

## Rafael Sánchez and Kathleen White's Artistic Love Affair

DAVID EVERITT HOWE



The close working and romantic relationship between Rafael Sánchez and Kathleen White always seemed like one of the greatest love stories. The two artists met each other in the mid 2000s and ended up living together in various apartments in the East Village. Collaborating on artworks while also making their own, the two tended to their backyard garden together and also ran a book stand on Hudson Street. They would often be seen going to openings at PARTICIPANT INC, where they both showed work. After White was diagnosed with lung cancer, Sánchez was her devoted caretaker until she died. After her passing, Sánchez would constantly evoke White, posting pictures of her and her work on social media. As primary caretaker of her estate, he's intimately involved in guaranteeing her artistic legacy, with great expense.



Kathleen White, *Bloodline 2*, 2005, oil on canvas, 25 × 20 cm.  
Courtesy: © Rafael Sánchez, Estate of Kathleen White and  
Martos Gallery, New York; photograph: Charles Benton

It's special, then, to see their work together in a two-person exhibition, a manifestation of their enduring partnership. With their respective works interspersed in salon-style groupings, their breadth is remarkable, a testament to their prolific art-making. It's also interesting to note the similarities and differences between the two. White's work tends to be more obviously painterly, with organic shapes hued in pinks, reds and browns, as if scooped up out of some primordial ooze and shaped into primitive forms. *Snake/Palette* (1989–90), for instance, sees a twisty rivulet of red set against a smudgy green background resembling a volcanic landscape, while in the sculptural tableaux *Hair Pod* (c.1990), the artist carved passageways out of a massive piece of extracted wall, lining each channel with matted hair that forms small balls in the corners. Other works by White use hair of a more familiar sort. In *Blonde Fall Spirit* (c.1990), a tied off strand of golden wig hair hangs from the ceiling, nodding to a time when drag queens – a scene in which White was intimately involved – died of AIDS en masse; their possessions, including wigs, left in piles on the street.



Kathleen White, *Blonde Fall Spirit*, 1990s, natural and synthetic wig hair suspended with invisible fishing wire, dimensions variable. Courtesy: © Rafael Sánchez, Estate of Kathleen White and Martos Gallery, New York; photograph: Charles Benton

Sánchez's contribution, meanwhile, makes great use of found materials and often has a playfully dadaist tone. A drag performer for most of his life, Sánchez often repurposed theatrical props in his sculptures. In *Performance Cane (Die Ballade Vom Ertrunkenen Mädchen)* (2019), for instance, the namesake object is inscribed with text from Kurt Weill and Bertolt Brecht's *Die Ballade Vom Ertrunkenen Mädchen* (1918), which Sánchez read onstage as part of a performance at Dixon Place (XIV, 2019). *Corner Piece* (2022) is an angled, black platform jutting out from the corner of the gallery: the stage provides support for a pair of black shoes and two black balloons, the latter tied up tautly from floor to ceiling. Nevertheless, the balloons slightly bobble in place, as if their movements were an echo of the performance the work is based on, *The Three Voices* (2005).

## MARTOS GALLERY



Rafael Sánchez, *Star*, 1997–98, ballpoint and gesso on board, 44 × 34 cm. Courtesy: © Rafael Sánchez, Estate of Kathleen White and Martos Gallery, New York; photograph: Charles Benton

The real spectacle for both artists, however, is the ordinary minutia of everyday life. White's trio of pencil-on-paper drawings of backyard plants, such as *Untitled (Rose Drawing)* (2005), are touchingly delicate, while Sánchez's *Pink Jar* (1990–2003) collects the artist's used, pink disposable razors into an old honey jar, codifying an everyday act of hygiene. Both artists are very attuned to how vulnerable our day-to-day existence is and, consequently, many works here recall something uncannily cosmic, finding wonder in phenomena that will long outlast us. A circular saw-like cut of brown Kraft paper, mounted on black velour, forms Sánchez's stunning *Sun* (1987). Right next to it is White's *Bunny Spirit* (1991), an almost buoyant portrait of famed drag queen Lady Bunny, comprised of wig hair fanned out from a yellow phone book page, onto which is drawn the faint outline of a face. Formally twinned, it's as if both could circle endlessly into eternity, a pair of stars burning bright.

*Rafael Sánchez and Kathleen White's 'Earth Work' is on view at Martos Gallery, New York, USA, until 19 March.*

*Main image: Rafael Sánchez, Sour Milk Sea, 1999–2001, ballpoint pen on paper, 58 × 74 cm. Courtesy: © Rafael Sánchez, Estate of Kathleen White and Martos Gallery, New York; photograph: Charles Benton*

Feb. 24, 2022

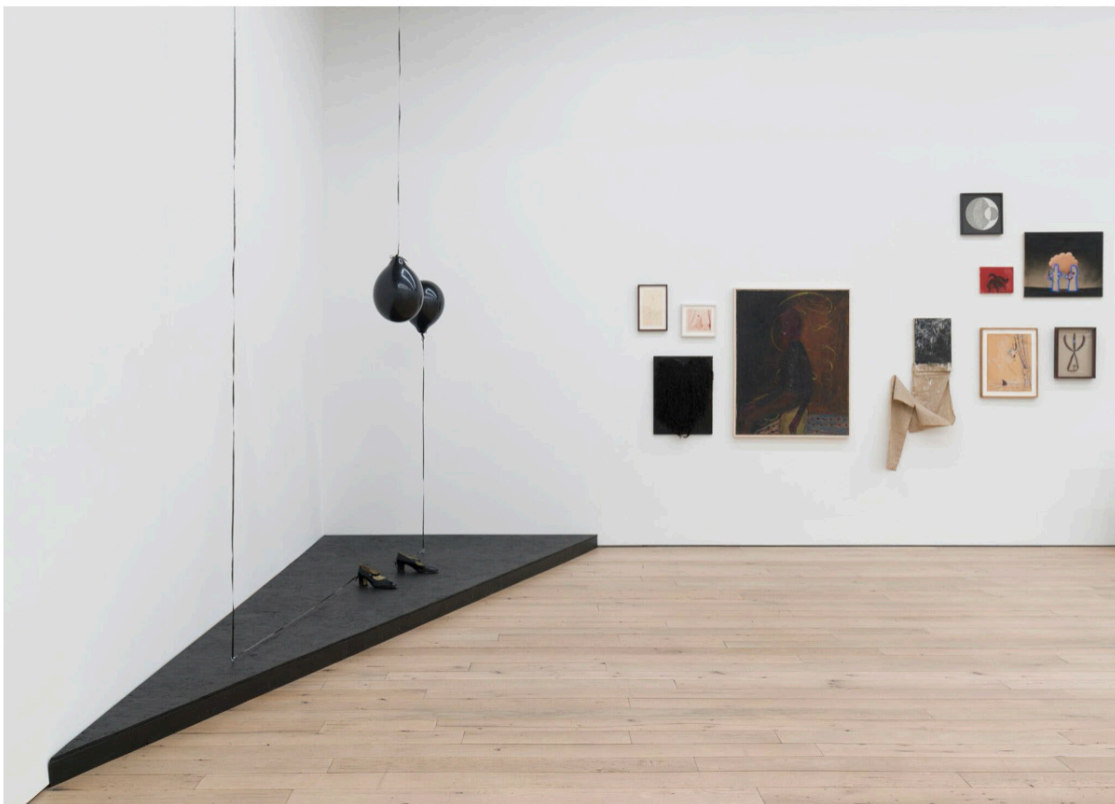
# What to See in N.Y.C. Galleries Right Now

*Want to see new art this weekend? Start in Chinatown with Rafael Sánchez and Kathleen White's found materials from the AIDS crisis to Sept. 11. Then head to Chelsea to check out the Kitchen's four-artist exhibition, which takes up its hallways, offices and exhibition spaces. And don't miss Stephanie Syjuco's haunting manipulations of archival photos.*

CHINATOWN

## 'Rafael Sánchez, Kathleen White: Earth Work'

Through March 12. Martos Gallery, 41 Elizabeth Street, Manhattan. 212-560-0670; [martosgallery.com](http://martosgallery.com).



From left, Rafael Sánchez's "Corner Piece" (2022), platform, balloons, shoes, ribbon, and hardware; and on the wall, works in various media (1985-2017) by Sánchez and Kathleen White. Photo by Charles Benton, Courtesy Rafael Sánchez, The Estate of Kathleen White, and Martos Gallery, New York

## MARTOS GALLERY

Rafael Sánchez and Kathleen White were both formed by New York City's underground scene of the 1980s and '90s. Sánchez, Cuban-born, was doing cross-gendered performances work in downtown drag clubs; and White, born in Fall River, Mass., was part of the Lower East Side art world when they met in 2004. They then lived together until White's death from cancer in 2014.

Along with cultural turf, they shared lived histories: the AIDS crisis, urban gentrification, Sept. 11. As is evident in this moving, intricately textured two-person show, both drew on a personal experience of those years in their art. At one point Sánchez made assemblages from light bulbs in memory of friends who had died of AIDS. (A single photograph here seems to refer to that work.) White made sculptures from the wigs of deceased drag queens whose possessions had been thrown out into the street.

Despite the thrum of mortality, their art pulses with joy, in part through their witty use of found materials: dust, makeup, cinder block, telephone-book pages. The installation intermingles work in ways that suggests how they were different as artists (simplistically put: Sánchez looks more conceptually oriented, White more hands-on expressive.) But we also sense how they were alike. Two small paintings hung side by side — Sánchez's "Onement in a Field" (2002) and White's "Moon" (2005-2006) — could be depictions of the same evening sky vista seen by two people with a shared vision and distinctive temperaments, sitting side by side. *HOLLAND COTTER*

