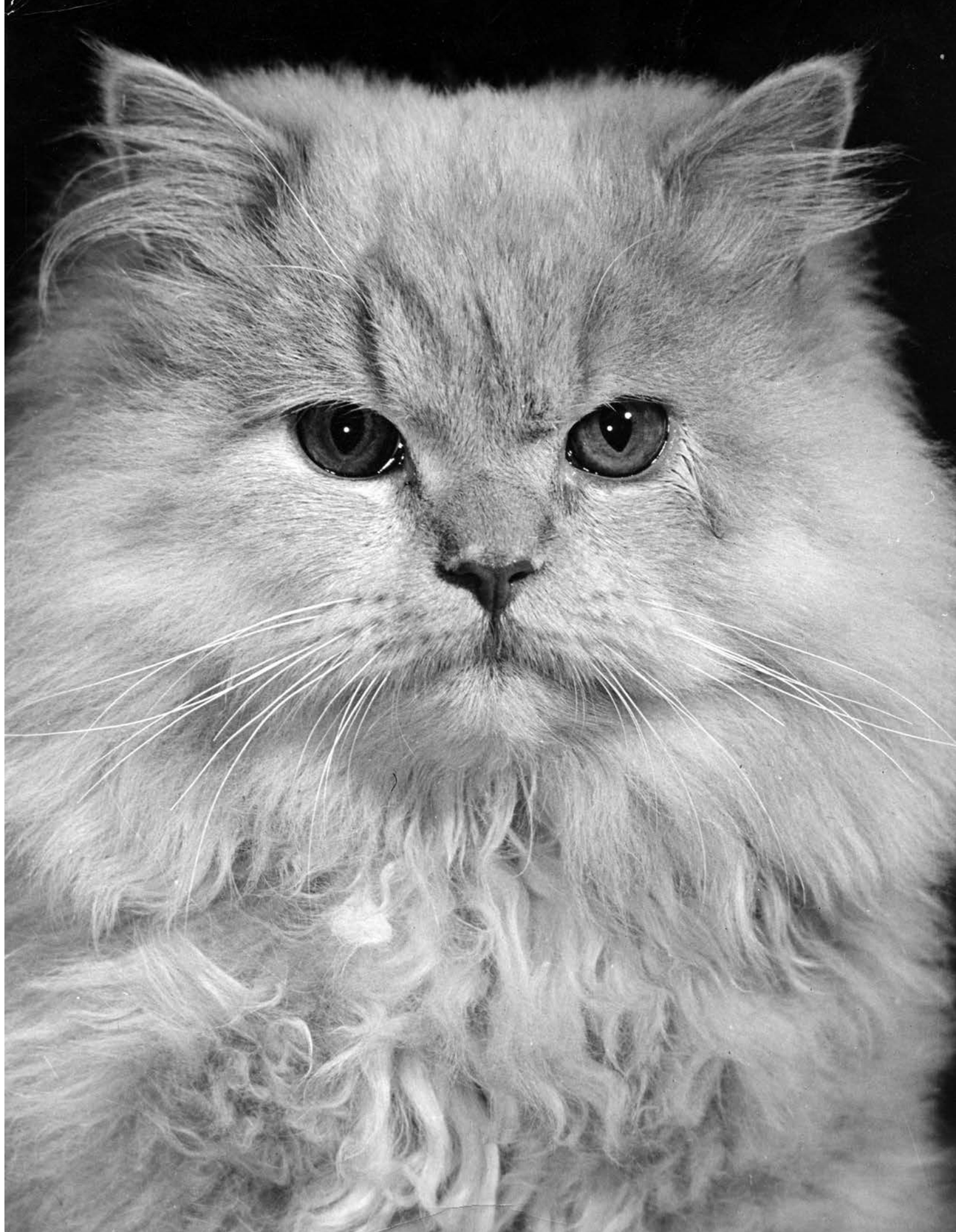
MARLO PASCUAL
REMEMBERING

With text by BETTINA FUNCKE



Language:

Marlo was private and fiercely resisted words. She didn't title her works or exhibitions. I imagine she shied away from the clarity of language, an alternate reality that can threaten art's open-endedness. Often, art is an object frozen in time, emerging coincidentally from playful experimentation or esoteric investigation. It wasn't meant to be pinned down, and language around art tends to do that.

