings that combine art-historical, political, and pop-cultural references. Her work introduces complex notions of femininity and challenges common definitions of beauty and aesthetic representations of women. Thomas holds an MFA from Yale University and a BFA from Pratt Institute. She's held solo museum exhibitions at the Brooklyn Museum, Aspen Museum, and L'Ecole des Beaux Arts, Monaco. Recent solo exhibitions include "Mickalene Thomas: Do I Look Like a Lady?" at MOCA Grand, Los Angeles; "Mickalene Thomas: Mentors, Muses and Celebrities" at Aspen Art Museum and Spelman College, and "Muse: Mickalene Thomas Photographs" at Aperture Foundation, New York, which is scheduled to travel to several venues across the United States through 2019, featuring her notably-curated exhibition, tête-à-tête. Other recent shows include the group exhibitions "Figuring History" at the Seattle Art Museum, and "You Are Here" at the North Carolina Museum of Art. Thomas's work is in the permanent collections of New York's Museum of Modern Art, Brooklyn Museum, Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum, Whitney Museum of American Art, Hammer Museum, and Smithsonian American Art Museum, among many others.

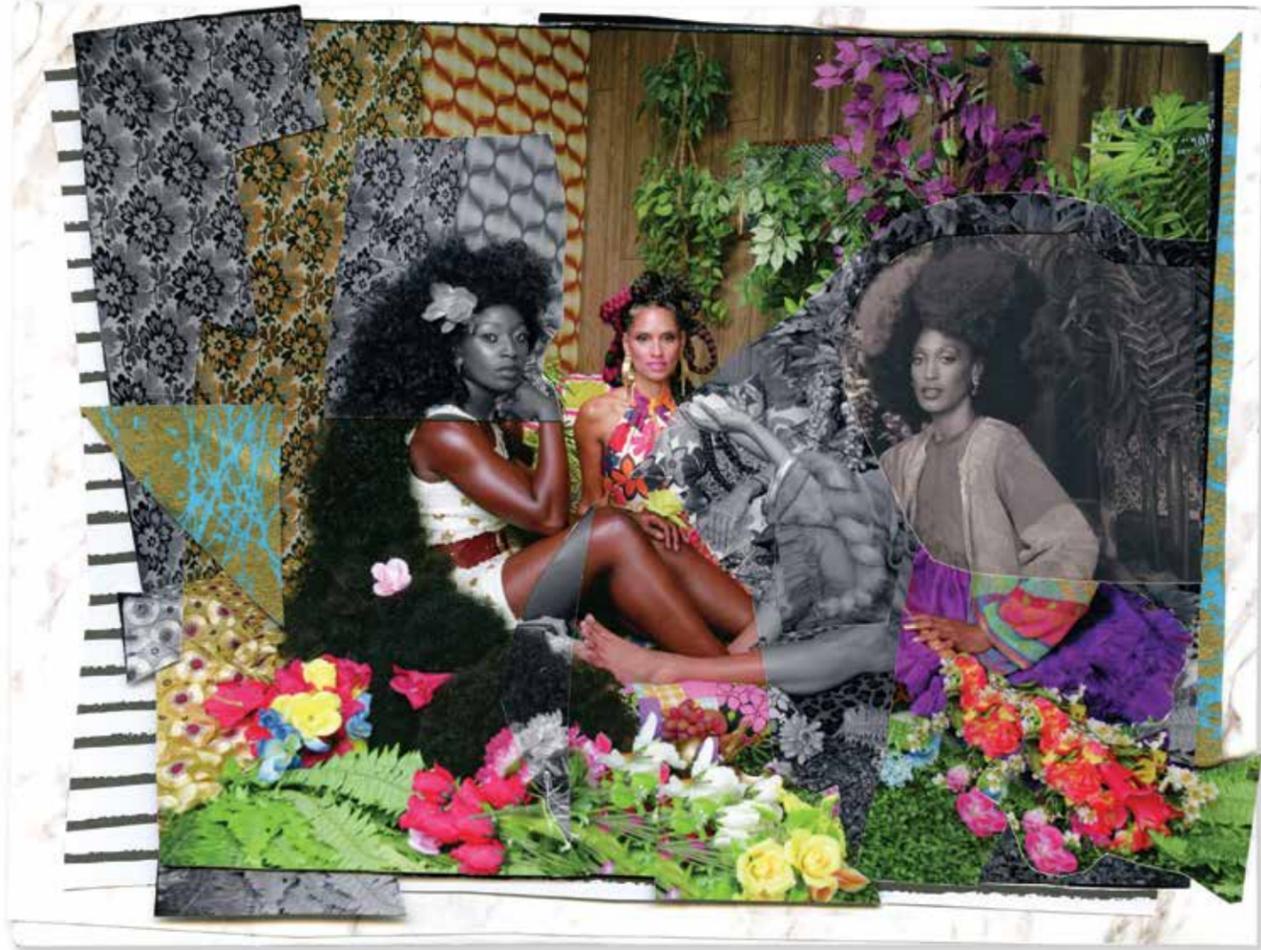
Mickalene Thomas

My work emerges from a discourse that combines art historical, political, and pop-cultural references through the lens of black and female identities. I aim to blur the distinction of object and subject, concrete and abstract, real and imaginary. Indeed, the modes through which culture serves to shape perception across social, spatial, and ideological platforms is fundamental to my investigations. Shaped through portraiture, my explorations introduce complex notions of femininity, beauty, sexuality, and challenge common definitions of beauty and aesthetic representations of women. Through painting, photography, collage and installation, my strategies include appropriation, the

deconstructing and repurposing of formal and conceptual artistic iconology that's developed to reevaluate its context. Here, my study of French impressionism, European modernism and Pop Art plays a formative influence, wherein pioneers including Bearden, Neel, Matisse, Manet and Warhol continue to activate my interest and approach. The subjects that populate my images are similarly influential, however their significance is often intimate or personal. Family, friends and lovers feature throughout my oeuvre; subsisting as powerful figures that serve to characterize the subjective, and often otherworldly, propositions that I envision.



