

Mooncake World

Natalie Loos & Chanel Nguyen

Curated by Lulu Xu

月饼. bánh trung thu. You cut open the crimped, crescent edges of a moon cake and inside; a message, a secret, a cipher. A vessel for secrecy, lotus paste and egg yolk arteries charter the unsaid. It has always been. *Mooncake World*—in content and form—is a portal produced from the heartlines of two girls who cusped womanhood before it shook loose. It is a dialect, and a proliferation of things: *Fruits Magazine* clippings and glossy sheafs of *Dolly* dog-eared yellow with age, the tinny pubescent desires for boys in bands, the four walls of a bedroom swaddled in pink and the audiences conducted from within them, invisible and novate while realer than anything outside in the world.

There, it is the crescent of time when queerness flowered like a question, when there was refuge from the world sharpening into focus. You lived gently and with angst. Desires were analogue—recorded, pasted, and collaged by hand. An exterior and explicit story exists, yes, but inside, time is viscous. Reveries danced from print to text to idols frozen in youth, and you felt something stir from the heart, at the sherbert-coloured shorts worn by *Girls Generation*. You are swooning. There is a closet but you don't open it—or dare question its existence. No one could separate you from the froth.

When you are pried from the portal, you exit into a world where your softness is sloughed off. The melody wanes. It is a desultory, aimless existence without the anchor of the girl you were. You pedal forwards. You capture it all, or at least try your best to. Everything has shifted and stayed the same. Your lifeline becomes memory; to conserve it through your lens where you press down, and hope to create from the four walls you once had. You create in parallel. You find her, the girl you were, you carry the project and reap the fruit and remember, distantly, what it

meant to imagine or see, to seed a part of yourself in what you consumed

Suddenly, the meaning arrives on your tongue, the sweetness of the golden-brown parcels giving way to the viscera of red bean and lotus. The secrecy of the message you wore as protection. You are safe. You are known.

Artists Natalie Loos and Chanel Nguyen mined their lives—girlhood, the multiplicity of queer Asian experiences and the cultural ephemera from their youth in order to create art that lives beyond the print. A natural evolution of their print issue *Mooncake* magazine, *Mooncake World*, curated by Lulu Xu, invites viewers into a capsule of their shared lineage and initial measure of self-expression.

For their debut exhibition at **photo access**, Loos and Nguyen return to Ngannuwal country (Canberra) where the artists initially tendered their process of collaboration—and the space where they had studied and lived. The city, earmarked with their post-adolescent years, is also the site of many of the shoots and stories hewn into the pages of *Mooncake Zine*. 18 months after the launch of their publication, the artists reunite here with the material architecture of the world they have created.

Featuring a suite of new photographic works presented alongside a large-scale installation including trinkets repurposed from the artists' respective childhoods, the exhibition approaches art-making as a temporal act— the process of cataloguing, the worlds inhabited, and the devotion to creating as a collective can build a language.

- Karen Leong

Bio

Mooncake is a duo composed of Vietnamese-Australian artist, Chanel Nguyen (2020-present) and Cantonese-German photographer/ artist, Natalie Loos (2017-present). After meeting and sharing the love of cinema, print media and pop culture, the two have been working on passion projects together since 2020. Nguyen and Loos have been featured in both digital and print publications and exhibitions throughout Australia and overseas.

Core to the duo's ethos is redefining the imbalanced dynamic between photographers and their subject so often seen throughout history by fostering active photographer/model collaboration and trust. Most importantly, the artists' works reflect the communities around them and imagery they grew up with.

List of works

from left to right

1.

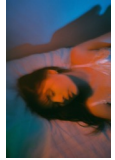
Chanel Nguyen

Natalie, 2021

Inkjet print on Ilford Pearl

59.4 x 84.1 cm

\$390



2.

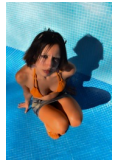
Natalie Loos

Asil, 2023

Inkjet print on Ilford Pearl

59.4 x 84.1 cm

\$390



3.

Natalie Loos

Girlhood, 2023

Inkjet print on Ilford Pearl

59.4 x 84.1 cm

\$390



4.

Lauren McDonald

January, 2022

Inkjet print on Ilford Pearl

59.4 x 84.1 cm

\$390



5.

Natalie Loos

Malcolm and His Bratz Dolls, 2023

Inkjet print on Ilford Pearl

59.4 x 84.1 cm

\$390



6.

Tylar Tran

In the Mood for Love #2, 2023

Inkjet print on Ilford Pearl

42 x 59.4 cm

\$230



7.

Layne Brown

Moonflower #1, 2023

Inkjet print on Ilford Pearl

29.7 x 42 cm

\$150



8.

