

MAKE BELIEVE

CURATED BY BRUCE W. FERGUSON

January 13–February 17, 2019

Opening reception: Sunday, January 13 from 6–8pm

JENNIFER BOLANDE

KLAUS VOM BRUCH

YUL BRYNNER

MEG CRANSTON

DAVID DEUTSCH

JACK GOLDSTEIN

SAYRE GOMEZ

TERESA HUBBARD / ALEXANDER BIRCHLER

ELLIOTT JAMAL ROBBINS

WALTER ROBINSON

KERRY TRIBE

This multimedia exhibition brings together eleven artists presenting works in painting, photography, video, audio, installation, and performance documentation from 1956 to the present. Borrowing aspects of film production such as camera angles, props, casting, lighting, and stage design, the artists in this exhibition both present and manipulate illusion.

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Somewhere between pure imaginative fantasy and complex industrial production lies the notion of “film.” Often associated with large budgets, extensive manpower and current technologies, film can alternatively be small, personal and extremely subjective. In its beginnings, film shifted between these two poles; in our present day, film is increasingly professionalized for large transnational audiences.

At the same time, film maintains both its amateur status and its tenuous yet important relationship to art. The cinematic experience is not all too different from the art viewing experience—the form and the phenomena of film affects viewers; movies make us feel. Perhaps “art” is the status that film always desires, even though it is often caught on the mere entertainment end of the scale.

The artists in MAKE BELIEVE utilise cinematic devices and thematic tropes to respond to film’s pervasiveness—their works functioning as subjective slices into film’s ubiquitous public presence. Upon entering the exhibition, one must pass through Jennifer Bolande’s humorous and convincing “plywood” stage curtains. Further references to staging, set design, casting and backdrops are seen in Yul Brynner’s candid, behind-the-scenes photographs on Hollywood movie sets, Sayre Gomez’s trompe l’oeil painting of a storefront rendered at a one-to-one scale, and Meg Cranston’s casting headshots of actresses from her performance, *Women Who Would Play Me If I Paid Them*.

Acknowledgement of specific movie genres and to the artifice of cinema abound. Walter Robinson's paintings on bed sheets derive from pulp novels, posters, romance and movie magazines and depict lovers in a scene of torrid romance while Klaus vom Bruch’s spliced footage from a range of classic and historic films deconstructs the cinematic Hollywood kiss. David Deutsch’s photographs of suburban Los Angeles taken from a helicopter and illuminated by a police searchlight evoke film noir and mystery. Jack Goldstein’s over-acted *The Six Minute Drown* conjures the listener’s own cinematic memories of drowning while Kerry Tribe’s spot-lit potted plant serves not only as a prop but the main character of the scene.

Two video works take a more serious note, illustrating the social character of the cinematic experience as well as the ambiguity between subject and identity, viewer and gaze. *Grand Paris Texas* by Teresa Hubbard / Alexander Birchler interweaves images of The Grand, a long abandoned movie theater, with behind-the-scenes footage of their crew exploring and setting up shots of the crumbling structure and interviews that evoke absence and presence. Elliott Jamal Robbins’ silent video, *Snow White Clapping*, fuses a series of frames from the Disney movie with a hand-drawn, virtual armature of a black body—employing a slapstick style to explore the intersection of societal readings of black and queer identity.

Seen through an artist's eye, the notion of film reflects two sides of a mirror—on one side, a fictional space, on the other, a discerning look into reality. MAKE BELIEVE presents artistic possibilities for considering film as a powerful and critical tool and asks not only “what constitutes the believable?” but also questions the difference between belief and invention.

Bruce W. Ferguson would like to acknowledge and thank Paulina Samborska for her assistance and research in the creation of this exhibition.



Bruce W. Ferguson is an accomplished author and curator of dozens of nationally and internationally noted exhibitions. Mr. Ferguson is the founding director of the nationally acclaimed SITE Santa Fe in New Mexico. He has curated for such eminent institutions as the Barbican Art Gallery in London, the Institute of Contemporary Art in Boston, and the Winnipeg and Vancouver art galleries in Canada. He has also organized exhibitions within the international biennales of Sao Paulo, Sydney, Venice, and Istanbul. Mr. Ferguson’s extensive academic leadership experience includes roles as Dean of Columbia University’s School of the Arts, Founding Director of Arizona State University’s F.A.R. (Future Arts Research), and Dean of Humanities and Social Sciences at the American University in Cairo, Egypt. Mr. Ferguson is the current President of Otis College of Art and Design in Los Angeles, CA.