fulfilled fantasies





about the exhibition

february 28 - april 1, 2019

To practice drag well is to be a master (or mistress) of the reference. The contour of a cheek. The color of an eyelid. The crackle of wit on the mic. Every element is a layered conception of gender and appearance - eyelashes to eyeshadow, lip shape to lip sync, and wig sculpting to body shaping.

Fulfilled Fantasies surveys the practice of drag in 2018 Chicago, documenting nascent drag performers to Rupaul's Drag Race alumni. Fulfilled Fantasies features over 30 works by 14 Chicago artists whose subject matter is drag and gender illusion.

Fulfilled Fantasies is curated by Kelly Boner, Master of Arts Management graduate student in Business and Entrepreneurship and assigned female at birth (AFAB) drag queen, and organized in partnership with the students of the Hokin Project, a gallery management practicum course of Business and Entrepreneurship.

artists

fashion

Chamilla Foxx
Phazma Plazma
An Authentic Skidmark...
x Imp Queen
Gidget Von Addams
Yolo

photo

Helen Maurene Cooper
Natalie Escobedo
Niki Grangruth &
James Kinser
Andie Mckenzie Meadows
Adam Ouahmane
Alex Wallbaum

video

Todd Diederich Dorian Electra

a note from the curator

Fantasy lives in the moment the corset is pulled tight. In the moment the beat drops and the queen death drops. In the moment the king dons his suit jacket and strikes a pose. When the persona is complete and the drag performer becomes lost in the illusion, that is when we "feel the fantasy." The fantasy takes many forms, from a heightened interpretation of gender to an otherworldly vision of an agender being. The works in *Fulfilled Fantasies* portray their subject when the fantasy is fully felt—through an idealized portrait, a glimpse of self-care in the bath, a representation of queer ancestry, or an immaculately constructed garment.

From legendary queens who have performed nightly for decades at the landmark Baton to performers fresh from their bedrooms on stage at Berlin's Crash Landing, Chicago's drag scene is in the midst of a growing and glowing renaissance. Indeed, the drag community encompasses a variety of artists beyond performers: photographers, videographers, and fashion designers, among others. There is a vibrating sense of collaboration when it comes to Chicago drag, partly due to the advantage of creating in a "city of villages." The central locus of the Boystown neighborhood, for instance, allows for more experimentation and a more intimate sense of community than the farther-flung clubs of New York or LA.

The drag artist as subject has a rich history in contemporary art. From Nan Goldin's photographs of the 1980s, Charles Atlas's videos of Leigh Bowery and Lady Bunny, to the 2017 New Museum exhibition *Trigger: Gender as a Tool and Weapon*, drag's exploration of gender, identity, glamour, and performance is a recurring conversation in the art world. *Fulfilled Fantasies* functions as an entry into that conversation on behalf of Chicago.

This exhibit showcases the intersection of contemporary Chicago artists and the drag world. In creating *Fulfilled Fantasies* I chose to focus on a select group of photographers and videographers whose distinct styles add a layer of collaboration and meaning to each portrait, while including costumes by Chicago designers that convey the level

of craftsmanship and creativity required to make drag fashion. Viewed together, a cultural moment emerges for this queer artform in which fantasy, gender, sexuality, and character intermingle.

Adam Ouahmane's work is recognized nationally and used on countless flyers for drag shows. Trained as a fashion photographer, Ouahmane is known for his deft hand in Photoshop that makes each of his drag portraits a singular work--never a simple point and shoot. His pieces in the show represent a range of styles of drag that are unified under his sense of color, lighting, and editing.

Helen Maurene Cooper's Blue Angels simultaneously reconstructs history while capturing a moment in contemporary Chicago drag. Using collodion wet plates, a historical photographic process reminiscent of the Victorian era, she asks her models to envision themselves as their own queer ancestors. In a project that addresses the historical erasure of LGBTQ identities, Cooper simultaneously records the contemporary drag performer as a historical precursor of themselves in a beautiful reclamation of stories lost.

The selected shots from Andie Mckenzie Meadows' series, *Queens Who Bathe*, is an acknowledgment of the dire need for self-care in queer communities, whose members' identities are routinely dismissed or punished for their transgressions from gender norms, while constructing a current history of a Chicago queer (and drag) community. Meadows is particularly adept at portraying the nature of fantasy in queer identity, as each set for her portraits is custom-built to the look and concept of the individual subject. The photo of Lucy Stoole, for instance, is the epitome of the queen in her fantastic ideal: in the bath, bell in hand, ready to be served.