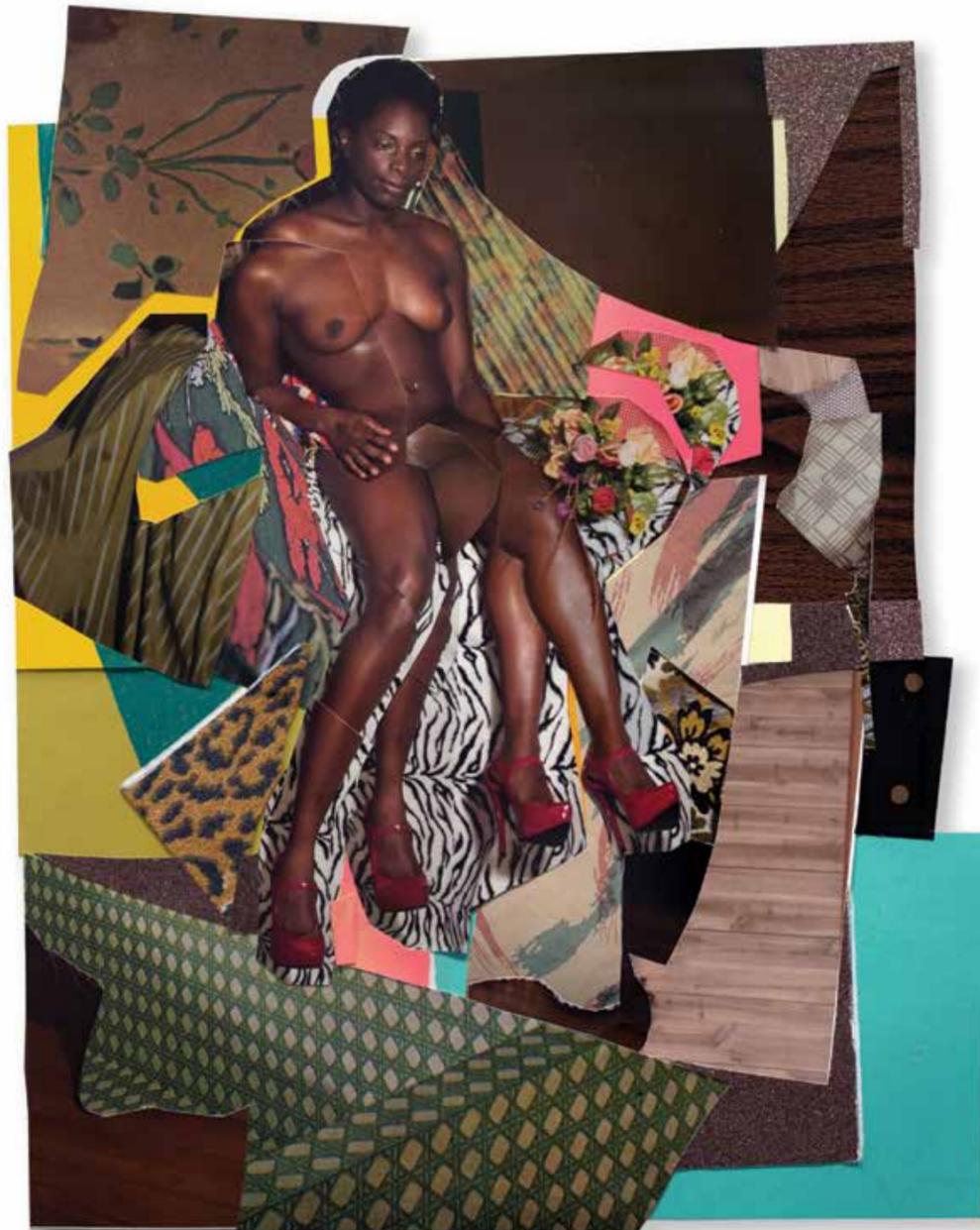
Mickalene Thomas . *Untitled Collaboration with Mario Testino* . 2013



Mickalene Thomas . *uner sur l'herbe les Trois Femme Noir #4* . 2017



Mickalene Thomas . *She Ain't A Child No More* . 2015



Mickalene Thomas . *Marie with Four Legs* . 2014



Mickalene Thomas . *Racquel Come to Me* . 2015



Mickalene Thomas . *Maya #6* . 2014



Mickalene Thomas . *Racquel / See You* . 2015



Ka-Man Tse was born in Kowloon, Hong Kong and is a photographer, video artist, and educator. She received an MFA from Yale University, and a BA from Bard College. She has exhibited her work at the Lianzhou Foto Festival in Guangdong, China; Para Site in Hong Kong, the WMA Masters Exhibition, Transition, in Hong Kong, the 2016 Hong Kong Contemporary Film Festival, and Videotage's Both Sides Now III – Final Frontiers. U.S.-based exhibitions include the Museum of Chinese in America in New York, the Bronx Museum of the Arts; the Palm Springs Art Museum, Cornell University, Alfred University, Capricious Gallery, the Philadelphia Photo Arts Center, and the Eighth Veil in Los Angeles. She has mounted solo shows at Lumenvisum in Hong Kong, the Silver Eye Center for Photography in Pittsburgh, PA and the New York Public Library. She is the recipient of the 2014 - 2015 Robert Giard Fellowship, a 2017-2018 Research Award from Yale University Fund for Lesbian and Gay Studies, and the 2018 Aperture Portfolio Prize. She taught at Yale University School of Art from 2013-2018 and is currently an Assistant Professor of Photography at Parsons The New School of Design. In 2018 she co-curated Daybreak: New Affirmations in Queer Photography at the Leslie-Lohman Museum with Matt Jensen.

Ka-Man Tse

My image-making begins from the tension between longing and belonging, place and placelessness. Through my photography, I am asking questions of home, community, family that is inherited and chosen, identity formation and subject-hood. What does it mean to look, who gets to do the looking, what does it mean to be seen? In considering notions of the margin, we ask, whose histories are told or centered, and who's made invisible? In these liminal spaces, my camera allows me to center and reshape these narratives. My photographs address a desire to negotiate multiple and diasporic identities and are made within the intersection of Asian and Pacific Islander (API) and LGBTQ communities. These seven photographs in this edit for Nueva Luz (2014 – 2018) were made between the U.S. and

Hong Kong—through a queer lens. My images take place in this potentiality of in-between and as a proposition. They are made in private and public spaces out of a need to occupy and hold the landscape, space, and frame; to establish a sense of personal space and agency where it is often contested and contingent. The images are built collaboratively with my subjects, involving oral history, memories, and reimagining; a queering and “querying” of the everyday and overlooked. The project combines interviews and collaborative portraits with still lives as well as images of the landscape—employing construction, subtraction, density, compression, liminal spaces, as metaphor. Out of this circular journey, I recast this world to see it repopulated and reimagined, with my protagonists and kinfolk: both inherited and created.



Ka-Man Tse . *Untitled, Narrow Distances series* . 2015



Ka-Man Tse . *Untitled, Narrow Distances series* . 2018



Ka-Man Tse . *Untitled, Narrow Distances series* . 2017



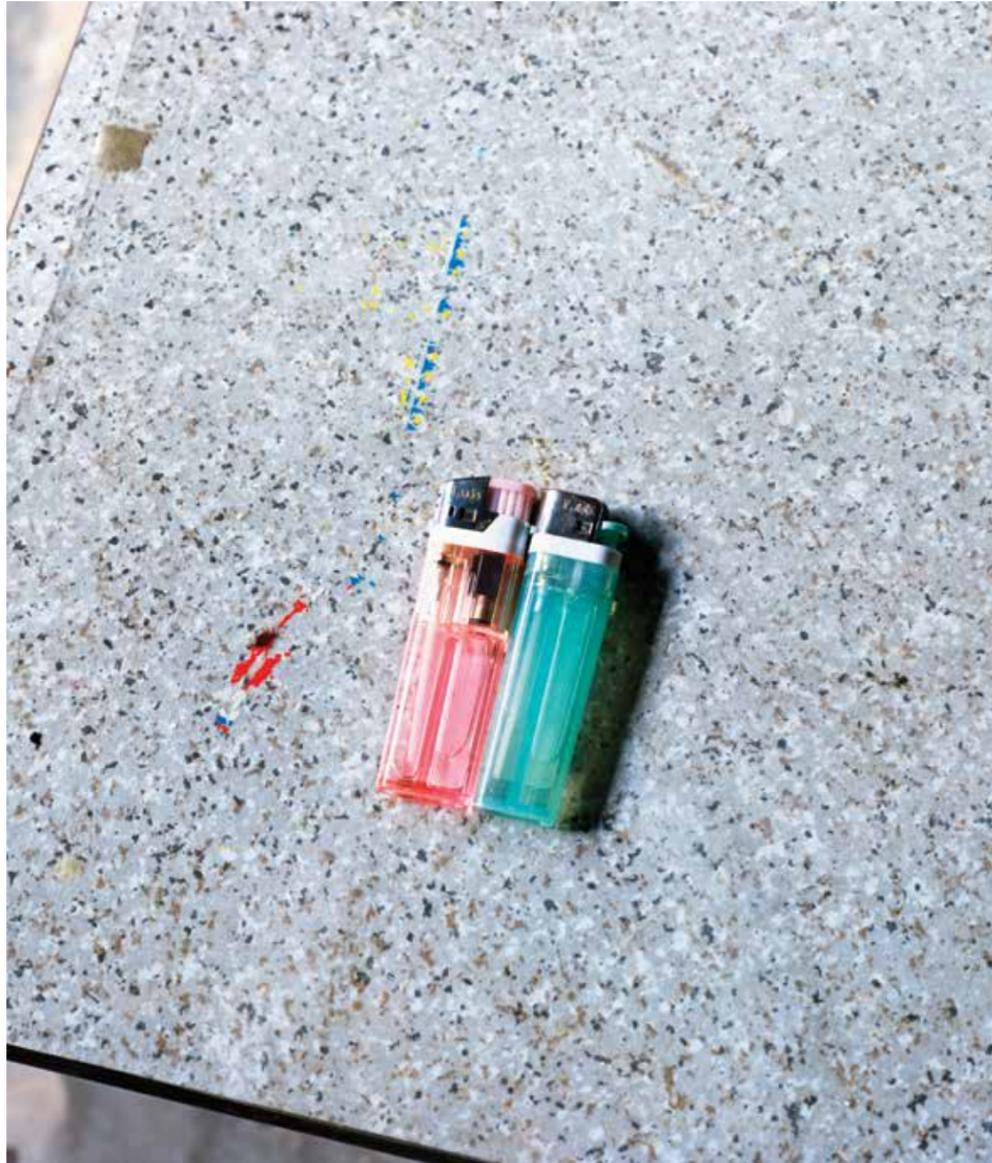
Ka-Man Tse . *Untitled, Narrow Distances series* . 2016

