



# Deep Pool

*Dreaming in Black & White*  
JUNE 16 – AUG 28, 2022

## About the Exhibit

Real Art Ways presents a solo exhibition by Real Art Award recipient Deep Pool.

“Precious and dark, *Dreaming in Black & White* reckons with maternity, unrequited feelings, and personal understanding of femininity. Combining digital imaging, screen shots, video stills, and both analogue and cell phone photography, the work presents echoes of the past, and ellipses into the future. These small portals resist resolution, embracing dissonance and generative confusion.

*Dreaming in Black & White* is a compilation of monochromatic images spanning from a seven year archive (2016–2022). Often re-visited and re-mixed, *Dreaming in Black & White* is an homage to my photographic background, (short) life span of ritual, and ultimate effort to reconcile with my past, while acknowledging its inherent ephemerality.”

## About the Artist

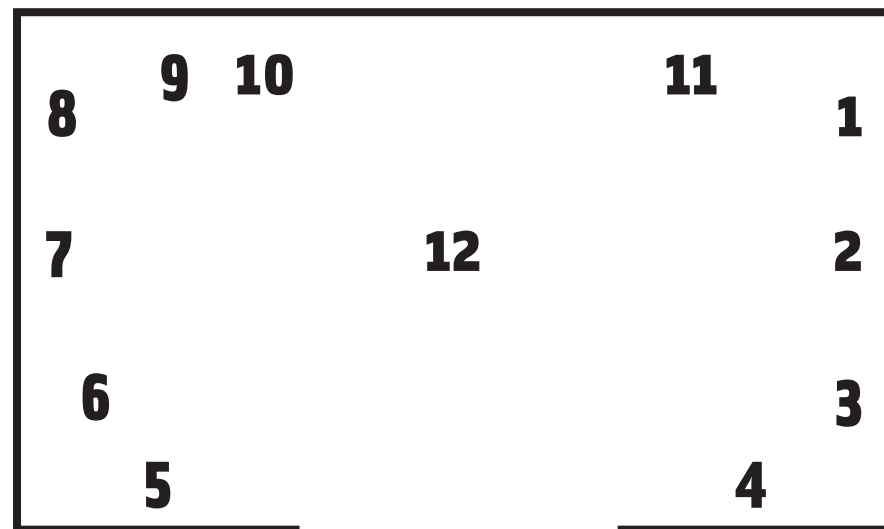
Deep Pool (b.1997) is an image maker and self-identifying “trans-disciplinary” artist. Informed by their upbringing as a transcontinental adoptee and their current gender transition, Deep Pool makes meaning with the reality of one’s identity being undetermined and in flux. The moniker “Deep Pool” is a rough English translation of their given name at birth, “Ji Tan.”

Most notably, Deep Pool is the recipient of the 2022 New York Community Trust Van Lier Fellowship at Wave Hill. They have exhibited in Richmond, VA; New Brunswick, NJ; Berlin, Germany; and have a forthcoming solo show in the Bronx, NY. Deep Pool graduated with a BFA from Virginia Commonwealth University School of the Arts, and currently lives and works out of Queens, NY.

## About the Real Art Awards

Deep Pool is a recipient of a 2021 Real Art Award. The Real Art Awards are a juried competition open at no cost to emerging artists from the six New England states, New York and New Jersey. The 2021 Real Art Awards were juried by artist and writer Kameelah Janan Rasheed; Hasan Elahi, artist and Director of the School of Art at George Mason University; and Real Art Ways Executive Director Will K. Wilkins. In addition to a cash prize and a solo exhibition, each artist receives logistical and curatorial support throughout the exhibition process. This project is supported in part by an award from the National Endowment for the Arts.