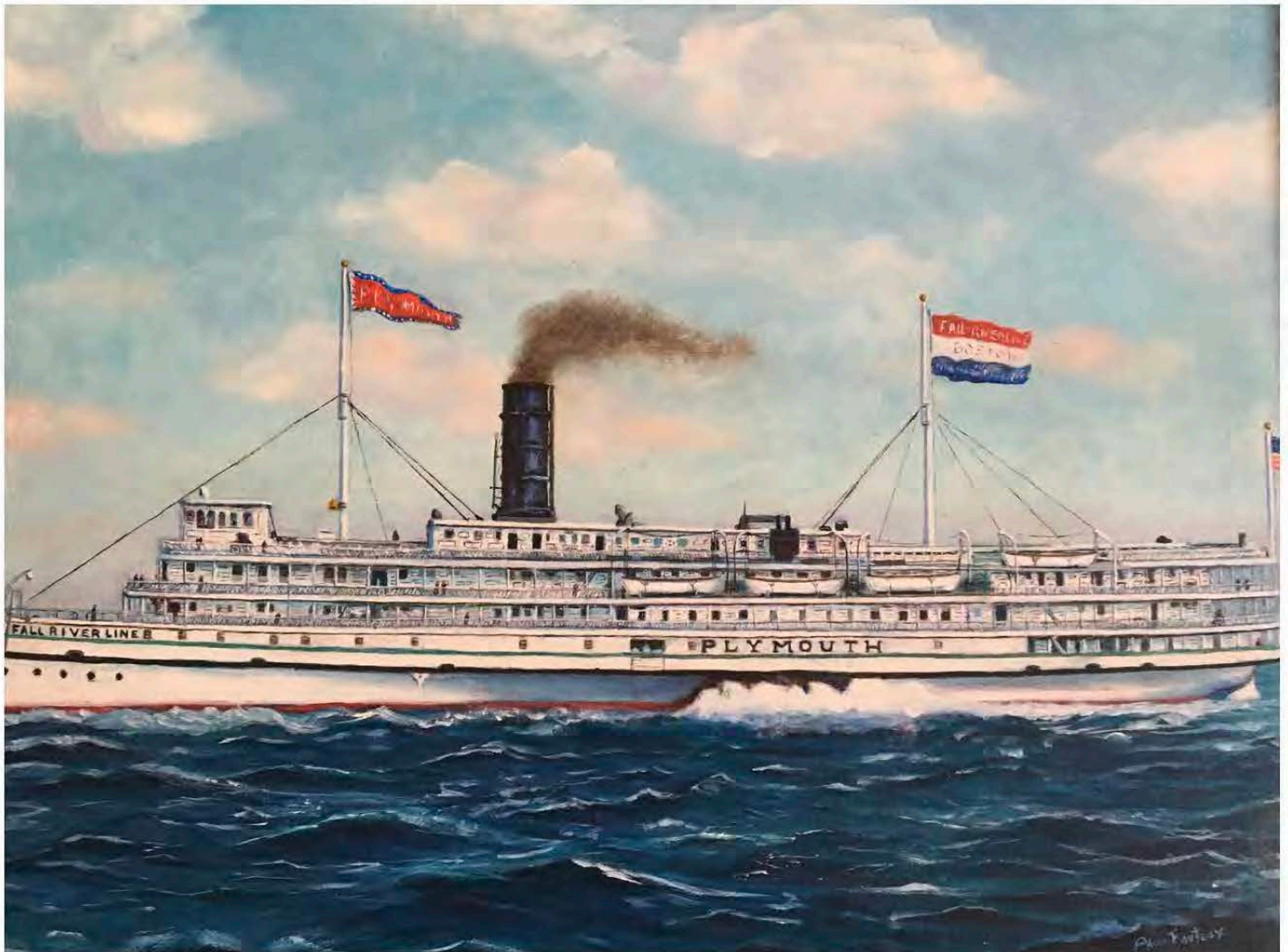
# Fall River Museum of Contemporary Art exhibit explores ties with New York art scene

**Don Wilkinson**

“Group Exhibition III” at the Fall River Museum of Contemporary Art (FR MoCA) is an ambitious presentation that takes note of some of the connective threads between the cities of Fall River and New York. Those threads, some direct and others tangential, note deeper bonds that one might not initially expect between the Spindle City and the Big Apple.

The exhibition, curated by FR MoCA co-founders Brittni Ann Harvey and Harry Gould Harvey IV, is effectively three distinct displays that speak to each other in unanticipated ways.

The foyer of the museum is a gallery unto itself and presently displays artifacts and artwork from the collection of the Maritime Museum at Battleship Cove. There is a charming painting by Alice Fauteux of the steamboat Plymouth and nautical tools (brass telescope, oil squirt can, hammers, a number of gauges and the like) displayed in a vitrine, representing the history of the Fall River Line, a transportation route that connected Boston to New York City from 1847 to 1937.



Painting By Alice Fauteux From The Collection Of The Maritmtime Museum At Battleship Cove. *Provided Photo*

The inaugural collaboration between the two institutions suggests the beginning of a beautiful friendship.

The large pristine main gallery features paintings and three-dimensional works by Kathleen White, who was born in Fall River in 1960. White, an incredibly prolific artist that moved to New York City in 1987, died in 2014. Displayed alongside White within that space is Rafael Sanchez, her partner and frequent artistic collaborator.



## MARTOS GALLERY

But what is the connection between the Fall River Line ephemera and White (and by extension, Sanchez)? White's grandfather was a Fall River Line steamboat captain.

There is something demanding and engaging about the obsessiveness of motif and approach in White's work, as if she were repeating a refrain over and over again, making sure she was being heard. A number of her "Love Letters" paintings are displayed and all feature similar markings and strokes: blunt vertical blocks, packed tightly against each other like passengers on a crowded subway train, one row over another.



A Painting From Kathleen White's Love Letters Series.  
*Provided Photo*

Her palette is selectively limited, with pinks running from chalky Pepto-Bismol to deep coral, shifting to-and-from sweet lavenders and a maroon that nears the hue of dried blood.

Displayed on one wall of small shelves are 24 handmade tiny automobiles not much bigger than vintage Matchbox cars and created with Sculptamold and oil paint. White titled them all simply "Car" and they represent but a tiny fraction of the series, all created between 1999 and 2001.

## MARTOS GALLERY

Sanchez has a bit of a Duchampian readymade sensibility in a few of his works. “La Pildora (The Pill)” is a bell jar tightly packed with lightbulbs of varying size, color and design. The cynical viewer might dismiss it as an art school joke but it is far more than that. The bulbs have changed over the years and Sanchez takes particular care of the bulbs both formally and conceptually. Many of the bulbs were taken from the homes of friends and colleagues who lost their lives to AIDS, and hence the objects take on a kind of sacredness, a physical embodiment of spirit.



La Pildora The Pill by Rafael Sanchez *Provided Photo*



All The Faces I Know by Bella Carlos *Provided Photo*

## MARTOS GALLERY

His kinetic mixed-media sculpture “Weather Station” is an assemblage of all-black objects. An open umbrella, a balloon, and a walking cane are mounted to an old school phonograph, atop a tall table or stool. It’s a deceptively simple work, situated in a corner of the all-white gallery. The curators have made the most of positioning and lighting to make it a showcase piece for the exhibition.

In the adjacent display spaces is the third leg of the exhibition called “Flame of Love” featuring Bella Carlos, Dorothy Carlos, Tom Forkin, Christopher K. Ho, Brian Oakes, Tim Simonds and Marisa Takal.

Bella Carlos displays a series of wearable body adornments, with long black satiny straps tied to soldered forms that, at quick glance, look like bracelets or necklaces, adorned with decorative shapes, baubles and shimmery surfaces. But when one realizes that they are meant to be strapped to the face, they take on a kinky “Eyes Wide Shut” vibe that nudges one to a different kind of thought process. One of them is actually called “The Face I’m Afraid Of.”



La Pildora The Pill by Rafael Sanchez *Provided Photo*

## MARTOS GALLERY

Carlos collaborated with fellow exhibitor Brian Oakes on “When You Touch Me You See Me,” a mixed media wall piece, with glowing cool blue lights, decorative flourishes, insectoid ornamentations, the suggestion of a flower, and the image of an entangled knot above the legend from which the work derives its title. It is a billet-doux of the new era.

“Group Exhibition III” is on display at Fall River Museum of Contemporary Art, 502 Bedford St., Fall River until April 14. FR MoCA is open Saturdays and Sundays, from noon to 5 p.m. and by appointment.

# MARTOS GALLERY

Howe, David Everitt, "How Are You?" Care and Remembrance in the Work of Nan Goldin and Kathleen White," Pioneer Works, September 8, 2020

Pioneer Works

## "How Are You?" Care and Remembrance in the Work of Nan Goldin and Kathleen White

David Everitt Howe



Nan Goldin, Kathleen at the Bowery Bar, NYC, 1995. Courtesy of the artist and Pioneer Works. Copyright: Nan Goldin. Photo: Dan Bradica.

**Pioneer Works curator David Everitt Howe takes a deeply personal look back at two former exhibitions he organized by Nan Goldin and Kathleen White in 2017, finding in both important lessons for navigating loss, sustaining communities, and caring for those whom you love.**

## 09.08.20 — ART

Nan Goldin called me out of the blue one Sunday afternoon—on November 26, 2017, to be exact. It was like getting a call from Jesus Christ; or I don't know, Robyn, being all, "Hey David, it's Robyn, from Sweden!" It was 2pm, and my best gays and I had each had a few rounds of "brunch" drinks and I was tipsy. Maybe even a little drunk. I had a clay face mask on slowly hardening, pulling my gaping pores shut while we watched *Schitt's Creek*, or maybe it was a flurry of old Madonna videos (I'm proud *and* ashamed to admit I'm a living cliché of a homosexual male). I didn't answer the phone thinking it was a debt collector or a robocall trying to sell me insurance for the car I don't have. But no, it was Nan Goldin, one of the most noted, photographic chroniclers of New York City's underground queer culture in the 80s and 90s. I listened to the voicemail: "Sorry this is last minute, it's Nan..."

I had a mini meltdown, looking like a green raccoon with "revitalizing" goo all over my face, and tried to pull myself together, to meet someone I revered in art school, in the flesh. I had been planning an exhibition of her work at Pioneer Works for a few months at that point. The show was going to exclusively feature big, glossy new prints of one of her recurring muses, the artist Kathleen White. Kathleen was also—in a story full of coincidences—my first neighbor in New York City when I was young, dumb, and... I was also planning a concurrent, posthumous exhibition of Kathleen's work at Pioneer Works (she died of cancer in 2014). Capitalizing on Nan's fame to leverage attention towards Kathleen, it was going to be a pairing of equals that also would shed some much-needed light on Kathleen's output, which tended to be overshadowed by "that face." Unsurprisingly, I remember well the time I first saw one of Nan's photos of Kathleen, *Kathleen at the Bowery Bar, NYC* (1995), in which Kathleen, wearing a pretty, revealing blue dress, has a drink and smoke at the bar, eyes downcast as if deep in melancholy thought, the alabaster darkness of the establishment's interior surrounding her as if closing in. It has all the pathos of that famous Edward Hopper diner painting, *Nighthawks* (1942), in which three people grab a bite to eat late at night, surrounded by an empty city. At the time, I thought "Holy shit, that's Kathleen!"

In any case, the call became one of those I-remember-when moments you regale guests with at dinner parties, "that time Nan Goldin called me and I was wasted," followed by maniacal laughter since it was so fitting, in a way, considering her work is all about dependency.

**IT'S** a little difficult to pin down what Nan is perhaps most known for now, since recently photos of her shouting "Shame on Sackler" and "Fund Rehab," and throwing pill bottles into the moat around the Temple of Dendur at the Met, in the museum's Sackler Wing, have emblazoned *The New York Times*. Or there's another indelible image of her in *Artforum*—arguably the art world's most high-profile periodical—lying next to the same moat, surrounded by families as part of a die-in, OxyContin bottles floating beside her like little clinical floaties.