Alex Wallbaum's triptych, Honey with Hot Dogs, is a commissioned work. If one of the most integral aspects of drag is glamour, then its counterpart would be camp—and in Wallbaum's photos, what could be campier than a drag queen simultaneously ravished by and worshipped with

hot dogs? In the preface to *Mother Camp*, one of the first ethnographies of the modern American drag queen, Esther Newton stated that, "In the mid-sixties, 'camp' was an in-group word which denoted specifically homosexual humor. The most highly esteemed female impersonators were all 'camps,' virtuoso verbal clowns." Any examination of drag would be remiss if it did not contain a nod to the history of the sharp wit of camp.

Natalie Escobedo's pictures situate the drag performer the club and its environs. While photographs documenting drag queens and kings at the club have a storied history, the color and lighting of her work imbues her subjects with an alluring sense of enigma. In her photographs, mystery and fantasy swirl together in a series of images that are believable as stills from David Lynch's *Twin Peaks*.

Niki Grangruth and James Kinser's series, Muse, is a continuing project originated in 2009. Kinser designs and models the costumes while Grangruth photographs their re-imaginings of iconic works from Western art history. In these works, Kinser styles himself with female and male gender markers to explore the fluidity of identity. Like Cooper's glass plates, placing Kinser as the central figure of these famous artworks situates the queer identity in the art historical context, therefore reconstructing lost queer histories. A selection of Kinser's costumes are included to illuminate the relationship between the creation of the character and the final image.

Two video works, 2000 Years of Drag by Dorian Electra and Smalls' World by Todd Diederich, provide context for drag as it was and drag as it is. Electra's song and video is a short primer for the global history of drag, and celebrates the nature of gender confusion, performance, and exploration in vibrant burst of color and melody, perhaps more succinctly than any scholarly paper. Smalls' World is a highly aestheticized documentation of the life of Naomi Smalls, Drag Race Season 8 and All Stars Season 4 contestant who currently lives in Chicago. Filmed and edited with a style that evokes VHS tapes, Smalls' World captures Naomi's life as a star on the road with a nod to her 90s idols.

The costume designers included in the exhibition. An Authentic Skidmark.... Chamilla Foxx. Gidget Von Addams, Phazma Plazma and Yolo bring the fantastical nature of drag into the space with their selected looks. An SAIC alum, Authentic Skidmark is known for the absolute surreality of their work and their consistent collaboration with Imp Queen, a popular trans drag queen and superstar. When a piece by Skidmark is in a room, that room is transformed into another reality. Foxx and Von Addams are both self-taught designers for the love of drag: Foxx's work evokes a level of fantastical glamour, while Von Addams' designs are extraterrestrial punk. Phazma Plazma's gloves, painted by hand and decorated using fake nails and various embellishments, are as beautiful as they are unnerving; tokens of the monstrous feminine. Rounding out the group of designers is Yolo, a queer trans Native artist currently completing her MFA at SAIC while working as a drag gueen and designer. Yolo's work explores her own, many intersectional identities while transporting her audience through her use of unconventional materials.

It's important to note that many of these pieces are being shown in the gallery space for the first time. As drag blurs the lines of gender and deconstructs boundaries, it was my hope in showing new works to similarly blur the boundary outside and inside the gallery. The pieces in this gallery are all immediate, recently made, and tangible. You can see most of the artists and performers working in their respective fields tomorrow.

As curator, I want to celebrate the color and vibrancy of the Chicago drag community. Life – affirming connections flourish in spaces across the city. These relationships grow during underground fashion shows in Pilsen, through avant garde productions in the Metro secret theater, amid kikis while painting face in the Berlin basement, and with camera flashes in home photography studios. In putting this show together, I hope to have captured some small slice of the diversity and beauty of the artistic voices of the Chicago drag scene.

kelly boner, curator @kellyboner

helen maurene cooper

Helen Maurene Cooper creates work that is multifaceted in its socialcultural languages; the mythology of her work borrows from social practice, and focuses on economic and social justice through the lens of adornment. *Blue Angels*, an ongoing series of wet plate collodion photographs, places an emphasis on the lack of visual representation of LGBTQ+ community from the 19th century. These portraits feature drag queens, drag kings and other non-binary performers, using a nineteenth century technology as a means to access a queer temporality and thus speak to history and current issues of inclusion.

