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Tosh Basco
Portraits, Still Lifes and Flowers
29 May – 3 July 2021

Portraits, Still Lifes and Flowers is the first iteration of the ongoing and evolving body of Tosh Basco's photographic practice. Gathered from a never-before-seen collection of Basco's intimate chronicle of daily life, these snapshots function as a record of a specific moment in the artist's complex relationship to cameras.

Limiting the selection of images to the context of the past two years, Basco printed and piled hundreds of stills shot on film and re-photographed them resulting in the twelve unique pieces which comprise this show. Flattened within the frame like pressed flowers, Basco describes the stacks of photos being like memory banks in which "everything is touching, rubbing into everything else...dancing and disappearing and reappearing like electrons in an atom, coming in and out of focus..."

First learning to shoot manually with an AE-1 CANON (a gift to the artist as a 15-year-old from her father) photography has consistently defined the shape of Basco's life and work as a performer in more ways than one. In an audio piece which accompanies the show, Basco says, "photography brought me to performance/ I learned the stage from the frame/ photography taught me the frame/ the frame and the stage are the same."

The images in *Portraits, Still Lifes and Flowers* both reveal and obscure the movement of time and the fear that comes when witnessing the passing of life. With a gentle tone and joyful touch, Basco's pictures of domestic life in a pandemic seem simple at first. But as the disconnected frames are viewed together (a loved-one wrapped in a wrinkled blanket, flowers wilting in a garbage bag, an indifferent seascape, an anonymous room etc.) the nostalgia of pictures reminiscent of family photos peels away at the genre to show a more somber point of view.

The works presented in *Portraits, Still Lifes and Flowers* are the first act of a life-long photographic project. A testament of humbling ambition and scale devoted to documenting the 'in-between moments' of Basco's life and constantly changing relationship to the camera.

Basco's gaze as a photographer is preoccupied with death and loss. The pattern that emerges in *Portraits, Still Lifes and Flowers* reflects a morbidity that is very real and deeply relevant. The fact that these photos were made at the cusp of and during a period of historically significant isolation feels important. Basco's pictures from this period of just before and during the pandemic are touching and unsettling at once. The images may be extremely personal but like many subjective expressions they also speak to a more universal experience and broadly shared human urge : to protest against forgetting.

"Most people know me through my performance practice but don't know the depth that photography has always informed that practice. The stage and the camera and the frame are all deeply entrenched with the act of looking and seeing. Between these two aspects, I am also able to reflect on the delicate

space between. This space being one that is in constant oscillation between “life” and “death.” Life and death dance and surround. There is then always the question of the ways we encounter life, with what quality are certain people granted access to living and the counterpart of the ways in which life is taken and for which uses or gain. This work tries to use the constraints of distance to think about other ways of connecting – a portrait and memento of a love that has changed form. It is has death folded many times into it, and in acknowledging that, glows with moments of joy that make life worth living.”
(–Tosh Basco, 2020, adapted from the text for M.M.S. #1, Creator Projects, Copenhagen)

Tosh Basco’s (b. 1988, USA) practice encompasses performance, photography and drawing. Her improvisational movement-based work under the name boychild arose from the underground drag scene in San Francisco. She is co-founder of the collaborative entity Moved by the Motion with Wu Tsang.