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Ka-Man Tse . *Untitled, Narrow Distances series* . 2017

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Ka-Man Tse . *Untitled, Narrow Distances series* . 2014



Ka-Man Tse . *Untitled, Narrow Distances series* . 2017



Derick Whitson was born in 1991, in Mansfield, Ohio and lives and works in New York City. Earned his MFA at Columbia University and BFA from Columbus College of Art and Design. Working within the realms of Photography, Video and Performance. Whitson's work has been published in Miami New Times, Huffington Post, and The Advocate. Whitson has participated in many residencies across the U.S., including programs at Mass MoCA, The Fountainhead (Miami), and the AICAD/New York Studio Residency Program. His work has been exhibited at The Studio Museum in Harlem and The Center for Fine Art Photography in Fort Collins, Colorado.

Derick Whitson

The presentation of current culture provides an overdetermination of the ego showing sexual and personal politics. The body is used as a toll and source to communicate ways of physical stimulation and desire. Standards of social media implications and social contemporary photographic platforms are celebrated, critiqued, and questioned as I am continuing to produce staged imagery that is in communication with historical platforms. The actions and reactions of people are solely based on their believed perception of reality. The

performance of self in relation to how we present ourselves to people is an external appearance form of expression. There are pioneers, subcultures, and individuals that are transforming the masking, questioning roles of identity in race and gender through costuming and humor/entertainment through pain. I use photography to create a new form of identification through methods of masking. I see this form of representation as an explorative generation of power through image making. There's a need to deconstruct

ideologies based on appearance through imagery. Although the queer community has embraced and is holding power through the representation of the ego in the nightlife scene, between social platforms that celebrate visual aesthetics of visible stimulation, there's a shortage of intellectually acknowledging and retracing the original negative intents of how masking currently subconsciously affects society. My photographic work is political, subversive, affirmative, imagery that forms a racial and gender non-conforming empathic utopia.



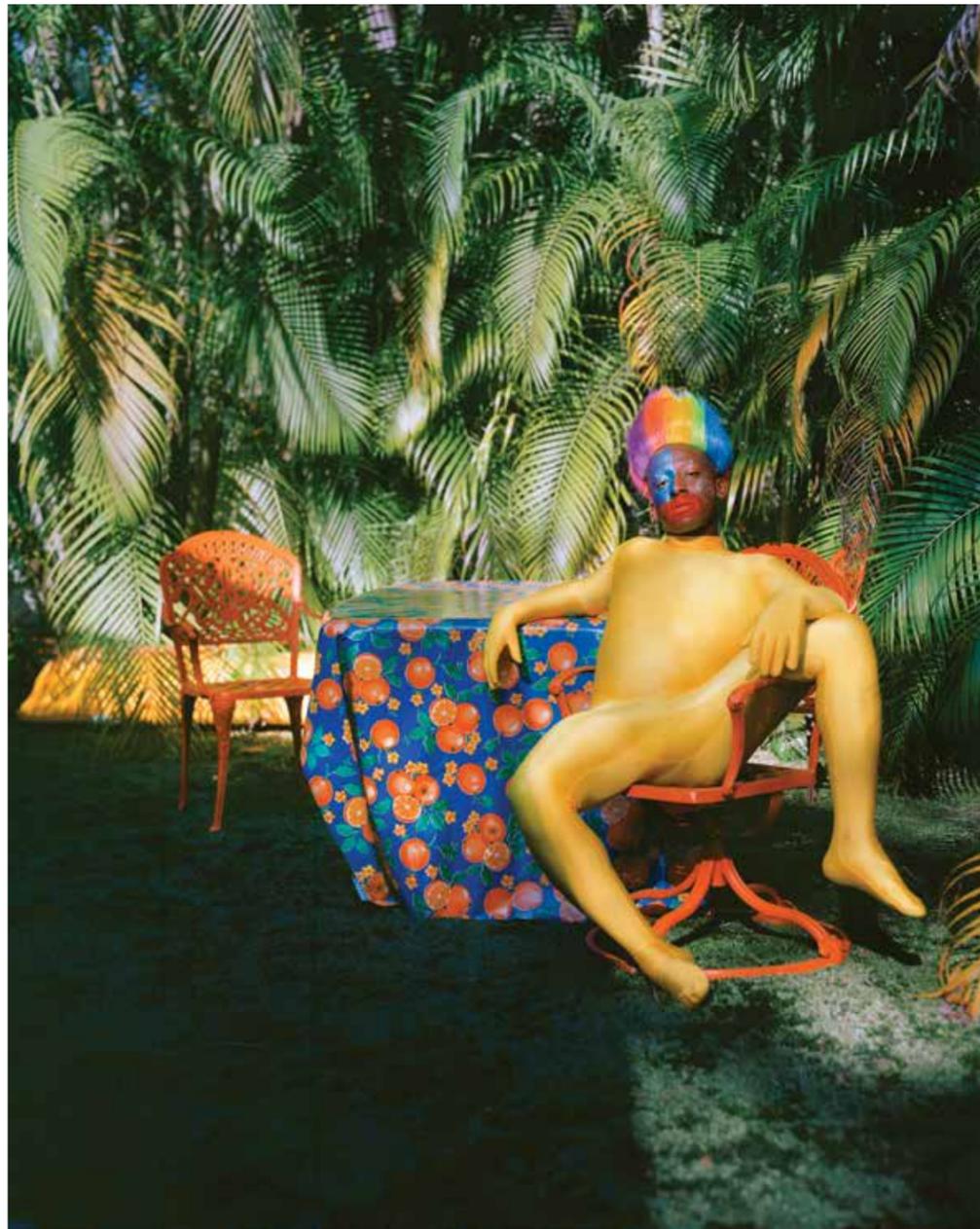
Derick Whitson . *Untitled, Sugar (Chapter II) series* . 2018



