

RUSCHWOMAN

Melanie Flood: Notions

April 10 – June 5, 2022

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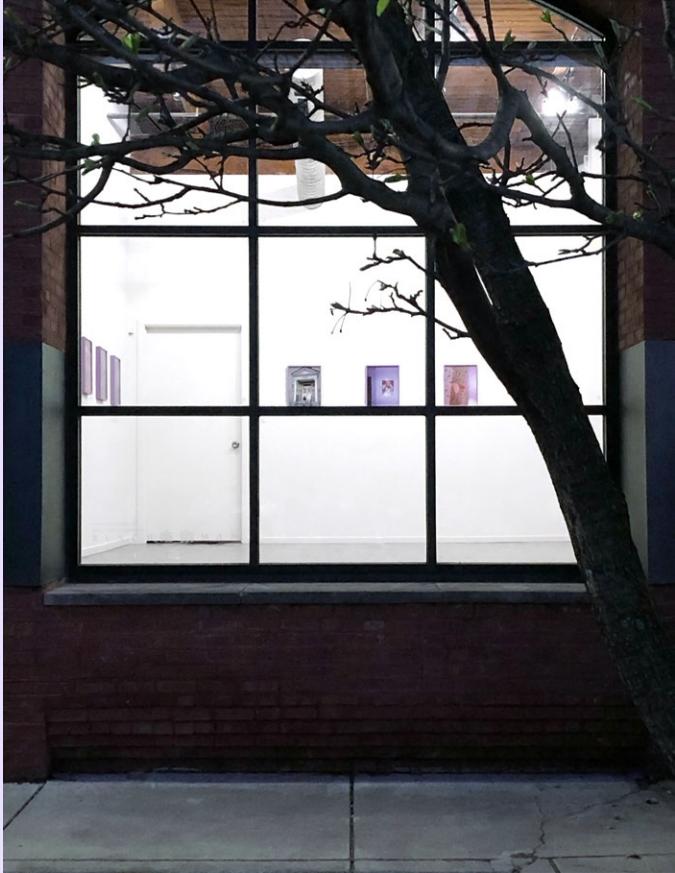
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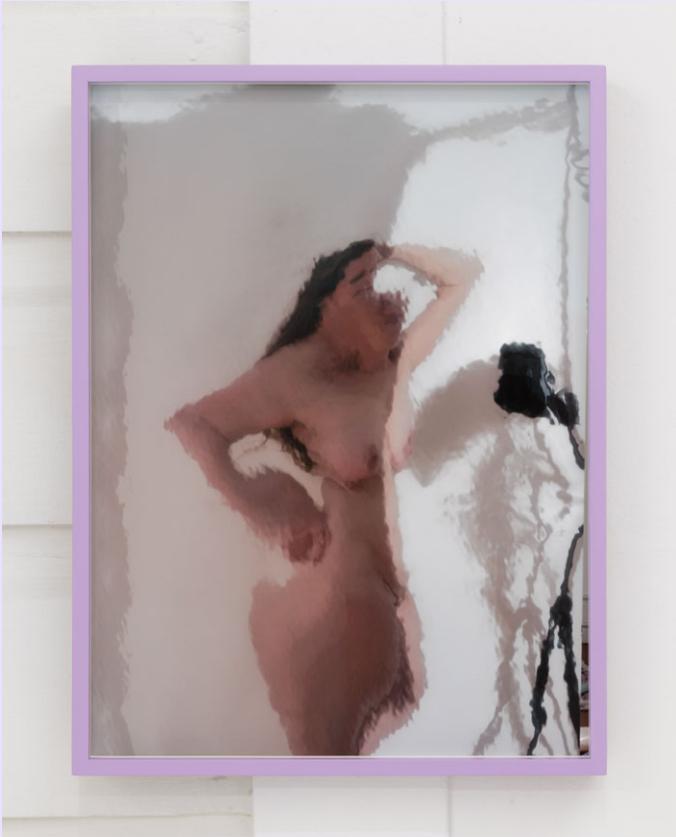
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“Of course I was then losing her twice over, in her final fatigue and in her first photograph, for me the last; but it was also at this moment that everything turned around and I discovered her *as into herself*. . . in a sense, I never ‘spoke’ to her, never ‘discoursed’ in her presence, for her; we supposed, without saying anything of the kind to each other, that the frivolous insignificance of language, the suspension of images must be the very space of love....”

–Excerpted from Roland Barthes’ “The Little Girl,”
Camera Lucida: Reflections on Photography.
New York: Hill and Wang, 1982. Print, p. 71–72.





