En Foco’s 2020 Photography Fellowship Winners
En Foco & BronxCare Health System offers its condolences to all those affected by the COVID-19 pandemic. This page is a printed moment of silence.
Dear Friends,

In the midst of dual crises—a pandemic and ongoing racial injustices, En Foco presents a new issue of *Nueva Luz*. As you can imagine we, along with the rest of the arts community, have been greatly affected by the COVID-19 pandemic. Although we entered the year with many obstacles, En Foco maintained its commitment to supporting and representing artists of color. In this issue, we celebrate the ten awardees of the 2020 En Foco Fellowship, which, now in its fifth year, has been awarded to a total of 45 photographers of color. The Fellowship has become an important resource for arts professionals and an integral part of our programming. Supplying En Foco with direct access to an ever-expanding pool of local talent.

As we move forward and continue to promote artists, we must also reflect on America’s ongoing racial strife as it relates to the murders of George Floyd and Breonna Taylor. En Foco has a long history of collaborating, exhibiting, and supporting Black artists and will continue to use our platforms to amplify the voices of Black diaspora—artists, leaders, and organizers—while standing beside them in support of Black life. Remaining committed to our mission to uplift, represent, and advocate, we ask that you continue to support artists of color, as it is needed now more than ever.

In this issue, supplementing the photography of the current Fellowship awardees is a special feature by En Foco’s Program Associate Oscar J Rivera on the impact the COVID-19 pandemic has had on local artists. Oscar invited ten artists from various experiences to share their accounts of life during the pandemic. These artists will be featured in the accompanying online exhibition *Asymptomatic/Systematic*, curated by Rivera.

With the entire staff quarantined, this *Nueva Luz* required a tremendous amount of effort from our dedicated team of art professionals: Julia Mata, curator and organizer; Kyle Kolker, issue designer; Kim Vaquedano-Rose, Director of Operations (who oversees the entire process from concept to print); and Ron Kavanaugh, Social Media Manager. Special kudos to Eastwood Litho, who have printed *Nueva Luz* since 1985 with an extraordinary commitment to quality.

Lastly, En Foco wants to acknowledge, and offer our sincerest condolences to all those lost and affected by the COVID-19 pandemic. Our communities have been disproportionately affected by the pandemic, and it is up to us to come together and rebuild.

Bill Aguado

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En Foco’s 2020 Photography Fellowship Winners

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18-21 ODETTE CHAVEZ-MAYO
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I am no photographer. I used to be part of a collective, and when in the rush of one or another event that we were organizing, the camera was passed quickly in my direction. I felt queasy and tight in my chest because it would mean that we had not planned out the responsibility for documentation, and here I would be with somebody’s DSLR in my hands with the weight of how the event would be remembered in images. An array of buttons with obscure meanings were standing between that memory and my knowledge. There are certain things that are not intuitive to me. I have never been the photographer of the family, or even for my own travels. When I look at photos of places I have been and have taken, it is not often of people or moments that have felt significant to me. It has been very illustrator-vision snapshots – a sign typography I would like to remember or the color of a building. I have a “take only photos, leave only footprints” mentality, except that I also don’t take photos. I figure, if it is important in the future, were someone to ask, I could describe what that particular place or moment felt like. Thinking back slowly, being in so and so’s company, my grandmother’s house, or the sun in California at 3pm.

I imagine that the drive to document speaks to each person’s conception of time. Or, how we might try and fix a perceptual or emotional sensation more concretely so that we can revisit it again and again. It makes me think about the Laguna Pueblo author, Leslie Marmon Silko’s approach to memoir in her book *The Turquoise Ledge*. In her writing, Silko transgresses the notion of memoir as a recounting of personal histories, and flips the focus to narrate her sense of belonging within the landscape of the

**Julia Mata** is an artist living in New York with familial roots in Central America and the Eastern European Jewish Pale of Settlement. She is an independent curator, event producer, and one-third of the *Spicy Mango Comics* publications collective. Julia has been working professionally as a curator for nearly ten years, and has been a part of various collaborations to produce concerts, radio shows, gallery exhibitions, and parties. Her most recent curatorial employment was as the manager of the Longwood Art Gallery @ Hostos Community College. As an illustrator, Julia writes and draws the comics series *Crisis!* and creates visuals and imagery for women-of-color run projects and initiatives. She is currently a Masters in Library Science candidate at Queens College with a focus in archival practices and a Storytelling Fellow at the Laundromat Project.
She describes walking through the desert landscape and the plant, mineral, and animal dramas playing out day by day. It is a non-human centric recounting of place and observation within an environment in which outsiders cannot perceive the nuance. It speaks to desert time, but also to place in general. How when we know a location intimately we observe slow, gradual, and joyous markers of shifting. Others may not be able to see these changes - but our closeness encourages observation.

