

overpainted image of three swimsuited models to which has been added real paper flowers, plastic birds and the eponymous pink neon sign.

These paintings were part of a new approach to representation Raysse referred to as the “hygiene of vision,” which employed images of anonymous fashion models taken from ads and magazines. Raysse’s emphasis on archetypal goddesses of the commercial realm notwithstanding, works from this period have a perceptible dark side, as in *Broken Painting* (1964), a photocopied picture of a pretty girl overpainted and collaged until the subject resembles less a delighted consumer of new products than a wartime refugee.

One of the exhibition’s highlights was a selection of Raysse’s movies from the mid- to late ’60s. Strung together images à la Kenneth Anger, these jump from scenes of young people disporting themselves in bathing suits to psychedelic dance sequences and Monty Python-esque skits.

In the early ’70s, Raysse’s work turned inward. The last section of the show featured small boxes sprouting papier-mâché mushrooms, a tall object resembling a shaman’s staff, and a long, friezelike wall sculpture made from an electric cord strung with feathers, sticks and beads and ending in a lit bulb. These pieces have their own trippy charm. But it is Raysse’s work of the 1960s that remains most compelling, brilliantly distilling that decade’s simultaneous embrace of the new and its willful forgetting of the recent past.

—Anne Doran

SIMON FUJIWARA

Andrea Rosen

For Simon Fujiwara’s first solo exhibition in New York, “Studio Pietà (King Kong Komplex),” the British artist, who lives in Berlin, used his recollection of a photograph of his mother from childhood as the foil for a mixed-medium installation (first shown in March at the Sharjah Biennial). The show delved into themes of stereotyping, inchoate sexuality and the faulty rewiring of memory.

The first room mimicked the look of a detective’s office. Two bulletin boards covered in fuzzy gray fabric were pinned with “evidence,” including plastic bags of beach gravel and images of the Casino du Liban near Beirut, where Fujiwara’s British mother, a Bluebell Girls cabaret dancer, performed in the ’60s. One of the boards also displayed photocopies of details of Michelangelo’s *Pietà*. In the middle of the room, a photo-shoot set was erected, complete with a spotlight, a reflective umbrella and a seamless backdrop.

In the second room, three large color photographs arranged as a triptych represented Fujiwara’s imaginative reconstruction of the original photograph, which depicted the artist’s blonde mother draped in the arms of a dark Lebanese man on a beach near the casino. In Fujiwara’s re-creation, he used a blonde female dancer and a Middle-Eastern-looking male actor to reenact the roles. The three photos in turn



show the woman alone, with arms outstretched; the woman holding the man (alluding to the pietà theme), assisted by a sling to help her bear his weight; and the man alone in the sling, in a pose that is comically feminine.

The viewer learns of the proto-image (which is not included in the exhibition) through a 20-minute video projected on the seamless backdrop. In the video, Fujiwara performs a voiceover in which he acts as both interviewer and interviewee. He begins by talking about something called the “King Kong complex,” reading a passage from a text describing a “fear of the notion of a darker-skinned or hairy male individual.” The accompanying image is a still from the German-release version of the 1933 film *King Kong*, which we find bore the title *King Kong und die weiße Frau* (King Kong and the White Woman). Fujiwara goes on to talk about his idea for reimagining the photograph, his visit to Beirut, and the casting and shooting processes. Fujiwara explains that the male actor had complained that continually being typecast in terrorist roles left him feeling like a ’50s housewife, incapable of escaping his lot in life. So Fujiwara shot him in the woman’s arms, in a reversal of the pose in the original photograph.

The video is illustrated with moody, atmospheric images, like a glass of water spilling over a stack of color photographs and the couple air-kissing in slow motion. Fujiwara’s voice is often deftly interrupted by sound effects: the word “insemination,” for example, is the implied climax of a sentence but is censored with a beep; a celebratory explosion of brass instrumentals unexpectedly muscles its way into the spoken narrative.

Fujiwara has become a rising international presence through works that tease his own biography to a restless point of intrigue. In this video, his cinematic cliff-hanger arrives when, after admitting that he found the man in his mother’s photograph “dangerous-looking,” he asks himself if, as a child, he had also felt attracted to him. He then declines, or refuses, to answer. By invoking a concept as fraught as the King Kong complex, then framing it against a rather fabulous backdrop of world travel, casinos and showgirls, Fujiwara reveals the brutal parochialism of lust and self-obsession. If the artist is investigating broadly beneath the surfaces of desire, he is also creating a devilishly dazzling surface in which to view himself.

—Aimee Walleston

Untitled photographs in Simon Fujiwara’s mixed-medium installation *Studio Pietà (King Kong Komplex)*, 2013; at Andrea Rosen.