A purple saint
an asthmatic saint
of course, she suffered much
What does the world hate more
than women
in public

When I am in my robe
then I am like a mom

I do well in bed
and do not wait

When I look in the mirror
and my face is everywhere

—Excerpted from Elaine Kahn’s “Women in Public.”
Women in Public. San Francisco: City Lights, 2015.
Print, p. 30–31.

I'm redecorating the bed
sink seafoam in shallow

darling, who cares
if desire is only desire
for repetition

begin again on that
who can say by what
a life is wasted?

suit my air satin
I fantasize a bedroom
mouthing must it look good
feel good to be pleasure...

each time I desire
not an exact repetition
but a rehearsal
of air
crescendo rolling
and stopping rococo...."

—Excerpted from Rachel Rabbit White's
"Infinity Spring," *Porn Carnival*.
Wonder Publishing, 2020. Print, p. 193.

He came back to us with stories of bedrooms filled with crumpled panties, of stuffed animals hugged to death by the passion of the girls, of a crucifix draped with a brassiere, of gauzy chambers of canopied beds, and of the effluvia of so many young girls becoming women together in the same cramped space. In the bathroom, running the faucet to cloak the sounds of his search, Peter Sissen found Mary Lisbon's secret cache of cosmetics tied up in a sock under the sink: tubes of red lipstick and the second skin of blush and base, and the depilatory wax that informed us she had a mustache we had never seen. In fact, we didn't know whose makeup Peter Sissen had found until we saw Mary Lisbon two weeks later on the pier with a crimson mouth that matched the shade of his descriptions.

He inventoried deodorants and perfumes and scouring pads for rubbing away dead skin, and we were surprised to learn that there were no douches anywhere because we had thought girls douched every night like brushing their teeth. But our disappointment was forgotten in the next second when Sissen told us of a discovery that went beyond our wildest imaginings. In the trash can was one Tampax, spotted, still fresh from the insides of one of the Lisbon girls. Sissen said that he wanted to bring it to us, that it wasn't gross but a beautiful thing, you had to see it, like a modern painting or something, and then he told us he had counted twelve boxes of Tampax in the cupboard.

—Excerpted from Jeffrey Eugenides'
The Virgin Suicides. New York: Picador, 1993.
Print, p. 7–8.





Against Chrononormativity: Expanding into Queer Femme Infinities

by



I find myself in the constant slippages between the language of linear time and the language of growth, questioning the roadmap I've been sold for where to end up and how to get there. The map, passed on to me through generations of heterosexual politeness and expectation, was designed with stepping stones of success defined through a valuation of straight-laced wealth, family service, and the embodiment of a specific east coast brand of delicate womanhood. My life has woven in and out of that map, rubbing against raw boundaries, hung up on the nowheres and eternities, looping back to a new starting line again and again. Locating myself within my body and in proximity to femininity has led me to unexpected and inexplicable places, grounding me in a reality of growth that exists outside of linear time.

I've waxed and waned within this reality, occasionally drained by living in a world where my own expansion is stifled by the stronghold of what is expected of adulthood and maturity, as I sit in the pressure of modeling a Fat Queer Femme power for those who need it. Each time I return to Notions though, spending time with Melanie Flood's photographs has snapped me back to my truth. Her timeline is broken—or, rather, discordant—too. As it flashes between

the glossy zipped-up still life meditations, the dysmorphic self portraits, and the views through the lens of a childhood self, I am willed to step back into the authenticity of myself, honoring the process and letting go of a constructed trajectory.

While recently rereading an anonymously printed zine entitled “A politics of care: Regarding communal child raising”, I found myself deeply mired in a passage urging the reader to divest from the promise of linear time. “Linear time,” the author writes, “assumes that the future follows the present in an orderly sequence, and can thus be controlled by us. On the contrary, we are controlled by it. To fit into the linear mode of time, we must make promises and be shamed to break them, we must close ourselves off to the emergent formations and flowing potentialities that are the substance of life.” Although the framework for the original text focuses on the complications of the promise of care for a child by a nuclear family, I am instead moved to use this passage to consider the care we direct inward. The swinging pendulum of self-discovery is only stymied by a linear timeline, which chokes the possibilities of deeply knowing ourselves and continuing to grow in all directions. The goal is not to enforce the promises we build within ourselves, but rather honor the manner in which those promises broaden or shift.

Jack Halberstam calls this “queer time”, a notion that I have adopted into my life in an effort to commune with my body’s pleas to find an alternative to prescribed timelines. Queer time pushes us to recognize the ways that queerness opens up the possibilities of embodiment, gendered interpretations and expectations, and to function on alternate timelines to the reproductive temporality used as a measure of success within heteronormativity. Queer time gives us permission to flail, sometimes returning to the unruly and turbulent emotionality reminiscent of teenhood, and through

the process, dig deeper.