Despite my aversion to producing photographic documentation, I am an avid consumer of it. I am so happy to find photo and text archival projects such as the Archivo de la Memoria Trans (Trans Memory Archive) project in Argentina or the Nuevayorkinos Instagram because these projects and everyone who is drawn to them understands that it means something very significant to be remembered in your wholeness, beauty, and struggle. The openness and community-sourced natures of these projects encourage participation from those who are consuming the archives as well. In this way, if you feel seen by the images of the people being archived and shared, you can add your part of the story to the group. Which to me suggests that the process of memory is not a solitary experience. That memory is a collaboration through which photos can suggest what has been, and later we can add our individual perceptions, takes, and opinions. The photo is a prompt, an appetizer, an indication of a much larger story to get into. The En Foco Fellowship photographers in each of their distinct ways, meticulously use their powers of observation, commentary, and response to create images that document a variety of realities. The fellows create both staged and spontaneous shots of interpersonal relationships, city and home landscapes, social and political dynamics, and their collaborative processes with each other. Through each of their bodies of work they amplify concrete realities as well as staged interpretations that display the underbelly of the social structures we live in. The work is a range of styles and outlooks, from different vantage points of the contemporary photography world. We have the straightforward report-style approach of an investigator seeking out the truth right up next to a more contemplative and surreal project. It's a sample of the field of new works by some very strong and very different voices.

But that being said, there are some parallels in the group. I first think about the overlaps in subject and approach by Luis Manuel Diaz, Rahul Majumdar, and Betty Yu who all have photographic practices documenting their family members. Betty follows a joint story of the relationship between her parents as they do everyday errands within the backdrop of the working-class immigrant neighborhood of Sunset Park, Brooklyn. The neighborhood is facing and actively confronting accelerated displacement and gentrification, which makes itself so visible by the giant new structures right up against her family’s home. Luis Manuel collaborates with his family to create portraits of them in their home in New Rochelle, NY. The black and white images are quiet gestures towards providing a counter-narrative of the ins and outs of a particular NY immigrant family. Rahul, in turn, has been covering his family dynamics and locations of significance to them, which most poignantly shows up in his image of the site of their ancestral home, a place which no longer physically exists, but has immense emotional and historical weight.

Then there is Akshay Bhoan, Antonio Johnson, and Josefin F Moran who document the interplay of people within specific significant locations. Akshay spent four years covering subway riders in New York on his phone, creating a dark, atmospheric, and grimy photobook that mirrors the feeling of defeat and trial that the MTA usually provokes in its ridership. Antonio took a look at the
rituals that happen within a barbershop, and what types of conversations and affirmations can come out of that space for Black men. Josefina meanwhile has been interested in portraying the nuances and challenges that teen girls experience, collaborating with the girls to create portraits in their homes that reflected how they expressed themselves in that transitional stage of life.

Jon Henry, Johnnie Chatman, and Odette Chavez-Mayo are the engineers of the group — orchestrating and staging scenarios to pursue a particular idea to its end. Jon worked with Black mothers and sons across the U.S. to create a portrait series of the care, grief, and rage of imagining the possibility of losing a child to police violence. Johnnie’s self-portraits are both an exploration of the dominant and reductivist narratives of the West and of blackness. It is a story about understanding and having a sense of oneself within a framework creating what is allegedly your narrative. Odette aligns with this approach in collaborating with incarcerated women to create affirming portraits in a restrictive and oppressive environment. Her weapon of choice is creating beauty in the face of erasure.

And finally, there is the duo of Clarissa Aponte and Roberta Dorsett — a group of their own. The two broke from their typical documentary styles to collaborate on a totally new series of cameraless experimental images. The wide, abstract images that came out of that collaboration are almost like a breakdown of their usual approaches to the medium, allowing for an expansiveness and different way of thinking about art-making tools.

As a person entering the archival field, I think about what projects such as these are going to tell about this time we are living in. It’s almost like a preemptive nostalgia, a tendency to separate from the immediacy of the moment. Or instead, an appreciation for seeing all the elements of a time be expressed from many different angles, an incomplete picture, but a good effort regardless. A striving to explain your story clearly and how it fit into a world composed of policies and events that you intersect and clash with. But I hope that the archival approach is a nostalgia that leads to something, a productive looking back to move ahead. It has been a pleasure to get to know the En Foco Fellowship photographers and I am grateful to have been able to participate in this issue of Nueva Luz. With that, I welcome you to this unique cohort; innovators of memory and image.
APONTE AND DORSETT collaborated on the abstract series Frameless, experimenting with what happens when you negate the camera and the traditional use of photographic film. They used color motion picture film and black and white darkroom chemicals which, when combined, resulted in a range of abstract shapes on the film. This approach was a departure from each independent work prior to the collaboration. Dorsett typically turns her lens towards providing alternate representations of black communities and environmental concerns, while Aponte documents and explores interpersonal relationships in her family, as well as the neighborhoods she grew up in.

