

ARTFORUM



Ren Hang
MAMA GALLERY
1242 Palmetto Street
June 18–July 23

Moral indecency has long been a way for disaffected bodies to break up an uninhabitable order. The irreverence of youth—an acceptable age for extravagant consumption of sex, drugs, and rock 'n' roll—pairs well with rebellion against censorship, in a raging party that celebrates pleasure as the highest good. In this current exhibition, Ren Hang shows his viewers that when systems fail us, naked revelry can be a revolutionary and very natural act.

Limber youths of color are the muses for Hang's revolt. These high-gloss C-prints, so sumptuously produced, linger on humps of asses in RH_001002, 2012, or vaginal mesas for RH_001026, 2013, portraying a provocative adolescence in full bloom. The show is a fantasy land populated by naked bodies arranged in the wild. The artist slyly inserts a sense of surrealism, as in RH_001004, 2014, in which a boy presents a girl with a red tulip using his mouth, the stem extending from him like a reptilian tongue. In Hang's paradise, the nude holds up trees and dangles from branches or mingles with exotic birds and bathes with fish. As viewers, we have crashed the secret party, but we won't be turned away. Hidden in the woods or on rooftops, so-called sins are allied with the picturesque. "What We Do Is Secret" is a lucid vision of a hedonistic night, from which hangovers bud into a garden of earthly delights.

— Meg Whiteford