Through the act of unearthing photographs of and taken by her young self, Flood engages queer time, celebrating the agency of that girl and recognizing the power of her vision. This nod becomes an understanding of the dissolution of expertise on oneself, rejecting the hierarchy of a linear collection of self-knowledge. The photographs speak into the world: “the way in which I felt embodied in my own self-representation at 9 years old is different than, not less than, how I know myself 30 years later.” I can feel the images swirling in my gut asking, “How do I find the right space, the comfortable space within femininity? Where do I draw from to build my individual blueprints for femme embodiment? How do I digest what I am fed, then manipulate and personalize it into a place of power?”

For me, Flood’s photographs all revolve around a center axis in the gallery, balancing on the wild glamorous energy precisely pinpointed by the grainy image of Miss Piggy’s celebrity portrait in its gleaming silver poster frame adorning Flood’s purple childhood bedroom wall. Translated through the camera lens of a 9 year old girl, then signed, sealed and delivered through that of the same woman 30 years later, Miss Piggy is dressed in 80s pageant regalia, situating herself as the Patron Saint of Feminine Power. Miss Piggy, sitting nestled in the middle of the space, becomes the centerpiece. She is the blueprint I want to use as a true neutral of high femininity- powerful, self-assured in her body with a take-no-shit attitude.

I take so much solace in 9 year old Flood’s commemoration of Miss Piggy as a bedroom poster icon, hung in a place that could remind and ground her every time she left the room. She saw something



within the character that resonated enough to document alongside her cherished baby dolls and bedroom playsets. Ten years after Flood's bedroom scene, I myself was plastering my own preteen bedroom walls with glossy photos of 90s teen heartthrobs- Leonardo DiCaprio, Hanson, and other boys whose genders, predictably enough for me, mirror those of suave dykes. As carefully extracted from *Tiger Beat* magazines as a 10 year old can manage, I sealed each tear away with a lipstick kiss applied with the help of my mother's Mary Kay collection. In an effort to reckon with my earliest insecurities, my young impulse was to map desire, to mine fantasies outside of myself and imagine a world where my femininity was consumable, and in part reflected back to me, by those beautiful boys.

Snapping back to the present, I scan the gallery and track Miss Piggy's influence lingering in Flood's more contemporary photographs. A still life paused in time, Flood presents us with relics of femininity: perfect pink ruffled trim cascading from outside the frame alongside a bedazzled zipper left halfway undone, each individual tooth encrusted with a sparkling plastic gem. I find her in the notions, an unzipped woman manifesting the importance of Fashion as Function's right-hand lady. I find her in the shadows, the details of the ruffles compressed into a toppling chain of hearts and the traces of lace that boast the mysterious intricacies of femininity. Miss Piggy follows me, always considering herself first and foremost, relishing in the details of each angle.

In the delicate days leading up to my 30th birthday, lost somewhere between the ages of Flood's self portraits throughout the years, I've gone searching for that same Miss Piggy poster on the internet as an effort to loop back to yet another starting line. It felt important to adopt her into my life, taking a note from 9 year old Melanie, stepping through portals of time to tap into the assured feminine

power of a puppet. People in my life keep hinting that through the happenstance of turning 30, I have arrived somewhere significant and that somehow I have reached a point of no return. In an instant, I am no longer a child, I have crossed an impenetrable finish line and am forever changed. Together, Miss Piggy, Jack Halberstam and Melanie Flood have assured me of the fallacy of that assumption. In the queer rejection of a linear timeline of growth, we are given infinite trials. An arrival is just a short sigh of relief followed by exponential possibility. Time folds back on itself, opening an excess of potential, back and forth, over and over and over again.









I Had a Notion of Our Beguiled: Melanie Flood's Unruly Images

by



To be is to be female: the two are identical.

—Andrea Long Chu. *Females*.

New York: Verso, 2019. Print, p. 12.

I had only thought of it as female, since things
crushed at the waist are female...

If I wanted to, even now, after everything that's
happened, I can still keep myself from having seen.

—Clarice Lispector. *The Passion According to G.H.*

Translated by Idra Novey. New York:
New Directions Books, 1964. Print, p. 92.