**The founder and lead organizer of P.A.I.N. (Prescription Addiction Intervention Now), Nan founded the loose group to protest the Sackler family, who amassed a great fortune marketing the opioid OxyContin while simultaneously burying or ignoring the overwhelming evidence of how truly addictive the medication was.**

The Sackler family almost single-handedly launched the opioid epidemic in the United States, which continues unabated, manifesting all around New York and countless towns across America. For Nan, the epidemic is personal, as she herself was addicted from 2014-2017 before kicking it after nearly overdosing on fentanyl-laced heroin. It was one of the most excruciating experiences she's ever dealt with. "Your own skin revolts against you," she noted to the *Times* in 2018. "Every part of yourself is in terrible pain."

This was, of course, a continuing battle dating back to her youth in suburban Boston, where she chafed against the confines of her more or less "normal" upbringing. As she noted, "I wanted to get high from a really early age. I wanted to be a junkie. That's what intrigues me. Part was the Velvet Underground and the Beats and all that stuff. But, really, I wanted to be as different from my mother as I could and define myself as far as possible from the suburban life I was brought up in." Taking up heroin as a teenager, she used it briefly in art school in Boston, and then afterwards in New York City, where she moved to in 1977. There, she settled into a lower east side scene of drag queens, nightlife types, writers, and artists who shared in her spirit of rebellion and living alternatively—including its attendant drug use.

It's this part of her life that informs the other work she's most famous for: the slideshow and book of photographs *The Ballad of Sexual Dependency* (1985 and 1986, respectively), which takes its name from the title of a song in Bertolt Brecht and Kurt Weill's *The Threepenny Opera* (1928) (in the song a woman sings of her wayward lover: "sexual obsession has him in its thrall...a mighty genius stuck on prostitution, but when they died who paid the funeral? Whores did.")<sup>1</sup> Brecht is a very cunning reference: a playwright, poet, and revolutionary Marxist working in the 1920s, he promoted a new kind of "epic theater" that would breach the fourth wall with certain "alienation effect" tactics that made the audience self-aware of their position *as* audience. These included actors playing multiple roles and directly addressing viewers, placards that didactically emphasized key points of the plot, and even leaving stage lights and other behind-the-scenes objects on the stage,<sup>2</sup> all to "show that you are showing...the audience identifies with the actor as being an observer, and accordingly develops his attitude of looking on."<sup>3</sup>



Nan Goldin, *Nan on Brian's lap, Nan's birthday, NYC, 1981*. Courtesy of the artist and Marian Goodman Gallery. Copyright: Nan Goldin.

With *The Ballad of Sexual Dependency* this idea of *looking* becomes especially fraught, as we witness scenes so intensely personal—so private—that it's almost as if a corollary fourth wall in photography between what's public and what should be out-of-view has been irrevocably washed away. We see Nan herself smiling coyly in *Nan on Brian's lap, Nan's birthday, New York City* (1981) her arms draped around her boyfriend's torso and her neck festooned in tasteful pearls. Expressionless, with his eyes looking at the camera and his mouth slightly agape, he looks like a deer caught in headlights, surprised by the click of the shutter. In *Nan after being battered* (1984), however, we see her with both eyes encircled by brown bruises, glassy with moisture from trauma. Staring at the camera defiantly, her lips are impeccably coated in deep, red lipstick, and she wears the same pearls, as if both were a badge of normalcy she refuses to relinquish.<sup>4</sup> It's images like these that have led many commentators to describe her work as "confessional," though that word seems like something of a misnomer. Confessional presupposes that some degree of guilt is involved when it's clear a sense of almost gleeful pride runs throughout the work, even in its darkest moments.





Nan Goldin, *Getting high, NYC, 1979*. Courtesy of the artist and Marian Goodman Gallery. Copyright: Nan Goldin.

In *Getting high, New York City* (1979) a man heats up heroin in a spoon, a woman's red belt tightened around his left arm. The scene is notable for its otherwise relative normalcy: a high-heel shoe lays next to a phone, while a glass of water rests on the floor in the foreground. *Greer and Robert on the bed, New York City* (1982) blurrily documents a quiet moment in which artist Greer Lankton—who was born Greg Lankton and underwent sexual reassignment surgery in 1979—lies on a bed, probably very high. She was known for making papier-mâché dolls in which bodies were stretched thin and genitals were crossed between genders, implying all bodies are transitional. Next to her sits her ex, gay artist Robert Vitale, who runs his hand through his hair while he looks away. He broke up with her years before over her new gender, though they remained friends. Greer wraps her hand around her wrist, as if measuring its mass, “looking inward, full of longing, thwarted desire and her essential loneliness,” as Nan has described the moment. This is darkness of another sort, not of the graphic, drug-paraphernalia kind that's evocative of the work of one of Nan's most formative, stated influences, Larry Clark. His *Tulsa* and *Teenage Lust* photo series became notorious for their chronicling of youths toting guns, fucking, and doing drugs, caught in the act; in *Jack and Lynn Johnson, Oklahoma City* (1973) a woman grins while licking her lips, forcing a thin stream of heroin out of a hypodermic needle just before injecting it into the arm of the man before her.<sup>5</sup>



Nan Goldin, *Greer and Robert on the Bed, NYC, 1982*. Courtesy of the artist and Marian Goodman Gallery. Copyright: Nan Goldin.

Rather, *Greer and Robert on the bed, New York City (1982)* points to a kind of tone or atmosphere of existential reckoning more than any specific, graphic act—quiet, peripheral edges of an event more than the event itself. Nan’s camera chronicles fleeting moments in time, through the highs and lows, the parties and nights out, the loves fallen in and out of. “I used to think that I could never lose anyone if I photographed them enough. In fact, my pictures show me how much I’ve lost.”<sup>6</sup> Greer died of an overdose in 1986, while Robert died of AIDS in 1989, four years and seven years after the picture was taken, respectively.<sup>7</sup>

**The photograph then is “the living image of a dead thing,” as Roland Barthes would say. It’s that *thing* that pulls your heart strings, the thing that makes Nan’s photographs so moving and yet so hard to put your finger on.**

The photograph then is “the living image of a dead thing,” as Roland Barthes would say. While I’m loathe to invoke a theorist so overly-referenced and grad school-textbook as Barthes, nonetheless his musings on a photograph’s *punctum*—which came out around the same time Nan was photographing these subjects—ring true here; it’s that *thing* that pulls your heart strings, the thing that makes Nan’s photographs so moving and yet so hard to put your finger on. The punctum is, for Barthes—writing about the picture of a man, Lewis Payne, in his jail cell waiting to be hanged—“*he is going to die*. I read at the same time, *this will be and this has been*; I observe with horror an anterior future of which death is the stake. Whether or not the subject is already dead, every photograph is this catastrophe.”<sup>8</sup>

**IT'S** weird personally going through something you read about in grad school, in a canonical text of postmodernist theory—a text that's supposed to be abstract, and somehow not real, when it's all premised on a very real event we all have or will go through: the death of a parent. Before, I was like, “yeah, yeah, I get it.” Now, it feels urgent. As lore goes, in *Camera Lucida* Barthes sorts through photographs of his recently deceased mother, trying to “find” her, as if that was even possible in old photographs. Nonetheless he comes upon one, all dog-eared, which becomes the whole premise of the punctum, which literally translates as a “point,” like a prick or being struck, or cut. I found myself doing the same thing this past March, sifting through boxes of family photographs after my Dad died of cancer, feeling déjà vu from something I'd read at Columbia, in my mid-twenties.

For some people, they literally can't look at photographs of the recently deceased. It's too painful. For me, it became a kind of out-of-body experience, just sifting through photos the day after his corpse was wheeled out of my childhood house. I was trying to find the “best” images—him marrying my Mom; holding me up on one of those fucked-up, massive guns on a Navy destroyer; giving a thumbs up after protesting Wells Fargo's funding of private prisons and immigrant detention facilities; mimicking the pose of a mannequin in that tacky Pierre Cardin exhibition at Brooklyn Museum, which he loved (“David, you should make an exhibition that uses lighting effects like that fashion show. So cool!”).

There's another photograph of him I took on my phone that I'll probably never show anyone, of his body in the hospice bed right after he died. I'm not exactly sure what compelled me to take it, except maybe I needed it to mark the event as real when at the time it seemed so the opposite. I was the only one in the room when it happened. I wasn't even sure his last breath was his last; no one tells you these things in school. Death seems like a taboo topic, or something no one cares about because it's so un-sexy and so un-marketable, unlike births or weddings. After he stopped moving for a while, I Googled “how to tell if someone is dead,” which is comical despite the circumstances. I really had no idea how to tell if it was the *end*. After the hospice nurse came by and called it, my family and I went into the other room to build a fire; he loved those. In between tending to it I would go to him in the other room, despite there being no reason to. I would touch his face and it didn't feel like him. Nor did he look like himself. He seemed like an alien being. I wonder what Barthes would call that kind of photograph.

I still have a few of his voicemails on my iPhone, which I play now and then to hear his voice. For me, they function like photographs, as they are an index of sorts even if they're not the literal impression of light on paper, the “thing of the past, [that] by its immediate radiations (its luminances), has really touched the surface which in turn my gaze will touch.” So too is that voicemail from Nan I have saved, which is in its own way a kind of *this-has-been*, even though it hasn't happened yet.

**NAN** met Kathleen in 1988, most likely through their mutual friend, the photographer Shellburne Thurber, who also shot Kathleen. But Nan and Kathleen became closer when Nan was getting clean at McLean Hospital, outside Boston. Kathleen needed an apartment in the city, and Nan met some dude in her detox program who was looking for a tenant. Organizing the transaction, Nan later found out the guy was a scam artist; the landlord ran into Kathleen one day, and was like, “why are you here?” Friendship ensued,<sup>10</sup> but Kathleen had to find someplace

else to live. After several ensuing apartments, such as one notable storefront on Elizabeth Street, she eventually settled in with Cookie Mueller's partner, singer and actress Sharon Niesp, in her apartment on East Sixth Street. Sharon and Cookie were also Nan's muses (most of her friends were), and both became famous for recurring roles in John Waters movies, like *Pink Flamingo*. While Kathleen lived with Sharon, she started to make small, Sculptamold cars due to the sudden death of her sister at the hands of a drunk driver, in January 1999.

**I'd say Kathleen's work is marked by an almost elemental simplicity. Often, her canvases and sculptures are nothing more than a kind of crude mark made in paint, or an object kind of placed just-so.**

I'd say Kathleen's work is marked by an almost elemental simplicity. Often, her canvases and sculptures are nothing more than a kind of crude mark made in paint, or an object kind of placed just-so. The cars, despite being modeled after (fairly) intricate objects, were brusquely molded by hand, and have the appearance of a blobby child's toy, or maybe of some kind of inchoate, indestructible rock—something that could survive anything. They were literally fashioned like out of play-doh, then set by heat. She would then paint them a solid color, like green or red. In her posthumous exhibition at Martos Gallery, "Year of Firsts"—which ran concurrently with her exhibition I organized at Pioneer Works, "Spirits of Manhattan"—two of the cars were placed neatly on small, white shelves, a far cry from how I initially viewed them with her surviving partner, artist Rafael Sánchez, in her old studio in Chelsea, where there were literally heaps of them in boxes, as well as countless flat, unstretched, and unprimed canvases onto which she inscribed bright, almost chipper renderings of car after car in paint, one or two per canvas. It's hard to overstate how gorgeous they are, and to my knowledge, these specific car works have never been shown publicly. Seen splayed on top of each other, they're hard to focus on, but like everything else of hers in the studio, if you were to frame one or two and hang them up alone on a wall, they would command the whole space and still take your breath away. Seen on a perfectly white shelf at eye level, *Car* (1999-2001) looks like a sacred object.