Cooper is currently Visiting Assistant Professor of Photography at Kutztown University of Pennsylvania, Kutztown PA, and received her MFA from the School of the Art Institute in 2007. Cooper has received funding for exhibitions through Kutztown University, the University of Chicago, the Chicago Department of Cultural Affairs and the Cultural Council of Eindhoven, Netherlands. Cooper's work has been reviewed by the Chicago Tribune, New City, International Forum for Contemporary Visual Arts, New York Photo Review, Temporary Art Review and Bust.com.

Instagram @ cooperadooper Website hmcooper.com

Featured Queens

Hinkypunk @ das_hinkypunk

Kat Sass @ kat.sass
Khloe Park @ _khloepark
Melee McQueen @ meleemcqueen
Mick Douch @ mickdouch
Phazma Plazma @ phazma_plazma
Riley the Girl @ rileytheriley

Sigourney Beaver
Talia

@ sigourney.beaver
@ totally.d00med
Venus
@ venuscarangi

Wanda Screw @ wanda_screw Yolo @ yoloono_chi

Opposite page: Khloe, 2018, ambrotype on black glass



todd die derich

Todd Diederich is the director/editor of Naomi Smalls' *Pose* music video and co-creator of *Smalls World*, a docu-series that focuses on the life of Davis Heppenstall, most popularly known as *Rupaul's Drag Race* contestant Naomi Smalls. The first episode of *Smalls' World* was posted on YouTube in February 2018; together they filmed 10 episodes to complete season one in 2018.

On his friendship with Naomi Smalls, Todd said: "Davis and I were friends first before ever working together. We originally met at Queen on a late Sunday night...We were friends for a while. We didn't think to work together until we were at a mutual friend's party. Davis was staring at a photograph that was framed on the wall unsure if it was a photograph or a painting. When I told him it was my photograph I saw a light turn on in his eyes. Sometime later he asked if I could make him a couple videos for YouTube...we haven't stopped filming since."

The whole production for *Smalls World* is filmed and edited by Diederich and features music from Cameron Traxxx. Episode 8, featured in the exhibition, is the purest example of *Smalls' World*. It gives a glimpse into Naomi's process in true cinéma vérité form.

You can view the rest of Season One of Smalls World on YouTube.

Todd Diederich @ beodderich Naomi Smalls @ naomismalls

Photo: still from episode 4 of Smalls' World, Naomi vogues for students from the Yollocalli Arts Reach program



chamilla f o x x

Chamilla Foxx is a Chicago native who has done drag for 11 years. Her love of drag and performing motivated her to teach herself to do makeup, wig styling, and sewing.

She currently runs her own hair styling business "Styled by Chamilla." She performs at clubs across Chicago and hosts her own show "Sunday Social" at Meeting House Tavern in Andersonville.

Instagram @ chamilla_foxx
Website etsy.com/shop/StyledbyChamilla

Photo: Chamilla posing in one of her own designs; taken by Drag Files



dorian e l e c t r a

Rising pop artist Dorian Electra makes music that defies gender norms. PAPER praised their "high-concept musical productions that beautifully marries great pop music with pertinent cultural narratives" about sexuality and gender. Their viral music videos, including 2000 Years of Drag, Ode To The Clitoris, and The History of Vibrators, released on Refinery29, have accumulated over six million views online. Dorian's songs blend 00s pop and 80s funk with a unique and futuristic, gender-bending vocal style. They were recently featured on Charli XCX's track "Femmebot" along with Mykki Blanco and have played live with XCX at a number of shows and afterparties curated and organized by Dorian. Dorian's on-stage persona is best described as a mix of Britney Spears and a sleazy Las Vegas lounge singer. Most recently, Electra performed at NYC Pride 2018 as well as supported Russian group Pussy Riot on their first U.S. tour. Their last two singles and music videos, "Career Boy" and "VIP" have garnered major press and playlist spots from Billboard, The Fader, and Buzzfeed among others. Paper Magazine named Dorian one of the "100 Women Revolutionizing Pop" and Buzzfeed listed them as one of "19 Female Artists You Need to Look Out For."