Keep it simple, I told myself.

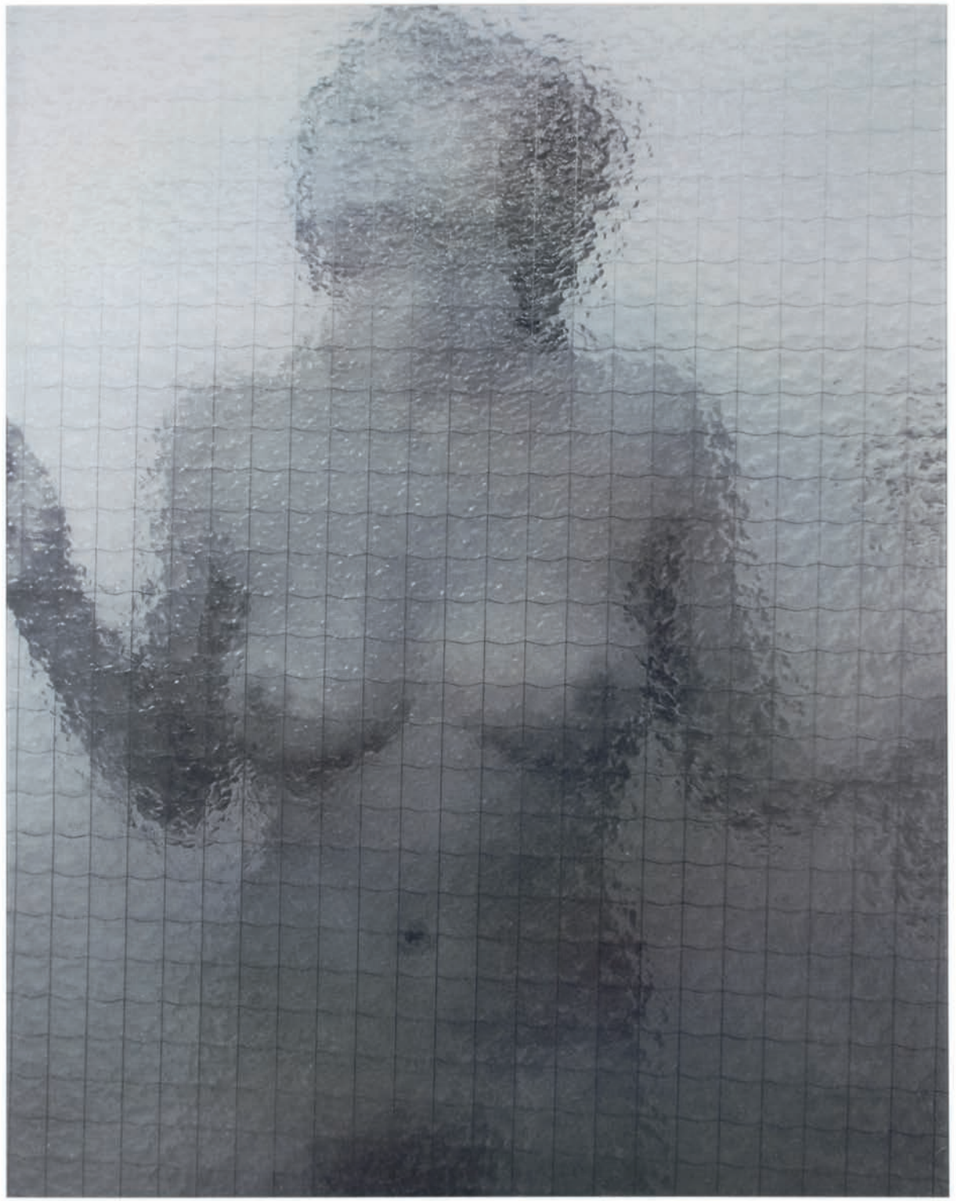
Photo, Photograph, Image:

Marlo talked about how she had reevaluated her relationship with photography many times. That was her work. These negotiations were mirrored in this writing: I found myself correcting words back and forth.

One morning I went through the manuscript and each time I encountered the word "photo" I replaced it with "photograph." Suddenly the text read differently, it seemed to work. Photo seemed too flimsy: quick, without thought or depth. Photograph made it sound more intentional, specific, historically considered and activated.

