

ARTFORUM

New York

Critics' Picks

Elia Alba

THE 8TH FLOOR

17 West 17th Street, 8th Floor

September 21–January 12



The sixty individual portraits of nonwhite artists taken by Elia Alba for her current exhibition here, titled “The Supper Club,” are mostly of people she came to know through a series of dinner parties she organizes. Topics surrounding race, the art world, and visual culture are frequently discussed at these events, and the project became an expansive, multidimensional discourse on selfhood and politics.

Alba tailors each portrait to the artist. She chooses an assortment of backdrops, props, and costumes to accentuate her sitters’ personae while subtly highlighting their contributions to the cultural landscape. The titular artist in *The Spiritualist* (Maren Hassinger), 2013, for example,

makes work that explores nature as a complex and psychological space for political and personal transformation. She appears as a dancing vision dressed in white, surrounded by violet foliage. In *The Provocateur (Coco Fusco)*, 2013, Fusco—famous for a rigorous multidisciplinary practice that interrogates colonialism, gender, and race—stares intensely at the camera, practically burning a hole through the viewer. The performance artist featured in *The Thespian (Wanda Raimundi-Ortiz)*, 2014, looks like an old Hollywood screen siren. She clutches a strand of pearls and points her eyes heavenward, a figure ensconced and confident in her own glamour.

Through the work Alba provides her community with a solid stage that connects it to the rest of the world. Her pictures add a theatrical dimension to concepts of identity, blurring the hard boundaries of “difference” into something more slippery and beautiful.

-By Naomi Lev