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Alice O'Malley

community of elsewhere

Curated by Antony

March 20 - May 4, 2008

Opening Reception: Thursday, March 20, 7-9pm



kimmy hatelove, NYC, 2001

These pictures are studio portraits of artists who inhabit the frontier of creative thought and individuality today. The subjects are complex, but the technique is quite simple - a 1950s view camera, black and white film, and a natural light studio. The collection contains stolen property from Cecil Beaton's archive, Bellocq's brothel, and Romaine Brooks' paintings of masculine women. The set is downtown Manhattan. The time is a new millennium. (Alice O'Malley)

From March 20 - May 4, 2008, PARTICIPANT INC presents *community of elsewhere*, a suite of black and white photographs by Alice O'Malley, curated by longtime friend and subject, Antony. Over the last seven years, O'Malley has collaborated with scores of downtown New York artists to create a photographic archive of, by and for those who inhabit the peripheries--a document of the affiliations she and Antony have shared for over a decade. Set against backdrops of what seem to be the last empty rooms in a neighborhood reeling from takeover, these portraits derive from the informal rituals of languid afternoon visits and unhurried conversation. While the choice of the silver gelatin print casts her unconventional subjects in enduring relief, O'Malley's unschooled process bears the marks of imperfection that lend to its intimacy. This is the first exhibition devoted exclusively to this major body of work.

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O'Malley's formal studio portraits of artists, performers, and friends depict untraditional people, whose defiant presence counterbalances the increasing obsolescence of such individuals currently being witnessed in New York City today. The Lower East Side has long been a place in which art and the avant-garde function as integral parts of urban life-- O'Malley's portraits provide an intimate look at the people who give it this character.

In these deceptively simple portraits of New York artists and luminaries, Alice O'Malley seems to capture each artist's vision of themselves. While her work can be compared to Peter Hujar in its epic sense of portraiture, or to Nan Goldin in its deconstructed grasp of formal aesthetics, O'Malley's pictures are also like those of a bird-watcher, fascinated by the revelations of nature unfolding before her. (Antony)

In 19th century Paris, Eugène Atget created a record of urban spaces soon to be gone, and a social strata invisible to many. Spirit photography, another visual archive of a vanishing world, gained popular interest in the 19th century, particularly following moments of great loss due to war. Through seemingly alchemical processes, photography discerns the immanent presence of absence, and simultaneously anticipates its opposite: a persistent, future-oriented present. At the turn of the previous century, Lucy Schwob changed her name to Claude Cahun, and went on to manifest the personal as political with her writings, actions, and self-portraits that articulated a multiplicity of gender and female identity--a future feminine. O'Malley draws such sources towards the present to find that a truth of our time may reside in our elsewheres.

Produced in conjunction with the exhibition, *community of elsewheres*, Alice O'Malley produced a limited edition box of 13 silver gelatin prints from the larger body of work, *Rare Orchids*. Edition of 5 (1AP).

Alice O'Malley lives and works in New York City. Last year, her work was included in the group exhibitions *Blow Both of Us* at Participant Inc, *A Rabbit as King of the Ghosts* at Mitchell-Innes & Nash, and *Ides of March* at ABC No Rio. Her photographs have appeared in various publications including *Art in America*, *Flash Art*, and *New York Times Magazine*. She was awarded a six-month residency through the 2007 AAI Rotating Studio Program.

Exhibition prints by Brian Young/Phototechnica.



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PARTICIPANT INC is located at 253 East Houston Street, between Norfolk and Suffolk Streets on the Lower East Side. Subway: F/V to Second Avenue, Allen Street exit.
Gallery Hours: Wednesday-Sunday, noon-7pm
www.participantinc.org