Derick Whitson . *Untitled, Sugar (Chapter II) series* . 2018



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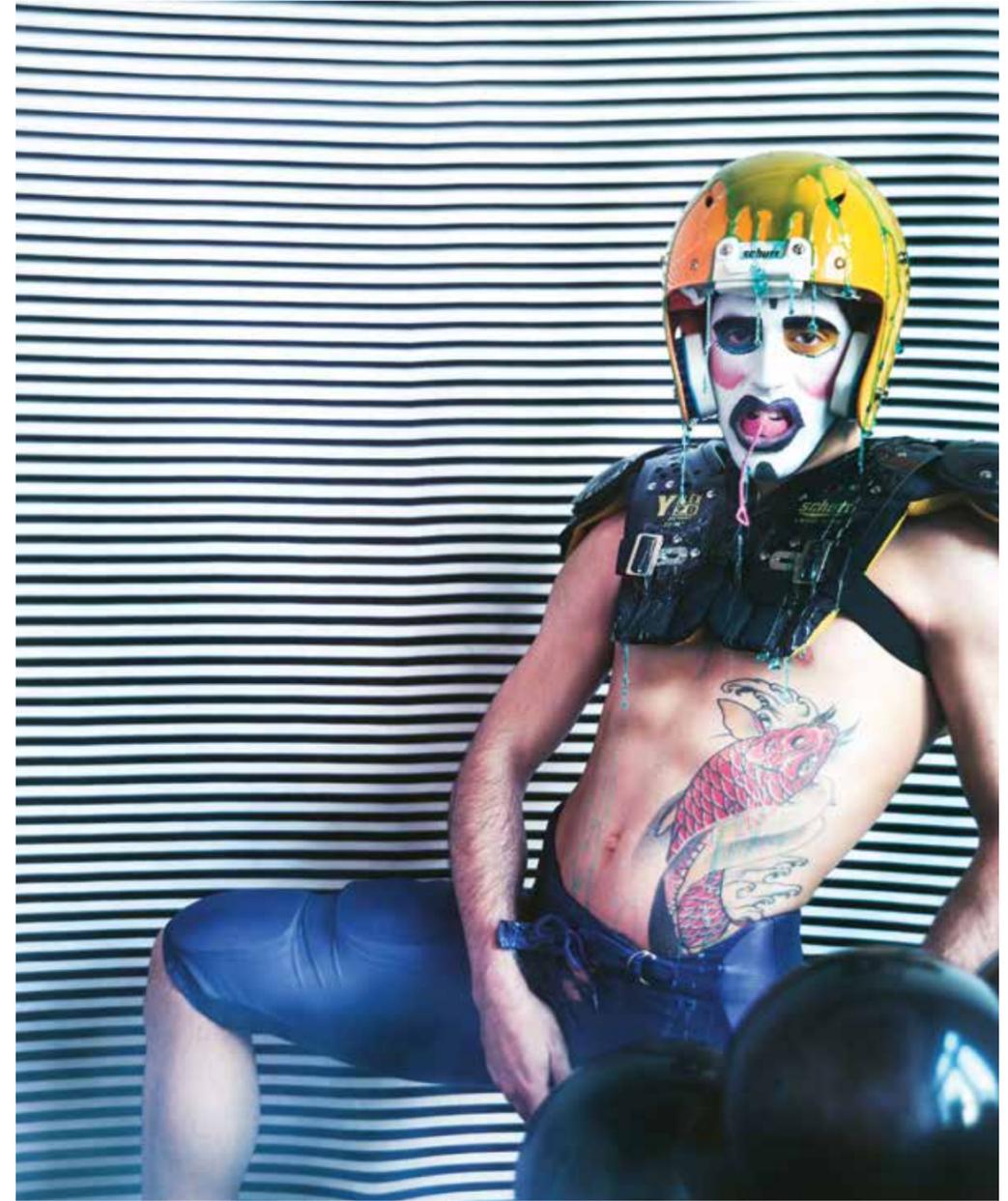
Derick Whitson . *Untitled, Sugar (Chapter II) series* . 2018



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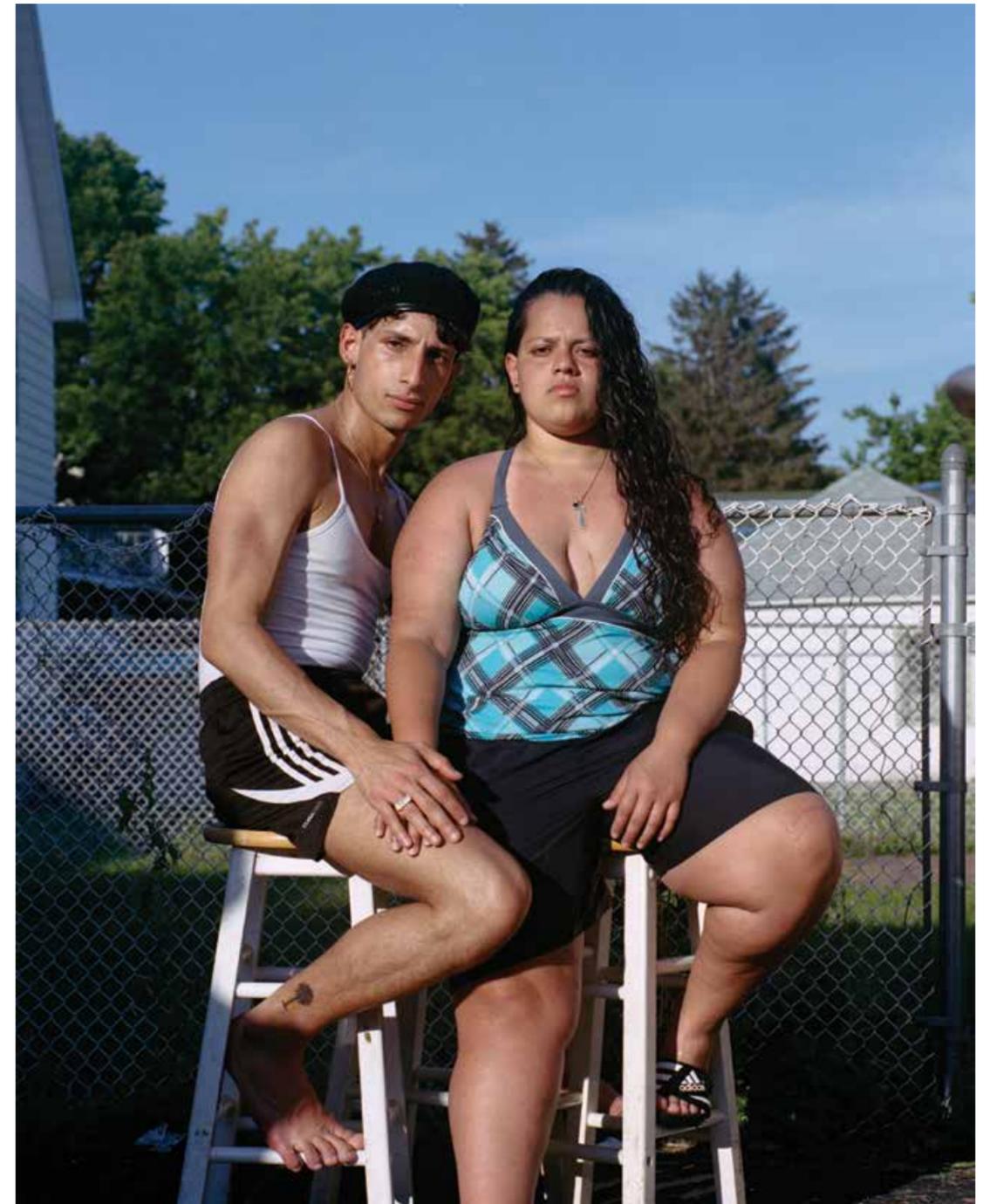


María José was born in Caguas, Puerto Rico in 1992. María José is a photographer, performer, and poet. As a photographer, María focuses on The Portrait; with deep, ongoing consideration of ethical casting, enthusiastic consent/collaboration, fair representation/compensation, and artistic responsibility. Stylistically, her photographs are classic, soft, and upfront. Thematically, the images examine queerness, family, community, nudity, politics, and romance with trans identity at their core. In 2015 she received her BFA in Photography at Parsons The New School of Design, and was chosen as one of the winners of the Pride Photo Award. María José has been included in group exhibitions at the Old Church in Amsterdam, MoMA PS1, Site/109, and the Sheila Johnson Design Center in New York. She currently lives and works in San Juan, Puerto Rico.