Kathleen White, *Car* (1999-2001), Sculptamold and oil paint,  $1\frac{1}{2} \times 2\frac{1}{4} \times 4$  inches. Courtesy of The Sánchez-White Archive and Martos Gallery.

Kathleen made hundreds and hundreds of these little vehicles and would give them to friends as gifts. According to Rafael, she made them almost compulsively for two years, as if she was trying to process her sister's passing by making the object that killed her over and over again<sup>11</sup>—as if, in the “compulsion to repeat,” as Lucien Freud would say, she was trying to come to grips with a reality she couldn't face. Riffing off of Freud, Jacques Lacan called this “encounter with the real” a traumatic rupture that breaks through to the surface, which he termed *tuché*—interestingly, Barthes' punctum was modeled on Lacan's term: “it's the Occasion, the Encounter, the Real, in its indefatigable expression.”<sup>12</sup> Looking at the work of Andy Warhol, particularly *White Burning Car III* (1963), art historian Hal Foster thought the smears, inconsistencies, and mistakes in the screen printed image repeated ad nauseum was an example of that tragedy's “reality”—its *tuché* or punctum—coming through; Warhol himself once said, “the more you look at the same exact thing, the more the meaning goes away, and the better and emptier you feel.”<sup>13</sup> On that same note, while Warhol and Kathleen's practices are wildly disparate, maybe there's a similar operation happening with Kathleen's cars. Perhaps their handmade irregularities, which varies between each sculpted object, functions like indexes of an event too harsh to fully grasp.

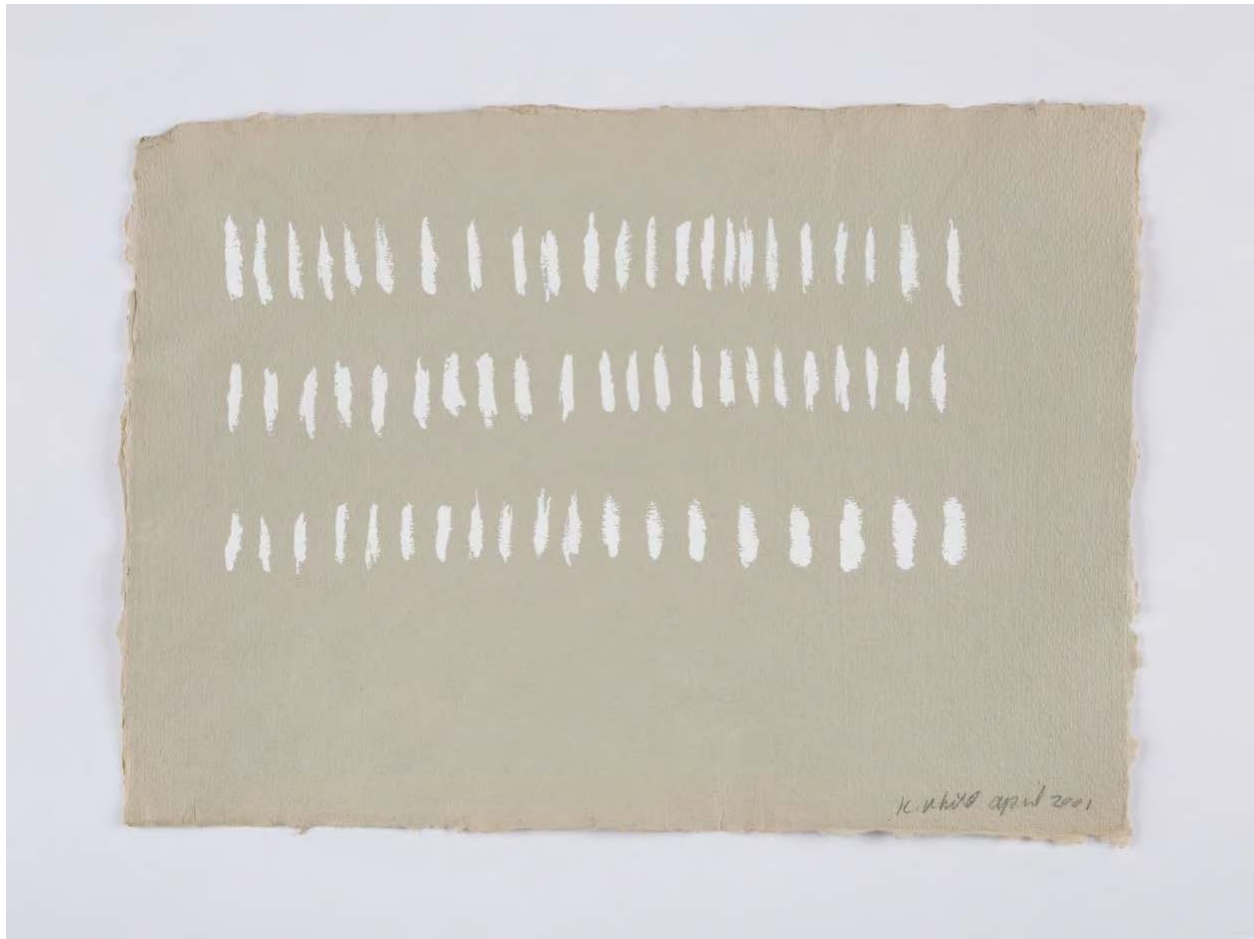
In any case, Kathleen gave up making cars after she broke the oven in the process, precipitating an eventual move in 2001 to 151 Ludlow Street in the heart of the lower east side, aided by Sharon and Lia Gangitano, the founder of Participant Inc, whose landlord also managed the Ludlow Street address. They filled a shopping cart with Kathleen's things and rolled it down the street.<sup>14</sup> I moved to that same address roughly five years afterwards, when I relocated to the city from Atlanta as a wide-eyed "innocent," settling in an apartment directly adjacent to Kathleen and Rafael's (they lived together). It was a quintessential New York set-up, a grungy yet charming old tenement building crisscrossed by fire escapes. Its front door was covered in graffiti, and my Dad joked that when he helped me move in, he pulled up to a homeless man sleeping in front of it. In wintertime I would be jolted awake by the clanging of radiators, and I could hear pigeons cooing outside my bedroom window at all times, like a kind of calming, urban soundtrack of filth. In classic fashion my window faced a brick wall two feet in front of it; that little interstitial black hole of a space was like a wind tunnel of pigeon feathers and weird smells. I never opened it. Every few nights, mountains of rat-infested trash piled up along the narrow streets, and occasionally one of the vermin would run across my feet on the way home while wasted, at 2 A.M.. It was hopelessly romantic.

Kathleen and Rafael were also a stereotype all their own—of the seasoned, urban hippie variety. Coming from Atlanta where "urban" doesn't even really exist, this was new to me. Rafael had a long, grey beard and looked a little bit like Father Time, while Kathleen would check the mail in a glamorous, floor-length fur coat, which I professed envy of. Once Rafael asked me what my plans were for the summer solstice, to which I jokingly asked in return if he was going to dance naked in the backyard under the full moon. He probably did. He and Kathleen made a nearly eleven-foot-high dolmen out of foamcore and painted it to resemble Stonehenge. Gazing at it while sitting in a lawn chair, contesting overdraft fees from Chase bank on the phone, I looked up and thought, *who the fuck are these people, and what is that?*

The "*what is that*" was exactly the point; Rafael was primarily known as a performance artist, and Kathleen was associated with paintings and sculptures. They wanted to meet in the middle to create something that was collaborative and defied explanation. The dolmen could be taken apart and driven to any location, where it could be rebuilt and function as a locus of performances and poetry readings, or even just a social gathering; its very contingency as an artwork only underlined the contingency of art *as such*. It was a Duchampian readymade that wasn't readymade, but crafted by two people, together. Its significance went over my head at the time, but to be fair, I was twenty-four and not really keyed in yet.



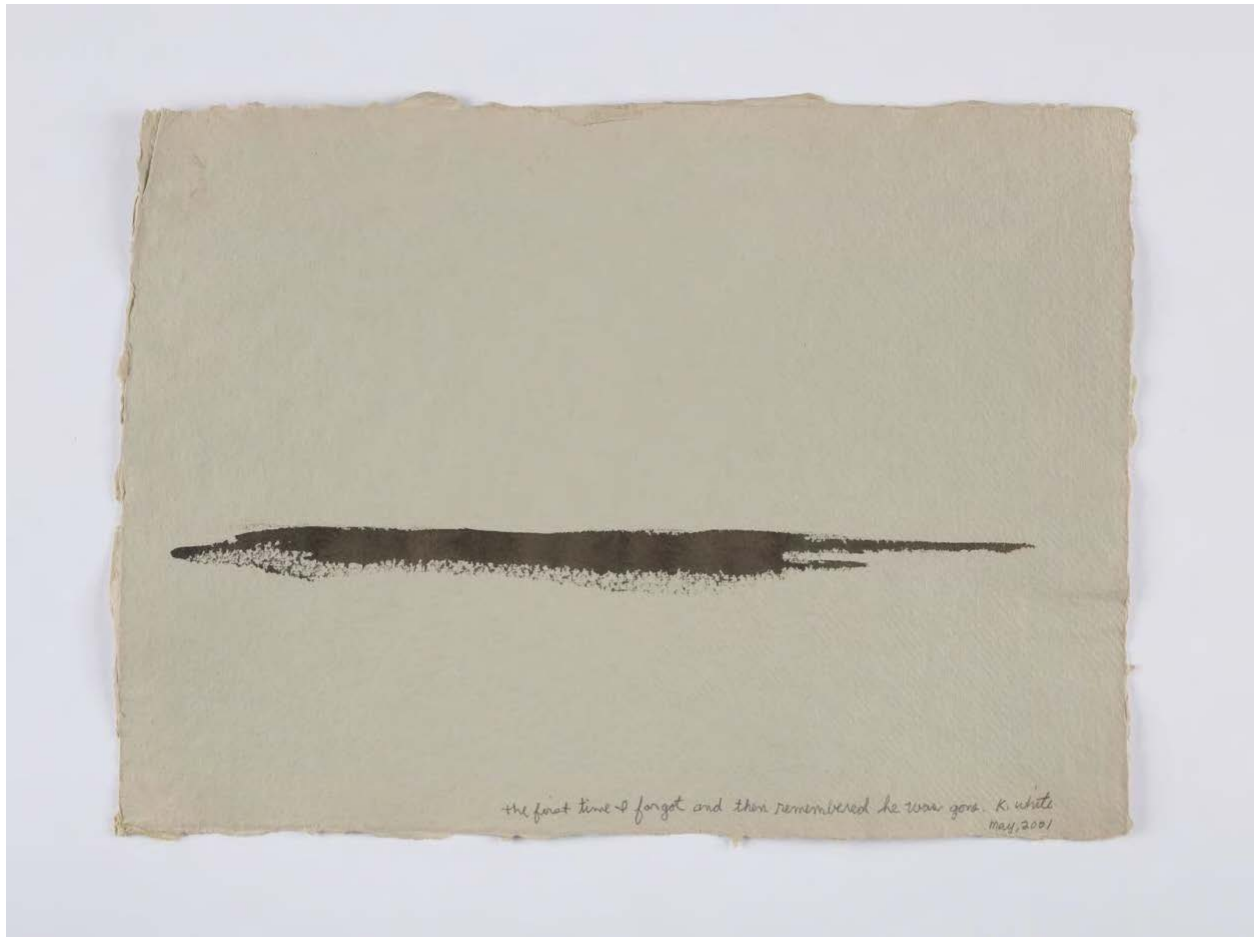
Installation view of Kathleen White, "A Year of Firsts," Martos Gallery, New York, December 14, 2017 - January 28, 2018. Courtesy of The Sánchez-White Archive and Martos Gallery.



