

Christophe Guye Galerie

*Since her breakthrough project *Hola Mi Amol*, Karla Hiraldo Voleau has found bold new ways to reverse the cliché identified by first generation feminists of the 'to-be-looked-at-ness' of women. Her practice, which is at once deeply personal and deeply political, seeks to overturn, directly and often confrontationally, normative ways of looking at, and thinking about masculinity. Through projects exploring male behavior and self-representation and the balance of power in the politics of representation, she produces images of men that are at once convincing, disturbing and strikingly beautiful.*

– Simon Baker, Director of the Maison Européenne de la Photographie, Paris

Karla Hiraldo Voleau – Without Men

6 June – 24 August 2024

Christophe Guye Galerie is thrilled to announce Karla Hiraldo Voleau's (*1992, French-Dominican) first solo exhibition 'Without Men' at the gallery. The exhibition shows works from different series, all of which contribute to her broader exploration of the female gaze. Often blending photography and performance together, all presented works explore ways of telling a personal story.

With her series 'Hola Mi Amol', Hiraldo Voleau defies the warnings her relatives gave her when she was growing up and frees herself from the boundaries of what feels 'allowed' (as a woman) in love, sexuality, and friendship, while deconstructing stereotypes surrounding Dominican and Latino men.

In her series 'Another Love Story' she reappropriates her own love story by re-enacting it, while hiring a double to play the role of her former lover, allowing her to emancipate herself from him.

In 'A Man on Public Space', she continues her exploration by slipping into the skin of her male alter ego 'Karlos', in order to study questions of masculinity in public space. Hiraldo Voleau is often her own protagonist in her series, and this position makes the work deeply personal. At the same time, she's dealing with how women can reclaim themes that are usually associated with masculinity, like voyeurism, desire, or the gaze. She combines fictional, non-fictional and auto-fictional elements. While investigating the borders of the allowed in human interactions, love, sexuality, friendship, she stands on the thin line that separates 'real life' and art.

Karla Hiraldo Voleau graduated from ECAL University of Arts and Design (Switzerland) in 2018, with her project 'Hola Mi Amol'. It was published in 2019 as her first photo book, and was a laureate of the VFG Swiss Young Talents for Photography, as well as shortlisted at Paris Photo for the Aperture First Book Awards 2019. Hiraldo Voleau was a Foam Talent in 2020, a laureate of the Olympus Recommended Fellowship in 2020, and many times laureate of the Swiss Foundation for culture Pro Helvetia's production and research grants. She was a resident of the Cité Internationale des Arts of Paris during 2022-2023. Recently she exhibited her performative project 'A Man in Public Space', at Art Basel 2022 where she was a Swiss Design Award finalist, but also at the Biennale de l'Image Possible of Liège 2020, at Photo London 2021, among other venues.

Her first ever solo exhibition 'Another Love Story' premiered at the Maison Européenne de la Photographie (MEP) in Paris in 2022. The exhibition then travelled to the Photoforum Pasquart in Biel/Bienne in Switzerland, the Foto Forum of Bolzano in Italy, and eventually the International Center for Photography in New York City, all in 2023. The book 'Another Love Story' was published by Mörel Books in 2023 and was voted as one of the best photography books of 2023 by Nathalie Herschdorfer, Director of Photo Elysée. Her work is currently on view at the Museum of Fine Arts, Chur, Switzerland, together with Hans Arp, Marcel Duchamp, Thomas Hirschhorn, Jenny Holzer, Barbara Kruger, Bruce Nauman and Not Vital, among others.

About the series 'Another Love Story':

"Another Love Story" is based on a personal story; the artist presents a series of photographs and texts that reconstruct and replay the last months of her relationship with a man, named X for the sake of anonymity. Karla Hiraldo Voleau relates the bascule which took place during their history, namely the discovery of the double life of X. The revelation takes place during a telephone conversation (transcribed in the exhibition), between the artist and X's other companion, herself unaware of the duplicity. What to do when one finds oneself dispossessed of its history?

Karla Hiraldo Voleau decides to reappropriate this narrative, by rephotographing all the captured moments of her relationship, identically, with the help of an actor she hires to play X's double.

The choice of a double is at the same time a means to protect herself legally, but also a fabulous device allowing the artist to emancipate herself from her former lover. Both performer and photographer, Karla Hiraldo Voleau, offers a mise en abyme of her own story and makes palpable the social codes attached to couples.

'Another Love Story' proposes a reflection on the photographic medium and its place as a silent witness of our lives. Here, the image fails to capture the truth of a relationship and only bends to our desires, to our wishes, to expose the feeling of love even if it remains elusive.' – Clothilde Morette, curator.

About the series 'Hola Mi Amol':

French-Dominican photographer Karla Hiraldo Voleau grew up with one constant warning: 'Never date a Dominican.' In 'Hola Mi Amol', Hiraldo Voleau returns to the Dominican Republic to cast her gaze on the bodies of the many men she meets, mostly men working in the tourism trade. There, she explores desire, sex, and love in this luscious, tender, and sexy debut. Her sensual, unstaged, mostly nude, photos of the men she connects with are punctuated by vulnerable self-portraits of their intimate encounters. 'Hola Mi Amol' unfolds into a story that is at once fierce, funny, and compassionate. In the DR without her mother, aunt, or grandmother (all of whom had fallen in love, married, or had a child there), and out of sight of her male relatives there, Voleau frees herself to the borders of what feels 'allowed' in love, sexuality, and friendship. Inevitably, her document of this edge carries a trace of the often brutal loneliness of our times. Hiraldo Voleau's curiosity about eroticism, virility, cultural and racial identities, and the status of the female-gaze vibrates throughout the works of this sly and stunning debut.

About the series 'A Man In Public Space':

For one week, Karla Hiraldo Voleau slipped into the skin of her 'masculine alter ego' in order to study the changes in attitudes towards her, and to observe how her own behaviour changed. Her exploration takes the form of self-portraits, texts, snapshots and video stills. She immerses the viewer in her unique, terrifying, funny and exciting experience. Her installation questions the influence of gender identity on our actions and in public spaces.

The first set of images in 'A Man In Public Space', created in Lausanne, were presented as part of the festival 'Bieler Fototage' in 2021; for the second part of the series, Karla Hiraldo Voleau has repeated the experiment, this time in Paris. Inspired by the rise in feminist demonstrations and woman artists such as Adrian Piper and Katarzyna Kozyra, she has created a photographic performance about transgressing genders and the codes associated with them. With the help of the SFX artist Mélanie Vargas, she once again slips into the skin of her 'male alter ego' in order to study questions of masculinity in public space.

She presents an examination of the impact of gender identity on issues of power, as it relates to one's sense of safety and the dangers one might feel or undergo in public places.