

# Mari Hernandez :: What Remains

May 31 – July 29, 2018

## Pictures about pictures

Mari Hernandez's photographs relate to a history of portraiture and its characteristics of canonical representation, simultaneously referencing the histories of photography and histories told through photography. The subjects of these photographs are presented as strong, stoic, dignified, and important—given that early portraits were only made of significant individuals. Formally, these photographs were taken using sun light and the poses and gestures are derived from 19<sup>th</sup>-century photography to mimic the aesthetics of that time. The costumes, make-up, and prosthetics symbolize and point to the drama and romanticism in historical narratives through images. The profile pose of the subjects mimics the period style but also exposes the artificiality of the facial prosthetics.

All of the portraits in this exhibition are a type of self-portrait in that all of the characters are portrayed by the artist. For Hernandez, the use of self-portraiture is significant as a means to make herself visible in the work and in the space of the work's presentation. Referencing art historical precedent, and rooted in early feminist theory, Hernandez makes herself physically present in her work, therefore dictating the subjective content with her own body. What her pictures do is highlight the relationship between images and ideology.

## Pictures about history

The title, *What Remains*, is offered as both a question and a statement. As a question, the title asks what remains to be stated, noted, written, admitted, recorded, validated. It's an inquiry on a personal and public level. What is present but remains unseen? As a statement, the title reads as an affirmation that translates as perseverance. It can be a reminder of the things that continue to exist, endure, persist, or survive.

The series of photographs presented here create historical narratives under the guise of documentation through twenty-one pictures of fictitious histories featuring characters as stand-ins for absent from normative narrative histories. The inclusion of Hernandez's *Soldadera* series (2002) is an indication of the beginning of these historical fact/fiction concerns over a decade ago. A reference to art-historical history and "official" history is depicted in her *Resist* photograph of 2018. Above all, these pictures attempt to emphasize that all history is storytelling—imagined narratives, intentionally constructed and subjectively biased.

## Pictures about representation

Hernandez's invented subjects are derived from theories of physiognomy popular at the same time as early photography. These subjects were developed from Louis Allen Vaught's *Practical Character Reader* (1902)—a book that claimed to explain (and illustrate) that a person's physical features or expression are indicative of their personality, intellect, and moral character. These proto-ethnographic theories amounted to a reduction of human capacity, enabled a century of genocide and subjugation, and now inform contemporary stereotypes, xenophobia, and racial profiling.

Ultimately, this work seeks to question how physiognomy and the characteristics of an individual inform identity, and how much of our identity is self-created or projected onto us. How much of an identity that is

projected or fabricated gets internalized by an individual? Based on representation, which is the more authentic self?

All artworks listed in order left-to-right,  
clockwise from entry door.

*Lucrecia the Light*

2018

Inkjet print on crepe de chine

*Fidelia the Faithful*

2018

Inkjet print on crepe de chine

*Fidelia*

2018

Inkjet print on crepe de chine

*Socorro*

2018

Inkjet print on crepe de chine

*Socorro to Provide Relief*

2018

Inkjet print on crepe de chine

*Adonia*

2018

Inkjet print on crepe de chine

*Adonia the Beautiful Woman*

2018

Inkjet print on crepe de chine

*Delfina*

2018

Inkjet print on crepe de chine

*Delfina of the Gods*

2018

Inkjet print on crepe de chine

*Ximena*

2018

Inkjet print on crepe de chine

*Resist*

2018

Inkjet print on crepe de chine

*Ximena the Voice*

2018

Inkjet print on crepe de chine

*Chavela*

2018

Inkjet print on crepe de chine

*Chavela Pledged to Justice*

2018

Inkjet print on crepe de chine

*Adelita*

2018

Inkjet print on crepe de chine

*Adelita of the Nobility*

2018

Inkjet print on crepe de chine

*Lucrecia*

2018

Inkjet print on crepe de chine

*Soldadera (1–4)*

2002

Inkjet print on Photo Rag from  
scanned film negative

*Resist Flag*

2017

Custom flag