How does one know? This epistemological inquiry chases after artistic gesture; in the attempt to articulate and give form to experience, at every stage of recognition—what one realizes that she remembers, the material evidence she gathers to support those recollections-cum-convictions, the capacity for either artist or audience to apprehend and associate to what is made to appear in the artwork reactive to those prior conditions, and the discourse that ensues—reflexively these stages of processing are also made to notice the terms in which the development of an artwork not to mention the life lived around it are understood. In turn, this wondering triggers a forensic investigation that seeks to organize from whence these terms arrived, by what criteria they were acceptable, and the effects of their compositing into a continuous, practiced, embodied knowledge. Does this seem complicated, this largely instinctive means of becoming through at least provisionally knowing that is both mostly unconsciously taken for granted and also absolutely vital to the functionality of any social per se? How much more complicated then is that initial question further specified: how does one know how to be a woman?

Traces of this investigation gather across photographic bodies of work by the artist Melanie Flood, but nowhere is this query more fully saturated than in her recent project *Notions*. These images work with and against each other, demonstrating the frequently fragmented and even discordant process by which a self-conscious relationship to one's own gendering is developed vis-a-vis a smattering of power relations, pressure points, and key moments of socialization. Evidencing Barad's blended onto-epistemological supposition that knowing is a form of being, Flood captures a more or less apparent pedagogical apparatus upon which this question of [self-]knowledge is predicated: one knows how to be a woman because one is taught how to be, or is not taught how to be, or

cannot be taught—these latter two conditions nonetheless still means of learning. As with femininity in the wild, Flood's photographic records are smooth and seductive, yet their objectives are in fact the choppy, uneven dispensation of the technologies by which a self is produced and maintained.

Bringing about the *Notions* body of work required from its artist a willingness for Flood to lower her boundaries and the separations she may have previously taken for granted. One such collapse among others was the dissolution of those partitions that had demarcated the photo studio practice from the family photo album from the photo records of daily life held on Flood's smartphone. And yet, throughout the project, Flood's imagery is persistently structured in an orientation toward an underlying remembering of those prior divisions: translucent acrylic panels, reflective Mylar, curtains, screens, book covers, and closed door are just some of the signals for a taxonomized system of maintained separations and the always allure of whatever degree of forbidden knowledge that courts and sparks beyond even the memory of imposed barriers. *Fan (self-portrait)*, 2020, shows the hips and belly of a denuded figure slipping between a floral print fabric and its wavering reflection in some kind of mirrored surface. The pink lace fan held aloft is doubled, and the precise location of the figure is unclear. In the lushly exercised interior logic of Flood's work is a physics whereby one moves more easily back and forth through time than through the politicized, contested borders that cut up space—where a woman can venture, where she has gone, and most trenchantly where she has (and hasn't) been.

Because it is in the sorting of these different zones that Flood uncovers the interdependent if not downright continuous ways that photography as a mechanism in all of its phantasmagoric projecting



outward, inward, across, between, circulating as the primary vehicle par excellence for images—a base currency within this advanced cultural economy—while still always operating pointedly as the seek-and-capture utility extension of ‘the gaze,’ and along with these elaborations of image production, their subsequent storage in the history-building project of archives are both predicated and constituted by the presupposition of gender—not only in the ways that Otherness is drawn up and consummately excluded from a position of agency, but also the particular fugitivity of the feminine which in its use if not in its conception signals contingency, variability, instability. Woman, photograph, archive: all of these are conceptual counterparts by which power is consolidated and otherness differentiated (and that differentiation embedded as an historical inevitability). Holding ‘woman’ as a troubled gender category of distinction, one might suppose that without a this-or-that demarcation, what stands behind the camera is not separate from what appears before it. And yet is it not also the camera itself, its storytelling function, that distinguishes its front from its back?

For certain, photography has been indispensable in the production of available instruction by which one might know how to become a woman from whatever point one begins, whether declared “a girl!” at birth, or by sonogram or by chromosome; or some discrepant, transgressing position that only gradually lays claim to being a woman without the consent or support of one’s political context. Images (emphasis on the imaginary here) fill glossy magazines, films, artistic practices, and advertising as a sparkling, enticing, disheartening trail of breadcrumbs that lead to the most mythic, idealized, and therefore fugitive practices of the feminine. It’s around these parts that Lacan controversially yet probably aptly observed that the woman does not exist. He’s noting the unbridgeable gap between those qualities sought after in images (or concepts,

generalizations) that describe womanhood and who or whatever is in pursuit of those ideals. Readily accessible instruction in the practice of being a woman does not always (may not ever) lead to its successful, to-the-letter implementation.

Nonetheless, it is here at the threshold of the visible that Flood stages her analysis, partaking in and contesting critically the constituent features of an assigned gender. Given the cannibalistic hunger, the noted treachery, the tendency toward trade and market economies that characterize images, Flood's project can be found fraternizing among ruffled layers of conversants: Anne Collier's stark forensic citations, the diaristic clutter of Moyra Davey, or the abyssal allure of Zanele Muholi's portraits. Perhaps even more, the feminine is a motion blur on film, caught in the smoldering longing of Sofia Coppola, the tumultuous eroticism in Powell and Pressburger's *Black Narcissus*, or caught somewhere in the tug-o-war between daydreamy flicks from ex-couple Miranda July and Mike Mills.