## Gallery Map



**1** *My Favorite Sin*, (2018–2019)  
Inkjet print, wood frame  
17 ½ x 12 ½ in.

**2** *Untitled*, (2016–2019)  
Inkjet print, metal frame  
14 x 18 in.

**3** *wet dreams*, (2017–2020)  
Inkjet print, faux marble frame  
12 x 9 ½ x 1 ½ in.

**4** *Untitled (Black Mirror III)*, (2019)  
Inkjet print, glass, metal frame  
16 x 20 in.

**5** *Untitled (Black Mirror II)*, (2019)  
Inkjet print, glass, metal frame  
16 x 20 in.

**6** *4ever (Iteration III)*, (2018–2022)  
Inkjet print, wood frame, LED  
20 x 25 x 3 in.

**7** *Limerence Trilogy I*, (2017–2021)  
Inkjet print, custom artist frame  
9 x 10 ½ in.

**8** *Limerence Trilogy II*, (2016–2021)  
Inkjet print, custom artist frame  
8 ½ x 11 ½ in.

**9** *Nine*, (2018–2022)  
Inkjet print, glass, metal frame  
8 x 10 in.

**10** *Limerence Trilogy III (the sun also rises)*, (2018–2022)  
Inkjet print, metal frame  
5 x 7 in.

**11** *sometimes not knowing is freedom*, (2019–2022)  
Inkjet print, metal frame  
8 x 10 in.

**12** *2good+2be=4gotten/Paradise... Someday*, (2020–2022)  
Inkjet print, wood frames, C-stand, butterfly clamps, water  
Dimensions variable

Cover: *Limerence Trilogy III*  
Back Cover: *Limerence Trilogy I* (left),  
*Limerence Trilogy II* (right)







*Dreaming in Black  
& White, 2022*  
installation view

## On Deep Pool, *Dreaming in Black & White*

Morgan Võ

*There is no performance that disappears into a  
concept where it might remain.*

— Fred Moten

“Black-and-white” is a desperate kind of formulation. As a chromatic category of photographic image-making, we usually let slide the rashness of the phrase, ignoring how flimsy its correspondence is to most of the objects it describes, attempting to hold something that cannot be held, or at least not held in that way. We could say “grayscale” to engage a more fluid, spectral, responsive frame. But that’s too slippery for shorthand, too murky—it fails to efficiently dominate the object. Instead, “black-and-white” offers to stabilize both the object and ourselves within a concise order of concrete bounds—but what is black, and what is white? Ad Reinhardt quotes Hokusai:

There is a black which is old and a black which is fresh. Lustrous black and dull black, black in sunlight and black in shadow. For the old black one must use an admixture of blue, for the dull black an admixture of white, for the lustrous black, gum must be added. Black in sunlight must have gray reflections.<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Ad Reinhardt, “Black as Symbol and Concept,” in Barbara Rose, *Art-as-Art: The Selected Writings of Ad Reinhardt* (New York: University of California Press, 1953), 86.

There is no “black” and there is no “white,” not outside of the blacks and whites we find before us, those shades that have surfaced amidst particular contingencies of material, light, and our capacities of reception. What’s desperate is the forsaking of an engagement with contingency only to more efficiently identify what stands before us, to suggest we are holding something still when that something cannot help but shift.

In *Dreaming in Black & White*, Deep Pool interrogates the expectations we bring to the experience of identity and the construction of personhood, braiding paradoxical strategies of irony and pleasure, of deconstructivist critique and romantic transcendence, into dissonant portraits of awkwardness, eroticism, melancholy, comedy, and contemplation. Deep Pool’s work recognizes the power of categorization to excite and compel us, to tempt us with the promise of knowing, while it simultaneously makes evident the ways in which life and world will innately exceed and relentlessly disrupt the grasp of social categorical controls.

At the center of *Dreaming in Black & White* is *2good+2b=4gotten/Paradise...Someday* (2020–2022), a complex work animated by a cyclical series of material puns on the photographic process. A large-scale photographic print hangs at an off-kilter angle from a pair of butterfly

*2good+2b=4gotten/  
Paradise...Someday,*  
2020–2022  
(detail)