By taking this distinct approach, separate from their individual documentary practices, the photographers left behind the idea of controlling the frame or shot, producing frameless photos that embraced chance reactions as a result of the mixture of the different chemicals used. What developed on the emulsion were organic shapes that cannot naturally be found in nature or the manufactured world. The result emphasized the absence of people, typical subjects, and the role of the camera. Each manipulated film strip was scanned, digitally edited and enlarged to present the process as a whole, including missing frames. The minute details in the enlarged filmstrips appear dreamy, opaque, and fluid, prompting the viewer to insert personal meaning in the space, amidst the grounding commitment to interrogating the nature of the photograph.

ROBERTA DORSETT
CLARISSA B. APONTE

Roberta Dorsett is an African-American photographer born and raised in the South Bronx. Roberta earned her B.A. in Studio Art at The City College of New York, where she studied photography. She currently works as a photography laboratory technician at City College. Roberta’s work focuses on documenting her family and abandoned places around New York City.

Clarissa B. Aponte is a Puerto Rican photographer born in Manhattan and raised in Brooklyn and Long Island. Clarissa earned her B.A. in Studio Art with a concentration in photography from The City College of New York. She previously worked at Falkland Road Inc., helping to organize the archive of photographer Mary Ellen Mark. Clarissa’s work concentrates on her familial relationships and environments, and how both aspects of her life have played a significant role in shaping her identity.
AS A CONCEPTUAL ARTIST FOREMOST, with a foundation in photography, Bhoan aims to capture the after-effects of trauma and its lingering silence. His primary practice grapples with narratives of existence and loss intimately tied with concepts of identity, perception, politics, and hierarchy.

Growing up in a military family, Bhoan experienced life sectioned by movement, living in fifteen cities over thirty years. His emotional response to repeated dislocation has been to study the forces that sculpt movement and understanding of the human need for belonging and home within the social conditions that frame those conceptions.

In the photo-book Relapse NYC, Bhoan documented photographic observations in the New York City Subway, which were then layered, sampled, and distorted through artistic interventions. Using democratic and easily accessible materials including a copy machine and scotch tape, the piece was created through a nonlinear mass of black and white xerox-style photographs shot on a cell phone over four years. Condensed to form a body of work, a sculptural block of monochrome, the piece analyses chaos through repeating poetic occurrences, revealing hidden patterns that define social and environmental tendencies, systems and anthropological structures of the city.

Hand-printed and bound in materials chosen from disposed waste or local hardware providers, the form comments on the artist’s response to the city —romantic, highly aggressive, and unempathetic. The prints are bound by metal rings, a tethering mechanism that is cyclical and constant, questioning not only the entry and exit point of the reader but redefining the experience as always abstract yet repeating endlessly like a machine. The final layout of the photo-book is constructed to overwhelm, with photographic images covered in graffiti-style sketches and writings that combine the language of the city with the artist’s associations. The layered acetate transparencies attempt to compress down the spatial experiences as well as mimic the resilience of citizens under the weight of capitalist ideologies.
City Impermanent
City Impermanent
City Impermanent
City Impermanent
City Impermanent

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CITY
Chatman’s series of self portraits, I Forgot Where We Were..., constructs an archive and body of imagery that explores ideas and notions around landscape and its relationship with black history. This chapter explores the American West which has often been defined by binary and reductionist grids of thought and iconography. Like the black body, the West is a complex, unstable signifier given meaning by those who have lived within it, passed through it, conquered it, settled, farmed, militarized, urbanized, and dreamed it.

Black men are often relegated in media and art to the positions of prisoner, gang member, statistic, or protestor. Blackness is commonly shown as a sedentary “object” limited to the confines of an urban environment, pigeonholed between narratives of resistance or resilience.

With this portion of the series, Chatman explores how vantage points across the West act as beacons for explorations of culture, history, and consumerism, as histories have been compressed into marketable cultural capital for international gazers. In pursuing this route the project explores the ambiguity and multiplicity of blackness oscillating between a space of romance and critique, objective research and personal narrative. The project will continue until he has created a portrait in every state.

“The American West with its landscapes that invite identification but do not offer definition and with its absence of black communities, provides a particularly appropriate setting for a post-soul interrogation of black identity. The walls of the gorge are as concrete as black people and white people, but what if one’s sense of self falls in the space between these concrete defining categories? Even if a vast space of possible identities exists between these two positions, how does one establish a definable and stable sense of self in the face of such vastness?”  
Michael Johnson

JOHNNIE CHATMAN

Johnnie Chatman, born in 1990, is a lens-based artist residing in New York. He holds a Master of Fine Arts in Photography, Video & Related Media from the School of Visual Arts in New York and a Bachelor of Fine Arts in Photography from Academy of Art University in San Francisco.