Later that day, I changed most instances of "photograph" back to "photo," or to "image." Photograph now seemed too weighty.

Marlo decreated photograph into image. She took photographs and removed their historical charge, giving them a new life, and activating them in ways that signify our present. I imagine she must have gone back and forth with these different impulses: loving the photograph as an example of a historically specific medium and for its relation to film, then holding up the photograph as *just* an image, and then making of it a constructed, manipulated thing of the current moment.



Remembering:

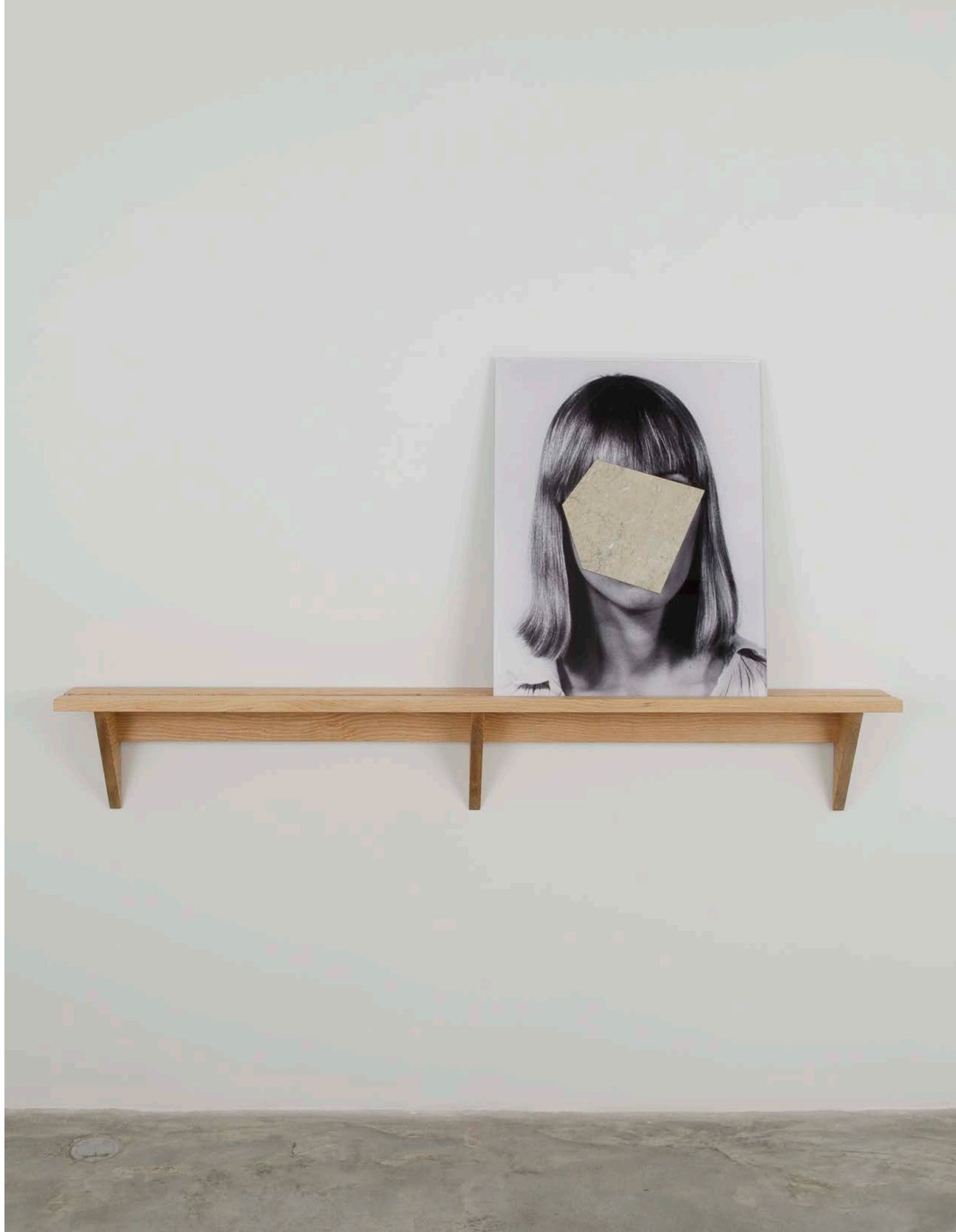
Remembering Marlo. We must brace ourselves to walk into the show, knowing she is no longer here. But she is so present in these works, which once more gather her friends.