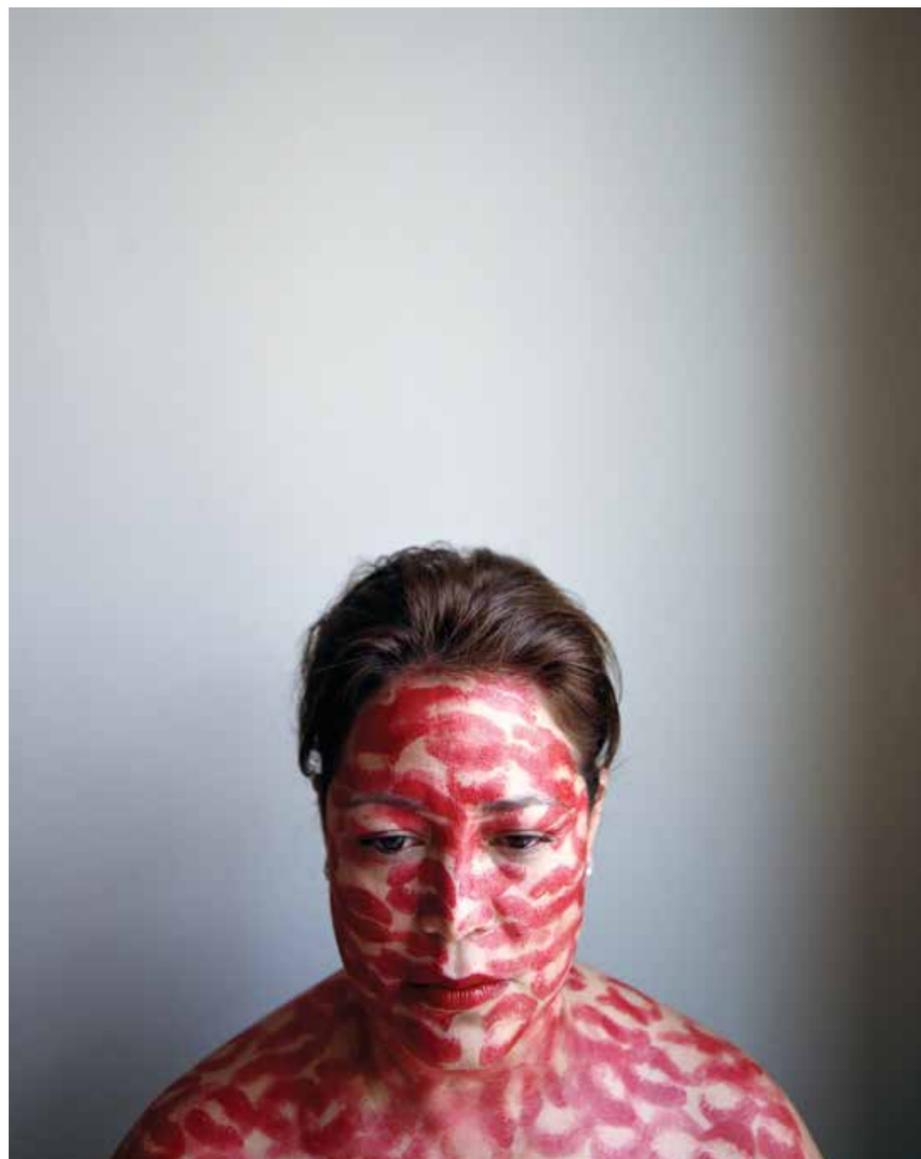
María José

Over the last two years, I set out to make a new series of portraits. This work comes out of a frustration with the ways in which photographers cast for commercial ends and political positioning under the guise of diversity. Diversity does not need to be sought; diversity is around us. Considering this, I do not generally set out to cast people in my work: I simply allow people into my intimate life and in front of the lens. This is an ongoing process of dismantling

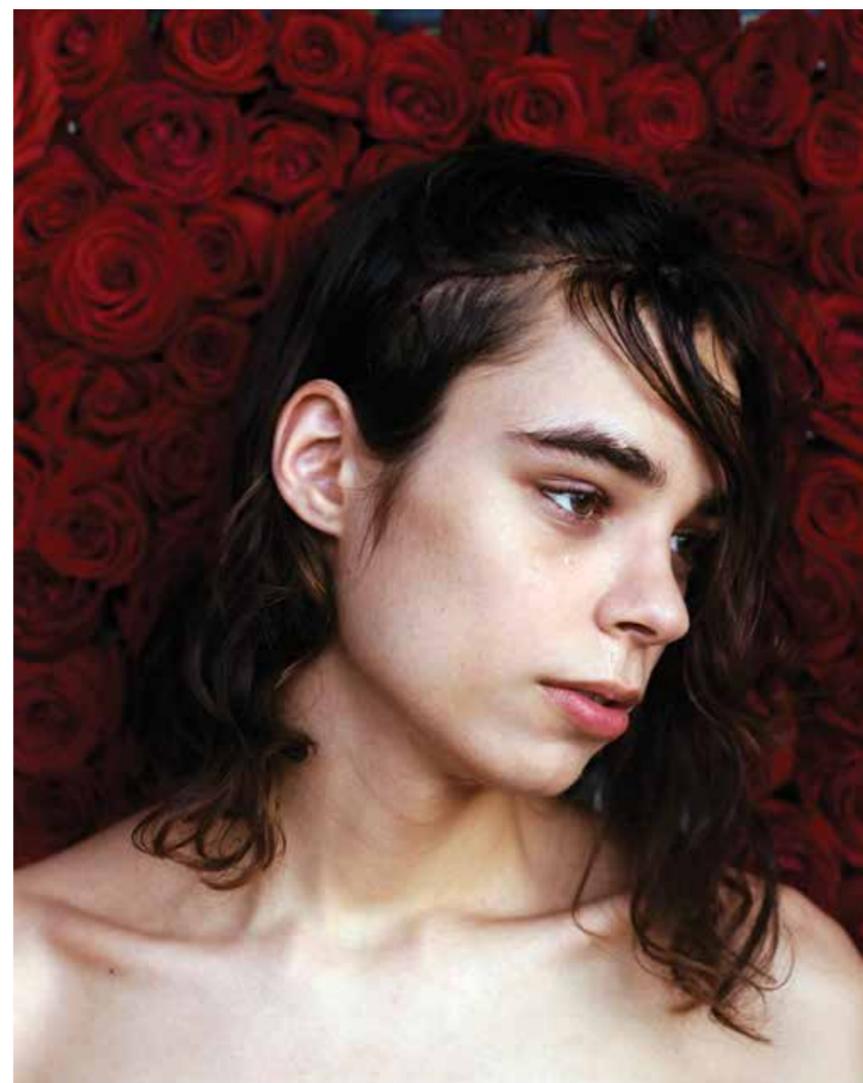
the ways in which I was taught to relate to the world, by queering and decolonizing the portrait. As a whole, the images are concerned with love, beauty, desire, family, dependency, identity, transition, transformation; femininity, pain, tiredness, silence, and divinity. Through photography and formal considerations such as line, lighting, color, and composition, the people in my images and I elevate the day to day into classic iconography.