Chatman’s work has been featured in exhibitions across the United States including at the De Young Museum (San Francisco, CA), Claremont Museum of Art (Claremont, CA), and Black Box Gallery (Portland, OR). His work has been featured in publications including PDN EDU, All The Best Alice, Rucksack Magazine, The Bold Italic, VoyageLA, and Zoetrope All-Story. Chatman is the founder of Terms & Conditions, a showcase of experimentation in moving image. His most recent exhibitions include Another West at Fraenkel Gallery (San Francisco, CA), Forecast 2019: Annual Survey Exhibition at SF Camerawork (San Francisco, CA), and Untitled, Art: SF (San Francisco, CA).
JOHNNIE CHATMAN  •  SELF PORTRAIT, VALLEY OF FIRE  •  2019
A seemingly ordinary portrait becomes remarkable when you are forcibly hidden; a mirror’s reflection - precious, when you haven’t seen your face in decades. The women you witness: Sarah, Jenn, and Pat are serving prison sentences with no end. Chavez-Mayo met the women at Dayton Correctional Institution where she volunteered and subsequently realized her conceptions of prisoners were mistaken. Chavez-Mayo and the women became incredibly close through thoughts, hopes, and regrets shared in discussions. They collaborated on making newspapers and zines and when the opportunity finally arose, in making these portraits.

After months of waiting and jumping through bureaucratic hoops, we were granted two hours in the visiting room with a 4x5 camera. Accessories, makeup, jewelry, and a mirror were available for the women to craft their own image. Making them feel important and allowing them as much agency as possible in the process was crucial. As well as fostering a space where freedom, curiosity, and play could occur despite the constraints of an oppressive institution meant for punishment.

Chavez-Mayo’s portrait series interrogates and counters oversimplified, harmful narratives of prisoners through the transgressive act of creating delicate and beautiful images. Our society exploits the invisibility of incarcerated communities by siloing people through narrow stereotypes that promote their objectification, in order to maintain unequal distributions of power. This subjective and oppressive imagery denies people's humanity and impedes their right to be seen and heard. Chavez-Mayo asks the viewer: Who is invisible? Why? Tied into her principles of beauty, justice, and liberation, Chavez-Mayo harnesses tenderness in her photographic approach as a radical strategy for change and reclaiming the right to expression.
OVER THE PAST FOUR YEARS, Luis Diaz has intimately tracked his mother, father, brother, and sisters in their home in New Rochelle, NY. Through a highly collaborative and collective process, he documents and has become a record keeper and narrator for his family, creating a new family album that speaks of their shared personal history in relation to immigration. The images celebrate the complexities of their experience as a family, giving personhood and nuanced representation, utilizing a view camera that Diaz operates, but the whole family directs. This process allows them to take ownership of the same tool that has been historically used to categorize and victimize immigrant communities.

Through Diaz’s photographs, he visualizes and reconstructs new perspectives, while holding America accountable for the institutional abuse of immigrants. The images explore familial relations and the American landscape through the lens of his immediate family. Culturally specific objects such as religious icons, household products, and framed photographs signify the Mexican diaspora while landscapes bear traces of manual labor and expendable raw materials. A motif of walls and fences reference borders and prisons pervasive in the larger immigrant struggle.

Luis Manuel Diaz, born in Michoacán, Mexico, works in photography, video, and performance that challenges historical and contemporary depictions of immigrants and the community. He examines themes of personal and communal history, assimilation, care, labor, and the construct of the American Dream. Diaz received a BFA in photography from Parsons School of Design in 2019. He has exhibited work at Aperture Foundation, the Arnold and Sheila Aronson Gallery, Pelham Art Center, Living Artist Gallery, and Baxter St Camera Club among others. Diaz currently lives and works in NY.
LUIS MANUEL DIAZ  •  UNTITLED (AIR DRY)  •  2019
STRANGER FRUIT WAS CREATED IN RESPONSE TO THE SENSELESS MURDERS OF BLACK MEN across the nation by police violence. Even with smartphones and dash cams recording the actions, more lives get cut short due to unnecessary and excessive violence. Who is next? Me? My brother? My friends? How do we protect these men?

Jon Henry has been exploring the project, Stranger Fruit, over the last five years. Born and raised in Queens, NY, Henry was deeply impacted by the murder of Sean Bell in 2006. While he didn’t know him personally, the murder hit too close to home and has stayed with Henry ever since. He has been traveling across the country photographing and connecting with families, bringing light to the nationwide suffering and retraumatizing of the community that happens when black men and women are murdered by the police.

