

Union Hall is pleased to present *Loving You: Documenting Kia Lopez and Chella Man*, a solo exhibition featuring the work of MaryV. MaryV is a 23-year-old photographer and performance artist based in Brooklyn, New York. Born and raised in Denver, Union Hall is thrilled to share MaryV's first exhibition outside New York City. With a uniquely sensitive approach to her subjects, MaryV focuses on the documentation of self-identity, bodies, intimacy, compassion, relationships, sexuality, and self-love.

*Loving You* consists of analog photography from two ongoing bodies of MaryV's work, including images created as early as 2014. These bodies of work document the transitions of Kia Lopez (she/her), MaryV's childhood friend; and Chella Man (he/him), her partner of over four years. Shared in this exhibition with Kia and Chella's consent, the images depict some of their most deeply personal moments, their beauty, their changing bodies, their resilience, biological and chosen families, and their pain, triumphs, and growth.

With *Loving You*, MaryV aims to open a window to aspects of queer culture that cisgender and heterosexual people do not often see. The photographs she captures range from moments of boundless joy, Kia and her friends laughing as they strut the streets in full drag looks; to moments of physical pain, Chella's bandages are removed post-top surgery. Of the choice to share these intimate images of her loved ones at their most vulnerable, including medical and surgical transitions, MaryV says:

*As a photographer, I am constantly trying to find the balance of where and how I can share my images so that they are viewed with understanding. I want the viewer to see them with a sensitive gaze. This is the only gaze that is acceptable to me. My hope is that this gaze can then be taken from the gallery into the real world. I want this gaze to be present when seeing trans, non-binary, and gender non conforming people. If you absorb anything from viewing my work, please consider the invitation and opportunity to*

*participate in continued conversations about seeing people, especially those in the queer community, through a sensitive gaze.*

Recognizing that viewing images depicting gender transitions can often cause feelings of dysphoria and discomfort, not only for Kia and Chella, but may also create a trigger for others traveling their own gender/queer journeys, MaryV encourages viewers to handle themselves with love and care, stating:

For others who may not be able to relate to the images displayed in *Loving You* on such a personal level, MaryV wishes to expose the temporary privilege of glimpsing into the lives of her subjects.

During opening night and throughout the run of show, all forms of photography or documentation will be strictly prohibited in order to encourage viewers to acknowledge the depth and sensitivity of the moments depicted. MaryV and Union Hall hope that *Loving You* challenges viewers' pre-conceived notions of trans and non-binary experiences, and creates space for members of the LGBTQIA+ community as well as straight allies to navigate our privilege and use our voices to make the world a safer, gentler, more respectful place for all.