Remembering is something Marlo did as part of her creative process: a cinematic feeling, in line with her love of movies and how they carry us into bygone worlds.

A way of remembering overlaid onto the exhibition: the light is low in the gallery and each work is spot lit. Another device of reanimating the image that Marlo had sometimes used herself. The portrait pinned to the wall by sconces, flames dramatically obstructing the eyes, candles slowly shrinking and streaming down the cheeks; the moment to be remembered slips away.

Remembering: a desire to hold a thing in place, as Marlo demonstrated by placing a rock or a plant on a headshot. Photography is always a construction, and Marlo liked to play overtly with that, adding sculptural elements to call attention to the artistic gesture.

Remembering: a desire to hold on to time, an attempt to put something back together again or to keep someone's image alive in your mind.



Motifs:

Over the years, Marlo returned to familiar motifs and materials: women, faces and bodies, domestic and natural scenes, often theatrically staged and carrying psychological charge or suspense. She combined found and vintage amateur photographs with plants, shells, rocks, or domestic objects from early modernity: anvils, Bakelite phones, coat racks, candelabras.

This exhibition brings together the following protagonists and scenes:

-a portrait of a long-haired cat, enlarged to six feet high and face-mounted to plexiglass, leaning against a wall
-a square profile of a woman obscured—or perhaps bejeweled—with a large conch shell, all on a pedestal
-a plexiglass-mounted sepia print of a plant in a hanging pot, itself suspended from a wall-mounted hook
-a nude woman, seven feet tall, indistinct behind a sheet of pebbled wire glass
-a pair of hands perched on top of one another, nails manicured to claw points
-a headshot of a woman, pinned to the wall with sconces, eyes enflamed by candlelight
-heeled legs, bisected, printed on velvet-textured paper, ten feet long, trailing from the ceiling
-a portrait of a woman whose face is obstructed by a rock that is weighing it down to the floor
-a woman's headshot leaning against a wooden shelf, face obscured by a marble tile
-a photo of a young Elizabeth Taylor (or perhaps a wannabe starlet?) stabbed by a fluorescent tube propping up the photo, itself secured against a rock
-a yearbook photo ripped in two, each half enlarged and face-mounted to plexiglass, leaning against a wall in two parts, one upside down
-the teary eye of Janet Leigh in *Psycho*, rotated, placed in front of a window looking into a garden

Emotive Presence:

"Social interactions take place more and more with the screen and the virtual. I find that there is a desire for physical interactions and I play with the possibilities and limitations of those interactions."
—Marlo, 2010

Let's consider the idea of an image feeding reality, and reality feeding the image. Take the conch shell on the portrait. The shell serves as obstruction and adornment, but Marlo also said that she was trying to physically communicate with the character by giving them something that would allow them to listen to the ocean. I found this baffling, but it's both surprising and simple, and it indicates the affective relationship Marlo had with her photos as subjects. They arrived small, in the mail, after a hunt through online thrift shops or eBay (years ago this still seemed like a quaintly exciting activity, like visiting an enormous flea market, rather than the space of today, largely colonized by stores and corporations).

The next step was to activate the prior existence of the image, so that our engagement might happen in a specific space and time. The woman impaled by a coat rack while smoking, otherwise undisturbed: it makes me chuckle. Arms emerging from within the fold of the image: the discomfort of an unseemly desire. The woman's zombie-like, enflamed eyes: at once both funny and somber. The enormous cat that greets us from the end of the space is comical but also foreboding.

Manual/Analog Photoshop:

We might also consider these works as expressions of the Photoshop tools that became popular in the early 2000s. By now, these sorts of image manipulations are part of our collective unconscious, and fill all parts of our lives. Marlo talked about this shift: "Now the role the screen plays is really intangible. It's really an experience where you don't actually have an experience. And that influences how I think about photographs too."