The series consists of large scale color photographs of mothers and sons, and accompanying texts written by the mothers. While the mothers in the photographs have not lost their sons, the images depict the reality that this could happen to their family. He composes portraits of the mothers with their sons in their environments as well as images of the women alone. Through the text component of the pieces, the women meditate on their love and relationship with their sons as well as their fears and rage around their son’s safety. By including the text, Henry aims to highlight the narratives of mothers, whose survival, grief, and mourning often get lost in the furor of media coverage, lawsuits, and protests.

Jon Henry, is a visual artist working with photography and text from Queens NY, living in Brooklyn. His work reflects on family, sociopolitical issues, grief, trauma, and healing within the African-American community. His work has been published both nationally and internationally and exhibited in numerous galleries including Aperture Foundation, Smack Mellon, and BRIC among others and has won Lens Cultures Emerging Talent grant. Known foremost for the cultural activism in his work, his projects include studies of athletes from different sports and their representations.
JON HENRY • STRANGER FRUIT: UNTITLED #44, CRENSHAW BLVD, CA • 2019
JON HENRY • STRANGER FRUIT: UNTITLED #11 BUFFALO, NY • 2015
JON HENRY  •  STRANGER FRUIT: UNTITLED #13 GROVELAND PARK, IL  •  2016
“Barber shops are more than places to simply get a shape-up or shave. They are about the only spaces in American life where black men can speak and receive feedback about who we are, who we want to be, and what we believe to be true about the world around us.”

In 2018, photographer Antonio Johnson embarked on a trip around the United States to gather images and stories from barber shops. Johnson made stops in Gary, Indiana; Washington DC; New York City; Oakland; Atlanta; Los Angeles; Detroit; New Orlean; Montgomery; Memphis, and his hometown of Philadelphia.

He met a toddler in DC on the occasion of his first haircut and a New Orlean barber who’s been in the business for more than half a century. Antonio talked to fathers, sons, husbands, and brothers about what it means to be black men in America and what the barber shop means to them. These conversations resulted in You Next, an intimate photographic exploration of this sacred space.

In exploring barber shops, Johnson is interested in capturing how those spaces and the communities within them are constructed and maintained—who’s in the community, how they interact when no one else is looking, and how the visual language of barber shops contribute to the social service they provide.

So why, You Next? In black barber shops, “you next” is what a barber says to communicate you’re on deck for a haircut. It’s also used as a question between customers to determine where they are in line — “You next?”

You Next is an invitation, an invocation, an affirmation. After waiting your turn in a barber shop, sharing, laughing, and debating, those magic words signify you are about to be transformed.

Antonio Johnson, is an emerging visual artist raised in West Philadelphia and educated at Morgan State University, whose work focuses on concepts of home and healing. His primary medium is photography and he has earned a reputation for capturing scenes that communicate the complex beauty of urban spaces and everyday people.

A self-taught photographer, Johnson’s work is undeniably intimate and authentic. He achieves that through the relationships he establishes with subjects, embedding himself in their worlds. Additionally, his work is informed by a long history of images capturing black life with influences ranging from the work of Gordon Parks, Jamel Shabazz, Khalik Allah, and Andre Wagner.

Johnson has a steadfast desire to create images of otherwise hidden parts of society. Ultimately, by shining a light on spaces like barber shops, he hopes to create relationships between them and viewers, connections that might not exist otherwise.
MEMORIES OF THINGS UNSAID, is a work-in-progress project around Rahul’s family. In the series, Rahul follows two parallel threads to express a narrative around his family and his own memories, or lack thereof, with his family members. The first focus is on portraits of the family, while the second is physical locations - meditating on accessibility and inaccessibility of a geography.

My family is a space where intergenerational trauma exists, and it seems like there is a pattern, I sense it and I am exploring it. With geography, I do not have the comfort of a familiar place to return to. I am considering places and spaces not as physical constructs alone, but as emotional ones. It is my belief that the geography of a place is only as relevant as the memory/experience we have of that space.

This body of work is akin to Rahul journaling, with him both guiding the questioning as well as the revelations that come up. He inquires, “Where do we (I) belong? What/Where is home? How do we access places that do not exist anymore? Or how do we access places that exist but that we have no access to when these places continue to occupy large spaces within our minds?” Through a highly confessional approach, Rahul endeavors to use the tool of photography as a method of healing, of self-expression, and emotional release in order to break intergenerational cycles of trauma. In this way, he hopes to encourage transformation in both himself and others by the work he is making.

Memories of Things Unsaid continues to be made, both in India and NYC, with a combination of family archives and new photo documentation.

