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Efrem Zelony-Mindell, February 12 2016




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NEW PHOTO EXHIBITION PUSHES THE BOUNDARIES OF FEMININITY AND GENDER ROLES

February 12, 2016 by [Efrem Zelony-Mindell](#) | [0 Comments](#)



Massage Mask, 2015 © Juno Calypso




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LEO XU PROJECTS



Get a firm grasp of your man, 2010 © Pixy Yijun Liao

Flowers Gallery in New York City has mounted a show, *The Real Thing*, which focuses on four female photographers whose works highlight roles of gender and identity. There's a surge of focus on the study of human sexuality and identity; male or female, straight, gay or otherwise. [Juno Calypso](#), [Natasha Caruana](#), [Pixy Liao](#), and [Melanie Willhide](#) use their photographic processes as a means to experiment further with feminine ideals.

These women are redefining femininity and preconceived notions about how women behave. By using themselves, and their own intimate experiences, they are able to pose new questions about the female gaze, and body. Running the gamut from novel to performance, if not total surrealism, the show doesn't have a dull moment.

Natasha Caruana is an engaging English documentarian. Her body of work, *Married Man*, is as much about the mundane as it is about the unseen, even secretive. Armed with a disposable camera and her poise, Caruana would arrange, with the assistance of online matchmaking sites, meetings between her and numerous married men. Men looking to have affairs. She would meet these men with the intention of capturing moments with her camera of the in between, much the way the men were wanting something in between. It is this relationship of awkwardness and silence from which the intimacy of her photos comes. Caruana's photos are blunt and full of mysterious, unsure tension. *Married Men* questions the certainty—or rather uncertainty—of intimacy.

There is a yearning novelty to capture images of relationships. Often these documents of passed love find their way into dusty archives hidden in places, under beds, attics, and the like. These tattered photographic representations can hold a faded joy as much as ignite spite. Melanie Willhide is interested in the fabrication of these antique mementos. *Sleeping Beauties* is a series of collaged and carefully crafted images. Willhide has constructed images full of processes, age, technique, and touch. Her fables reflect on memory and loss; a totally absurd farce, Willhide's flawless fakes juxtapose play between imaginary and actuality.

Juno Calypso is a maker of estranged realities, allowing her own body to become an otherly creature. Her self-portraits follow her character Joyce through a lonely narrative of beauty, body, and transformation. Calypso's images capture the almost occult-like performances of one. Joyce worships to an angel of uncertainty, locked alone in hotel honeymoon suites where she can succumb to her own femininity and vanity. Viewing a Calypso photograph is much like a visit to Stanley Kubrick's room 237.

Pixy Liao's *Experimental Relationship* completes the show's voice. Her images poses questions that challenge rolls of men and women in relationships. Growing up in China, men are meant to provide woman with protection and mentorship. Men are looked at and meant to be older than the woman to whom they are married. Liao currently finds herself in a relationship where she is five years older. Her partner Moro interacts with her in experimental and totally poetic photographic frames. Liao's photos explore the self and how individuals interact and receive each other outside of limitations. Liao embraces Moro's naked body; she shields and looks to nurture him.

Juno Calypso, Natasha Caruana, Pixy Liao, and Natasha Willhide add to photographically significant histories with their images, while still being in conversation with histories of female iconography.

The Real Thing is on view at [Flowers Gallery](#) in New York City through February 27th.



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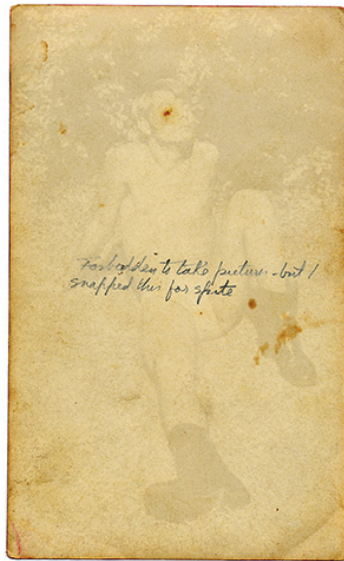
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Seaweed Wrap, 2015 © Juno Calypso

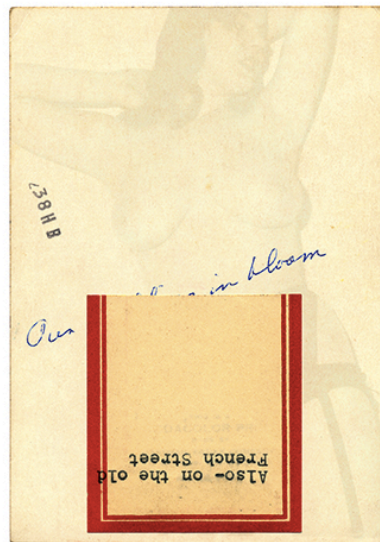


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Shallow Breath Thinking of You, 2007 © Melanie Willhide



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The Barn, 2008-09 © Natasha Caruana



Tiger Tiger, 2008-09 © Natasha Caruana



Some words are just between you and me, 2010 © Pixy Yijun Liao

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