Instagram: @ dorianelectra
Website: dorianelectra.com



Creator, Director: Dorian Electra

Director, Creative Producer: Imp Queen (@imp_kid)

Main Featured Talent: Imp Queen, Lucy Stoole (@tyislucystoole), Eva Young (@evayoung),

Dorian Electra, The Vixen (@thevixensworld), London Jade (@djtslondonjade)

Art Director, Production Designer: Mood Killer

Set Designer, Editor: Weston Allen Cinematographer: Kelsey Talton

2nd Unit DP: Greg Reigh Music Production: Andy Milad Choreographer: David Davis

Extras: David Davis, Jerome Riley, Benji Morino, Faeline Sharrieff, Mane Emmanuel, Darling Squire,

Molly Hewitt

Set Artist: Emma Moss

Makeup (Dorian's Look): Imp Queen, Melissa Hespelt

Hair (Dorian's Look): Justina Kairyte Costumes and Styling: Dorian Electra

Lighting Assistant: Taylor Russ Craft Services: Justina Kairyte

Production Assistants: Maya Muerhoff, Melissa Hespelt, Emelie Adele, Kaycee Conaway, Molly Hewitt,

Naomi Stuhlman

Photo: still from 2000 Years of Drag featuring The Vixen (left) and Dorian Electra (right)



natalie e s c o b e d o

Natalie Escobedo is from the south side of Chicago, IL with 18 years of photography experience.

After graduating from Columbia College in 2008 with a bachelor's degree in photography, she began pursuing a freelance career with a focus on portraiture. Her interest in drag photography began in 2013 after shooting a portrait of friend and Chicago-based queen Honey Dijon; this interest deepened after she reconnected with the documentary *Paris is Burning* while living in LA. In early 2016 after returning to Chicago, she began work on the portrait series *All Hail the Queen*, from which all the photographs featured in this show originated. While the series is currently Chicago-centric, she intends to expand its scope to neighboring cities and states, providing a diverse and intimate view of Midwestern drag culture.

Instagram Website @ natalieescobedo natalieescobedo.com

Featured Queens

Auntie Heroine @ auntieheroine
Aura Mayari @ auramayari
Kim Passable @ kimmypassable
Krissy Feetface @ krissy.feetface
Pastry Kream @ pastry.kream







niki grangruth james kinser

Niki Grangruth (b. St. Paul, MN) is a photo-based artist working in Chicago, IL. She creates images that explore issues of performative gender identity, beauty ideals and the reinterpretation of art history. Her work is influenced by pervasive archetypes found in cultural texts, art history, mythologies and folklore.

Her work has been exhibited nationally at museums and galleries such as the Center for Fine Art Photography, the Indianapolis Art Center, the Kinsey Institute Gallery and the Zhou B. Art Center. Grangruth received her B.A. in Studio Art and English from Saint Olaf College in Northfield, MN and her M.F.A. in Photography from Columbia College Chicago.

James Kinser is a Chicago-based multimedia artist. Combining performance and costume design, his work currently explores idiosyncratic expressions of identity that challenge the traditional male/female construct of gender. Previously, his work has addressed the relationship between the body, spirituality, and sexuality, all topics which continue to be incorporated into his work.

James earned an MA (2005) in Interdisciplinary Art at Columbia College Chicago and a BA (1997) in Art Education and Fine Art from Bethany College in Lindsborg, KS.

On Muse

Muse, a collaborative body of work by photographer Niki Grangruth and multimedia artist James Kinser, explores issues of non-conforming gender identity by reimagining and reinterpreting well-known paintings from art history. The photographs, sets, and costumes are all carefully constructed to reflect a painterly aesthetic. With art history as a foundation that grounds the work in the familiar and comfortable, each piece nods to the notion that history tends to be repeated in an organic and cyclical manner.

The use of a male subject, gaze, and costumes questions common gender-specific beauty ideals, disrupts the social construct of binary gender identity, and explores gender as a non-linear and ever-changing construct. The photographs also document a process of gender play – a conscious hybridization of hyperfeminine and masculine as a way of exploring the fluid, performative, and sometimes dichotomous elements of identity.

Project website: facebook.com/MuseArtistProject

Kinser Grangruth

Website www.jkinser.com/ Website nikigrangruth.squarespace.com

Instagram @ jameskinser Instagram @ nikinikniknik

Opposite page: Venus, 2009, laminated inkjet print

andie mckenzie m e a d o w s

Andie Mckenzie Meadows is a local queer femme historian, photographer, and organizer. Whether researching LGBTQ history, photographing in the studio or organizing events, Meadows is dedicated to building platforms of visibility for members of Chicago's LGBTQ community who are not represented by the "boy" in Boystown. She gives walking tours of the city's queer history with The Chicago History Museum (CHM), and The American Planning Association. She serves on the OUT at CHM committee and volunteers with CAMP (Chicagoland Alliance of Museums with Pride). Meadows' series Queens Who Bathe has been featured in Windy City Wardrobe, Sixty Inches from the Center, and Out There Magazine. Her drive and passion for Chicago's queer community prioritizes collaboration and seeks platforms to highlight the great work being done in Chicago.

