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Engaños

Photographs by Daniel Handal

July 8—September 9, 2023

Opening reception:

Saturday, July 8, 2023

6:00–8:00 pm

CLAMP is pleased to announce “Engaños,” an exhibition of photographs by Daniel Handal, the artist’s third solo show with the gallery.

“Engaños” (Spanish for “deceptions” or “illusions”), draws inspiration from Joris-Karl Huysmans’ 1884 literary classic *Against the Grain*, which explores themes of individuality, nonconformity, and authenticity.

The novel, a seminal work of Decadent literature, centers on Jean des Esseintes, a reclusive aesthete who attempts to create a perfect, artificial world for himself. As part of his experiment, he collects artificial flowers that appear to be natural. Later, as his intellectual curiosity progresses, des Esseintes starts seeking out natural flowers that appear to have been artificially made. Handal’s project takes this concept a step further by presenting flowers as optical illusions, blurring the line between reality and representation.

Through the use of trompe l’oeil and visual tricks, he aims to challenge traditional notions of beauty by presenting flowers in unexpected and unconventional contexts. By placing these delicate, natural subjects in corrugated cardboard boxes, he creates a sense of contrast that speaks to the themes of the novel—transforming an inexpensive and common material into something beautiful. The rough, industrial material of the boxes serves as a foil for the delicate beauty of the flowers, challenging the viewer to consider the relationship between the natural world and the man-made.



247 West 29th Street, Ground Floor, New York, NY 10001

Tel 646 230 0020 / clampart.com

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The project also touches on the theme of our relationship with truth and how technology affects the way we see and interact with the world. By presenting these photographs as two-dimensional works that appear to be three-dimensional, Handal explores the ways in which photography can both create illusions and distort our perception.



While technology has the potential to be a powerful tool for solving complex problems, it also raises concerns. Since entering the digital era, people have engaged with technology in a way that calls into question what is real and what is not. As a result, the world is facing new challenges, so Handal wanted to work on a project that addressed our relationship with truth and how it's linked to what we see, perceive, or experience—but without using anything too sophisticated. Instead, he employs simple techniques to add a layer of illusion and playfulness to each piece, inviting the viewer to engage with the artwork on a deeper level.

Handal explains that he read *Against the Grain* when he was coming to terms with his queerness, and it resonated with him in ways that are hard to describe. For queer people, authenticity is important because many struggle to come out. That process teaches individuals that in order to be happy they must also be truthful. Handal turns the notion of truthfulness on its head.

Techniques & Materials

The unique beauty and characteristics of flowers symbolize individuality, diversity, and authenticity. Handal uses corrugated boxes as a representation of the creative process, elevating this inexpensive and common material into something beautiful. With the help of photography, he aims to trick the viewer, even if only for a moment, into believing the flowers are real.

All artworks are pigment prints on gesso-coated aluminum which have been mounted onto a museum box in order to create a seamless effect. Each photograph is printed to scale to match the flowers and box used to display the flower arrangement in real life.

Originally from Honduras, Daniel Handal lives and works in New York City. He received his BS in Applied Sciences from Rutgers University and studied photography at the International Center of Photography. His work centers on portraiture and explores issues of gender, sexuality, identity, and community. He has had a solo exhibition at the Brooklyn Public Library (Flatbush Branch) and has been shown in group exhibitions at the New Mexico Museum of Art, FotoFest in Houston, and the Center for Photography in Woodstock, among others. His work has been exhibited internationally at the Australian Centre for Photography and MKII in London. Handal's photographs have been published in HuffPost, Slate, and Hyperallergic. He has been awarded residencies at The Millay

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Colony for the Arts, Virginia Center for the Creative Arts, and VCAA—France. Handal currently serves on the board of directors of Baxter St at the Camera Club of New York. His work is represented in the permanent collections of the Worcester Art Museum, 21c Museum and Hotels, Transformer Station Contemporary Art, Kala Art Institute, Kimmel Harding Center for the Arts, and more.

For more information and images please contact Brian Paul Clamp, Director, or see www.clampart.com. Summer gallery hours are Monday through Friday, 10:00 am to 6:00 pm.

Image 1: © Daniel Handal; “Decorative Dahlia (White Paper Bag),” 2022; Pigment print on gesso-coated aluminum, painted museum box (Edition of 3 + 2 APs); 20 x 16 x 1.5 inches.

Image 2: © Daniel Handal; “White & Yellow Ranunculus (Clear),” 2022; Pigment print on gesso-coated aluminum, painted museum box (Edition of 3 + 2 APs); 18 x 12 x 1.5 inches.