What if we think about Marlo's handling of found photographs as a systematic exercise of the Photoshop vernacular, but executed by hand, in the world of material existence? Here, she had to work with gravity, depth, and space:

-take a found photo
-enlarge it
-zoom into it
-crop it
-slice or rip or split it
-rotate it 90 degrees, or 180 degrees
-mirror it

And then:

-layer images one upon another
-adorn or obscure the photo by pouring paint on it, or placing an object on it: a rock, a shell, a plant, a lamp
-impale a photo with objects: a sconce, a fluorescent tube, Alvar Aalto stools
-fold a photo against itself

Kate Zambreno's Drifts*, adapted:*

For the last few years, I have been reading a lot of contemporary fiction by female authors. This past summer, Kate Zambreno's *Drifts* pulled me into its slow, restless auto-musings on the experience of writing a book. Something there reminded me of the feel of Marlo's work. While I was reading, I wrote down a few notes:

For some time, Marlo had been interested in the photograph being taken when one is not taking a photograph. Finding a vintage photograph, rather than finding something to take a picture of.

The key is trying to stay still, trying to turn off the internet, and keep it off.

"One lives so badly because one always comes into the present unfinished, unable, distracted."
—Rainer Maria Rilke, in a letter to Clara Rilke-Westhoff

The splendor of these fragments, folded into themselves … made me feel I had entered the space of fiction / of film / of a memory activated by …

Time:

"All great art contains at its center contemplation, dynamic contemplation."
—Susan Sontag, *Journal*

Marlo's gestures are bold and simple. And yet, a feeling of a deep, sustained connection with an image carries through her work. Maurice Blanchot's untranslatable *désœuvrement* comes to mind, a kind of spiritual stance, more active, like decreation, and used variously as inoperativeness, inertia, idleness, unworking, worklessness. This sense of worklessness gives her work its austere, elegant feel. An air of effortlessness.

An email from Aaron:

"*Psycho* was one of her all-time favorites, and she usually watched it at least once a year.

Most recently, when she was shooting the *Psycho* eye, she installed it in our Los Angeles kitchen, shot it, and that was the piece.

Marlo watched a movie of some kind pretty much every day. She LOVED films. Films of all kinds, both high and low. She could watch a Criterion Collection masterwork and then turn around and watch a super cheesy Hollywood blockbuster with equal excitement. … Don't get me wrong, she still had strong opinions about what she liked and disliked, but she was so open to experiencing everything. That openness transferred to pretty much all facets of life. Literature, music, food, etc. … she was completely open to all levels and types.

One of her favorite books was *The Moviegoer* by Walker Percy.

She loved walking and exploring. We walked every day. She particularly enjoyed setting out with no specific destination and just wandering and observing. She fiercely loved our dogs and had a desire to help all dogs. She often donated to the ASPCA.

She was a minimalist in life and not many physical objects (if any at all) were precious to her. She would give away or get rid of anything and everything at any given time. Objects would come and go with regularity. Objects were always in flux.

Marlo had a next level ability with facial recognition. It was a superpower of hers. She could spot and recognize very minor background character actors in films all the time."

Biography:

Marlo was born in 1972 in Nashville, Tennessee, where she grew up on her family's farm. After getting her BA from the University of Tennessee, Knoxville, in 1994, she moved to Brooklyn. In New York City she got into street photography for a little bit. She started shooting images of TV shows from the television. Her interests moved around and changed. She would discover a new photographer who she would become enamored with and would "try on" whatever they were doing. One of her day jobs was working on Dia Art Foundation's crew, along with former fellow students Wade Guyton and Meredyth Sparks. There she met Johanna Burton, Seth Price, and myself. In the following years she started to articulate her work among a group of peers, including Virginia Overton, Guyton, Sparks, Kelley Walker, Price, Trisha Donnelly, Carol Bove, and Anne Collier, a close-knit group of artists who were thinking in various ways about how to respond to the fast-paced changes we were all experiencing, changes which came primarily from digital innovations and their impact on our visual, social, and emotional world. At the center of this change was the photographic image. Marlo liked to distinguish herself from her Tennessee peers, reasoning: "I'm the only one who studied photography, so I have a different relationship to it." She went on to work for Karen Kilimnik and applied to study photography at the Tyler School of Art in Philadelphia, where she received an MFA in 2007. She began to grow disenchanted with the camera: "I had to take a painting class, and the first thing I did was pour paint over a photo." Later, she would comment: "I was thinking about Lynda Benglis and the pours that she did, and this idea about having a physical or sensual relationship with these images, but also at the same time destroying these images … and it progressed from there."