María José . *Fernando and Katrina, Pool Party* . 2017



María José . *I Kissed My Mother 100 Times (I've never been kissed there before)* . 2015



María José . *Ode To Massima* . 2016



María José . *Andres sin su mamá* . 2017



María José . *Massima, 10 minutes* . 2016



María José . *Leo, Leo* . 2016



María José . *Massima, Space minutes* . 2016



Gabriel Martínez is a Cuban American multidisciplinary artist originally from Miami, FL. His practice is primarily based in Philadelphia, PA, and his work is represented by Samson Projects in Boston, MA. Martínez was a Pew Fellowship in the Arts recipient in 2001 and was a Joan Mitchell Foundation Fellowship recipient in 2003. He has received two Individual Artists Grants from the Pennsylvania Council on the Arts. Martínez has participated in several national artist residencies and artist-in-residence programs including: The Rosenbach Museum and Library, The Fabric Workshop and Museum, both in Philadelphia; Atlantic Center for the Arts and The Fountainhead Residency, Florida; Arcadia Summer Arts Program, Maine; MacDowell Colony, New Hampshire; Yaddo, New York; The Studios at MASS MoCA, North Adams, MA; and the Joan Mitchell Center in New Orleans.

Gabriel Martínez

My artistic endeavors often explore issues facing queer people, intermingled with Cuban undertones of influence, reflection, and symbolism. For most of my artistic career, I've investigated various themes related to masculinity from a queer perspective. I have worked on projects that touch upon various aspects of gay culture. Some of my influences include Donna Summer, the AIDS epidemic, the aesthetics of disco, the films of Wakefield

Poole, the novels of John Rechy, and the enigma of Fire Island. Lately, I've been specifically focused upon LGBTQ history, with a particular interest in the milieu of the 1970s. It was a period of intense struggle, but also an era of outrageous courage and creativity, sexual liberation and pride in community. It was also the time of my own childhood growing up in Miami, which I look back upon with a great sense of admiration and empathy.



Gabriel Martínez . *Queer Eclipse (Darkroom)* . 2016



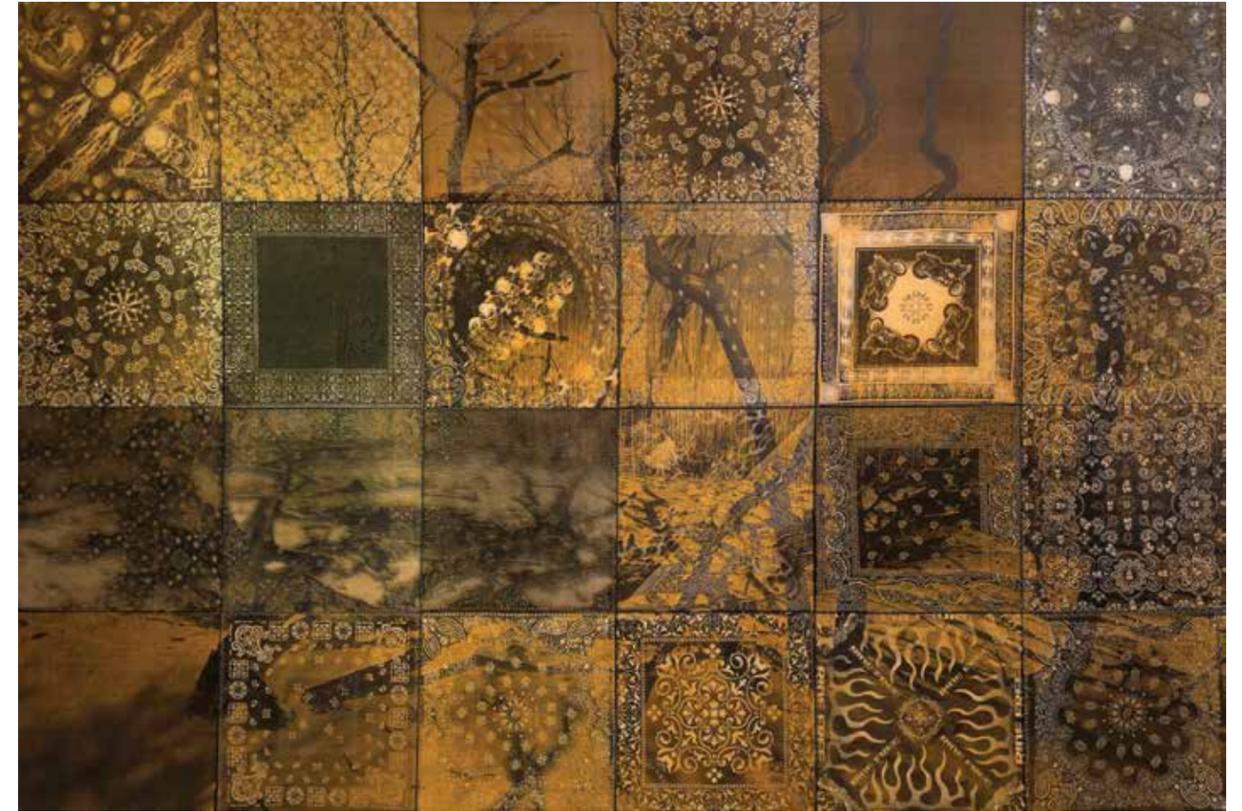
Gabriel Martínez . *BITS (Bayside 4)* Courtesy: Wakefield Poole . 2015



Gabriel Martínez . *Grove Hotel* . 2015



Gabriel Martínez . *Caridad* . 2017



Gabriel Martínez . *Live Hard* . 2015



Gabriel Martínez . BITS (Inside 1) Courtesy: Wakefield Poole . 2015



Gabriel Martínez . BITS (Pool 1) Courtesy: Wakefield Poole . 2015

An Artist Profile: Luis Carle



Born in Puerto Rico and moved to New York City in 1984. Carle first studied photography at Parsons School of Design and worked as artist and photographer's assistant to various well-known photographers. In the 1990s, Carle started working for various magazines and newspapers including: Latina Magazine, CRN Magazine, Footwear News, El Diario La Prensa, San Juan Star and El Nuevo Día. Carle joined advertising campaigns like Cutty Sark, AT&T, OBRI Cosmetics, and participated in many documentary films. In 1992 he founded and directed O.P. Art, Inc. (The Organization of Puerto Rican Artists, Inc.), a not-for-profit run by artist's collective, that has been recognized as an important source of Latin art by the New York Regional Center of the Smithsonian Institute (1999), The Museum of Modern Art (2006), the NYC Public Library, and accepted by NYFA's Fiscal Sponsorship program. Carle was the visual arts curator for the NuyoRican Poets Café in the East Village, New York, and his photographs have captured the essence of a life well lived and have received numerous critiques from The New York Times, Daily News and other art magazines.