RAHUL MAJUMDAR

Born and raised in India, within a bilingual family and now living in NYC, Rahul Majumdar’s work centers around the themes of belonging/un-belonging, human desire and emotion, family and spirituality. He is a self-taught photographer, with a formal education in business. After a decade within corporate India, he started out as a full-time photographer. It was the deeply personal loss of his father that led him to question his motivations and seek out a more meaningful way to access his world. He turned to photography. A few workshops at the International Center of Photography have influenced the direction of his work — The Intimate Portrait with Jen Davis, Documentary Photography with Andre Lamberston, and a Masterclass with Antoine D’Agata. Working as a teaching assistant since 2014 at ICP continues to inform his practice. In 2017, Rahul self-published Inarticulate, a single edition photo book of 100 copies.
Josefina F Moran is a photo-based artist with a focus in portraiture. For the ongoing series, *Portraits of Girls*, she looked for ways to convey the vulnerable side of young women, through their gaze and gestures. Inspired by photographers like Hellen van Meene, she explores the emotional tension between innocence and adulthood. In these portraits, Moran would use natural light and unmanipulated images, a strategy that allowed her to freely discover unexpected moments in everyday life and depict people and personal relationships as she saw them. Though her work approach is spontaneous, light and form remain a vital concern. This is seen in the way Moran references the emotional quality of pre-photographic formal classicism in seventeenth-century Dutch portraiture by painters like Johannes Vermeer.

*Even though I left my adolescence a long time ago, I see myself in them and can recognize my own shifting emotions, my own vulnerability.*

She has been particularly interested in photographing this time in the girls’ lives because of the challenges and changes that are associated with adolescence. Her goal is to photograph the girls as they are; recording their vulnerability, honesty, and identity. Whenever possible, she photographed at their homes, focusing on ways to convey the unique character of each person. As she constructed the photographs, she would notice details on the ways in which her subjects would reveal their emotional states, whether that be anxiety or confidence. Through those little details, she aimed to capture the nuances in the portraits and the psychological intensity of their presence through their gaze and gestures.

Josefina F Moran has been exhibited at the Latin American Fine Art Competition at Agora Gallery and she is one of the winners of the 2019 Photo Review. She taught photography in her native Buenos Aires and has worked with photographer Harvey Stein teaching workshops in Argentina. Josefina has had a successful career as a make-up artist, working with artist Cindy Sherman in her feature film *Office Killer* as well as with top directors and production companies.
(Dis)placed in Sunset Park is an intimate look at the impact of accelerated gentrification in Sunset Park, an immigrant neighborhood in Brooklyn. It is a multimedia project that features photography, audio and videos of Yu’s family’s life in the predominantly Chinese and Latinx neighborhood. As a teenager in the 90s Yu was obsessed with documenting her community taking black and white photographs and amateur Hi-8 video as a high school student. Her family’s story is the visual entry point into grasping the impact of gentrification on the cultural fabric, community life and changing racial demographics. Yu’s family was part of the early wave of Chinese immigrants to move into the 8th Avenue part of Sunset Park back in the late 1970s.

I felt privileged to have grown up in a neighborhood where I had friends from all backgrounds. Growing up I straddled what was often referred to as the “Two Sunset Parks” - the Chinatown part and Latinx section.

Her intention is to expand this project and document the impact of gentrification on other families, small businesses and even homeowners who are being pushed out on the Latinx and Chinese side of the neighborhood.

Each story is grounded in each person’s own sense of home, sanctuary and refuge that they have found in Sunset Park. The title refers to the way people are being “displaced in” their own community as it changes around them; while others are being crowded into smaller quarters within Sunset Park as well. As someone raised in Sunset Park, Yu is concerned about the way the cultural fabric and life she has known for decades may be transformed in the coming decades. Through her own story and the stories of others, she hopes to capture this culturally-rich, vibrant and diverse community that is being threatened by gentrification.

Betty Yu is a Chinese-American multimedia artist, filmmaker, and activist born and raised in NYC. Her documentary Resilience, about her garment worker mother, screened at film festivals including the Margaret Mead Film Festival. Yu’s multimedia installation, “The Garment Worker” was featured at Tribeca Film Institute’s Interactive. She worked with housing activists to co-create People’s Monument to Anti-Displacement Organizing that was exhibited at the Brooklyn Museum. Betty received the Laundromat Project’s 2016 SOAPBOX Community Artist Award and has been awarded residencies from International Studio & Curatorial Program and Santa Fe Art Institute.