Queens Who Bathe is a collaborative documentary series dedicated to capturing Chicago's contemporary queer community. The work LGBTQ folk have to do to be seen and valued often makes constantly working hard feel like an inherent part of queer identity. Queer folk need pampering and something as simple as taking a decadent bath can remind us that while we have so much work to do, we can also exhale. Queens Who Bathe is a way to facilitate and celebrate that exhale with folks who are working tirelessly to build the incredible spaces and community we have here in Chicago. Projects like Queens Who Bathe ensure that queer youth will never have to scour obscure archives and track down living storytellers to know that femme, trans, POC, and gender-non-conforming queer folks have always existed and thrived in this city just as hard as the hyper-visible boys of Boystown.

Instagram @ _miss_meadows_ Website andiemeadows.com

Featured Queens

Abhijeet @ bon abhijeet Denali @ denali . Irregular Girl @ imirregulargirl Jojo Baby @ thejojobaby @ iforpaydotcom JForPav C'est Kevvie @ cestkevvie TRex @ trexinchicago Lucy Stoole @ tyislucystoole

Opposite page: Lucy Stoole, from Queens Who Bathe, 2018, moab slickback metallic pearl



yolo

Toni Villasneñor-Marchal (YOLO) is a working artist and fashion designer in Chicago bearing with her all facets of the identity and culture that she has curated within herself over a lifetime. Raised on a Native American reservation in Wisconsin, she was taught from a young age the importance of community, culture, and the understanding of ones self and role in the greater scheme of things. Thus, it is her goal to always create art that speaks to her own personal identity bringing together all of the pieces that help make her who she is. With this in mind, Toni confronts the intersections of culture and identity through her work in the realms of installation, performance (drag), as well as object and garment design.

Instagram @ yoloono_chi

Photo: Womb (Work in Progress) featuring Yolo in collaboration with Wanda Screw, digital photography



phazma plazma

Phazma Plazma is the nexus of reactions, the inorganic extraterrestrial. Last time she was on Earth, the dinosaurs went extinct. She swears it wasn't her fault, but who knows. Now she returns to slay the haus down! Phazma seeks to fuse art, drag and science - to transform and blur the human construct of gender.





adam o u a h m a n e

Adam Ouahmane is a Chicago-based fashion and beauty photographer. After studying fashion photography in Michigan, he moved to Chicago in 2013. Eventually, he met and began working with renowned drag queen Kim Chi, who rose to global fame after her turn on Season 8 of *Rupaul's Drag Race*. Ouahmane's work with Kim opened the floodgates to shooting other Ru girls and queens across Chicago.

Ouahmane's favorite part of working with drag queens, as he told *Block Club Chicago*, is the collaboration: "We're artists working together. It's really fun to work together and see what we can come up with as a team." His shoots can be as little as ten minutes when the vision for the final image is clear for both him and the model.

Instagram@ adamouahmaneWebsiteadamouahmane.com

Featured Queens

Valentine Addams

Wim Chi

Wimchi_chic

Wimc

Opposite page: Nico, 2018, digital photography

an authentic s k i d m a r k . . . x imp q u e e n

"all we do is get dressed, go out, dance and stuff, go home, and tell each other we love them. that's it.

THIS DRESS IS MADE EXCLUSIVELY AND INSPIREDLY FOR IMP QUEEN, A BEAUTIFUL INTELLIGENT TRANS GODDESS.

Thank you sew much... I also do birthday parties."

Instagram

@ authenticskidmark

@ imp_kid

Photo: Imp Queen wearing the dress on the night of its debut, 2016.



gidget von a d d a m s

Travis Potter by day, Gidget Von Addams by night. Gidget puts the extra in extraterrestrial. This space queen made Chicago their home base two years ago, using the city as a platform to share their fashion designs, makeup artistry, and performance styles.

