



## ***Black Box Theater***

An exhibition by

**Kenneth Bergfeld, Cheryl Donegan, Joan Jonas,  
Melike Kara, Jean-François Lauda, Trevor Shimizu**

CLEARING New York

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In this exhibition, destabilizing images suggest the contours of a thing rather than defining it fully. In some works, exaggerated forms complicate depictions of very tangible things. In other cases, pure paint and material eject the viewer from any semblance of the Real. This is an opportunity to marry different ideas from across genres in order to establish a new network. From Jean-François Lauda's pure abstractions to a video selection that explores the contours of narrative and non-narrative forms, the binary of stability is put into question.

The title *Black Box Theater* refers to the avant-garde performance space that was first popularized in the early 20th century. Understood as a zone liquidated of preconceptions, this particular venue allows its actors and occupants the ability to explore the art of performance more freely. In the case of this exhibition, the freedom to toggle between narrative aspects along with the language of abstraction is sympathetic to this space of non-prescription.

Jean-François Lauda's paintings are aggregations of both structuralization and gestural experimentation. He often fractures the topography with visual locutions, laminating these different moments onto one canvas. The painter's disruptive elements appear seamlessly, engendered by the fact that every move of Lauda's is a constructive decision. Comfortably flitting between scales, the artist engages a formal landscape that Ji-Yoon Han aptly refers to as "indeterminate." Han also emphasizes the layering procedure here, writing "the underneath can also designate every new coat that appears on the painting, over the others but deeper." What emerges through the process is a palimpsest of painterly moves and an absence of narrativity that throws the viewer into perspectival uncertainty. This creates a minefield of uncertainty and thus freedom to explore each canvas on its own terms without representational directives.

From another vantage point, Kenneth Bergfeld's representational acuity delivers an apt counterpoint to Lauda's swells of nonobjective paint. While the artist threads recognizable features and reiterates portraiture, each image contains discrete passages in which the artist's painterly acumen is drawn to the fore. Bergfeld's discretion between different grounds elicits a foray into new dimensions, where the demarcations between inside and outside are irrevocably upended. While his process mirrors Lauda in its accumulated paints, Bergfeld explores the medium's terrain in more direct terms. He decontextualizes the figures and objects within his paintings, combining Renaissance formalities with psychedelic pigmentation. The nebulousness of narrative here provides a psychological vortex that viewers moved to detangle.

Foraying back into abstraction, one meets the work of Melike Kara. She explodes scale and assumes a recuperative method, with a matrix of gestures that contribute to specific compositional energies. Her paintings refer back to the thorny substance of cultural memory - where voided historical epochs meet the artist's ancestral ties. There are elements here that allude to the history of Kurdish weaving and its undulation through time. As such, contours of familiar shapes are implemented, alongside loose patterns. In her effort to recuperate a specific past, Kara moves through her very own swirling referent worlds, plodding forth on a whirlwind of moves that beget clever pictorial subterfuge. Encounters with the knowable and the obscure lend to the experience of meandering through each painting by Kara.

## C L E A R I N G

Like a binding agent, Trevor Shimizu's *What a Boring and Disappointing Life (blue)* is a hybrid of his painting and video practices. Day and night fluctuate from within the confines of a San Franciscan apartment, as the protagonist wanders through space and time in a mundane loop. This banality is inscribed in clips of a man languishing in bed, reading the newspaper, and returning home with a bag of groceries. There is no promise of a climax, only filmic accouterments like plants swaying in the wind and extended footage of a dying mosquito. A new sort of drama plays out as a result of Shimizu's form, inscribing this work's totality with his performative impulse. The surrounding canvas is a mass of blue scribbles, interrupted only by the artist's name scrawled in red lettering. *What a Boring and Disappointing Life (blue)* is part of Shimizu's "Video Paintings" series in which the artist confronts medium specificity and alleviates the pressure of conventions. A marked apathy toward inherited structure situates the work within the experimental mode that black box theater originally proposed.

Cheryl Donegan habitually engages with the medium of video, while rejecting a formulaic approach to its traditional form. Whether parodying pop cultural materials, or usurping the procedures of social media, Donegan continues a legacy of discovery and invention. In *Whoa Whoa Studio (for Courbet)* she perverts the artist's role by incorporating a machine to do the work that a painter would. She also treats her canvas reflexively, at one point applying pigment directly onto a computer screen. The painter is also the actor in this case, donning costumes and propifying her studio's objects. Donegan writes that "In this tautological space the performer, both object and subject, views herself from both sides of the mirror."

