

THE REAL THING

JUNO CALYPSO, NATASHA CARUANA,
PIXY LIAO & MELANIE WILLHIDE

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Opening Reception Thursday January 28, 6 - 8pm

Panel Discussion moderated by Elisabeth Biondi Saturday January 30, 4pm

Flowers Gallery is pleased to announce an exhibition of the work of four female photographers, who experiment with gender roles, sexuality, and constructed identity, often putting themselves and their relationships with others in the frame.

Pixy Liao's *Experimental Relationship* navigates the dynamics of power within partnerships between men and women. As a woman brought up in China, Liao describes the perception of an ideal male partner as being older and more mature, playing an authoritative role of protector and mentor. Since meeting her current partner, Moro, who is five years younger, Liao has begun to experiment with alternative possibilities, interweaving a fictional narrative in a series of constructed self-portraits. Photographed within domestic or pastoral scenes, the couple are often locked in embrace with the male body unclothed. The artist uses her body to grip, shield, or brace the male figure, accentuating the shifting balance of their relationship.

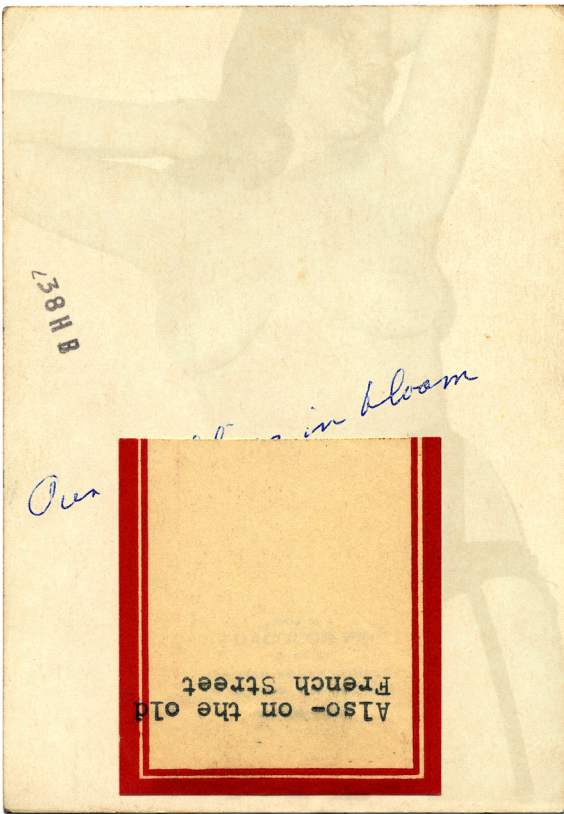


Pixy Liao, *Some Words are Just Between You and Me*, 2010

Working in a documentary mode, Natasha Caruana's series *Married Man* captures the exchanges between the artist and men who she met through online sites devoted to matchmaking for married people. Posing as a potential partner, Caruana secretly filmed their encounters, focusing on the peripheral details of the setting, as though presenting clues for the viewer to decipher. Caruana questions their motivations of the men beyond the temptations of sexual desire, suggesting unfulfilled expectations and underlying states of loneliness and alienation.

Juno Calypso has created a series of self-portraits in which she stages herself as a fictional character named Joyce. Alone in rented bedrooms and honeymoon suites, Calypso performs solitary rituals of seduction, applying mysterious looking cosmetic substances and electronic anti-aging devices. Through Calypso's lens the artificial setting of the hotel bathroom becomes joyless and oppressive. Directing Joyce's gaze towards her own invented image, which is often duplicated and refracted by the use of multiple mirrors, Calypso's character appears weighed down by the laboured construction of her own femininity.

Melanie Willhide takes the idea of intimate vernacular portraits, created as tokens between lovers, as the inspiration for her series *Sleeping Beauties (The Box Under the Bed)*. Willhide fabricates plausibly antique photographs complete with personalised messages and markings on the reverse, carefully simulating the glue stains, fingerprints, watermarks, scrawls, tints and text. Through her digital overlaying of the front and reverse sides, the portrait and text are superimposed, becoming partially obscured. By creating artificial artifacts, Willhide meditates on the memory and loss of early moments of romance, while presenting the photographic document as an absurd proxy for the real thing.



Melanie Willhide, *Shallow Breath Thinking Of You*, 2007

ABOUT THE ARTISTS

Pixy Yijun Liao was born and raised in Shanghai, China, and currently resides in Brooklyn, NY. Liao holds a MFA in photography from University of Memphis, and she is a recipient of the NYFA Fellowship; En Foco's New Works Fellowship; and the LensCulture Exposure Awards. Liao's photographs have been exhibited in the USA, China, Taiwan, Korea, Lebanon, UK and The Netherlands.

Natasha Caruana lives and works in London, UK. She has an MA in photography from the Royal College of Art, London and is a Senior Lecturer of Photography at the University for the Creative Arts, Surrey, UK. Her work has been exhibited widely internationally. In 2014 Caruana was named as the winner of the BMW Artist in Residence Award 2014 at musée Nicéphore Niépce, France. She has been named as the one to watch in the Royal Photographic Society Journal and selected by the Humble Arts Foundation as one of 18 leading female art photographers currently working in the UK.

Juno Calypso lives and works in London, UK. She graduated with a BA (Hons) in photography from London College of Communication, University of the Arts, London in 2012. She was a winner of the LCC Hotshoe Portfolio Award 2012; the Michael Wilson Award 2012; and was the Visitor Vote Winner of the Catlin Art Prize 2013. She has recently been named a winner of the British Journal of Photography's International Photography Awards 2016. Her work has been exhibited in the UK, USA, South Korea, Mexico and Switzerland.

Melanie Willhide lives and works in Los Angeles, California. She holds an MFA from Yale University School of Art. She has exhibited throughout the United States for nearly two decades. Her work has been reviewed and featured in the New York Times, the Los Angeles Times, Blind Spot, Art in America and Modern Painters.

NOTES TO EDITORS

For more information and images, please contact Brent Beamon Brent@flowersgallery.com

Opening Hours: Tuesday - Saturday 10am - 6pm

Image Credits: *Images courtesy of Flowers Gallery, London and New York*



Natasha Caruana, *Primrose Hill #2*, 2008-09



Juno Calypso, *Seaweed Wrap*, 2015