Kathleen White, *A Year of Firsts* (2001), 40 works on paper, 12 × 16 ½ inches each. Courtesy of The Sánchez-White Archive and Martos Gallery.

While she was still living with Sharon and continuing at 151 Ludlow, Kathleen had also started her series of drawings *A Year of Firsts* (2001), which was prompted by her father's death from cancer in March of that year but continued in earnest cataloging significant events during that time and from the recent past. One drawing from April, 2001, features only white tally marks—sixty-four to be exact—on the paper's unadorned, beige background, as if she were counting down the days from some unknown event; or from May of that year in a work with a simple black brush stroke forming an inky horizon line, labeled in her handwriting, “the first time I forgot and then remembered he was gone, K. White, May, 2001.” A drawing made on September 11, 2001 consists of black darkness hovering over a swath of ocean-like blue. *A Year of Firsts* speaks to the almost suffocating inexorability of time passing, inevitably bearing out losses as it unfolds. These took a heavy toll on her.<sup>15</sup>





Kathleen White, *A Year of Firsts* (2001), 40 works on paper, 12 × 16 ½ inches each. Courtesy of The Sánchez-White Archive and Martos Gallery.

Yet another loss—this time her twin brother Chris’s suicide in 2007<sup>16</sup>—prompted another group of works that later formed the 2014 exhibition “(A) Rake’s Progress,” curated by Rafael while Kathleen was more or less immobilized by cancer. Just after Chris’s death, she started observing the seasonal, shifting colors in our building’s backyard—which together her and Rafael had turned from kind of a dump into a hardscrabble garden—as a basis for seventy-one layered, pastel monochromes created in remembrance of Chris, all arranged in a neat row around the perimeter of Momenta Art’s gallery space. Pinned to the wall at their top corners, they were left to flutter like delicate yet blank diary entries, subject to the whims of an errant breeze. They were arranged in the order they were made. In the middle of the space, a garden rake and a plumb hanging from a thread formed *Rake & Plumb (#1)* (2014),<sup>17</sup> and spoke to the precariousness of human life and the “life” of 151 Ludlow Street. A soundtrack of Kathleen typing on the typewriter, titled *Sound Texts*, and a video she made with Rafael of pastel-stained snow from the monochromes hanging to dry were another gesture to the space outside, a site they wanted to inhabit while it lasted; in the press materials Kathleen noted, “knowing also that the garden would soon be lost to the high rents plaguing our city...this physical exploration of color through its endless grinding, its proliferating combinations and intense contact onto the page is at once a stance of grace and defiance against all the world’s insults.”



Installation view of Kathleen White and Rafael Sánchez, "(A) Rakes Progress," Momenta Art, Brooklyn, August 08 - August 31, 2014. Courtesy of The Sánchez-White Archive and Martos Gallery. Photo: Kikuko Tanaka

A live performance of readings by Jim Fletcher, Joey Gabriel, Rafael, and Kate Valk—all associates and friends of Kathleen's—closed out the exhibition on its last night, on August 31st of that year.<sup>18</sup> Kathleen couldn't attend as she was in the throes of her own death and largely unconscious, though Rafael was in bed with her with the event on speakerphone; a friend at Momenta held a phone close up to the performers to establish a kind of private and rudimentary live stream. Though she wasn't "present" in many ways, Rafael still thinks she could hear everything.<sup>19</sup> It was all ultimately a score of *her*.



Nan Goldin, *Kathleen laughing NYC*, 1994. Courtesy of the artist and Pioneer Works. Copyright: Nan Goldin. Photo: Dan Bradica.

**THE** seven prints in Nan Goldin’s exhibition of works featuring Kathleen (you guessed it, titled “Kathleen”) featured her in many guises, a conscious decision made by Rafael, Nan, and I. Most had never been printed before and were taken from a large selection of slides, numbering in the hundreds. There’s Kathleen crying in bed; Kathleen grinning mischievously in late-afternoon light; Kathleen looking like a badass bitch at Wigstock, dressed in a blue unitard in full make-up, smoking a cigarette; and Nan’s favorite, *Kathleen laughing NYC* (1994). Nan noted in a recent phone call, “She could be really funny. I miss her. She had a gentleness about her, but also sharp edges. She taught me to always ask people first: ‘how are you?’”

**Nan noted in a recent phone call, “She could be really funny. I miss her. She had a gentleness about her, but also sharp edges. She taught me to always ask people first: ‘how are you?’”**

This is probably why when Nan picked up the phone she asked how *I* was, and how I’d been. I responded dryly, “Do you really want to know?” “Yes,” she said.<sup>20</sup>



Installation view of Kathleen White, "Spirits of Manhattan," Pioneer Works, December 1, 2017 - February 11, 2018. Courtesy of The Sánchez-White Archive and Pioneer Works. Photo: Dan Bradica.

In another new print, *Kathleen in her studio, NYC* (1995) we see her in a moment of conversation or perhaps distracted, surrounded by boughs of wigs and other hair works hanging from the ceiling. Nan would curate this installation, *Spirits of Manhattan* (1996), in "Shy" at Artists Space in 1999, in something of a follow-up exhibition to the now storied "Witnesses: Against our Vanishing" at the same space a decade earlier, which was one of the first exhibitions to feature work exclusively about AIDS. Probably not incidentally, *Spirits of Manhattan* was also about AIDS, and how it decimated the drag queen community in New York City of which Kathleen was intimately involved; she made costumes for many of them, including Lady Bunny and JoJo Americo (you can see Kathleen as a background dancer in many Wigstock videos from the 90s). During that time in the lower east side, the possessions of drag queens who had succumbed to the "gay disease" were often left on the streets, their wigs heaped in piles. *Spirits of Manhattan* was a tribute to all of them. When Rafael and I were deciding what work of Kathleen's to show, we decided on that installation as the exhibition's bedrock and also as its title, as a tribute to the social scene she and Nan shared and as a way to connect the two shows.



Installation view of Kathleen White, "Spirits of Manhattan," Pioneer Works, December 1, 2017 - February 11, 2018. Courtesy of The Sánchez-White Archive and Pioneer Works. Photo: Dan Bradica.



Installation view of Kathleen White, "Spirits of Manhattan," Pioneer Works, December 1, 2017 - February 11, 2018. Courtesy of The Sánchez-White Archive and Pioneer Works. Photo: Dan Bradica.

When Rafael and I were mounting *Spirits*, we did a careful inventory of every hair piece, which took hours. Then we enlisted some of the drag queens featured in the work to hang the piece as they did when it originally went up at Artists Space. Rafael filmed the whole thing, as if it was a private performance of remembrance. Talking to me a few weeks ago, he said something very poignant:

"As a curator, you're actually helping things *not* disappear. It becomes part of the work, but ultimately that's the most beautiful part, as challenging as it is—to integrate people and make sure that conversations start to cross over between one show to the next. Part of what Kathleen was doing was curating in that sense, of caring for these things. Curating comes from the word care [from the Latin *curare*, "to take care of"]; she *cared* for these people, you know? And the tools that she had at her disposal were her art. That's how her care manifests, so that her brother is remembered; so that her father is remembered; her sister; so that the losses of AIDS are remembered. That's what she believed in."<sup>21</sup> ♦<sup>22</sup>

#### Endnotes

1. Kurt Weill, "Ballad of Sexual Dependency," *The Threepenny Opera*, with Robyn Archer, mezzo-soprano and the London Sinfonietta, conducted by Dominic Muldowney, recorded in 1954, on *Weill: Symphony No.2, Seven Deadly Sins etc.*, EMI Records Ltd., 2009, streaming audio, 02:56. <https://app.idagio.com/recordings/22743920>.
2. "Epic Theatre and Brecht," *BBC*, <https://www.bbc.co.uk/bitesize/guides/zwmvd2p/revision/1>.
3. Robert Gordon, *The Purpose of Playing: Modern Acting Theories in Perspective* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 2006), 233-234.
4. Nan Goldin, *The Ballad of Sexual Dependency* (New York: Aperture, 1986), 11-83.
5. Sean O'Hagan, "Larry Clark's photographs: 'Once the needle goes in, it never comes out,'" *The Guardian*, June 5, 2014, <https://www.theguardian.com/artanddesign/2014/jun/05/larry-clark-tulsa-teenage-lust-photography-controversy>.
6. Tasya Kudryk, "Nan Goldin: 'My Pictures Show me How Much I Lost,'" *Sleek*, August 24, 2016, <https://www.sleek-mag.com/article/nan-goldin-ballad-sexual-dependency/>.
7. Nan Goldin, "A Rebel Whose Dolls Embodied Her Demons," *The New York Times*, December 22, 1996, <https://www.nytimes.com/1996/12/22/arts/a-rebel-whose-dolls-embodied-her-demons.html>.
8. Roland Barthes, *Camera Lucida: Reflections on Photography* (New York: Hill and Wang, 1980), 79-96.
9. *Ibid*, 81.
10. Nan Goldin, text to author, August 17, 2020.
11. Rafael Sánchez, in a phone conversation with the author, August 6, 2020.
12. Margaret Iversen, *Beyond Pleasure: Freud, Lacan, Barthes* (University Park: Penn State Press, 2007), 114-116.
13. Hal Foster, *The Return of the Real* (Cambridge and London: MIT Press, 1996), 130-134.
14. Sánchez, in a phone conversation with the author.
15. *Ibid*.
16. "Kathleen White '(A) Rake's Progress,'" *NY Art Beat*, <https://www.nyartbeat.com/event/2014/2131>.
17. Jeff Grunthaner, "Kathleen White @ Momenta Art," *Tribes*, September 3, 2014, <https://www.tribes.org/web/2014/09/03/kathleen-white-momenta-art>.

