**John Edmonds**  
*Tribe: Act One*

Itd lower east side | 24A Orchard Street | New York

Opening Reception | Friday | 4 May | 6-8p

4 May - 31 May 2018 | Weds - Sun | 12p-7p
By appointment via ltd@ltdlosangeles.com

Itd los angeles is pleased to present John Edmonds’ *Tribe: Act One*. Fifteen new works will be featured in his second solo exhibition with the gallery, and his first in Manhattan.

For the occasion, Jessica Bell Brown has contributed the following:

A toned bearded individual stands behind a chartreuse backdrop in baggy jeans and Calvin Klein boxer briefs and black socks. Another bare-chested model sits as a warm golden light reflector casts a warm sheen on his brown skin. His hands clasp a red bandana, perhaps the same blood red bandana that covers the mouth of another arresting sitter in tightly coiled bantu knots. The symbolically charged garment appearing here still leaves his beautiful almond shaped eyes unconcealed. All of these figures unabashedly address the camera in *Tribe: Act One*, John Edmonds’ new series of portraits and conceptual photographs. Alluding in title to community, and histories of black dramaturgy, staging and presentation, Edmonds’ evokes ideas of “tribe” through picturing scenes of black, queer, and gender nonconforming subjects and still-lives of African sculptural masks and heads.

Thinking much about one’s chosen family, Edmonds’ subjects are friends and acquaintances from his creative community in New York. This exhibition will be the first occasion in which the artist tries his hand at narrative and staging, casting roles such as the bandana-clad “antagonist” and seductive hero, the glamorous vixen, using gender nonconforming and non-binary subjects. In these photographs Edmonds conjures a kind of erotics of vulnerability. Sometimes the roles he casts are of heroes, villains, kings, and queens. At others, Edmonds theatricalizes the body as a mutable form, presenting interchangeable pictures of disembodied heads, lone African sculptures, and his sitters’ heads and hands with hand-carved masks.

Edmonds nods to the photographic legacies of Walker Evans, Man Ray, and the studio portraits of Carl Van Vechten, and at the same time, enters queer black folk into a playfully subversive conversation about modernism, one that luxuriates in beauty and the possibilities of artifice. This project sidesteps the long burdened conversation about authenticity and modernism’s accompanying history of primitivist obsession with African art forms. In fact, Edmonds revels in the artifice of staging fictive vignettes and objects. The sculptures he pictures are untethered from any ascertainable tribal reference. He borrowed them from the home of a friend.

*Tribe: Act One* insists on the allure of the body as both actor and prop, or as tools for creating new mythologies. Body, surface, and texture all become framing devices for his camera’s surrealism. By continuing his investigation of fashion, interiority, and queer collectivity, Edmonds probes aesthetic possibilities of deconstructing desire through costuming, posturing, and role play.

*Jessica Bell Brown is an art historian and writer based in Harlem, NY.*