A stream of one-person shows followed, at venues including the Swiss Institute, New York (2009); the Aspen Art Museum (2010); Casey Kaplan, New York (2010 and 2012); Moore College of Art and Design, Philadelphia (2013); and Galerie Rodolphe Janssen, Brussels (2014). Her work appeared in numerous international group exhibitions and is represented in the collections of the National Museum of Women in the Arts, Washington, D.C.; the Dallas Museum of Art; the Seattle Art Museum; the Roberts Institute of Art, London; the Hessel Museum of Art, Bard College, Annandale-on-Hudson; the Museum of Contemporary Art, Chicago; the Walker Art Center, Minneapolis; the Whitney Museum of American Art, New York; and the Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum, New York.

Marlo left us decades too early, in the spring of 2020. She had been living in Philadelphia with her husband, Aaron Carroll, where she had been teaching at Moore College of Art and Design.

List of Works

In order of appearance

p. 3
Untitled, 2017/2021
Pigment print
Print size: 16 ⅔ × 22 ¼ in. / 42.3 × 56.5 cm
Edition of 3 with 1 AP

p. 7
Untitled, 2012
Digital C-print face-mounted to plexiglass with sintra backing
79 × 60 in. / 200.7 × 152.4 cm
Collection of Christen and Derek Wilson, Dallas, TX

p. 9
Untitled, 2010
Digital C-print, conch shell, pedestal
Print size: 17 × 17 in. / 43.2 × 43.2 cm
Installed dimensions: 36 × 17 × 17 in. / 91.4 × 43.2 × 43.2 cm
Private Collection, New York, NY

p. 11
Untitled, 2009
Digital C-print face-mounted to plexiglass with sintra backing
84 × 66 in. / 213.4 × 167.6 cm
Collection of the National Museum of Women in the Arts
Gift of Podesta Collection, Washington, D.C.

p. 15
Untitled, 2014
Digital C-print face-mounted on plexiglass with sintra backing, stone, red oak shelf
Print size: 30 × 23 ½ × ⅜ in. / 76.2 × 59.7 × 1.5 cm
Installed dimensions: 40 ¼ × 72 × 7 ½ in. / 102.2 × 182.9 × 19.1 cm

pp. 16-17
Untitled, 2012
Pigment print on Somerset Velvet paper, two panels
Each panel: 144 × 60 in. / 365.8 × 152.4 cm
Edition of 3 with 1 AP

p. 21
Untitled, 2016
Two digital C-prints face-mounted on laser-cut plexiglass with sintra backing
Print sizes:
36 ¾ × 43 ⅞ × ⅝ in. / 93.4 × 111.5 × 1.6 cm
25 ⅞ × 43 ⅝ × ⅝ in. / 65.8 × 110.7 × 1.6 cm
Installed dimensions: 36 ¾ × 91 × 3 ½ in. / 93.3 × 231.1 × 8.9 cm

p. 23
Untitled, 2010
Digital C-print face-mounted on plexiglass with sintra backing, rock
Print size: 34 ½ × 28 in. / 87.6 × 71.1 cm
Installed dimensions: 10 ½ × 34 ½ × 28 in. / 26.7 × 87.6 × 71.1 cm
Collection of Christen and Derek Wilson, Dallas, TX

p. 25
Untitled, 2008/2009
Digital C-print, brass candle sconces, white candles
Print size: 30 × 37 ¼ in. / 76.2 × 94.7 cm
Edition of 2 (ed. 1/2)
Private Collection, Switzerland

p. 27
Untitled, 2009
Digital C-print face-mounted to plexiglass with sintra backing, chain, wall-mounted plant hook
Print size: 31 × 48 in. / 78.7 × 121.9 cm
Collection of Thomas Alexander, New York, NY

p. 31
Untitled, 2009
Digital C-print
Print size: 29 ½ × 23 in. / 75 × 58.4 cm
Framed dimensions: 30 ½ × 24 in. / 77.5 × 61 cm
Edition of 3 with 2 APs

p. 33
Untitled, 2009
Digital C-print mounted on polycarbonate, fluorescent light, rock
Print size: 40 × 30 in. / 101.6 × 76.2 cm
Installed dimensions variable
Collection of Martin and Rebecca Eisenberg, New York, NY

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