

En Foco Announces the Apartment Gallery Series Exhibition Surreal Histories



(Bronx, NY - February 4, 2020) En Foco is proud to announce ***Surreal Histories***, featuring the fantastical storytelling photographs of Sandra Ayala, Jeremy Dennis, and Karisha Hickman. With history as a precursor, these works feel timeless yet timely, identifying unique narratives that speak of the Native American, African American, and Latinx experiences of “America.”

On view March 13 - April 12, 2020, at Hell Gate Arts 755 East 133rd St., Bronx, NY

Opening Reception: Friday, March 13, 2020, 6-8pm at Hell Gate Arts. Public Program: TBA.

Surreal Histories presents artists whose photographs blur the boundaries of time and place. Encapsulated within an ephemeral narrative, these conceptually constructed photographs build upon stories of heritage and history, presenting a surreal perspective of familial legacy within a contemporary gaze.

In her series of photographs, Karisha Hickman reimagines the story of the Great Migration. Hickman recasts history and the depictions of her ancestors, people of strength and character, who survived the inhumanity of slavery with the perseverance to keep on going in the aftermath. These works represent the African Diaspora within the boundaries of America, the ability to travel to other parts of the country post-slavery for a better life.

Jeremy Dennis's photography explores indigenous identity, cultural assimilation, and the ancestral traditional practices of my tribe, the Shinnecock Indian Nation. The indigenous mythology that influences the work grants Dennis access to the minds of his ancestors, including the value they placed on our sacred lands. By outfitting and arranging models to depict those myths, the work strives to continue his ancestors' tradition of storytelling and showcase the sanctity of their land.

Sandra Ayala presents a series of conceptual photographs dedicated to the dreamlike world of her son, known here as “The Boy.” Ayala creates a series of photographs that borrow from the Renaissance paintings' formal elements of composition, perspective, light and tonal value. Her work signifies imagery where the elements of reality are modified, mediated, and reimagined as inspired by real events, fears, anxieties, losses, and accomplishments.

Curators

Melissa Calderon, Co-Curator, En Foco

Self-taught artist and independent curator Melissa Calderón creates bodies of conceptual work around themes exploring social and political landscapes, drawing upon historical and philosophical references of power, fragility, and perception. Her work has been exhibited at The Bronx Museum of the Arts, The Queens Museum, Socrates Sculpture Park, and The Portland Museum of Art, SmackMellon, Pioneer Works, Galeria 20/20 in Puerto Rico among others. Melissa recently completed a monument dedicated to Roberto Clemente for the NYC Percent for Art Commission in the heart of the South Bronx. She is born, bred, and currently resides in the Bronx.

Juanita Lanzo, Co-Curator, En Foco

Juanita Lanzo has worked in the Bronx for over 20 years as a visual artist, arts administrator, curator, archivist, and art adviser. Her curatorial projects focus on emerging artists of color, the LGBTQ community, women, race, immigration and popular culture in a wide array of media, which she supplements with the addition of by public programs and professional development and advocacy/career sustainable practices for visual artists. She currently works as an Independent Curator for En Foco, and as a teaching artist in NYC. She graduated from City College of NY (MFA-Painting & Printmaking) and University of Puerto Rico (BFA 1996 Printmaking & Drawing). Ms. Lanzo was born in Puerto Rico, works and teaches in the Bronx and lives in East Harlem, NYC.

About Hell Gate Arts

Hell Gate Arts is an art gallery and performance space in Port Morris section of the Bronx. The gallery shows Local, National, and international Artists. Hell Gate Arts curate shows and work with independent curators to create a thoughtful program of exhibits and performance that is of interest to the local Bronx and greater New York City community.

En Foco, Inc. supports contemporary fine art and documentary photographers of color and diverse cultures, using photography as a platform to speak on behalf of issues related to cultural equity and access. En Foco provides its photographers, curators, critics & cultural activists with forum to advocate on behalf of an inclusive cultural policy that historically has been lacking in substance. En Foco supports its constituent artists with direct and indirect funding opportunities, professional development services, curated exhibitions, publications and networking events with industry and cultural leaders. Learn more at www.enfoco.org and follow us on facebook.com/enfoco & twitter.com/enfoco.

This exhibition is supported in part by public funds from the [New York City Department of Cultural Affairs](#), in partnership with the [City Council](#), [New York State Council on the Arts](#) with the support of [Governor Andrew M. Cuomo](#) and the [New York State Legislature](#), Ford Foundation, The Joy of Giving Something, Inc., The Andrew Freedman Home, and private contributions. Member of the [Urban Arts Cooperative](#). *Image Credit: Sharry Daniels, All Power to the People, 2018*



Jeremy Dennis, *The Girl Chenoo*, 2016



Karisha Hickman, Camping (The Great Migration Series), 2018



Sandra Ayala, Untitled (The Boy), 2018