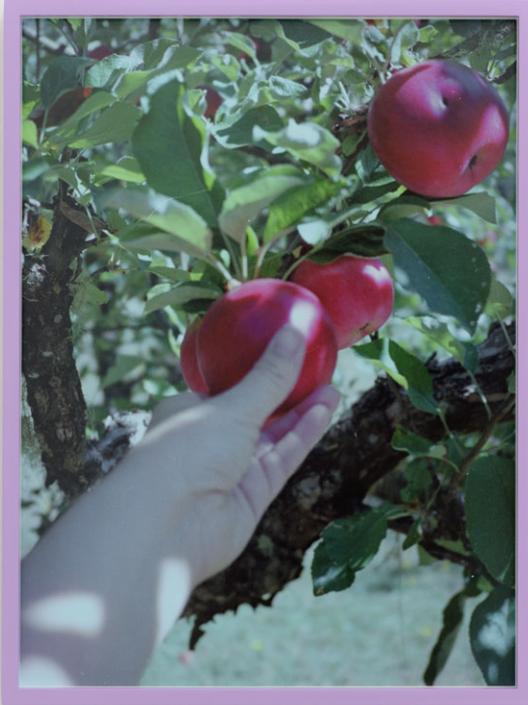
Femininity is mutually constituted with a racialized body in the most recent addition to Flood's Notions project: the image *Azalea Trail Maid*, 2021, shows brown hands and pink monogrammed gloves along with a rhapsody of pink ruffles and ribbons that characterize the costuming for the official court of ambassadors to Mobile, Alabama—a coterie of pastel hued transfigurations of the antebellum South, which now welcomes girls of color into their numbers. Beyond typical femininity, this is a heightened performance that lies at the intersections of gender and race, past and present, history and idealized mythologies.

The Black Azalea Trail Maid, not to mention the critical contexts drawn out around Flood's work are the markers of an observed,



mostly level field of what is taught and learned. But there are the persistent awkwardnesses (and oppressions, and traumas) of becoming and being a girl, transitioning to being a woman that issue from a pursuit of knowledge that goes unfulfilled—unmet with any adequate training. Even as *Notions* behaves as a group of photographs, visible, precisely attenuated in their depictions, this work perhaps owes more to those times when instruction in the knowledge of how to be a woman is foregone, its absence substituted with a justifiable angst for all the ways that being a woman lacks any form of guidance or even a language by which her dilemmas could be expressed. How often has someone said that when their period started, they didn't know what was happening to them? Or said that no one ever told them what being a lesbian was? Or what early signals of the onset of menopause to watch for? The symptoms of cardiac events for women? Or further intangible: what to do when you are harassed? What to do when you are in danger?

Girls (self-portrait), 1996-2000, shows a youthful Flood re-photographed from an earlier snapshot. Her long mermaid tresses fall across the jeans-and-hoodie grunge androgyny endemic to the period. Her eyes appear shut; her hands pressed between her inner thighs. She is seated on a set of patched concrete steps leading into a building labeled above its cornices simply, "GIRLS." While elsewhere Flood playfully stages some of the frivolities and ornamental trappings associated with a play of gender, here the underlying institutionality and regulative forces that oversee identity are brought forward into this stark architecture. Is the young Melanie seated as an exemplar of the girls who would seem to reside within? Or does she appear at the point of her own exclusion? What was the secret password that gains entry into the institution of girls, and did anyone share it with this seated youth?





The archive becomes truly unruly in those areas that lack scripts due to some combination of repression, shame, embarrassment, inherited ancestral trauma, anxiety and fear, crushing misogyny and *misogynoir*, an acute but unarticulated sense of the dangers of living in a paternalistic heterosexist white supremacist culture. Lapses in ‘talks’ with mothers and female relatives, failures in health and sex ed classes, and confounding, blithe denial (that scented candle is not what Gwyneth Paltrow’s vagina smells like) all conspire to render considerable aspects of the full meaning of being positioned as a woman in our society utterly opaque, unknown, only to be groped through gradually, alone, made up by each person as they invent their own progress (therein perhaps a radical opportunity).

