

ABELARDO MORELL

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Flowers for Lisa II

1 November — 22 December 2018

Opening reception & artist book signing: Thursday, 1 November, 6-8pm



Flowers for Lisa #69 – After Van Gogh, 2017

Edwynn Houk Gallery is pleased to present an exhibition of thirteen large-scale photographs by Abelardo Morell (American, b. Cuba, 1948), from his series *Flowers for Lisa*.

The exhibition marks a culmination of the series, originally debuted by the gallery in 2017, and will feature a selection of never-before-seen photographs in which Morell delves deeper into his experimentation of variations on floral still lifes.

The artist will be present at the opening reception on November 1st from 6-8pm.

Titled after Morell's wife of more than 40 years, Lisa McElaney, *Flowers for Lisa* evolved from the artist's quest for a birthday gift that would endure beyond the brief lifespan of the bouquets Lisa was accustomed to receiving, and impress her with its bold, lasting visual impact. The process of creating this initial work for his wife spurred an intensive investigation into the theme over several years, resulting in a series of more than seventy examples that span a range of influences and improvisational techniques, and "serve an emotional impulse to show my dedication to the woman with whom I share my life."

Excited by the prospect of exploring this subject matter, he embraced the challenge of engaging with the longstanding tradition of depicting floral arrangements in still lifes from a fresh perspective—inspired by Jan Brueghel, Giorgio Morandi, Edouard Manet, Georgia O'Keefe, and Irving Penn, among others.

Working primarily within his studio, Morell incorporated the techniques of painters, sculptors, print-makers and photographers to expand the notion of what a floral still life, and indeed what a photograph itself, could be. The images in this exhibition are imbued with recognizable art historical and cultural references—Van Gogh's sunflowers, Piero della Francesca's portrait of the Duke and Duchess d'Urbino, Surrealist trompe-l'œil imagery, and films such as Douglas Sirk's *All that Heaven Allows* and Hitchcock's *Vertigo*.

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Yet, some works are also autobiographical, reflecting Morell's relationship with his wife and her importance in his life and artistic practice. "While the subject of my work may be flowers, the photographs are also pictures about perspective, love, jealousy, hate, geometry, sex, life, the passage of time, and death," says Morell.

Abelardo Morell holds an MFA from Yale University and a BA and honorary doctorate from Bowdoin College. He also received an honorary doctorate from Lesley University in 2014. In 1993, he was awarded a Guggenheim Fellowship. Until 2010, he was a full-time professor of photography at Massachusetts College of Art, where he continues to work with graduate students. Morell was the recipient of the International Center of Photography's Infinity Award in 2011. In 2013, he was the subject of a retrospective entitled, "The Universe Next Door," organized by the Art Institute of Chicago, which traveled to the Getty Museum in Los Angeles, and the High Museum in Atlanta. Morell's work was featured in group exhibitions at the Morgan Library & Museum, New York in 2017 and at the Museum of Fine Arts, Boston and the Denver Art Museum in 2018. His work is in numerous private and public collections, including the Art Institute of Chicago, the Fondation Cartier, Paris, the Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York, San Francisco Museum of Modern Art, Victoria & Albert Museum, London, and the Museum of Modern Art, New York, amongst others. Abelardo Morell lives and works in Boston, Massachusetts.

This will be Morell's fourth solo exhibition with Edwynn Houk Gallery. A publication on the series, *Flowers for Lisa: A Delirium of Photographic Invention*, is being released by Abrams in October 2018, and the gallery will host book signings at the opening reception.