# MARTOS GALLERY

Sewart Chris, "Kathleen White and Nan Goldin," *Gayletter*, February 8, 2019

# GAYLETTER



BUNNY, 1991, WIG HAIR, PENCIL, CRAYON, COLLAGE, WATERCOLOR ON PHONE BOOK PAGE, DIMENSIONS VARIABLE.

## KATHLEEN WHITE AND NAN GOLDIN

Two separate shows reflect on AIDS, community and compassion.

by Chris Stewart

Downtown Manhattan in the latter part of the 20th century is something of lore if you grew up interested in the arts, alternative rock, counter-culture or battling corrupt government. Nan Goldin was no stranger to 1980s New York City's dangerous and drug fueled streets. She moved to New York following her graduation from the School of the Museum of Fine Arts in 1978 and quickly began photographing the burgeoning arts scene. Goldin befriended and photographed the many vibrant characters that populated the Bowery neighborhood. Among those documented in her work was Kathleen White.



In dual shows up at Pioneer Works, curator David Everitt Howe — along with White’s partner Rafael Sánchez — returns *Spirits of Manhattan* to the gallery setting in tandem with *Nan Goldin: Kathleen*, which features five portraits of White taken by Goldin in the 90s.

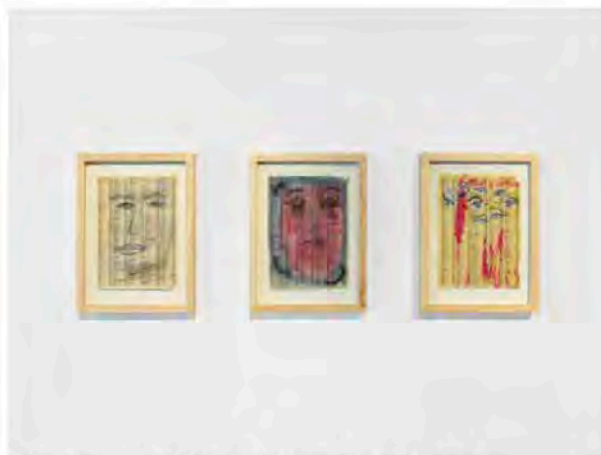
*Spirits of Manhattan* was first shown in 1999’s *Shy*, an exhibition curated by Goldin that featured works from some of those she was photographing at the time . In what Pioneer Works calls a “posthumous return to White’s work” (the artist lost her battle with cancer in 2014), the two separate but interconnected exhibitions revolve around the two artists; “formidable colleagues, they were mutually affected by the AIDS crisis then unfolding in the 1980s and 90s.”



Wig suitcase, c. 1990s, suitcase, wigs, dimensions variable.



Floyd, 1991, wig hair, hair, watercolor, acrylic, glitter, pencil, and eye pencil on phone book page, dimensions variable.



Clockwise: To: Stephen, Love Kathleen, 1991, crayon, pencil on phone book page, 15.25 x 12.25 in., Untitled (girl clown 1), 1991, hair and watercolor, collage, pencil on phone book page, 15.25 x 12.25 in., Untitled (eyes with glasses), 1991, crayon, charcoal, collage, watercolor on phone book page, 15.25 x 12.25 in.



Untitled (blonde spirit), c. 1990s, hair, monofilament.

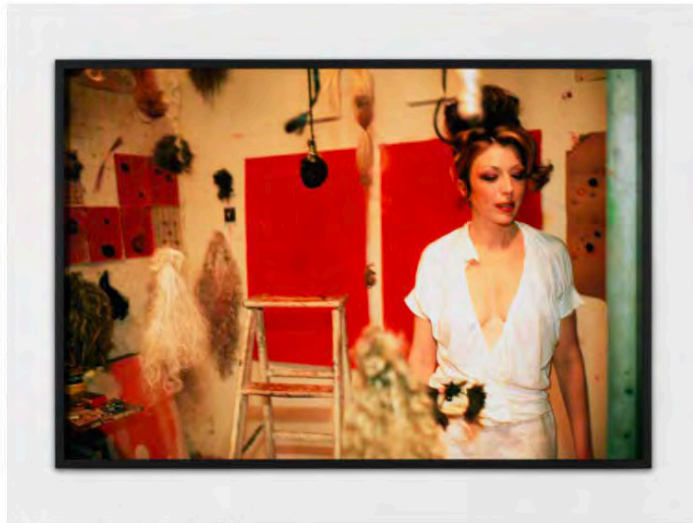
As many queer performers and drag queens began to die from complications related to AIDS their belongings were left unclaimed and began to pile up in the street. White, a witness to these abysmal scenes of theatrics left for trash, had come to know many downtown characters falling victim to the epidemic. Though primarily a painter, White sought to remember her dying community and began constructing a series of portraits out of human and synthetic hair. The sculptures are exhibited in many ways, arriving in knots, classic curls, very long braids, and anatomical shapes; White's work often dealt with visceral imagery like the heart-shape that reoccurs throughout her oeuvre.

*Spirits of Manhattan* also features a series of hand altered New York phone book pages from the era crafted into portraits of their own. White received contributions from nightlife legends such as Lady Bunny, Jojo Americo, Billy Erb and David Dalrymple that went straight into the many pieces in the show. When viewed in its entirety, *Spirits of Manhattan* is an intimate gathering of the myriad personalities that defined a generation of talent lost in the world-wide battle with AIDS.

White's compassion toward the complexity that delineates friendship really comes to life in the exhibition. Her works suggest that her love and devotion to the community developed over time like authentic relationships do. As the story goes, when White moved to New York in 1987 she had not many friends, and so she decided to paint one instead. *My Friend* is a chalky oil portrait of a goofy looking figure. Writing for ArtNews, Gary Indiana noted that “‘*My Friend*’ shows you something of how Kathleen was, what she looked for in people, and what she hoped to find in the world, and sometimes did, sometimes didn’t; this friend is subtle, complicated, more than a little hidden, freakishly beautiful and singular.”

As for the Goldin portraits, some of which are printed here for the very first time, every realm of humanity is touched upon. White is photographed in daylight, at the bar, when she was sad, as she lie in bed, and when she was happy. They are a poignant addition to the already very sweet show downstairs. I was compelled to make many trips up and down the stairs with Everitt Howe. With each viewing, White and Goldin's work unveiled a richer sense of intimacy between the two and their contemporaries. Their technical skill came through as well. Goldin is a master of natural lighting, and White's knack for gestural strokes are alive and well in her mixed-media portraits. I trekked to Red Hook, Brooklyn when it was frigid outside, a daunting 18 degree Fahrenheit, but inside I was warmed by White and Goldin's compassion on full display.

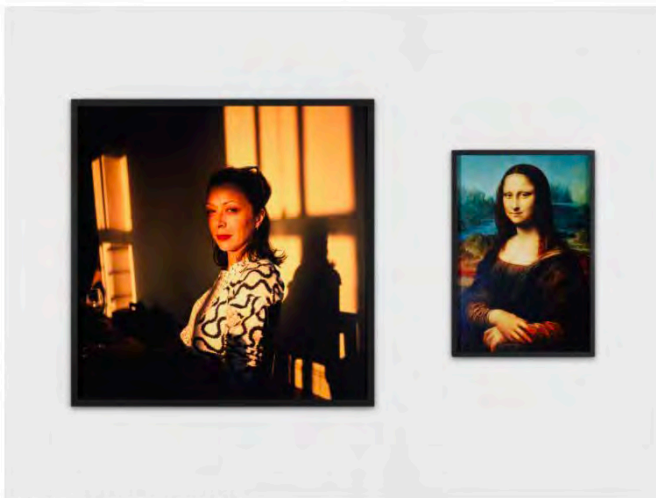
A drag queen's job is the promotion of facade. Befriending the performer behind the face-paint is no easy task, but White's *Spirits of Manhattan* uses the incestuous nature of New York nightlife and community to deconstruct these intimidating qualities and aggrandizes her subjects' joyous individuality. Goldin's documentary style approach is unprecedented in contemporary photography, and it was marvelous to have been introduced to White through her eyes.



Kathleen in her studio, NYC, 1995.



Kathleen, Wigstock, NYC, 1991.



Kathleen as Mona Lisa, NYC, 1993.

*Spirits of Manhattan: Kathleen White and Nan Goldin: Kathleen are on view at Red Hook's Pioneer Works through February 11th.*

# KATHLEEN WHITE AND NAN GOLDIN

By *Jane Ursula Harris*

In the mid-1970s, **Kathleen White** and **Nan Goldin** were part of an emerging art scene in Boston that revolved around a close circle of student friends, most of whom, like Goldin, were photographers. White was an exception, creating sculptural and performance-based work as well as paintings. That distinction would prohibit her inclusion in a seminal 1995 exhibition at Boston's Institute of Contemporary Art, titled "The Boston School," that both canonized the group and cemented its association with **photography**. Goldin's snapshot-style portraits of her drug-fueled, queer "families" in the 1970s and 1980s, first in Boston and then in New York, became the Boston School's defining aesthetic. Yet as the paired **Pioneer Works** exhibitions "Kathleen White: Spirits of Manhattan" and "Nan Goldin: Kathleen" conveyed, this post-punk tribe of **artists, lovers, and drag queens** not only included White but remained at the heart of her practice, as did the devastating impact of **AIDS** on its members. Both presentations were a tribute to White, who died of cancer in 2014.

The former exhibition showcased an installation of abject, fetishlike sculptures made from hair—real and synthetic—that White gathered from (and dedicated to) the living and the dead. Most of her samples came from the wigs of drag performer friends who had perished from AIDS, and from those who survived—including **Lady Bunny, Billy Erb, and Jojo Americo**. The series dates to the 1990s and debuted in a little-seen exhibition at Apex Art in 1996. At Pioneer Works, the pieces were suspended from the ceiling and displayed on the surrounding walls. Knotted, balled, teased, wrapped, twisted, pulled, braided, combed, starched, tangled, and otherwise manipulated by the artist with great formal aplomb, they alternately recall nests, ropes, hearts, and masks. These works were accompanied by a series of mixed-medium drawings of eyes and faces on old Manhattan phone-book pages, many with hair elements attached; an open suitcase, placed on the floor, containing a pile of blonde and red wigs in a variety of shades and curls; and a vitrine with related ephemera. The overall effect was of a ritualized collective portrait as theatrical as it was transcendent.

The same commemorative impulse underscoring these works, and indeed White's entire practice, was echoed in the six **large-scale color photographs** of White taken by Goldin that comprised the other exhibition, which was held on the first floor. The portraits, four of which were printed for the first time, reflect Goldin's now-legendary style, which is based in the **trust and rapport shared by friends**. All were shot between 1991 and 1995, when White created the works shown in "Spirits of Manhattan." We see White as ingenue, standing in a sparkling aqua blue bathing suit, cigarette in hand as she squints in sunlight; at work in her studio amid a group of the hair works; donning a Mona Lisa-esque smile; laughing at a party; slumped in thought at a bar; and lying on her bed, sad-faced with downcast eyes. That White's role as a muse served to introduce and frame her work is a reminder that those forgotten by art history are typically recovered only through their associations with the acclaimed. Given the vagaries of fame, one hopes that White's evocative and prodigious output, merely hinted at here and still relatively unknown, will garner the future presentations it warrants.