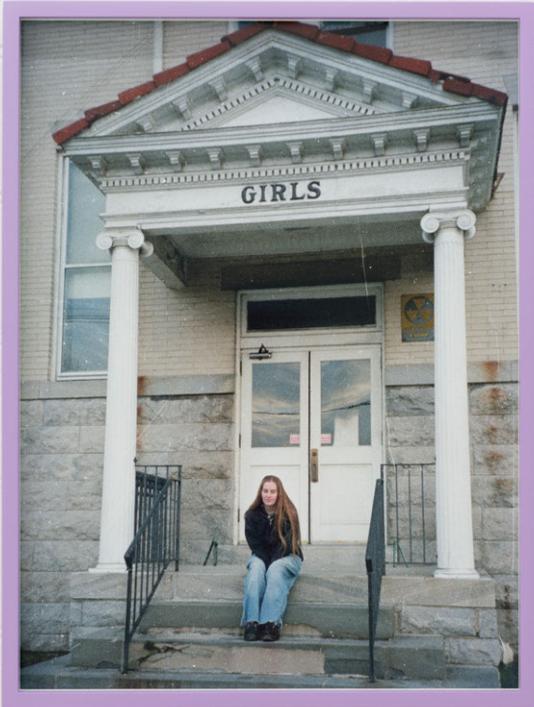
Within the education of a gendered future, there is a difference between failures to communicate and those parts that are cruelly refused, obstinately, strategically withheld. A tipping point along the faultline running through a foundational hatred of women that gives form to the entire livable (or not so livable) social environment in which gender can even be said to exist. This is instruction by erasure, a nullifying force that would still have women traded and circulated as property, muted, castrated, forced into biological servitude. These are not the fringe detriments of a system of genders and images and the storage of their histories: this is the letter of the land, where the highest court is populated by rapist judges and the evilness of straight white men is reinforced by token women and people of color who envision a world where women are separated from more than their rights, but that to come into being as women means to lack even a capacity for knowledge. As if Eve and her knowledge tree never could have existed. And in place of that yarn is just a long knitting needle, and in place of knowledge is fear.

These prospects are bleak and they are worth grieving over. But they aren't the endpoint of this thought experiment because in fact Melanie Flood's burgeoning approach to a self-reflexive photographic process sans compartmentalization offers a handy politics through an examination of how her images are made. Following on feminist traditions that precede her, in many cases Flood is both in front and behind her camera, the attendant gaze and the looked upon body. In so doing, she reaffirms an upset to the gendered binary within photography that has been contested before her by Florence Henri, Laura Aguilar, Hannah Wilke, Adrian Piper, Howdena Pindell, Cindy Sherman, Gillian Wearing, Patty Chang, Valie Export, and countless others. This countercurrent of imaging while certainly entangled with traditions of male, subordinating gazes makes room for shapeshifting, role-playing, multiplying, fragmenting, prismatic pronouncements of photographed personhood. And so to does Flood when at close range, she performs as a surviving Eve in *An apple for Amy (self-portrait)*, 2020, reaching into frame toward a bucolic scene of picking fruit, only to time travel to a pubescent experiment with glamor in *Silver dress (self-portrait)*, 1994/2000, a photograph of a photograph that was made with Flood was a teen.

Rather than outright dread, melancholy and a wistful curiosity intone Melanie Flood's works. She stays quietly vigilant for ghosts wandering through the strictures of power relations depicted, watches for further complications and undoing. Sometimes she even offers us glimpses that show a high femme association to camp, whimsy, wit, humor, and a bodacious take on *jouissance*: her photo of a 1989 photo *Miss Piggy*, 1989/2000, showing the artist's lilac childhood bedroom wall hung with a poster of the notorious feminist puppet done up in beauty pageant royalty drag, for instance, or *Long Beach, WA*, 2020, which shows the exterior of some kind of bargain

store with its hilarious name spelled out on a marshmallow pink awning: “THIS SHOP IS EVERY HUSBAND’S NIGHTMARE.”

Small mercies, indelible little joys, a moment of lightness. In fabric stores, the “notions” section refers to the area where accessories, tools, and trimmings are purveyed. Needles and thread, pin cushions, buttons, snaps, brassiere straps, fringe, lace, sequins, appliqué patches, baubles, elastic, or seam rippers: anything a witch or a grandmother or a Riot Grrrl could want in order to craft their future insurrection. Notions include the means of production (needle, camera) as well as marker of excess (tassels, paillettes, femininity outright). Flood’s project is aptly named for how she directs deconstruction toward the understructure while still finessing the facade. In this pivotal body of work, Flood has excavated mismatched histories where the instruction and learning of socialization have been explicit, implicit, and violently suppressed. She has developed a matrix for looking into and through these mechanisms of power, particularly in the ways they have been made to be held in her and like bodies. She has aimed the lens, set the flash, and produced a plume of lavender smoke that curls off the edges of the image’s frame. Her photographs’ contrails are a violet fog, and in its immateriality a feminist potential for additional vantages and standpoints lurk. The ways history operates within Flood’s work is anticipatory of unlikely and radical futures. We get to build them, and perhaps our greatest asset is the all out failure in teaching us how to do so.