Chanel Nguyen

Yasmine for '*Everything I am Not*' (2024), 2023

Inkjet print on Ilford Pearl

29.7 x 42 cm

\$150



9.

Natalie Loos

Tianshi (Angel) #2, 2023

Inkjet print on Ilford Pearl

29.7 x 42 cm

\$150



10.

Layne Brown

Moonflower #2, 2023

Inkjet print on Ilford Pearl

29.7 x 42 cm

\$150



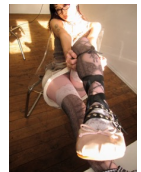
11.
Natalie Loos, Chanel Nguyen
Greta, 2023
Inkjet print on Ilford Pearl
42 x 59.4 cm
\$230



12.
Natalie Loos
Girlhood #2, 2024
Inkjet print on Ilford Pearl
42 x 59.4 cm
\$230



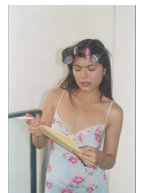
13.
Janine Wongsuwan, Bridgette Huang
Office Siren, 2023
Inkjet print on Ilford Pearl
42 x 59.4 cm
\$230



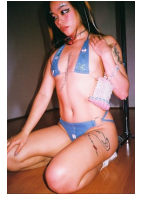
14.
Natalie Loos
Tianshi (Angel), 2023
Inkjet print on Ilford Pearl
42 x 59.4 cm
\$230



15.
Chanel Nguyen
Dollhouse, 2023
Inkjet print on Ilford Pearl
42 x 59.4 cm
\$230



16.
Chanel Nguyen
Linh, 2023
Inkjet print on Ilford Pearl
42 x 59.4 cm
\$230



17.
Alleyne Aviles
Mooncake Girls, 2024
Inkjet print on Ilford Pearl
42 x 59.4 cm
\$230



18.
Chanel Nguyen
Mix, 2023
Inkjet print on Ilford Pearl
42 x 59.4 cm
\$230



19.
Tylar Tran
In the Mood for Love, 2023
Inkjet print on Ilford Pearl
42 x 59.4 cm
\$230



20.
Chanel Nguyen
Mooncake World #4, 2026
Inkjet print
29.7 x 42 cm
\$150



21.
Chanel Nguyen
Mooncake World #2, 2026
Inkjet print
29.7 x 42 cm
\$150



22.
Chanel Nguyen
Mooncake World #1, 2026
Inkjet print
29.7 x 42 cm
\$150



23.
Chanel Nguyen
Mooncake World #5, 2026
Inkjet print
29.7 x 42 cm
\$150



24.
Chanel Nguyen
Mooncake World #3, 2026
Inkjet print
29.7 x 42 cm
\$150



25.
Lan Nguyen, Natalie Loos
In the Mood for Love fake movie poster, 2021
Inkjet print
42 x 59.4 cm
\$230



26.

Lauren McDonald, Natalie Loos

January fake movie poster, 2022

Inkjet print

42 x 59.4 cm

\$230



27.

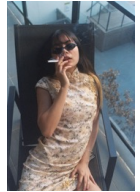
Chanel Nguyen

Nat in a Qipao from '*Dollhouse*', 2023

Inkjet print

29.7 x 42 cm

\$150



28.

Chanel Nguyen,

Film Negatives from '*Dollhouse*', 2023

35mm negatives, lightbox

Dimensions variable

NFS



29.

Qipao

Traditional Chinese dress

NFS

31.

Video compilation:

Chanel Nguyen, *MCW Decoden* (0:00)

Asil Habara, *Teathered BTS* (0:46)

Chanel Nguyen, *Untitled BTS* (1:01)

Tung Bui, *Bibo's World* (1:41)

Jafri Yakin, *Summum Bonum* (2:09)

Natalie Loos, *Malaysia <3* (3:07)

Chanel Nguyen, *B2S* (4:15)

Natalie Loos, *Perth...!* (4:47)

Tylar Tran, *Runaway Bride* (7:53)

Natalie Loos, *Wings in Motion* (8:04)

Chanel Nguyen, *Ecco2k* (8:29)

Chanel Nguyen, *Everything I Am Not - Mooncake World Ver.* (9:41)

Natalie Loos, *Projector Film* (10:31)

Natalie Loos, *Butterfly (ari)* (11:20)

Jafri Yakin, *Chanel TV* (12:25)

Natalie Loos, *Grape* (13:26)

Chanel Nguyen, *Fallen Angel* (13:46)

31.

Chanel Nguyen and Natalie Loos

Travel Series (1-27), 2019-2024

Inkjet print

14.8 x 21cm

\$74 ea



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