# MARTOS GALLERY

Lambery Audra, "Depending on Independent, the Keenly Curated Art Fair," *Arcade Project*, March 13, 2018



## Depending on Independent, the Keenly Curated Art Fair by Audra Lambert

There's something to be said for an art fair that takes care of its own. This came to mind while scrolling through my Instagram feed to find an image of red roses a friend posted that she received as a woman exhibitor on International Women's Day. The photo wasn't staged by Independent: To my knowledge there was no official announcement by the fair. Independent had exercised its best judgment in treating its exhibitors with care and compassion.

In 2018, Independent extends this good judgment and utopic vision to its bountiful offerings, reinforcing its consistent ability to exceed expectations with this year's precise rendition. Independent remains the final frontier for fans of art for art's sake: the carefully curated alternative to SPRING/BREAK's exuberant excess and the Armory Show's sleek, multi-million dollar works. Independent presents a fine-tuned selection of gallerists whose vision shines through their keen aptitude for presentation and passion for representing their artists; it helps, of course, that each gallery is encouraged to show as few artists as possible.

The galleries showing at Independent this year were mostly strong, with a few weaker points involving picnic table-style red check print and bland, reflective abstraction. Delving into the top 6 showings proved a tricky endeavor, but below are selected standouts at Independent 2018.



*Kathleen White*  
*Self Portrait, Spirit, 1995*  
watercolor, pencil, glue, hair on phone book page  
11 × 8 ½ inches (27.94 × 21.59 cm)  
15 ¼ × 12 ¼ inches (38.74 × 31.12 cm) (framed)  
Image courtesy of Martos Gallery

***Kathleen White, Martos Gallery***

White's interdisciplinary works feature abstract elements and blends of texture with direct reference to the body. Loaded with memory with a delicate and captive eye toward beauty, White's works appear as whispers on the pages of history: Made of soft, pliable material with miniscule details. Martos displays a range of works created by the artist, evoking a sensitive and perceptive artist with a deft eye toward composition and scale. Though White sadly passed from cancer in 2014, her works live on and continue to document an artist's vision of how to re-imagine those whose stories were re-written by a tragic epidemic.

# MARTOS GALLERY

Kron Cat, "Kathleen White: A Year of Firsts," *Art Review*, March 23, 2018

## ArtReview

Kathleen White *A Year of Firsts*

Martos Gallery, New York 14 December – 27 January

'Life doesn't compute,' the critic Bruce Hainley once offered as a summation of the oeuvre of Hanne Darboven (an armoury of endless looped scrawls and unequivocal equations, neatly inked on graph paper and filling up calendar grids). One is reminded of the resolute will with which the German artist produced those obsessive ledgers when viewing Kathleen White's *A Year of Firsts* (2001), a suite of 40 drawings in paint, ink, pastel and other media on rag paper, many accompanied by explanatory pencilled captions and each marking a separate day in 2001. The New York-based artist is perhaps best known for her work commemorating friends lost to the city's AIDS crisis during the 1980s and 90s – a time in which death appeared to strike at random, picking off members of her community without logic or reason. White, who died of lung cancer in 2014, created these modest works on paper in response to the death of her father early in 2001 (also to lung cancer) and loss of her brother to a prison sentencing in March of that year. The spare, abstract compositions, arranged in chronological order to span three gallery walls, track her emotions on each date. The paintings commemorate 'firsts' not in the sense of new beginnings, but rather in terms of the inaugural steps of a slow march ever farther from

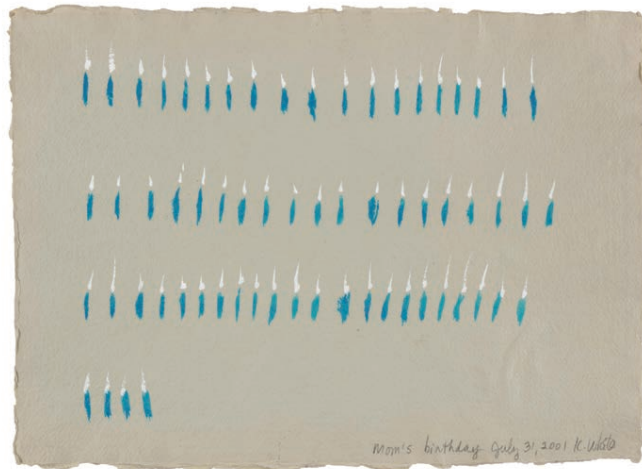
an irrecoverable past. Their oblique, sometimes tortured scrawls are testaments to the impossible task of wresting sense from tragedy.

Some dates are milestones: White dedicates one painting to her brother's first birthday spent incarcerated, another to the first time she found herself forgetting and then remembering that her father was gone. Others are prosaic: the first trip to the corner store since his death; the first Labor Day since his passing. These are interspersed with still other drawings dedicated to loved ones lost to AIDS as well as to her sister Charlene, who was killed by a drunk driver in 1998 and whose death haunted the White family. In each, the artist's dating is overshadowed by the gesture's seeming insufficiency in the face of the passage of time. In another week, it would be a year and a week since the anniversary in question. Would the date's resonance still hold?

While Darboven's precise notations are intentionally oblique and incoherent, as if to underscore the futility of attempting to create order out of trauma (in the senior artist's case, the experience of witnessing the Second World War and its aftermath), White's are tender and confessional in their frank admission of personal loss. Even more direct, albeit less

overtly autobiographical, is her four-channel 1988 video installation (mounted in the centre of the gallery), *The Spark Between L And D*. On four monitors, which play the looped 11-minute video at varying points in its duration, the artist is shown, in a nurse's dress emblazoned with international flags, intoning the chorus from *On Broadway* and slapping her face until it appears to bleed profusely. She then proceeds to bandage the entirety of her body while continuing to sing, until her mouth is muffled by gauze, stopping only when she can no longer move. The application of these bandages, stop-gaps that do nothing to redress the violent assault upon the artist's body in the video's opening, and which ultimately silence her into submission, is an obvious allusion to New York City's inadequate response during the 1980s to its escalating AIDS crisis. Yet the work additionally calls to mind inner turmoil and the desire for self-harm exacerbated by cosmetic attempts to suppress this urge. Perhaps it also speaks to personal guilt.

While *The Spark...* finds White fuelled by anger, in her subdued, elegiac paintings of 2001, she has transitioned to – if not acceptance – acknowledgement of the inherent chaos of loss. *Cat Kron*



*A Year of Firsts* (detail), 2001, 40 works on paper, 42 × 30 cm. Courtesy the artist and Martos Gallery, New York

# MARTOS GALLERY

Wetzler, Rachel, "Preview: Kathleen White," *Independent*, February 15, 2018

## Independent

Preview: Kathleen White

A look at the work of White, who chronicled the East Village avant garde, at Martos Gallery  
by Rachel Wetzler  
February 2018



Kathleen White, *Car*, 1999 - 2001  
Sculptamold and oil paint 1 3/4 × 2 × 4 1/4 inches (4.45 × 5.08 × 10.80 cm).  
Courtesy The Estate of Kathleen White and Martos Gallery, New York



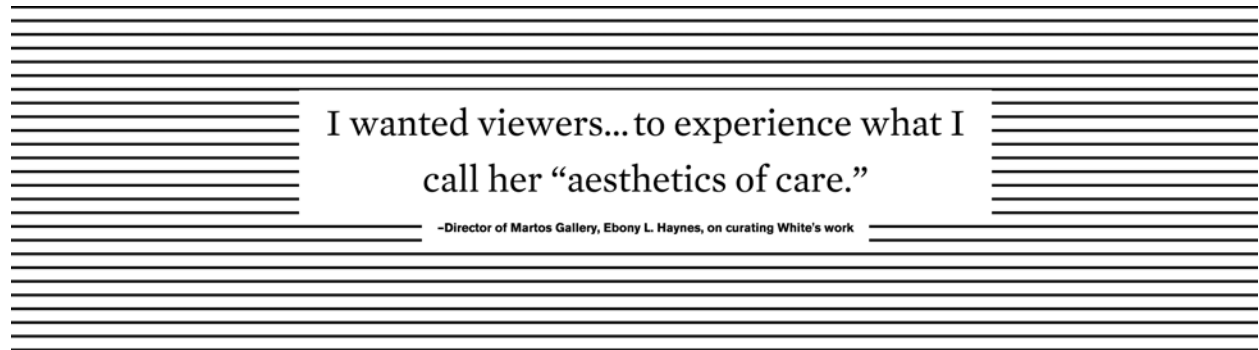


Kathleen White, *Self Portrait, Spirit*, 1995  
 watercolor, pencil, glue, hair on phone book page 11 × 8 1/2 inches (27.94 × 21.59 cm).  
 Courtesy The Estate of Kathleen White and Martos Gallery, New York

At this edition of Independent, Martos Gallery will present works by Kathleen White (1960-2014), who emerged in the late 1980s as part of New York's downtown art scene and created poignant reflections on the ravaging of her community by AIDS. In December 2017, Martos Gallery took over representation of the artist's estate and archive, which includes work in performance, painting, drawing, and sculpture. We spoke with Martos Gallery director Ebony L. Haynes about White's life and work, characterized by what Haynes describes as "an aesthetics of care."

**Martos Gallery recently began representing the Estate of Kathleen White and the Sánchez-White Archives. How did the artist and her work first come to your attention?**

Kathleen White passed away from cancer in 2014. Her studio is on 25th Street in Chelsea, which is very near our former location. While working in her studio after her death, White's partner, Rafael Sánchez, often came to visit us at the gallery. Sánchez had been a longtime friend of the gallery, but during these visits he spoke about White's life and work so poignantly— we were immediately captivated by her story. After moving into our new space in Chinatown, we presented White's first solo exhibition with the gallery, [A Year of Firsts](#), in December 2017.



**White was recently the subject of two concurrent exhibitions, one at Martos and another at Pioneer Works. How did these exhibitions approach the artist’s life and work?**

White’s first show with the gallery was presented in conjunction with two separate but connected exhibitions at Pioneer Works by Nan Goldin and Kathleen White. White’s Spirits of Manhattan exhibition at Pioneer Works focused on her collages and sculptures that incorporate real and synthetic hair, often sourced from the artist's friends that were drag performers. White’s community was notably impacted by the AIDS crisis, then unfolding in the 1980s and 1990s, and the remnants of hair evoke the many people White lost to the illness.

A Year of Firsts at Martos Gallery presented two major works. The first, a video entitled “The Spark Between L And D.” Here, White beats herself up and licks the blood off of her fingers. She then bandages herself up, almost mummy-like, the whole time singing “On Broadway” until she is so bound, she can no longer make a sound. You can still hear her trying to muffle through the melody. The other major work in the show is the eponymous “A Year of Firsts,” which is an intimate narrative of the tragedy and loss that became ever-present in White’s life. The work can be read like a book, or more accurately a diary and unique system of language, as it takes you through White’s year after; year after her father’s death, her brother’s death, her sister’s death, and the many friends that were lost to AIDS.