Photograph Rodríguez Calero

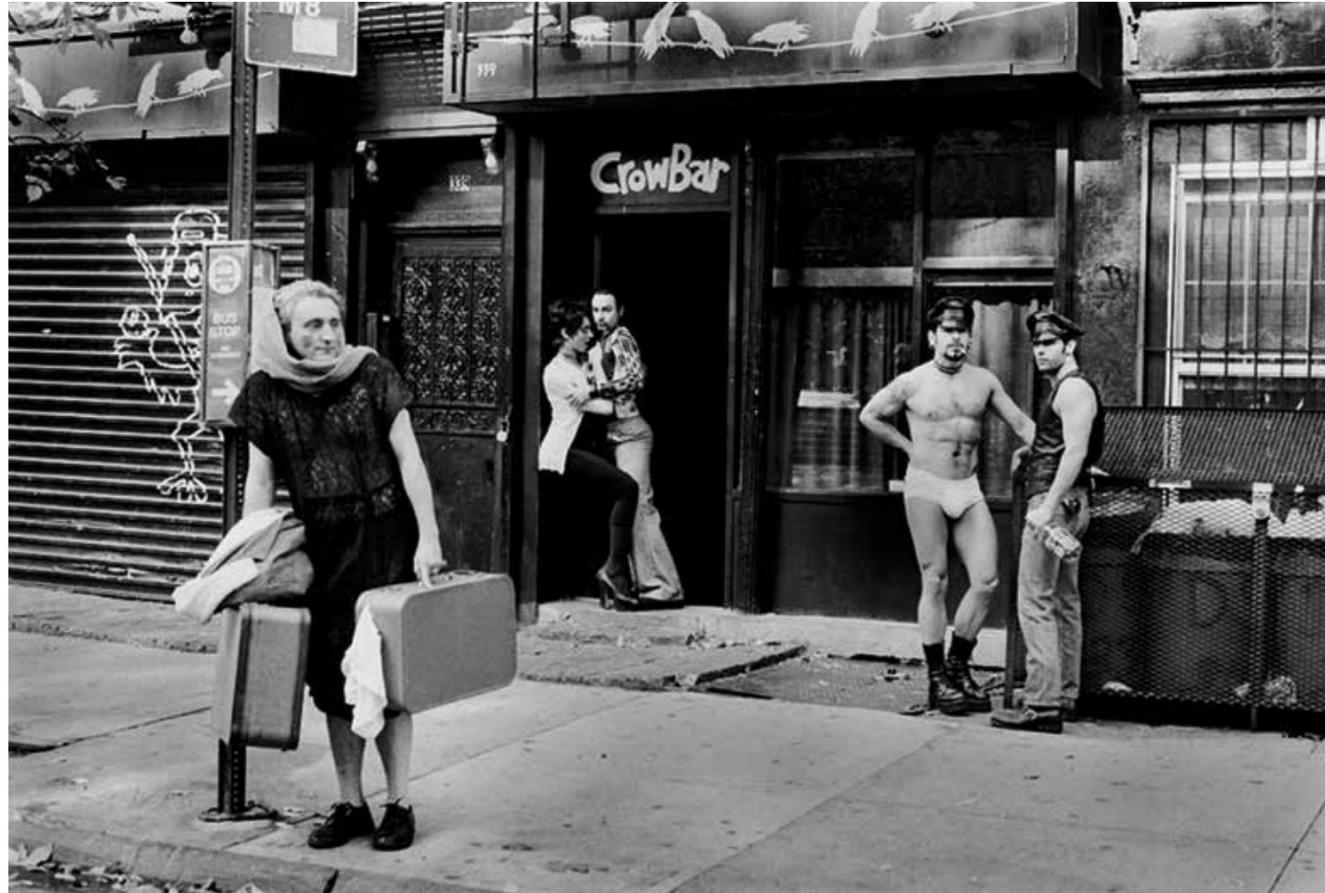
Luis Carle, is a New York based photographer by way of San Juan, Puerto Rico. As a gay latino photographer Carle captured the height of the AIDS Crisis in NYC. Through his effort to document life, he represented the duality of life during the Crisis for gay men - the fear of death, and the courage to live freely, and authentically. Many of Carle's photographs feature young men enjoying themselves, finding solace in their communities, and enjoying in the sexual liberation that came with being young, and gay in New York City. As an activist, Carle marched along side the pioneers of the Gay Right's Movement and his photographs are important pieces of Queer History. En Foco recognizes the efforts of Luis Carle, and the following essay comes from a conversation between Luis and En Foco's Director Bill Aguado.

Puerto Rico historically was a gay travel destination, which influenced the spread of American culture by older white Gay men, seeking the company of young Puerto Rican males and ultimately the spread of sexually transmitted disease and HIV/AIDS. The spread of HIV/AIDS, and the fear of mortality influenced many young artists to create fearless work. The predatory nature of the older gay white male seeking young Puerto Rican men, was the rite of passage for many and created "opportunities" to move into social circles, not normally accessible to those young men in Puerto Rico. In many instances the older gay artist provided upward career mobility for emerging Puerto Rican artists.

During the early 1980s Luis Carle began his studies as a photographer and at the same time fell into the gay partying culture of the Ocean Beach section of San Juan, Puerto Rico. It was through this community, and cultural experience that granted Luis access, opportunity and the necessary connections to pursue his career. In the mid-1980s Luis Carle relocated to New York City to begin his studies at Parsons School of Design. He was becoming a very successful photographer in the fashion industry, traveling through the United States and Europe. As a staff photographer for Latina Magazine he documented the cultural lifestyles in Puerto Rico and New York City.

As successful as he was as an artist, Luis soon realized that very little effort was made to preserve the artworks of Puerto Rican visual artists. Then, and much like today, artists of color have been excluded from the general mainstream market. The AIDS Crisis raised another concern, who would protect the memory and legacies, of all those artists who were dying? To address this concern Luis Carle created the Organization of Puerto Rican Artists Inc, also known as O.P. Art, Inc. The priority was to promote the quality of the work, and exhibit works produced by Puerto Rican artists that have been systematically excluded by the mainstream culture of the arts, and showcased a large community of Puerto Rican Artists from 1993 until 2013. The O.P. Art archives are now a part of the Hunter College Libraries. Carle has been a prolific Photographer, activist, advocate for artists of color and a pioneer of the canon of queer photography.

BILL AGUADO . NYC . 2018



Luis Carle . *The CroWBar, NYC* . 1994



Luis Carle . *The National March on Washington for Lesbian and Gay Rights* . 1994

OpEd: upon their shoulders

“But when we begin to live from within outward, in touch with the power of the erotic within ourselves, and allowing that power to inform and illuminate our actions upon the world around us, then we begin to be responsible to ourselves in the deepest sense.”

Audre Lorde¹

This **Op Ed** is a pilot Initiative, designed for Artists, Curators, Cultural Workers of Color specifically to voice their thoughts and opinions on contemporary cultural issues. We invite all to respond to us and with space permitting, we will publish related commentary in the next Nueva Luz Issue. We will also make all related responses available on our website and through social media. This issue’s Op Ed piece is submitted by **Stephanie A. Lindquist**, Director of **BronxArtSpace**. Her thoughts reflect the need for a more authentic representation of Queer Art History. Lindquist highlights the efforts of several influential Queer Artists of Color. She reminds us of the issues QPOC are still grappling with, and demands that we follow in the footsteps of queer pioneers and strive for visibility.

In celebration of En Foco’s Volume 22.1 of Nueva Luz, featuring all queer photographers of color, let us remember those artists that have come before us, who received belated attention for creating a more nuanced queer history through their lenses.

As a queer artist of color looking for my identity reflected in the world, it is immensely gratifying to plumb our past in pursuit of queer photographers that have paved the way for me and others. It is equally satisfying to watch a growing number of contemporary queer artists of color pushing our predecessors’ boundaries.

As access to the tools of photography has widened post-1960s, more queer photographers of color are documenting their communities and unique perspectives in the world against a backdrop of historically-rampant violence against race, culture, gender expression, and sexual identity.