She co-founded the Chinatown Art Brigade, a cultural collective using art to advance anti-gentrification organizing. Betty won the 2017 Aronson Journalism Award for her film Three Tours about U.S. veterans returning home from war and fighting to overcome their PTSD. Betty’s first solo exhibition, (Dis)Placed in Sunset Park was at Open Source Gallery and was part of BRIC’s 2019 Biennial. Betty will have her curatorial debut this Fall in Imagining De-Gentrified Futures an interactive exhibition at Apexart where she will be exhibiting new work.
BETTY YU • MOM AND DAD IN FRONT OF OUR HOUSE, WITH NEW CONDOS ON OUR BLOCK • 2019
BETTY YU • PUSH/PULL • 2019

45 Nueva Luz
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 as 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.
COURTNEY GARVVIN

Watching movies, shows, online concerts, streamed screenings and talks, etc. has helped with keeping me inspired and it’s also helped me feel better about not having the energy to create work. I spent the first few weeks of quarantine reminding myself that I can and should find the time to rest and take care of my body as best as I currently can. Reminding myself that I don’t have to make something during this time –especially if it feels forced. Some of the online events I’ve been able to tune in to have been interactive group events and I really hope that these sorts of events continue just as frequently once this is over.

ELIAS RISCHMAWI

Every day I see Americans protesting the lockdown, not taking the pandemic seriously, and just spreading false facts. Too many lives have been lost and how many more will be lost because of greed? Ignorance? Crime? I am struggling but how can I process anything while I have to once again pick up the slack for the government and selfish Americans to help my family, my communities, and my people. The government aid, a joke. Our communities are disposable and non-citizens are not even included in the conversation, yet again. Should I be surprised? I thank God I still have my family and friends to help me stay sane, and of course my camera. Being in quarantine, I’ve had no choice but to revisit some works and find new ways to express my feelings. All I can do right now to heal, and help my people heal is to educate and create.

GIONCARLO VALENTINE

I decided to travel to Hawaii when Covid-19 became more of a threat on American soil. I felt very strongly that I needed to be as far away as possible when things started to deteriorate. It has been incredibly difficult to keep the faith during this time. Freelancers haven’t seen a cent of unemployment money and the prospects of us receiving any seem more and more outlandish. I haven’t received a penny of Pandemic Unemployment Assistance and I’m still awaiting the elusive stimulus check. There is no way to call anyone and updates come from our government sporadically and oftentimes incoherently. The only thing keeping me clearheaded and self-possessed during this time is art. I have been writing consistently, reading every day, and working on editing and archiving older works and creating new works. I make a lot of self-portraits and take a walk with my camera every afternoon.
**KASEY-LYNN RODRIGUEZ**

I’m a new mother to an 8-month old baby. I was able to finally get myself back into a routine as a working artist once again, but when the pandemic hit my gigs were canceled. My son doesn’t understand what is happening, so he doesn’t know why we have to wear masks when we go outside. He won’t remember why my aunt had to move out of our home to prevent us from getting the virus since she’s a nurse who takes care of COVID patients. My partner and I won’t be able to properly celebrate our first Mother’s or Father’s Day as parents with our baby. I would have never imagined that our first year as parents would be even harder because of a pandemic.

**KAYLA LIM**

At the beginning of March, my partner and I left for a trip to Seattle and the Bay Area. When we arrived back in New York about two weeks later, it had surpassed Seattle in positive corona cases, and, in turn, I lost my job due to closures within a matter of days. All of my film from the past two weeks that were being processed by a lab were now stuck there until business was allowed to resume. It was a huge blow to suddenly not have the resources to take care of myself but also losing the resources I relied on to create work. Relearning how to develop film at home and making the most out of limited subjects I have around me has been challenging, but it’s been a helpful way to maintain a creative workflow.

**MONIQUE ISLAM**

My experience with COVID-19 has been challenging, but blessed. I am lucky enough to still have my day job and I am now working from home. Some of the people in my community have been laid off, have had their hours severely cut, or have been subjected to work in unsafe conditions. Most of my family and friends live across the country. It has been difficult feeling connected even though we frequently video chat or text. Sometimes zooming with loved ones makes me ache and miss them even more — like I immediately want to hug them and go out with them. It has been difficult to work on my art practice during this time, given the heightened mental anxiety caused by staying indoors most of the day, being far from loved ones, and the drastic change in day-to-day life.
NIK ANTONIO

On March 6, I left New York, heading to Philly for a few days and I never made it back home. Within two days, it seemed like everything progressed really fast and suddenly everyone was quarantined. I got lucky to be stuck with other artists, which helped to keep my creativity flowing. But being out of work for the last month, and not having the resources available to work has taken a huge toll on my ambition. As a mostly analog photographer, using a digital camera is new to me. Not having money but still having to pay my bills is constantly stressful but when you see everyone going through the same exact thing, I don’t really know how I feel right now but I’m excited for what’s next.

