

# Lola Flash *Believable*

March 14 - May 22, 2026

## Opening Reception

Saturday, March 14, 2026, 4 - 6pm

## Artist Talk

Artist Lola Flash in conversation with Jim Ganz, Senior Curator of Photographs and Department Head, J. Paul Getty Museum, Los Angeles, CA. Talk 4:30 - 5:30pm.

Jenkins Johnson Gallery is pleased to present *Believable*, an exhibition of New York based artist and activist Lola Flash. *Believable* debuted in our New York space in November 2025, and we are pleased to present a new incarnation of the show, traveling to our San Francisco space, opening Saturday, March 14, 2026. from 4 - 6pm.

The exhibition opening coincides with Women's History Month, and in the spirit of that observance, *Believable* emphasizes Flash as a figure with important historical impact on photography, queer art, and activist art. The Bay Area's tremendous history with the counterculture, political activism, and especially LGBTQ+ history further brings the exhibition new context for dialog. The opening will be accompanied by an artist talk, 4:30 - 5:30pm. Copies of the book *Believable* will also be available on-site and signing will begin with the start of the reception at 4pm.

A pioneering voice in photography for more than four decades, Flash's multifaceted practice has evolved through numerous series, each with a unique formal and conceptual focus. Beginning with their iconic "Cross Colour" series from the 1980s and 1990s—which utilized inverted colors to document queer culture as part of ACT UP, in the wake of the HIV/AIDS epidemic—this exhibition traces a path through portraiture



*N is for Native American, Provincetown, Mass (Cross Colour Series and Gay to Z Series), 1993*

towards recent and ongoing series. Working at the forefront of genderqueer visual politics, all of Flash's work challenges preconceptions about gender and racism, and is firmly rooted in social justice advocacy for marginalized peoples.

Flash became involved with LGBTQ+ rights advocacy in the 1980s amid the HIV/AIDS epidemic, participating in activism with the group ACT UP (AIDS Coalition To Unleash Power) and the associated affinity group ART+. Amid this political upheaval, Flash developed new techniques to invert the colors of their photographs, resulting in the "Cross Colour" series. Flash has envisioned the gesture as a fundamental disruption of how the audience engages with the image, obscuring legibility and forcing a different perspective. Light skinned people become dark, and dark skinned people become light. Night and day trade places, as do warm and cool tones. Flash "flips the script" and forces a fundamental change to how people view the world, and lends insight into the powerful, vulnerable, celebratory, and cathartic moments of 1980s and 1990s queer culture.



Each subsequent series in the exhibition marks a unique aesthetic and conceptual position for Flash, who returned to non-inverted colors in the 2000s.

*Unsung Fire Island* embraces the Black and Brown residents and day trippers to Fire Island, a long-standing queer enclave. While the island is known as a retreat and safe haven for LGBTQ+ people, Flash considers how it still remains a microcosm of other systems of oppression, and specifically how Black and Brown people continue to experience racism even within a supposed progressive bastion as Fire Island.

*surmise* is an account of the many ways in which queer people are perceived, and how visual presentations of a person fulfill or disrupt expectations of gender and sexuality. The white background beyond the figures creates a neutral space in which you can only focus on their individuality, rather than contextualizing them to an environment. Each individual proposes a departure from social normativity, bravely presenting an authentic self, outside narrow definitions and expectations imposed by society at large.

*[sur]passing* explores “pigmentocracy,” the notion of how lighter and darker skin in people of color have historically produced a hierarchy within which people are treated differently even within the larger schemes of racism. Produced with the goal of creating a continuum of skin tones, the series seeks to surpass colorism—considering also the Latin prefix “sur” meaning “beyond,” the works in *[sur]passing* consider how society can move beyond the notion of “passing” in a racial sense consciousness.



*syzygy, the vision* is Flash’s newest body of work and a multifaceted, globe-spanning self-portrait project. Flash depicts an Afrofuturist alter-ego “syzygy” who wanders visually disparate landscapes united by historical complications with the transatlantic slave trade, colonialism, and mass incarceration. The term “syzygy” refers to alignment, and through this series, Flash questions how past, present, and future align for and against Black people globally.

Above: Mzz Kimberly, London (*surmise Series*), 2011  
 Below: Carrie Mae Weems (*[sur]passing Series*), 2008

Lola Flash (b. 1959, Montclair, NJ) has works in museums including the Museum of Modern Art, New York; Whitney Museum of American Art, New York; Brooklyn Museum; National Museum of African American History & Culture, Washington D.C.; Virginia Museum of Fine Arts, Richmond; the J. Paul Getty Museum, Los Angeles; and Victoria and Albert Museum, London. Work is currently on view in MoMA as part of their permanent collection. Recent exhibitions have included *Queer Lens: A History of Photography*, at the J. Paul Getty Museum, Los Angeles, 2025; *Trust Me*, at the Whitney, New York, 2024; and *Lola Flash: SALT, What If Women Ruled the World? Part II*, a solo at the National Museum of Contemporary Art, Athens, Greece, 2024. Flash recently created a podcast in collaboration with MoMA Magazine titled *My Friends Gave Me Their Love: Remembering New York City's AIDS Crisis Together*.

Flash is a proud current member of Kamoinge, and is the President of the board of Queer Art. Flash is recipient of awards including the Anonymous Was A Woman Award, 2025; the Visual AIDS Vanguard Award, 2024; a Pollock-Krasner Foundation Award, 2024; and two Art Matters Grants, 2021 and 2011. Flash holds a BA in Photography from the Maryland Institute College of Arts, Baltimore, and an MA in Photography from London College of Printing, London, UK. Flash lives and works in New York.

*Believable* opens March 14, 2026 at Jenkins Johnson Gallery, 1275 Minnesota St. #200, San Francisco, and will be on view through May 22, 2026. Opening reception will be hosted 4 – 6pm, including an artist talk from 4:30 - 5:30pm. Book signing will begin with the start of the reception at 4pm. *Believable* was Jenkins Johnson Gallery's debut exhibition at the 385 Broadway location, made possible through an alliance with fellow ADAA member Marian Goodman Gallery. We are pleased to travel the exhibition to our San Francisco space to share with our West Coast audience. For more information, please contact [info@jenkinsjohnsongallery.com](mailto:info@jenkinsjohnsongallery.com) or call the gallery at (415) 677-0770. Follow us on Instagram, [@jenkinsjohnsongallery](https://www.instagram.com/jenkinsjohnsongallery), to keep up to date with the newest developments in our program.



*Divinity, Brighton, UK (syzygy, the vision Series), 2020*



*Emolosa (unsung fire island Series), 2021*

