

Mickey Aloisio

You Go Ahead—I'll Watch

January 23 — March 2, 2024
Floor 3

Press Release

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Marlborough is delighted to present *You Go Ahead—I'll Watch*, a solo exhibition of the New York-based interdisciplinary artist, Mickey Aloisio. The exhibition will open on Tuesday, January 23rd, with a reception from 6pm until 8pm, and will remain on view through Saturday, March 2nd, in the third-floor gallery of 545 West 25th Street. *You Go Ahead—I'll Watch* comprises works from two recent photography-based series titled *Lunch Break* and *Morning Dew*, in addition to a single-channel video installation. The exhibition marks Aloisio's first solo project with Marlborough following his inclusion in *Dead Letter Office*, a group exhibition of then-recent graduates of Yale University's MFA Photography program that was held in the gallery in 2021.

In his practice, Aloisio employs various analog media, including projectors, film, CB radios, and receipt printers, among other alternative technologies, attempting to temper the immediacy of our hyper-digital, image-saturated world. He engages viewers "as participants in a complex performance of display, time, and legibility." Predominantly working with photography, video, and sound, Aloisio attempts to present seemingly transgressive narratives that explore undercurrents of anticipation and longing, while also investigating the nuances of queer navigation across intergenerational communities. The artist consequently borrows the title of the current exhibition from an excerpt found in Laud Humphreys' *Tearoom Trade: Impersonal sex in public places*—the American sociologist and Episcopal priest's seminal, albeit highly-controversial, text published in 1970. In *Tearoom Trade*, Humphreys presented the findings of his research into anonymous sexual encounters between men in public bathrooms (a practice known as "tea-rooming"). At the time, his "subjects" did not consent to participating in any such study, with Humphreys assuming the role not of an academic, but that of a voyeur, sometimes engaging with those he observed—"You Go Ahead—I'll Watch." While many consider Humphreys' research methods highly unethical, Aloisio finds his work not entirely dissimilar. Aloisio draws from Humphreys' text to undo the fragile borders that separate consent, manipulation, and deception, in order to reveal how these systems are instead irrevocably bound together through his examination of intimacy and privacy.

Many of the works on view belong to the series *Lunch Break*, originally conceived while Aloisio was a Core Fellow at The Museum of Fine Arts, Houston and presented as a documentary-style slideshow (here, the selected images from the series are exhibited as standalone archival pigment prints). The series comprises photographs taken at and around a state historic site considered to be the geographical birthplace of an independent Texas, following the 1836 Texas Revolution. Aloisio captured vignettes that unfolded in the designated men's bathroom at the site, in addition to documenting



Untitled (Cinnamon Roll Basket), 2022
archival pigment print, ed. of 3 + 2 AP
24 × 36 in. / 61 × 91.4 cm

the surrounding town. Aloisio did not choose the site at random; in fact, it was the location of a fleeting glory hole, the type of transgressive space the artist seeks that is the subject of extensive online discourse. The resulting images—whimsical yet gritty—explore how an area associated with public sex could function within the context of a Texan state-run park, the ethos of which is grounded in the promise of freedom. Aloisio approaches each image with sensitivity, patiently documenting vestiges of the encounters, rather than the identities of the players. Visual motifs arise, subtly hinting to those who use codified language to uncover lunch-hour freedom.

Also on view are recent cyanotypes from the series *Morning Dew* (2023), that Aloisio produced while a resident at the Ellis-Beauregard Foundation in Rockland, Maine. Made from emulsions and toners derived from the juices of local flora and vegetation, these new works—tinted pink and purple—depict composed still life-like compositions and Maine landscapes, signaling a departure from the artist's more documentary, snapshot-style approach to *Lunch Break*. These new images present surrealist fantasies where the sitters of this work often slip between identity and performance.

The exhibition culminates with *Channel 17* (2021), an eight-minute single-channel video presented in a stall-like structure resembling a phone booth, which viewers are encouraged to enter. Part of the series *30 Hours for a Glimpse*, *Channel 17* began as a project in which Aloisio fashioned a makeshift CB radio in his vehicle to tune in to a trucker radio station. Aloisio regularly visited the car wash at a New Haven, Connecticut-area truck stop where he had hoped to establish a discreet and intimate encounter with someone on the other end of his radio. Taking a voyeuristic and documentarian approach, Aloisio recorded his conversation with another man who was negotiating a meet-up with the artist, punctuated by moments of trepidation that his identity could be discovered. The film raises questions about cleanliness, both dialectically as well as visually with the car wash as a central location of the piece.

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