PATRICIA ELLAH

It is only right to expect a change in our lives and the lives of our various communities during this pandemic. It would be a mistake to try to distract ourselves from the reality of it and it wouldn’t be right to act like thousands aren’t dying, grieving, or out of work. I grew up sheltered, bordering on reclusive, so staying home uninterrupted by human life is an old habit. However, not knowing what the future holds is confusing, and not being able to help friends going through a hard time is very disheartening. I’m not working from home, I spend a good portion of my time face-timing family and friends trying to keep our collective spirits up. How do we continue to move forward when it feels like everything is at stake?

ARGENIS APOLINARIO

I’ve built my career as a photographer working with many artistic, educational, and community-focused institutions. Like many artists and freelancers, my work was slowly canceled or put on hold. Losing a week, a month, a season, and the possibility of losing work and projects for the foreseeable future has left me anxious and financially insecure about the future. During this time, I’ve used my photography to explore the city and my experiences. Another challenge is, after living in the Bronx my whole life, about two years ago I moved to Hell’s Kitchen. Being disconnected from my family, friends, and community has left me feeling somewhat isolated and longing to be back in the BX. The last time I saw my mom and aunt in person was early on in the quarantine -- to show them how to video chat. However, as time passes, my anxiety has turned into hope and desire to continue growing my practice.
The word pandemic implied a foreign concept… never a possibility.

Until I woke up one day fearing for my life and those of my family and friends. Reality hits hard when lives are at risk and when the anxiety took hold and wanted to settle in I remembered one thing, art heals. I am not only an artist but a nurse handling COVID cases. Each night I returned home, I was in despair. Sitting in my safe space dreaming of ways to purge the unease, I held on to art. I have created and continue to create pieces that help me restore my faith in humanity and in myself.

We stand on the precipice of cultural and societal change. The COVID-19 pandemic has affected millions across the global community and has proven itself to be not only a health issue but a socio-economic and political issue. Underlying systems of oppression have been highlighted as many communities of Black and Brown folks struggle to survive from threats of illness, over-policing, food and housing insecurities, and the lack of access to medical care and insurance. While these issues are not new for those of us familiar with life in these communities, COVID-19 has sparked a new wave of demand for equity.

Across the nation exists a duality of experiences, one where there are armed protestors demanding access to haircuts and massages, and another where amid a pandemic Black and Brown folks are pushed to protest because of blatant racism, and only one of these experiences is considered “violent.” The spring of 2020 has found itself hosting a global state of emergency, causing what could very well be the next economic depression and a global death rate that continues to grow.

The experiences highlighted in this issue of Nueva Luz are a small reflection of a larger pool of folks navigating this transition into a new global community. These artists have faced unique challenges adapting to the new reality of life in lockdown. With many having to encounter the glaring disparity of needing to social distance, continue working to support themselves and their families, and the ineffectiveness of the governmental systems in place to support us in times of crisis.

As we approach the summer, the spread of COVID-19 has not slowed, and many predict a second wave of the virus to spread as local governments open back up, as communities of color take to the streets for undoubtedly necessary actions demanding equity and justice, and as other communities reject social distancing measures in protest of the severity of the response to the crisis. The future state of our global community is unknown, and the hanging uncertainty is reflected in the experiences of these artists, and their works featured in the upcoming online exhibition Asymptomatic/Systematic, launching on the En Foco website, as a companion to this forum.
Dos Mundos: (Re)Constructing Narratives

September 12 – December 13, 2020
Curated by Juanita Lanzo and Stephanie A. Lindquist

The Samuel Dorsky Museum of Art is pleased to host Dos Mundos: (Re)Constructing Narratives, a curated exhibition organized to present the photographs of 12 artists of color who are recipients of En Foco’s Photography Fellowships. The current Dos Mundos theme is inspired by the 1973 Dos Mundos exhibition and captures the contemporary duality of traditions and cultures in immigrant and ethnic communities, but also revisits and demonstrates the challenges of systemic exclusion from the mainstream as described by the 1973 exhibition.
The Andrew Freedman Home is an art and culture collective that is a hub of creativity and learning in the South Bronx. Featuring two exhibition galleries, an artist in residence program, special events, theatrical and music performances, a small business incubator, workforce development courses, a Universal Pre-K program and event rental spaces. AFH has been serving the Bronx since 2012.

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CALL FOR SUBMISSIONS

Blue Sky is still accepting and reviewing submissions! All photo or video based work is eligible and **there is never a fee to submit your work.**

For details go to: blueskygallery.org/submissions/

Established in 1975 in Portland, Oregon, Blue Sky Gallery has a long history devoted to showcasing the finest in photographic vision and innovation. In addition to submission information and guidelines, our website now contains many new ways to engage virtually with past and current Blue Sky exhibitions, as well as online exhibitions culled from our extensive archive.

@blueskygallerypdx