

En Foco Announces the Online Exhibition *Asymptomatic/Systematic*



(Bronx, NY - June 25, 2020) En Foco presents the companion exhibition to the En Foco Pandemic Response Forum created in the current issue of Nueva Luz, *Asymptomatic/Systematic* Featuring photographs by Kayla Lim, Nik Antonio, Monique Islam, Kasey-Lynn Rodriguez, Gioncarlo Valentine, Courtney Garvin, Patricia Ellah, Elias Rischmaui, Argenis Apolinario, and Sandra Ayala. As the title suggests, the exhibition focuses on the experiences of these artists as they navigate life during the COVID-19 Pandemic.

On view June 30 - July 30, 2020, on the En Foco website. The Exhibition is a companion to the En Foco Pandemic Response Forum published in the

current issue of Nueva Luz, available online now.

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 people 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.

Sandra Ayala creates ethereal images driven by family, the Bronx and a community navigating a changing world. Ayala tells a fable in 4 parts of life in the age of COVID. **Argenis Apolinario** documented the seemingly overnight changes in NYC. Highlighting parts of the city that are no longer bustling, the effects of lockdown orders and how our families are adjusting to social distancing measures.

Kasey-Lynn Rodriguez explores the new challenges of motherhood, with the added pressures of a global pandemic. She remixes the classic visual language of a family portrait to reflect the new realities of family dynamics. **Elias Rischmawi's** images offer a quiet look into the past, reflecting on bonds of family, culture, and celebration. These themes offer a respite from the constant bombardment of uncertainty, lack of support, and fear compounded on communities most affected by the spread of COVID.

Monique Islam similarly explores the ideas of family, connection, and longing. Islam's images offer a quiet longing for home, and the comforts of loved ones -a stark contrast to social distancing measures. **Kayla Lim** in their series' *Bahay ni Grandma & Barong Tagalog* focuses on their connections to Filipino culture and heritage through their grandma, and a common Filipino shirt belonging to their father. Capturing moments of familiarity, imbuing the images with a sense of nostalgia, preciousness, and warmth.

Oscar J Rivera uses his series *Notes on Paradise*, to navigate the challenges of displacement, isolation, and change that come with moving to an unfamiliar place, and the struggles to define the idea of "home," while trying to come to terms with the spread of COVID in Puerto Rico. **Gioncarlo Valentine** uses portraiture to offer slivers of connection, highlighting the relationship between subject and photographer, creating impactful moments where the viewer is forced to lock eyes with the subject, reinforcing the personhood and agency of the subjects.

Patricia Ellah's images tackle the ideas of contemporary black womanhood. She centers the female form, presents fearless portraits that push back against accepted notions of femininity, and highlight the women she photographs. **Courtney Garvin's** portraits reflect the themes of black femininity, identity and resistance through the use of hair. Garvin, like Ellah, creates images to center and uplift the experiences of Black women.

Nik Antonio uses the nude in his series *Nüd*, to explore the relationships present between the body and space, between the subjects, and the interactions between these connections. The images capture a sense of tenderness and a closeness, that seems foreign after the adoption of social distancing measures.

The experiences highlighted in this companion exhibition to the current issue of *Nueva Luz* are a small reflection of a larger pool of individuals 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.

About the Curator

Oscar J Rivera, Curator, En Foco

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 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.

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 a 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: Kayla Lim, Sleeve Detail, Barong Tagalog, 2020.*