Instagram @ gidgetvonaddams

Photos: Left, Gidget shot by Jacob Bjorge; right, Gidget's parner Discord Addams (@discordaddams) wearing the piece featured in the exhibition, shot by Jacob Bjorge, digital photography



alex w a I I b a u m

Alex Wallbaum is an artist and photographer based in Chicago. He is a graduate from the University of Illinois where he studied Photography in the Art and Design program. Alex focuses on still life studio photography, but also works in portraiture and sculpture. His images are composed of everyday found objects and situations; both familiar and surreal.

Wallbaum's series of images, coordinated and produced for this show specifically, feature the familiar American icon (the hot dog), compared to the glamour of drag queen Honey Dijon. The juxtaposition is simultaneously light hearted and surreptitiously deviant.

Instagram @ Website ale

@ alexwallbaum alexwallbaum.com

Featured Queen

Honey Dijon @ honey.dijon



special thanks

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To our friends across Chicago

Rebecca Fall, Newberry Library

Bert Green, Bert Green Fine Art

Jacob Bjorge, Chicago area photographer featured on page 22

The Drag Files, Chicago area photographers featured on page 8

Erick Carrasco, hair and makeup assistant for Honey with Hot Dogs

Evan Sheehan, set assistant for Honey with Hot Dogs

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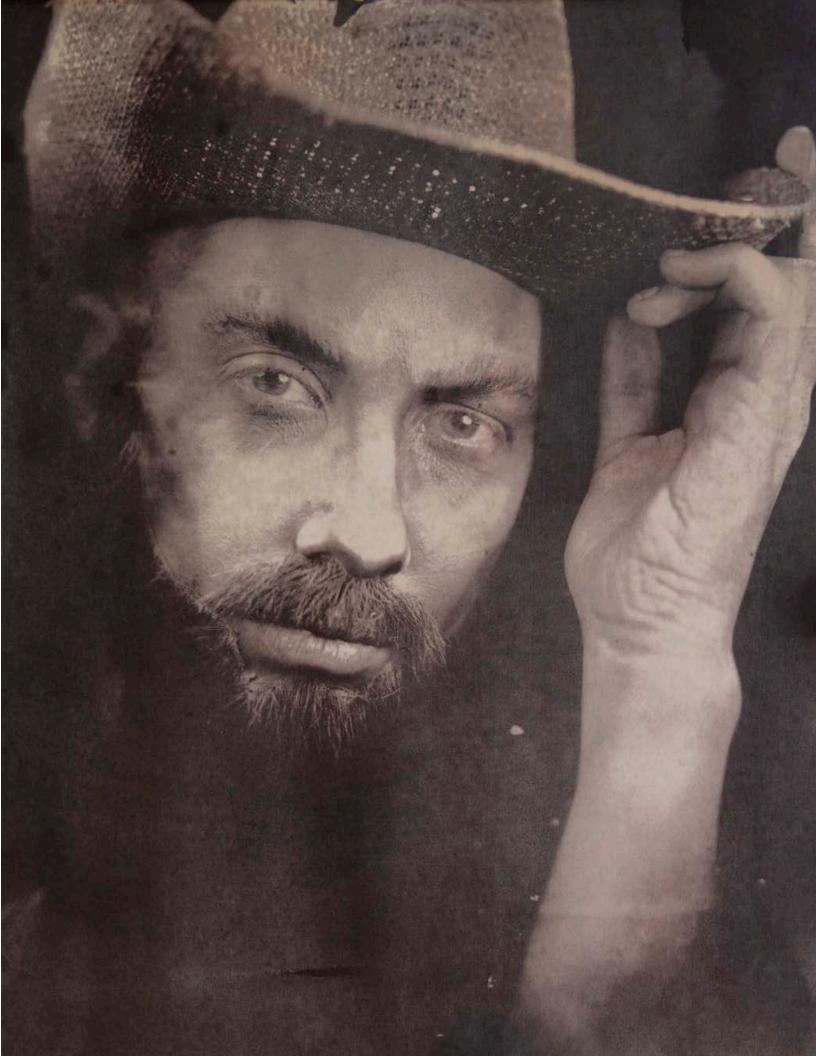
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Opposite page: Mick Douch, salt print, 2018 by Maurene Cooper



The Hokin Project 623 S. Wabash Ave, Chicago IL 60605

The Hokin Project is an arts management practicum course that provides students of all majors with professional experience in the development, curation, and execution of exhibitions, including programs and events at the Hokin Gallery. The Hokin Project operates through student run collaborations between the Business and Entrepreneurship Department and the Department of Exhibitions, Performance, and Student Spaces (DEPS) of Columbia College Chicago