*Dreaming in Black & White, 2022*  
installation view



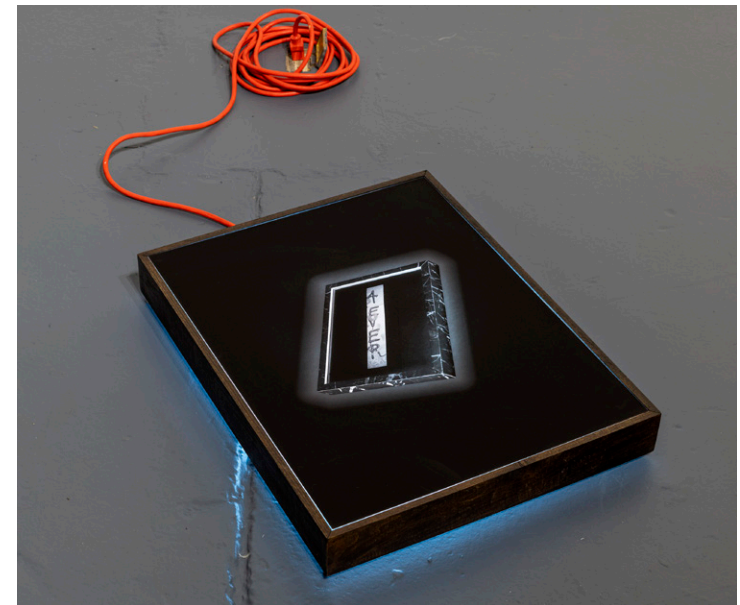
clamps attached to imposing C-stands. The print is of Deep Pool's formal highschool portrait, which has been re-photographed from off of a MacBook screen, a prismatic refraction of an 'X' breaking across their face, the image of one figure disrupted by the ethereal manifestation of another. The lowest corner of the print dips into a dark wooden trough of water; the paper curves with the absorption, as the darkness of the image seems to pour itself into the black beneath the water's surface. Moving to view the backside of the print, we see that Deep Pool has stamped the piece with their signature seal of a leaping white rabbit. Though we might understand the print itself to be a solid object, light from the front carries the portrait through its semi-transparent ground, as if staining or haunting the back of the print with the image it bears. The rabbit lifts off from the same point of disruption as the refracted 'X.' In front of the image, vinyl text affixed to the ground provides the title, and a materials list that begins in mythic psychological abstractions:

"2good+2b=4gotten/Paradise...Someday" (2022)  
hyper-refined, pre-existential, bliss, distant futures,  
sex, murder, water, broken glass & inkjet print

xoxo, Deep Pool



*2good+2b=4gotten/  
Paradise...Someday,*  
2020–2022  
(detail)



*4ever (Iteration III),*  
2018–2022  
(detail)

In the space of the contemporary exhibition, materials lists seem to offer intellectual priority to the situating of a piece in the “knowable” context of process, perhaps interrupting the chance to cultivate a richly unsituated phenomenological relation to the work. But Deep Pool challenges this hierarchy by asking more poetically and more potently, “What is this made of?” By inserting affect and possibility into the space of an image’s material construction, the image becomes more overtly the site of construction for a particular horizon of identity. Affective expectations oversaturate the physical world and undermine the conditions of existence within that world—Deep Pool inverts this relationship by forcing us to experience affect *as* material, at once allowing us to recognize its role in the shaping of reality while also questioning its integrity as a literal building block.

*2good...* is an exhaustion of the photographic medium as a metaphor for both the pressures and the impossibilities of identification, categorization, conformity, and containment. In this case, the visual production of youthful femininity—I am thinking particularly of the red rose raised delicately in Deep Pool’s fingers—is explored in the context of a violent tableau that draws resonance between studio practices like print development and historic forms of female bondage such as the “swimming” of accused witches. A profound dimension of



*Dreaming in Black & White, 2022*  
installation view



*sometimes not  
knowing is freedom,  
(2019–2022)*

this piece comes from the use of the C-stands and butterfly clamps, which might more conventionally be used to hold up paper backdrops for a commercial product photoshoot. Subverting the clamps' function by instead having them hold the image itself, *2good...* suggests that what is taken to be the background of an image is actually fundamental and formative to the constitution of whatever figure lives in the foreground.

