



THOMAS HAUSER

INDIA

Thomas Hauser's latest collection of still life flowers convey the ghostly side of beauty; once again the theme of nakedness rushes in, but not the nakedness of a young girl, rather the stark stillness of a morning pond, the air at sunrise. These photos, unlike his earlier, more desperate collections, represent a more youthful personality, despite the presence of either young women in his previous photos or wilted flowers in this expose.

In Hauser's photograph of the jade plant, a figure rooted in the frame yet eerily alive, the jade shoots out of its grounded place in the center of the photograph toward the corners of the frame, suggesting a level of fluidity in stillness. Curvature of the branches, the way light "picks up" blunted, shiny jade petals, reveals giddiness amidst the haunted frame. Such petals are childlike, moving out and open, both welcoming and warning the viewer into its image. Even though the pictures are centered, the branches' spidery legs throw-off the centrality of the subject, weaving and leaning, moving away from the limelight. The lack of glow, the dim sharpness of the photo instills trustworthy calm, perhaps the calm that surfaces before a storm.

But a photograph like the jade plant convinces and stuns the viewer into somber mystery, when really Hauser's latest collection seems more about conversation, time, and color. Yes, color. Take, for instance, the strong, white carnation—or what appears to be a carnation to my untrained eye—growing from its delicate beginnings in a water cup. Here Hauser uses color to convey not mystery or serenity but rather cheer. The blossoming white grows whiter against a flat, slate wall. To say that this photo is black and white is to miss the almost green tint of the leaves, the clear translucence of the water, or the thick brownish stripes that square the tile floor. While it seems at first that such colors are thickly fogged behind the strength of the white flower, browns, whites, blacks and, yes, even the clear sheen of water comes sparkling through the frame, precisely because of the foil the flower presents for the photograph.



As for time and conversation, both themes call out in a photo featuring an array of coke, beer, and soda-pop bottles with either already blossomed or nearly shriveled blossoms tangling the forefront of the picture. The dichotomy of young and old—between wilted flowers, youthful soda, wrinkled labels, and withering stems, meets and intersects. Even the stems of the flowers speak to each other in mingled conversation, crossing each other madly, bowing, boasting and relentlessly pushing their way through the air. I cannot help but see the orchestra of cacophony as musical, reflecting the broken conversations that sometimes occur between young people and their elders, and also, simultaneously, the quality and warmth of beauty that surrounds such maddening conversation. Here time both matches and reflects otherness, where shades of gray, white, and black, stems straight, curved, and wilting, bottles of all varieties and shapes, and even spilled water, projects the gentle yet stubborn disarray of conversation and time.

Looking at the entirety of Hauser's latest collection, I cannot help be drawn to detail—a cup of milk holding a bushel of flowers, the use of a tin as a pot, his choice between old, dying or dead flowers and young, newly budding stems—and to see in such detail so much exuberance for life, color, relationship, and even a positivity toward the inevitable process of aging. Here time has a story to tell, and we cannot help but want to see it.

Text: Heather Palmer, 2013

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