The notion of a black box theater explodes the potential of the stage and dissolves protocols that have been long upheld, creating alternative models for theater. In *Waltz*, Joan Jonas extends the stage into the outdoors, her cast of friends performing strange rituals to no clear end. The video format and live performance commingle as Jonas arranges a mythological course ornamented with intervals of impromptu deviation. Sans audience, the atypical plot unfolds on a Nova Scotian beach. Jonas sees her choice of context as an act of synergism. In an interview for *Document Journal* she explains: "just putting my camera outdoors and entering the world of nature and the beauty of it—it's kind of a collaboration with the landscape." The tenets of theater are present in part, though become radically altered under Jonas's direction. Props and sets are present, but the body remains at the fore of any given production. By foregrounding corporeality, Jonas continues to champion freedom beyond the conventional stage.

# C L E A R I N G

**Kenneth Bergfeld** (Born in 1990 in Bergisch-Gladbach, Germany) lives and works in Cologne, Germany.

Solo exhibitions of his work have been held at Jan Kaps, Cologne; Project Native Informant, London; Galerie Max Mayer, Dusseldorf; Kunstverein Leverkusen, Leverkusen.

His work has been included in group exhibitions at LC Queisser, Tbilisi; Mujin-to Production, Tokyo; The Artist Room, London; Ung5, Cologne; Kölnischer Kunstverein, Cologne; Museum Abteiberg, Mönchengladbach; Jessica Silverman Gallery, San Francisco; Galerie Max Mayer, Dusseldorf; Kunsthal Charlottenborg, Copenhagen.

**Cheryl Donegan** (Born in 1962 in New Haven) lives and works in New York City and Istria, Croatia.

She received a BFA in Painting at Rhode Island School of Design in 1984 and an MFA at Hunter College, New York in 1990. She was an artist-in-residence at ART/OMI, and Banff Center for Fine Arts, Alberta, Canada.

Solo exhibitions of her work have been held at Kunsthalle Zürich; Aspen Art Museum, Aspen; Contemporary Art Museum Houston; The New Museum, New York; Nicelle Beauchene, New York; Oliver Kamm/5BE Gallery, New York; Galerie VidalCuglietta, Brussels; Hidde Van Seggelen Gallery, London; Lotta Hammer, London; Baumgartner Galleries, Washington, D.C.; Basilico Fine Arts, New York; Elizabeth Koury Gallery, New York.

Her work has been included in group exhibitions at the Whitney Biennial, Biennale d'Art Contemporain de Lyon; Venice Biennale; New York Film and Video Festival; the Museum of Modern Art, New York; MoMA PS1, New York; Guggenheim Museum Soho, New York; the Tang Museum of Art, Saratoga Springs; White Columns, New York; the Philadelphia Museum of Art; Museum of Contemporary Art, Chicago; David Zwirner, New York; Galerie Rizzo, Paris; the Stedelijk Museum, Amsterdam.

In 2001 she was awarded the Grand Prix at the 7th annual Biennale de l'Image en Mouvement, Geneva.

**Joan Jonas** (Born in 1938 in New York) lives and works in New York and Nova Scotia, Canada.

She received a BA from Mount Holyoke College in 1958 and an MFA in Sculpture from Columbia University in 1965. She is a professor emerita at MIT.

Major exhibitions have been held at Kulturhuset Stadsteatern, Stockholm; Contemporary Arts Museum, Houston; Documenta, Kassel; Performa, New York; The Kitchen, New York; Bergen Kunsthall, Bergen; Museum of Modern Art, New York; Whitney Museum of American Art, New York; Guggenheim Museum, New York; Biennale di Venezia, Venice; Dia Art Foundation, Beacon; Museo Nacional Centro de Arte Reina Sofia, Madrid; Jeu de Paume, Paris; Renaissance Society, Chicago; Tate Modern, London; Queens Museum of Art, New York; Taipei Biennial, Taipei; Dia Center for the Arts, New York; among others.

Joan Jonas has received numerous awards including from Anonymous Was A Woman; the Rockefeller Foundation; American Film Institute's Maya Deren Award for Video; Guggenheim Foundation; and the National Endowment for the Arts.

Her work belongs to the collections of the National Gallery of Canada-Musee des Beaux-arts du Canada, Ottawa; Vancouver Art Gallery, Vancouver; Centre Pompidou-Musee National d'Art Moderne, Paris; The Museum of Modern Art, New York; The Whitney Museum of American Art, New York; Stedelijk Museum voor Actuele Kunst, Amsterdam; Reina Sofia National Museum Art Centre, Madrid; Museu d'Art Contemporani de Barcelona, MACBA, Barcelona; Museum of Contemporary Art, MOCA, Los Angeles; Museum of Contemporary Art San Diego, MCASD, San Diego; Kunsthaus Zürich, Zurich.

