

REENA SPAULINGS FINE ART
6916 SANTA MONICA BLVD
LOS ANGELES, CA 90038

Reynaldo Rivera
Ya no me quieres
November 4 – December 22

Untitled, undated, some of them printed from negatives damaged by fire, Reynaldo Rivera's BLUE photographs were never intended for exhibition. They were created over a span of thirty-six years, between 1986 and 2022, as personal documents of the enmeshed lives, loves and entanglements of a small group of friends.

Rivera's prodigious, lifelong body of work emerged in the contemporary art world three years ago, with exhibitions at the Hammer Museum's Made In LA and Reena Spaulings New York, and the publication of a book of his work, Reynaldo Rivera – Some Provisional Notes Towards a Disappeared City. Drawn from a vast trove of images taken in LA's Latino drag bars and house parties of the late 1980s and early 90s, the stunning black-and-white photographs celebrated the city's once-thriving queer and Latinx subcultures. But as Christina Catherine Martinez noted in *Aperture*, "Rivera's work isn't at the Latino table. It's not even in the same restaurant. It's down the street taking a smoke break in a piss-stained alley behind Mugy's, where inside the owner is stomping the stage in a dress while singing in Japanese." Or as Carolina Miranda wrote in the *Los Angeles Times*, "Rivera explodes the blinkered vision of US pop culture's Latino archetypes with a textured rendering of a polyglot Latino bohemia."

Exhibited here for the first time, Rivera's BLUE photographs are like – and unlike - the images for which he's become known. Reclining naked on beds just before or just after sex, gazing into a mirror, photographed in a state of total erotic abandon, the people in BLUE aren't presenting themselves to the camera. If the implicit message of Rivera's Latinx bohemian images was *Here I Am*, the subjects of BLUE are simply allowing themselves to be seen.

Rivera has always equated glamour with danger. His previously shown images of drag bar performers bestowed a wondrous glamour on those who aspired to myth but whose glamour was otherwise rarely perceived. His four photographs of the actress and singer Alexa Demie of *Eurphoria* fame in this exhibition approach glamour head-on. In this true collaboration between photographer and subject, Rivera guides the young actress to channel the romance of the Golden Age of 20th century Mexican cinema. At once bold and frail, she is as fully exposed in these beautiful images as the subjects of BLUE.

-Chris Kraus