While their apparent invisibility pervades our mainstream media and art history canon, there are significant examples of queer photographers of color working in the 1970s, 1980s and 1990s, including Laura Aguilar (1959-2018), Ajamu X (b. 1963), Lyle Ashton Harris (b. 1965), Alvin Baltrop (1948-2004), Macario “Tosh” Carrillo (-1983), Rotimi Fani-Kayode (1955-1989), Mumtaz Karimjee (b. 1950), Hahn Thi Pham (b. 1954), among others.

For many queer artists of color, the addition of black, brown, and non-cis bodies to the art history canon is a primary objective. Mickalene Thomas and Kehinde Wiley, for instance, insert queer figures of color into European compositions as a strategy for creating equity and hopefully empathy within the popular imagination. Not only are the figures queer POC, the artists’ gaze is queer as well.

Commissioned by a mental health conference, Laura Aguilar extends to us her perspective of queer Chicanas in her series *Latina Lesbians*, a series of black and white portraits accompanied by her subjects’ handwritten monologues (1986-1990). Through portraiture, landscape, and even the absence of the figure, these artists subvert the white cis gaze, promoting images and identities of queerness, while saturating their audience’s consciousness with the humanity of LGBTQIA+. Because photography has historically been used by white cis men as a weapon to devalue POC and queer bodies, it is vital that today’s photographers continue the work of rewriting our historical narratives and establishing LGBTQIA+ authorship in face of risks.

The degree of risk varies by identity and political geography. Nigerian photographer Rotimi Fani-Kayode confessed that, “On three counts I am an outsider: in matters of sexuality; in terms of geographical and cultural dislocation; and in the sense of not having become the sort of respectably-married professional my parents might have hoped for.” While today’s queer white cis-gendered artists may feel they are “living in an unprecedented time of acceptance and openness of queer lifestyles,”² black lesbian photographer and activist Zanele Muholi and her subjects are familiar with the deadly physical risks they take in documenting the strength and positivity of queer lives in South Africa. Those QTPOC in the U.S. are far more likely to be victims of hate crimes than queer/trans, non-people of color.

Intersectionality is real. Black feminists since the 19th century, from Anna Julia Cooper to Audre Lorde, have attested to how multiple sources of oppression collide, magnifying social inequality. In my search for queer photographers of color, I uncovered few women—testimony to the difficulties of seizing visibility (power) for queer, women, and those of color from the 1960s to the 1990s. Exceptions such as Vietnamese-American Hahn Thi Pham and British-Indian Mumtaz Karimjee demand more research, who bravely asserted their identities as lesbians of color.

Before the 1970s few MFA programs accepted candidates of color, and arts institutions and the market have only begun to value the work of queer POC. In the 1970s black queer Bronxite and Vietnam veteran Alvin Baltrop documented homosexual public sex, homelessness and decay along Manhattan’s West Side Piers. While curators and gallerists ignored his work, took advantage of his illness later in life, and accused him of stealing others’ work, his work has begun to show internationally and be collected by institutions such as the Whitney Museum of American Art—ten years after his death. Despite the art market’s rush to self-correct itself after decades of institutional disparity, inequity persists in education/academia, healthcare, and the market/workplace for POC, women and LGBTQIA+.

To date there is no federal legal protection in the workplace for sexual orientation or gender identity in the U.S., and nearly half of states also lack legal protections. One-fifth of queer Americans have experienced discrimination in the workplace. This statistic increases to 27% for transgender employees and 32% for those of color.³

The median wealth of non-Hispanic white household (\$171,000) is 10 times larger than that of black households (\$17,000).⁴ White women still make \$.80 on the dollar compared to white men. Black women earn \$.63 on the dollar, and Latinas and Native Americans, \$.54 and \$.57 respectively.⁵ Women artists earn one third of what men do.⁶ To make matters worse, 56% of LGBTQ and 70% of transgender and non-conforming patients have experienced some sort of discrimination within the U.S. healthcare system.⁷

Needless to say, HIV/AIDS continues to have a terrifying impact on gay and bisexual men in the U.S. and the world despite achievements in prevention and treatment. During the United Nations’ High Level Meeting on Ending AIDS in 2016, “over 50 countries blocked the access of LGBTQ+ groups from participating in the meeting”, so that “the final resolution barely mentioned several groups that are most affected by HIV/AIDS, men who have sex with men, transgender people, people who inject drugs, and sex workers.”⁸

Over 35 million people have died since the epidemic began, one-million of whom died in 2016. There are approximately 37 million people living with HIV/AIDS worldwide today, of which about 6% are under 15 years of age. Seventy percent of people living with HIV (PLWH) are living in Africa. Six percent of PLWH live in Europe and North America.⁸ Among the 1.2 million PLWH in the US, 55% are gay or bisexual men, although they only account for 2% of the population. At these rates 1/6 gay and bisexual men in the U.S. will be diagnosed in their lifetime. This rate increases to 1/4 for Latino men and 1/2 for Black men.⁹ While women accounted for 19% of HIV diagnosis in the U.S., in 2016, 61% were African-American.¹⁰

Despite the huge response of artists to the epidemic, and support of organizations like the Leslie-Lohman Museum of Gay and Lesbian Art (which began collecting art of dying artists in the 1980s), and Visual AIDS founded in 1988, it wasn't until 2015 that U.S. museums began to tackle this history head on.

Decades after the epidemic began, when an HIV diagnosis is no longer a death sentence if given access to timely treatment, some white cisgender queer artists feel their work can indulge more subtle emotions outside of the crisis.² Perhaps this luxury reflects more what the market is willing to see and value than the actual nuances captured by today's queer artists of color, who have made significant inroads in shedding light on their communities and lifestyles. Regardless of the market's desires, the internet and new online archives provide a platform for QTPOC across states and countries to connect and proliferate thoughtful and complex images.

In a 2012 interview published on Blouin ArtInfo titled "I Dislike the Word Visibility": Wu Tsang on Sexuality, Creativity and Conquering New York's Museums, Tsang criticizes this notion of increased visibility of queer and trans artists as a form of assimilation into mainstream media. Instead "Success [for Tsang] is more about privilege and motivation and power, and it can be used to create change."¹¹ While I agree that visibility for its own sake is an empty pursuit, when harnessed to touch the world's subconscious it can be a powerful tool to affect real change.

Rather than accept external pressures to deny our truer selves and assimilate into mainstream media, black lesbian warrior poet Audre Lorde encourages us to dig deep into our erotic source of power to reveal our most authentic selves and "live from within outward", in every breath and action we take. Artist David Wojnarowicz reminds us that this is far from easy: "To make the private into something public is an action that has terrific ramifications." One only has to be reminded of the grave differences in legal protection, education, the workplace, and healthcare system to see its ramifications.

1-11: Citations available on enfoco.org.



Hailing from Los Angeles, **Stephanie A. Lindquist** is an artist and Director of **BronxArtSpace**. As an arts administrator she advocates for often overlooked artists from the Bronx and communities of color across gender and sexual expressions, namely through BAS's offsite residency program and open call for local curators. Her current artwork is inspired by historical and botanical research of indigenous food plants from around the world, and takes the form of photography, collage, prints and video. Her work has been exhibited at Google, the New York Public Library, the Allen Hospital, the Bronx Museum, El Museo del Barrio, Smack Mellon, SPRING/BREAK Art Show, The New Museum, San Diego Art Institute and the Elizabeth Foundation for the Arts.



Ruth Rodriguez *Lipstick Series Unraveling Polkadot* 2016 Collage and Silkscreen on Paper 18" x 24"

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image: Daesha Devón Harris, *You Bid Me Hold My Peace and Dry My Fruitless Tears, Forgetting That I Bear a Pain Beyond My Years*, exhibited in the artist's solo show at Blue Sky, June 2018.