# C L E A R I N G

**Melike Kara** (Born 1985 in Bensberg, Germany) lives and works in Cologne.

Solo exhibitions of her work have been held at Schirn Kunsthalle, Frankfurt; Kunst Halle St. Gallen; nw9, Cologne; Arcadia Missa, London; Neue Galerie Gladbeck, Gladbeck; Kölnischer Kunstverein, Cologne; LC Queisser, Tbilisi; B.LA Art Foundation, Vienna; Kunstraum Fuhrwerkswaage, Sürth; Jan Kaps, Cologne; Kunstverein Göttingen; Salon 94, New York; Witte de With Center for Contemporary Art, Rotterdam; Yuz Museum, Shanghai; Peres Projects, Berlin; Komplot, Brussels; Open Forum, Berlin; Frankfurt a. M., Frankfurt; Ortlo, Leipzig; and Boutique, Cologne.

Her work has been included in group exhibitions at Kunst Museum St. Gallen; Museum De Fundatie, Zwolle; Philara Foundation, Dusseldorf; Kunsthalle Zürich, Zurich; Kunstverein Düsseldorf, Dusseldorf; Mead Gallery, Coventry; LC Queisser, Tiflis; Galerie Max Hetzler, Berlin; Yuz Project Space of Art, Shanghai; 58th Carnegie International, Pittsburgh; Frac des pays de la Loire, Nantes; Kunstverein Friedrichshafen, Friedrichshafen; Editions Dilecta, Paris; Ludwig Forum Aachen, Aachen; Belgrade Biennial, Belgrade; Basement Roma, Rome; Wiels Contemporary Art Centre, Brussels; blank projects, Cape Town; Parisian Laundry, Montreal; Dortmunder Kunstverein, Dortmund; Braunsfelder, Cologne; Tanya Leighton, Berlin; David Roberts Art Foundation, London; Salon 94, New York; White Columns, New York; Studiolo, Milan; Salon Dahlmann, Berlin; Palazzo Fruscione, Salerno; König Gallery, Berlin.

**Jean-François Lauda** (Born 1981 in Montréal, CA) lives and works in Montréal, Canada.

Solo exhibitions of his work have been held at Romer Young Gallery, San Francisco; Shoot the Lobster, New York; the Darling Foundry, Montréal; Galerie René Blouin, Montréal; Fondation Molinari, Montréal; Antoine Ertaskiran Gallery, Montréal; Battat Contemporary, Montréal; Vie D'Ange, Montréal; Angell Gallery, Toronto; VSVSVS, Toronto.

He will have a solo exhibition with Galerie Eli Kerr, Montréal later this year.

His work has been included in group exhibitions at 86 Walker, New York; Blouin Division, Montréal; Maison des Arts de Laval, Laval; Galerie René Blouin, Montréal; Angell Gallery, Toronto; Battat Contemporary, Montréal; and Erin Stump Projects, Toronto.

Jean-François Lauda's work belongs to the collections of National Museum of Fine Arts of Quebec; TD Bank; Collection Hydro-Québec; National Bank of Canada; Prêt d'oeuvres d'Art du Musée National des Beaux-Arts du Québec; Collection Loto-Québec; Servest Collection; Colart Collection; Heenan-Blaikie Collection, Collège Ahuntsic.

**Trevor Shimizu** (Born in 1978 in Santa Rosa, California, USA) lives and works in Queens, New York.

Solo and two-person exhibitions of his work have been held at 47 Canal, New York; Institute of Contemporary Art, Philadelphia; ICA Philadelphia at Kunsthalle Lissabon; Mendes Wood DM, São Paulo; Galerie Christine Mayer, Munich; La Maison de Rendez-Vous, Brussels; Magenta Plains, New York; Misako & Rosen, Tokyo; Potts, Los Angeles.

His work has been included in group exhibitions at 47 Canal, New York; Greene Naftali Gallery, New York; The Ranch, Montauk; James Cohen, New York; Lisson Gallery, New York; Marinaro, New York; Peter Freeman Inc., New York; Pio Pico, Los Angeles; Galerie Christine Mayer, Munich; Galerie Khoshbakht, Cologne; BRAUNSFELDER, Cologne; Galerie Christine Mayer, Munich; Vin Vin Gallery, Vienna; Gallery Sofie Van de Velde, Antwerp; Stuart Shave Modern Art, London; Galerie Thaddaeus Ropac, London; Pilar Corrias, London; Kunsthal Aarhus, Aarhus; Morán Morán, Mexico City; Art Sonje Center, Seoul; Galería Marta Cervera, Madrid.

Shimizu's work belongs to the collections of Whitney Museum of American Art, New York; Aishti Foundation, Beirut; Detroit Institute of Arts, Detroit, MI; K11 Art Foundation, Hong Kong; High Museum of Art, Atlanta, GA; University of Chicago Booth School of Business Art Collection, Chicago, IL.