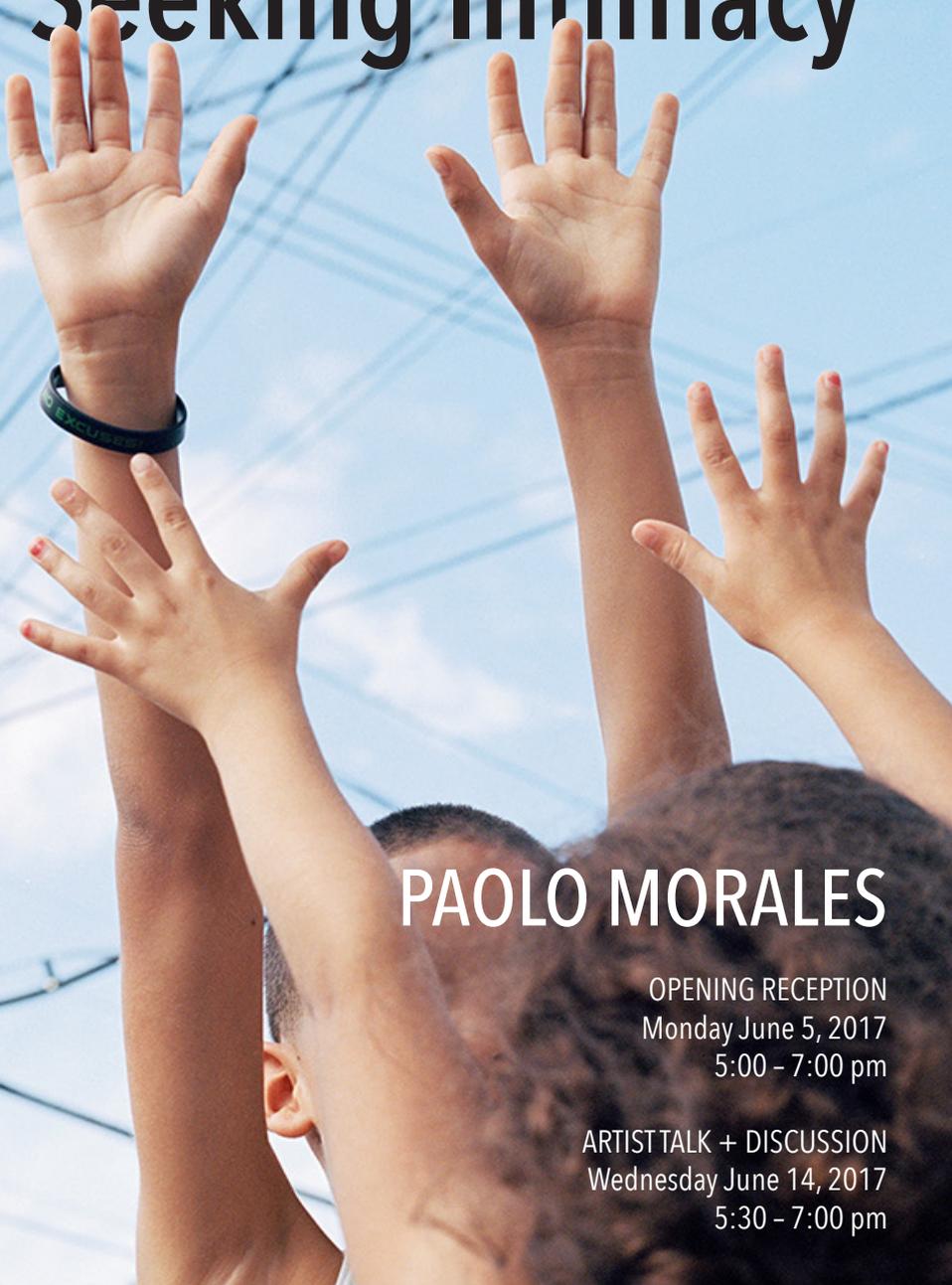


Monday June 5 - Friday June 30, 2017

# The Vulnerability of Seeking Intimacy



**PAOLO MORALES**

OPENING RECEPTION  
Monday June 5, 2017  
5:00 - 7:00 pm

ARTIST TALK + DISCUSSION  
Wednesday June 14, 2017  
5:30 - 7:00 pm

# On Capturing Vulnerability

Paolo Morales's photographs first crossed my path during one of Gallery 102's open calls last year. Upon flipping through the images, I was struck by an inexplicable sensation of subtle, yet intense longing. Morales's photographs express a deep human desire to connect (whether the figures are successful in their attempts is left to the viewer's interpretation). Such implications illustrate the struggle nearly every person experiences in their search to find emotional, physical, and mental stability. As with Morales's work, the juxtaposition of states of isolation and connection, dislocation and stability, best illustrate that process. Vulnerability thus becomes a negotiation of sorts - an attempt to do battle with our internal drive to protect our "selfhood."

"The Vulnerability of Seeking Intimacy" is a visual record of the desire to connect. Paolo Morales presents two complementary bodies of work *These Days I Feel Like a Snail Without a Shell* and *Palm Lines*. Morales gained inspiration for the title of *Snail Without a Shell* from Haruki Murakami's 1992 novel *South of the Border, West of the Sun*. The book follows the life of Hajime, who, in one scene reconnects with his female childhood sweetheart, Izumi. During their conversation she relays that "these days I feel like a snail without a shell." The phrase, for Morales, encapsulated the emotional instability and vulnerability he sought to capture in his work.



Morales began his second body of work, *Palm Lines*, in the summer of 2015. He notes that the work was inspired by a fascination with palm reading and "the expectation that palm lines somehow map out a life." The serial format by which Morales photographs each hand suggests that the palm is a source of information, a readable text of sorts. Whether it is to reveal the past or predict the future, hands, for Morales, are loaded symbols. While we use our hands to reach out, to physically connect, and to communicate, hands also contain decipherable signs - in certain instances, we can make crass assumptions about class, gender, race, and/or age. The isolation of the hand within the frame depersonalizes the figure, while the open palm gesture expresses a moment of vulnerability. The sitter allows the viewer to inspect the hand vis-a-vis the photographer's lens. The isolation of hands allows the viewer to interpret the subtle nuances in the lines and crevices formed over time. Characterized by hardened or soft skin, smudged text, bracelets, or cigarettes, every hand unfolds before the viewer.

