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Narrative/Collaborative

Photographs by **Petah Coyne & Kathy Grove, Neville D'Almeida & Hélio Oiticica, Lin Tianmiao & Wang Gongxin, Doug & Mike Starn**

March 31 – April 23, 2016

Opening reception: Thursday, March 31, 6 – 8pm



Narrative/Collaborative presents photographic works generated through collaborative practices that emphasize and expand the aesthetic philosophy and range of the eight artists in the exhibition. These artists utilize photography as a medium for collaboration with another visual artist to develop specific projects. Through interaction, their work shifts focus and acquires new meaning.

Narrative/Collaborative is a testament to the potential for establishing new creative ground when artists share their perceptions, technical skills and ideas to collectively create new work.

Establishing the historicity of collaborative practice is *Cosmococa*, 1973/2003, conceived by Latin American avant-garde artists **Hélio Oiticica** and **Neville D'Almeida** in 1970s New York. Comprising an extensive series of C-prints produced as part of a radical, large-scale multisensory environment, *Block-Experiments in Cosmococa – programa in progress* (1973–74) was a series of nine 'supra-sensorial' environments that incorporated slide projections, soundtracks, cocaine powder drawings on pop culture photographs, and a set of instructions for visitors. Merging real life experiences with art, the artists overlaid film projection and amplified sounds in a multi-room installation arrayed with mattresses, balloons and other effects. Using powdered cocaine to draw lines around the eyes, noses and mouths on the cover image of Norman Mailer's Marilyn Monroe biography, Jimi Hendrix's *War Heroes* album, and Luis Buñuel pictured in *The New York Times Magazine*, among others, the artists created subversive images that pushed their anti-establishment position. The photographs and surrounding environment were strewn with paraphernalia such as rolling papers, knives and matches and then re-photographed from a variety of angles, expressing an edgy, restless and resistant attitude.

Also derived from a large-scale, multi-media installation is the suite of still photographs, *Here? or There?*, 2002, by **Lin Tianmiao** and **Wang Gongxin**. These pioneers of Chinese contemporary art had not previously collaborated in the studio, despite being married for more than thirty years. They determined to produce one work together for the Shanghai Biennial, 2002. The resulting project, *Urban Creation*—inspired in part by content from the Qing Dynasty novel, *Liaozhai Zhiyi*—integrates Lin's labor-intensive sculptural techniques and Wang's video practice to comprise an original, extraordinary narrative about Chinese society at the turn of the millennium. Their compelling images depict female models wearing Lin's macabre and beautiful costumes made from fabric and hair, posed in strange postures in Chinese landscapes that range from industrial wastelands to historic settings of the

hutong. The sense of dislocation—past and present, real and unreal—is retained in the black and blue tinted photo-documents from the haunting installation, *Here? or There?*

Doug and Mike Starn's practice is atypical from other artists in the exhibition, consisting of a co-creation process that is almost a single gesture from a life-long collaboration in photography and most recently in sculpture, with *Big Bambú*. Working in a shared studio every day, it is not possible to tell where the hand of one ends and the other begins. Overlap and simultaneity, interconnection and evolution—fundamental aspects in their *oeuvre*—are continued in new works created for the exhibition from the ongoing *No Mind, Not Thinks, No Things* series. Collapsing the hierarchal tree structure by creating silhouetted images of branches to allow the free flowing connections to happen everywhere, the Starns mine images from extant work, composing and roughly cobbling together the colorful translucent images, tenuously interwoven and layered to represent the unceasing structure of thought. For the Starns, the taped and glued connective tissue is the same factor in the equation as the ropes connecting the bamboo poles in the random interdependence of the chaotic structures of *Big Bambú*. Inspired by Buddhism, the Starns select images to remake the past into something new. Interruption and interplay is constant. In the words of the Starn twins, "the discipline needed to achieve the No Mind is fought for."

The collaboration of **Petah Coyne** and **Kathy Grove** is the most recent in the exhibition. Coyne and Grove are collaborating specifically to produce portrait photographs of the elusive members of the original Guerrilla Girls collective to document and honor each woman's dedication to this important feminist collective. The entire project, entitled *The Real Guerrillas – The Early Years*, comprises two portraits of each woman who participated from 1985 through 2000. One photographic portrait depicts the selected member as her "alias," masked and costumed while the second depicts the artist as herself, without a mask, in her studio surrounded by her work. The first four "alias" in the series, *AKA Chansonetta Stanley Emmons, AKA Lyubov Popova, AKA Remedios Varo, and AKA Élisabeth Louise Vigée Le Brun* will debut in *Narrative / Collaborative* keeping the identities of their true persons protected. As members pass away and their identities can be safely revealed, both portraits will be exhibited allowing their contributions to be fully acknowledged.

For press enquiries, please contact Danielle Wu 212-315-0470 or danielle@galerielelong.com

Hours: Tuesday-Saturday, 10am – 6pm.

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Pictured: Doug and Mike Starn, *The No Mind Not Thinks No Things vokgret*, 2013, Ultrachrome K3 inkjet prints on Kozo paper with varnish.