The meta self-portraiture of *2good...*, wherein Deep Pool is re-experiencing and re-formulating an image of their pre-transition self, serves as an instructive guide for how to read the rest of the works in *Dreaming* which, though still invested in photography as a metaphorical terrain, present more circuitous relationships between artist and self. Of the three images that make up *Limerence Trilogy*, for example, the human figure is represented in only two, and neither is the artist. "Limerence" refers to a state of infatuation with another person, characterized by a strong desire for the reciprocation of one's feelings. While *Limerence Trilogy I* carries the erotic charge of gazing on someone's naked back, the "unrequited feelings" Deep Pool contends with are not only—or even chiefly—to be understood as concerned with another.<sup>2</sup> Rather, while the presence of an amorous sign-off ("xoxo") flirts with the viewer, in the context of such a reflexive self-portrait as *2good...*, Deep Pool is also signaling their image making practice as a way to ask fundamental questions of themselves, and raises the difficult truth that one's self does not have an easy answer with which to respond

<sup>2</sup> In the exhibition's accompanying text, Deep Pool writes: "Precious and dark, *Dreaming in Black & White* reckons with maternity, unrequited feelings, and personal understanding of femininity."

<sup>3</sup> Judith Butler, *Giving an Account of Oneself* (Fordham University Press, 2005).

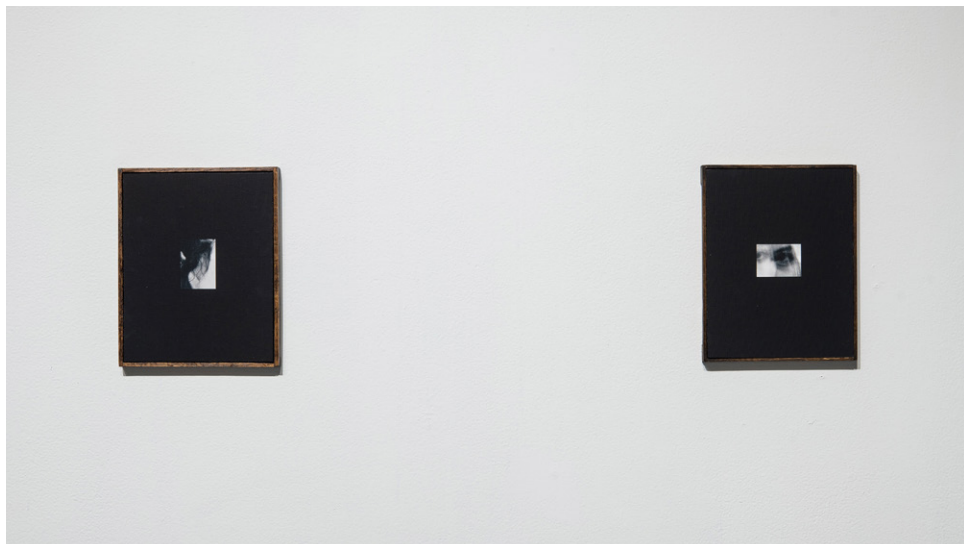
to these important concerns. *Limerence Trilogy* ends with a ruminative image of the sun glaring over the tilted ocean. Judith Butler writes:

If and when, in an effort to confer or to receive a recognition that fails again and again, I call into question the normative horizon within which recognition takes place, this questioning is part of the desire for recognition, a desire that can find no satisfaction, and whose unsatisfiability establishes a critical point of departure for the interrogation of available norms.<sup>3</sup>

Deep Pool's work happens here at the intersection of frustration and engagement, helping us to consider the generative potentials of working with, and ultimately through, the limits of identity categories as a way to account for the impossibility of capturing the whole of ourselves.

**Morgan Vō** (b. 1989) is a poet concerned with resonance, contingency, difficulty understanding, and the presence of the dead among the living; he is also a librarian-in-training. His chapbooks include *Lights of Earth* and *Eat Pamphlet*. His poems have been included in the anthology *Pathetic Literature*, edited by Eileen Myles, and he has recently appeared in *Footnotes*, the exquisites reading series, and the Segue reading series. He organized G-L-O-S-S, a mutual aid-based poetry press, from 2020-21, and is currently a member of the *Poetry Project Newsletter* editorial collective.





**Real Art Ways** is a contemporary arts organization with a record of linking artists, innovation and community. Programs include visual arts, with exhibitions, public art projects, and artist presentations; cinema, with independent and international films; music; performance; literary events; community and educational programming.



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