Front Cover Image: *Skylar reaching for Elijah*, 2014

In an interview with Strange Fire Collective, a platform for women artists, artists of color, queer and trans artists, Morales was asked about the intentionality of the race and ethnicity of his subjects. He noted that, "diversity is important because you can point to it in the pictures, but I like to think of the content of the work is more emotional. They're more about physical and emotional distance, isolation, longing, and desire to reach out to connect. My aspiration is for those feelings to transcend the topics of diversity, race, and economic in the pictures." Nonetheless however, while Morales seeks to obscure his own race and gender as the photographer, such obfuscation does not necessarily silence any reference to race, class, age, or gender.



What I find most compelling about Morales's work is that the emotional tone of the photographs, the feelings of isolation and disconnection, and this overall sensation of vulnerability takes precedent in his process. It is only through this conviction that the

*Andy Johnson is a DC-based art historian, arts writer, curator, and currently director of Gallery 102. His academic and curatorial practice centers on queer, feminist, and black feminist theories, critical race theory, cultural studies, photography, video, performance art, and visual culture. He holds an M.A. in Art History from the George Washington University. He has presented research and spoken on panels at universities and museums including Rutgers, University of Georgia, UC Santa Barbara, GW, and the Urban Institute for Contemporary Arts. He contributes to DIRT DMV, and has curated shows for both Gallery 102 and the DC Arts Center.*



viewer begins to notice tangential, and often subtle, references to race, class, age, and gender. Morales does not rely on shock value, sensationalism, or racial stereotypes in his photography, but rather explores the dynamics of the often overlooked, the banal, and the quotidian. Morales captures unassuming, yet powerful scenes through his acute attention to light and shadow, the repetition of gesture, the relation of one body to another, and the mixture of staged versus documentary style photography.





