

A.I.R.

Did you have a hard time finding me? **Denisse Griselda Reyes**

April 20–May 19, 2024

Opening reception: Saturday, April 20, from 6–8pm

GALLERY III

A.I.R. Gallery is pleased to announce *Did you have a hard time finding me?*, an exhibition by 2023–2024 Fellow Denisse Griselda Reyes. Featuring short films and familial ephemera alongside a new body of paintings, this exhibition humorously meditates on questions of self-formation, reparative representation, and archival preservation, inviting us to dwell in the absurdity these ambitions unintentionally generate. This is Reyes’s first solo exhibition in New York City.



Denisse Griselda Reyes, *Ana on the Bed* (1985), 2024,
Manipulated archival photograph, 4 x 6 inches.

Presenting what Reyes has called a “maximalist constellation of memory,” the exhibition juxtaposes materials from their family archives with paintings and multimedia projections within an installation space that recalls, yet does not perfectly reproduce, the domestic interiors of Reyes’s family. Anchoring this exhibition is a short film that ties together two threads. First, the border crossings of Reyes’s grandmother Anita that were necessitated by the peril of the Salvadoran Civil War, and this history’s impact on Reyes’s mother. Second, the queer dating life of Reyes’s indignant and savvy alter-ego, Griselda. Part-narrator, part-drag-persona, part-survival-strategy, Griselda offers Reyes a means to dictate the terms of their own representation against the expectations that constrict queer Latinx artists in the United States. Still, Griselda is also beholden to identitarian demands. Reyes allows their avatar to straddle the line of spectacle, flirting with failure, acknowledging that self-formation might be an impossible endeavor. By juxtaposing Griselda’s exploits with the narrative of their grandmother, Reyes interrogates whether familial, social, and historical processes have the final word on what generates a self.

Reyes has produced Griselda as a mediating figure—one who negotiates their own identity between femininity and non-binary gender, and who personifies the absurdity of any singular narrative of origin. In its plenitude and play, the exhibition exceeds the ostensible facticity of the familial and historical archive. Featuring new paintings that hazily recreate family photographs, a vitrine full of childhood teeth that parodies genres of museal presentation, screens that toggle between home videos and the simulation of archival footage, and striking blue-green walls that recall the past domestic spaces of Reyes’s family in El Salvador, the exhibition transforms processes of preservation into acts of mythmaking. The exhibition is less a recreation of the artist’s family’s domiciles than a space of critical reflection and ambiguity. Guests are invited to join in this meditation—and may find their own notions of selfhood implicated as a result.

Connor Spencer

Denisse Griselda Reyes (they/them, b. 1993) is an interdisciplinary artist and filmmaker, utilizing autobiographical narratives as source material to create contemporary fictions. Through layered temporalities and representations of the self within archives, objects, and performances, they construct a mythology of Salvadoran and personal history. Balanced between tragedy and pleasure, Reyes employs humor and their alter-ego, Griselda, to navigate the grief and absurdity inherent in recreating transhistorical subjects. Their work seeks to negotiate an agreement with the present moment rather than with a distant future, exploring how close one can get to recreating reality before losing touch with it. Their work has been exhibited at White Columns, A.I.R. Gallery, NoBudge Films, Film Diary NYC, The Wallach Art Gallery, Lenfest Center for the Arts, *Artforum*, Velvetpark Media, *MODA Critical Review* and internationally. Their films have premiered in Berlin and New York, and they have been nominated for the Rema Hort Mann Foundation Emerging Artist Grant and awarded the “Hot Film in the Making” Roy W. Dean Film Grant. They received an MFA in Visual Arts (New Genres) from Columbia University and a BA in Art History from Wesleyan University. They are currently an A.I.R. Gallery Fellow and live and work in Brooklyn, NY.

A.I.R. Gallery is wheelchair accessible via ramp. There are accessible toilets in the venue. There is comfortable seating with backs. Free tap water is available. The venue is nearest to the F train at York St (0.2 miles) and the A train at High St (0.5 miles). The nearest wheelchair accessible trains is the B, Q, R at Dekalb Av (1.1 miles) and the 2, 3 at Borough Hall (0.8 miles). The roads immediately surrounding the gallery are cobblestone. The nearest accessible parking garage (for an hourly fee) is two blocks away at 100 Jay St. No ID necessary for entry. Please contact info@airgallery.org for more information.



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