Artist Statement

My practice is about my experience living as a cisgender woman. Using the tools of still life and commercial photography, I examine the myths of modern femininity and the idyllic female body. I make images that are pretty, sexy, awkward, nostalgic, and at times funny.

My subjects include ribbons, nude bodies, jewelry boxes, beauty tools, textiles, undergarments, mixed with early self-portraits, vernacular photographs taken out in the world, anything that points to female-gendered margins, histories or experiences. My pictures are made with iPhones, digital cameras, disposable point and shoots, medium format cameras, screengrabs, using studio lights, colored films, and reflective mylar.

My work over the last decade has evolved from playful still lives that explored color, exercised technical skills, lighting, composition, invested deeply in the history of the medium, without reverence to my own experience, to embracing how photography, in its many uses, mirrors and perpetuates society's inescapable gender influences. Images teach and inform how we perceive ourselves and want to be perceived. Photographs teach young girls that being skinny is paramount and

that duck lips are sexy; anything other than how we are naturally is desired. Over the last two years, I've mined my own photographs, made from 9 to 42 years old, to construct a personal timeline of aging, femininity, self-awareness or lack thereof, and humor of feminine demands. These photos taught me that my experiences are not unique; my frustrations are universal. In the arrangement and editing of my images, I find my voice. I enjoy finding humorous stereotypes of gender out in the world; one instance is a storefront whose large pink sign reads, "THIS SHOP IS EVERY HUSBAND'S NIGHTMARE." The shop is painted pink and full of knick-knacks, a stereotype of women as thoughtless spenders of their husband's money.

When I look back, I realize that I still struggle with the same exact things: body image, male gaze, sexual shame, frivolity/necessity of gendered garments. Not much has changed in three decades of ideals; there is always something on our bodies to improve. My newer work exploits my own teenage naivete to investigate self-representation, self-branding, self-discovery and melts it with the insecurities of middle age. I've made my private teenage moments of expressing agency and exploring sexuality public by printing photos of negatives I exposed as a young girl. Juxtaposed with all my photographs, I don't aim to create a linear body of work; everything is a *notion*, a suggestion, a nod, images come in and out of the final edit, images are fluid.

Image Checklist

5. Exterior nocturnal view of *Melanie Flood: Notions* at RUSCHWOMAN, April 2022

6. Melanie Flood. *Camera (Self-Portrait)*, 1994/2020
archival pigment print, custom enamel wood frame
16" x 12"

10. Earlier installation view of *Notions* at Fourteen Thirty, Portland, OR, October 2020

11. Installation view of *Notions* at RUSCHWOMAN, April 2022

15. Melanie Flood. *Miss Piggy*, 1989/2020
archival pigment print, custom enamel wood frame
16" x 12"

18. Melanie Flood. *Notions 1*, 2020
archival pigment print, custom enamel wood frame
16" x 12"

19. Melanie Flood. *Notions 3*, 2020
archival pigment print, custom enamel wood frame
16" x 12"

20. Melanie Flood. *Fishnet (self-portrait)*, 2020
archival pigment print, custom enamel wood frame

21. Melanie Flood. *Notions 2*, 2020

archival pigment print, custom enamel wood frame
16" x 12"

25. Melanie Flood. *Fan (self-portrait)*, 2020

archival pigment print, custom enamel wood frame
16" x 12"

28. Melanie Flood. *Azalea Trail Maid*, 2020

archival pigment print, custom enamel wood frame
16" x 12"

30. Melanie Flood. *An apple for Amy (self-portrait)*, 2020

archival pigment print, custom enamel wood frame
16" x 12"

31. Melanie Flood. *Silver dress (self-portrait)*, 1994/2020

archival pigment print, custom enamel wood frame
16" x 12"

35. Melanie Flood. *Girls (self-portrait)*, 1996/2020

archival pigment print, custom enamel wood frame
16" x 12"

36. Installation view of *Notions* at RUSCHWOMAN, April 2022

37. Installation view of *Notions* at RUSCHWOMAN, April 2022

45. Installation view of Melanie Flood's *Long Beach, WA*, 2020, at
RUSCHWOMAN, April 2022

Contributor Biographies

Melanie Flood (b. New York) is an artist and gallerist based in Portland, Oregon. She holds a BFA in Photography from the School of Visual Arts in New York and an MFA in Contemporary Art Practice from Portland State University. In 2008, Flood founded New York-based Melanie Flood Projects (MFP), a contemporary gallery with a photography concentration. In 2014 Flood re-imagined MFP in downtown Portland, expanding beyond photography and focusing on solo presentations of an array of artists; recent exhibitions include Clifford Prince King, Pacifico Silano, Rose Dickson, Ido Radon, Rachele Bussières, Maria Antelman, and Dru Donovan. Flood has been an arts professional for over 20 years, holding positions early in her career as Photo Editor of *The New York Observer* and Managing Editor of *zingmagazine*. Most recently she has served as Director of the Paige Powell Archive, overseeing a major collaboration between Paige Powell and Gucci with exhibitions in Los Angeles, New York, London and Tokyo.