*Carmen and a Child*  
2014



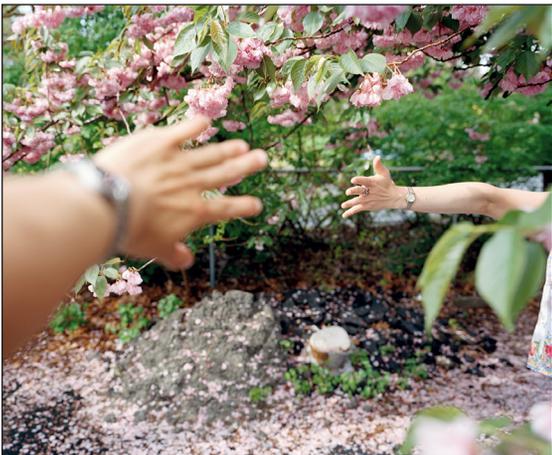
*My Grandfather*  
*Exercising*  
2014



*My Grandfather Getting*  
*out of the Pool*  
2014



*A Couple Waiting for*  
*the Bus*  
2014



*Reaching Hands*  
2014



*My Grandfather and*  
*his Nurse*  
2014



*Cindy and Her Niece in the Parking Lot*  
2014



*Alex Getting his Hair Cut*  
2014



*Junior Looking out the Window*  
2014



*Skylar Reaching for Lady*  
2014





*Genevieve in the Window*  
2015



*Christopher Looking in the Mirror*  
2014

*Cynthia in the Garden*  
2013

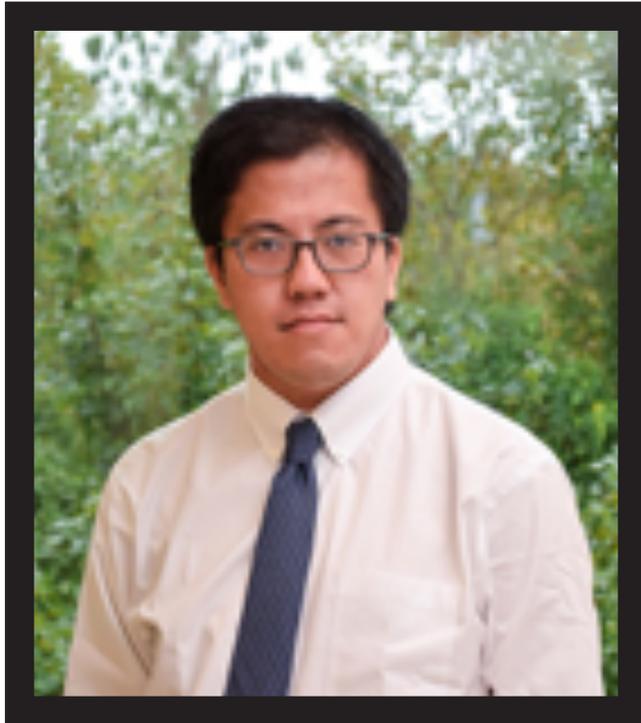


*Join the Landscape*  
2014

*Reaching Up*  
2015



*Dancing Couples*  
2013



*<http://www.paolomorales.com/>*

**Paolo Morales** is a photographer. He was born and raised in New York City and currently lives in Arlington, Virginia. Exhibitions include the Detroit Center for Contemporary Photography, Philadelphia PhotoArts Center, ClampArt, and Hamiltonian Gallery, among others. His photographs have appeared in *Witness*, *Papersafe*, and *Vice*. He received an MFA in photography from Rhode Island School of Design and attended Skowhegan School of Painting & Sculpture. He teaches at George Mason University and The Potomac School.

# GALLERY 102



Gallery 102 is committed to the exhibiting of contemporary art, including work from GW & Corcoran students, DC-area artists, and nationally recognized artists of all medium. The gallery provides practical curatorial experience to the student body. Students have the opportunity to exhibit work, curate shows, and install exhibitions. The Gallery 102 Committee consists of GW & Corcoran students -- undergraduate and graduate, majors and non-majors, artists and art historians -- who both develop innovative, original, and thought-provoking exhibitions and invite a select group guest curators to present exhibitions each semester.

Andy Johnson, Director + Co-Curator  
MichaelAngelo Rodriguez, Co-Curator  
Nicole 'Ozzy' Osborne, Graphic Design

Special thanks to Paolo Morales, The Corcoran  
School of the Arts & Design, and The George  
Washington University.

GALLERY  
**102**

**OPEN M-F 9-5**

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