

photograph

PIXY LIAO: OPEN KIMONO AT CHAMBERS FINE ART

By Barbara Pollack

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Pixy Liao, *The Woman Who Clicks the Shutter*, 2018. Courtesy Chambers Fine Art

Born and raised in Shanghai and now living in Brooklyn, Pixy Liao received her MFA from the University of Memphis in 2008. It was there that she met her Japanese boyfriend, Moro Magario, one of the few other Asian students on campus. Over the past 12 years, Liao has created an intriguing body of work, *Experimental Relationship*, posing herself and Moro in humorous and provocative configurations that often upend gender stereotypes. Despite the fact that there is a Kewpie-doll innocence to Liao's appearance, she portrays herself as the one holding the power in this couple.

Open Kimono is the latest addition to this witty, surrealistic series. On view at [Chambers Fine Art](#) through April 27, it was created in 2018, while the two vacationed in Japan. Staying in an old-fashioned inn, Liao posed herself and her muse in traditional feminine Japanese garb, which only

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heightens the perverse playfulness here. In *Moro Leans on Me*, 2018, Liao stares fiercely out at viewers while her partner gently rests his head on her shoulder. *Two Tunas on the Tatami*, 2018, in which the couple spoons on the floor, like two pieces of sushi, is reminiscent of an earlier photograph, *Homemade Sushi*, 2010, in which Liao photographed Moro lying naked and prone on a bed, wrapped in a green nori-like blanket. Moro holds the camera release in many recent photographs, a wire squiggling up his leg, but in *The Woman Who Clicks the Shutter*, 2018, lest we forget who is in control, Liao wields the remote release like a weapon.



Pixy Liao, *Two Tunas on the Tatami*, 2018. Courtesy Chambers Fine Art

These photographs were accompanied by a miniature installation resting high on a shelf – *Temple for Her*, dedicated to 7th-century empress Wu Zetian, the only female leader in the history of China. After climbing a ladder, viewers encountered a temple scene with a tall, blood-red staircase leading up to a phallic throne. Other elements included a pool of “blood” in the shape of a woman, a pair of golden eyes, and the Chinese character for Zhao, the name Wu adopted for herself. It was a feminist statement, but a childlike one, a juxtaposition of innocence and sexuality that is also evident in Liao’s photographs. Her strength still lies in photography, as the pictures here prove, but it is great to see this young artist branching out in new ways, still staying on message.