Flood's work and projects have been featured in *Art in America*, *The New York Times*, *New York Magazine*, *Photo District News*, among others. She is the recipient of numerous grants and awards, including a Regional Arts and Cultural Council Grant, Precipice Fund Award, Oregon Arts Commission Artist Fellowship, and The Ford Family Foundation Visual Arts Exhibition Grant. Her photographs have been acquired by private collections and public institutions nationally.

Matt Morris is an artist, perfumer, and writer based in Chicago. Morris has presented artwork internationally including Andrew Kreps and Tiger Strikes Asteroid, New York; RUSCHMAN, Berlin, Germany; Netwerk Aalst, Aalst, Belgium; Krabbesholm Højskole, Skive, Denmark; The Suburban, Milwaukee, WI; DePaul Art Museum and Queer Thoughts, Chicago, IL; Mary + Leigh Block Museum of Art, Evanston, IL; Elmhurst Art Museum, Elmhurst, IL; and the Contemporary Arts Center, Cincinnati, OH. Morris contributes to Artforum.com, *Art Papers*, *ARTnews*, *Flash Art*, *Fragrantica*, *Sculpture*, *The Seen*, and *X-TRA*—additional writing appears in numerous exhibition catalogues and artist monographs. In 2021 chapters of Morris’ writing were included in the anthologies *Olfactory Art and the Political in an Age of Resistance*, Routledge; and *Atem / Breath*, De Gruyter, with Dr. Dorothee King. Morris is a transplant from southern Louisiana who holds a BFA from the Art Academy of Cincinnati and earned an MFA in Art Theory + Practice from Northwestern University, as well as a Certificate in Gender + Sexuality Studies. In 2017 Morris earned a Certification in Fairyology from Doreen Virtue, PhD. Morris is an Adjunct Assistant Professor at the School of the Art Institute of Chicago.

Katie Rauth is a fat, queer multidisciplinary artist working between sculpture, performance, community organizing, and curating. Through her studio practice, she engages in dialogue guided by radical fat liberationist politics, questioning the delicate boundaries of care and control in public and private concerns around health and wellness. Drawing from Dutch Protestant *vanitas* imagery and personal experiences navigating classed systems of etiquette, Rauth's work considers the morality placed on consumption and the complicated ethical landscape of pleasure and indulgence.

Rauth's work has been exhibited nationally including Vox Populi, Philadelphia, PA; Little Berlin, Philadelphia, PA; David Salkin Creative, Chicago, IL; Mudfire Studios, Atlanta, GA and Brew House Gallery, Pittsburgh, PA. They hold a BFA in Sculpture from Arcadia University in Glenside, PA and an MFA in Studio from the School of the Art Institute of Chicago. Rauth is an artist member alum of Vox Populi in Philadelphia, PA and currently serves as the Artistic Director of Comfort Station, a multidisciplinary art space in Chicago, IL.



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Gallery Mission Statement

RUSCHWOMAN is a convivial yet dissenting satellite project space residing in Chicago's La Villita neighborhood. RUSCHWOMAN is compelled by an interest in inviting feminist-oriented dissent into broad and overlapping cultural economies. Her exhibition program is both curatorially and commercially minded; further, the space is oriented toward additional purposes like care and support, critical inquiry, and strategic interventions into projects of dehierarchalization and decolonization. Every gender expression, sexuality, race, economic class, body type, range of cognitive function or physical ability, and state of non-citizenship will be welcomed, included, and cherished in this space—most especially those who have been disenfranchised in mainstream societies. There is no threshold for what an artist has to have achieved before they merit being shown in this space. RUSCHWOMAN's organizers do not uphold the illusion that the art world operates as a meritocracy; rather, inclusivity, a multitude of possible criteria, and a flood of divergent means of measurement will inform her programming. Most of all, RUSCHWOMAN will be witchy, provocative, experimental, and irreverent.

This catalogue accompanies the RUSCHWOMAN exhibition

Melanie Flood: Notions

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