Kathleen White, *Spirits (Lew-Lewis)*, 1991-95  
watercolor, glue, hair on phone book pages 11 × 8 1/2 inches (27.94 × 21.59 cm).  
Courtesy The Estate of Kathleen White and Martos Gallery, New York

**The impact of AIDS on White's circle of friends and fellow artists is a central theme in many of her works. Did she see these works as a form of activism, or were they more about reflecting on her personal experience of loss?**

White's work is certainly a profound personal reflection on her experience of loss. Whether it was a conscious decision or not, I believe her work was a form of activism too. The artist directly confronted the emotional effects of AIDS on her community at a time when the disease was a mystery to doctors and possessed a negative stigma within mainstream culture.

**How did you approach the process of putting together the gallery's first exhibition of White's work?**

When White's partner Rafael Sánchez described "A Year of Firsts" to me, he said that "the gift Kathleen gave us all through these drawings is beautiful objects to spend time with as we grieve, to get us through to the other side of mourning." I wanted viewers to come away from the exhibition with this sentiment in mind and an understanding of the very special way Kathleen approached death and, moreover, life after death, and to experience what I call her "aesthetics of care."

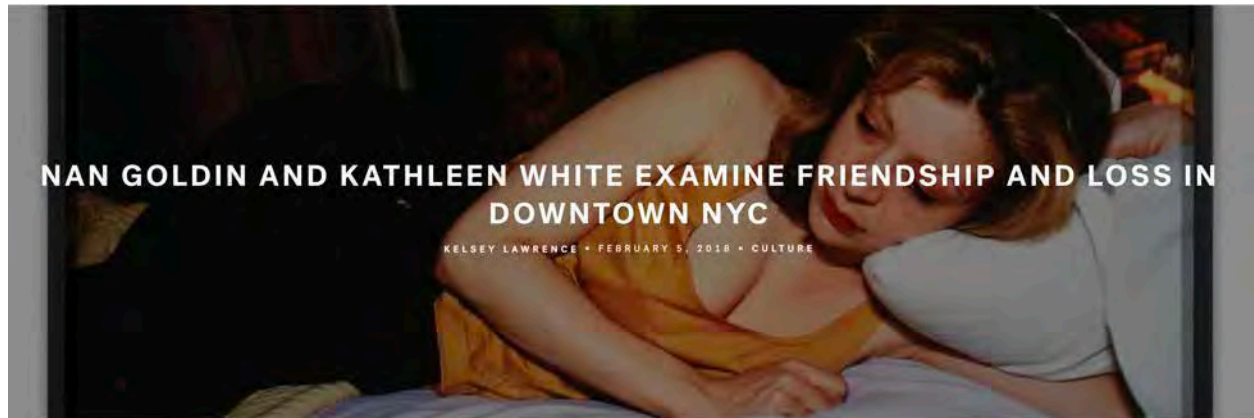
**What are your plans for the gallery's presentation of White's work at Independent?**

Before passing away in 2014, much of White's work was in response to her love for the family of friends she surrounded herself with. In the body of work entitled "Spirits of Manhattan," White used pages from NYC phone books to make drawings and collages. The works often depict her friends from the drag and performance scene, and often include hair from wigs. Also on view at Independent are the "Car" sculptures: vessels for fantasy, adventures, and both good and bad fortune for White. Hundreds of such works exist, and they allude to the tragedy and loss that became ever-present in the artist's life, especially during AIDS epidemic.

# MARTOS GALLERY

Lawrence, Kelsey, "Nan Goldin and Kathleen White Examine Friendship and Loss in Downtown NYC," *Cools*, February 5, 2018

## COOLS



Nan Goldin joined Instagram in December, and one of her first photos was Kathleen White, her late friend who died in 2014 after battling cancer. White became Goldin's muse of sorts through the '90s when Goldin would photograph White throughout a tumultuous time, a time of highs and extreme lows, while many of their friends were dying of AIDS.

Goldin curated an exhibit at Artists Space called *Shy*, featuring works by friends who were her photographic subjects and artists, as well. White's installation *Spirits of Manhattan* (1996) was a prominent piece from the show and made primarily of human hair — more specifically, the hair of drag performers who were dying of AIDS and had no one to claim their possessions, including their wigs.

Hair became a main feature of White's work, with performer friends like Lady Bunny, David Dalrymple and Jojo Americo contributing their wigs. These wigs and other hair pieces make up the essence of White's exhibit at [Pioneer Works](#), Kathleen White: *Spirits of Manhattan*. Goldin's *Kathleen* is also being held at the same time, and both shows are in conjunction with White's work at Martos Gallery.

As Dazed noted, friendship was a defining theme in White's art with "My Friend" being the name of her first completed work after moving to New York in 1987. Both exhibitions are a tribute to friendship; Goldin's is a tribute to White and her legacy, and White's exhibition is a memorial to the friends who passed away before her. The hair is an unusual bond that unites them all.

# MARTOS GALLERY

Novick, Illana, "The Life of Kathleen White as Told Through Her Art and Nan Goldin's Photographs," *Hyperallergic*, January 18, 2018

## HYPERALLERGIC

ART

### The Life of Kathleen White as Told Through Her Art and Nan Goldin's Photographs

A pair of exhibitions at Pioneer Works showcases Kathleen White's commemorative artworks incorporating the hair of deceased friends and Nan Goldin's photographs of White, who died in 2014.



*Spirits of Manhattan: Kathleen White*, Pioneer Works, New York, December 10, 2017–February 11, 2018 (all photos

© Dan Bradica)

In the Victorian era, deceased loved ones were mourned and remembered with hair jewelry, their strands lovingly woven into necklaces, bracelets, even walking sticks. A century later, as artist Kathleen White's close friends began contracting a mysterious, debilitating virus, she started saving locks of hair and accessories, using them to create mourning jewelry for the age of AIDS. The resulting sculptures are featured in *Kathleen White: Spirits of Manhattan*, currently on view at Pioneer Works in Red Hook.



*Spirits of Manhattan: Kathleen White, Pioneer Works, New York, December 10, 2017–February 11, 2018*

Hair of all colors, textures, and shapes line the space's second-floor gallery, including a nest of braids, buns, and other tangles salvaged from hairbrushes. White collected blonde curls and strands of straight auburn hair lined with pink bows, which hang on nearly imperceptible string from the space's wood-beamed ceiling, like Edison bulbs in a particularly macabre

farm to table restaurant, or perhaps a baby's crib mobile. One pair of curls is shaped into a heart; I could imagine tiny fingers stretching up to reach for them. Another friend's hair is in a hairnet, another in a bonnet, others hardened by the effects of years of hairspray and dye. A tan suitcase sits in a corner of the space, its cargo of mostly blonde and curly wigs spilling out onto the floor, as if the ghosts of White's loved ones are trying to escape.



*Spirits of Manhattan: Kathleen White, Pioneer Works, New York, December 10, 2017–February 11, 2018*

The tendrils of hair in White's work are surprisingly expressive. The pieces are messy yet reverent, an entire generation of artists, writers, performers, and more rendered in curls, knotted strands, wrapped in yarn, or braided.

There are more literal portraits, too, drawn in crayon layered on thick and looking like masks. But the hair mobiles are White's most tender portraits.



*Kathleen: Nan Goldin, Pioneer Works, New York, December 10, 2017–February 11, 2018*

On the third floor, in a smaller gallery, Pioneer Works is showing Nan Goldin's photographic portraits of White (who died of cancer in 2014). In an image installed near the front of the room, White stands in a turquoise bathing suit, surrounded by a veil of sunlight seemingly amplified by Goldin's flash, so bright I was sure I could see floaters at the corners of my eyes. On the opposite wall, in the image "Kathleen Modeling the Mona Lisa" (2015), White imitates the inscrutable smile of Leonardo da Vinci's mysterious sitter as the sun casts dramatic windowpane shadows across the wall behind her. To facilitate the comparison, a reproduction of the iconic



Renaissance portrait hangs alongside Goldin's photo, creating a playful diptych.



*Kathleen: Nan Goldin, Pioneer Works, New York, December 10, 2017–February 11, 2018*

A couple of images over from the Leonardo homage, White is gleaming in “Kathleen at BBar.” Her pale face, framed by strands of blonde hair, is so overexposed compared to her black top that her head seems to be floating above her body. In another Goldin photo, White is in her studio, deep in concentration. In all of these settings Goldin photographs her friend reverently, whether she appears glamorous in a bathing suit or busy working in her studio.

White and Goldin were close friends, and this pair of exhibitions was conceived as a conversation. The two groups of work may not be in dialogue exactly, but they are related. If White's show is a kind of memorial to her friends who were dying or those she feared might be soon, Goldin's

photos are a kind of memorial to White. Both bodies of work are tributes to people who knew they might not have much time left, but made art as if they had all the time in the world.



*Kathleen: Nan Goldin, Pioneer Works, New York, December 10, 2017–February 11, 2018 (photo © Dan Bradica)*

*Kathleen White: Spirits of Manhattan and Nan Goldin: Kathleen are on view at Pioneer Works (159 Pioneer Street, Red Hook, Brooklyn) through February 11.*

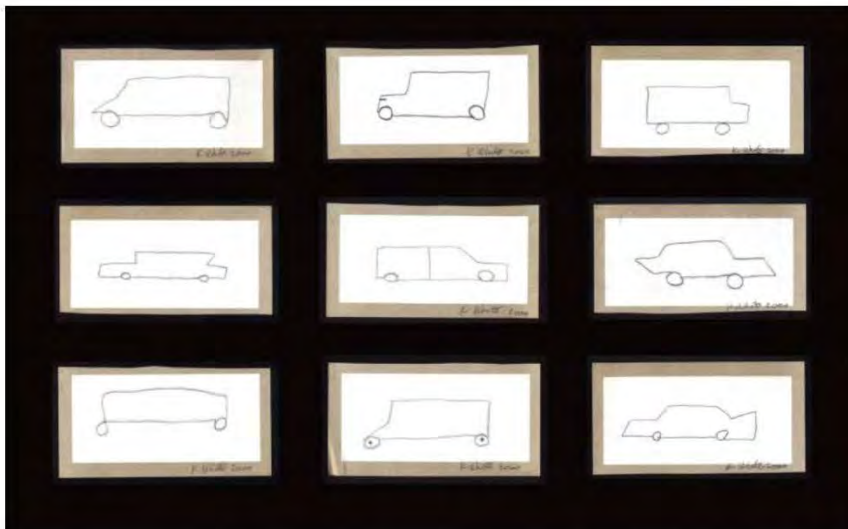
# MARTOS GALLERY

Graves, Cassidy Dawn, "Exhibitions To See: 8-Bit Reality, Kathleen White, Immigrant Women," *Bedford+Bowery*, December 12, 2017

## **BEDFORD + BOWERY**

### **Exhibitions To See: 8-Bit Reality, Kathleen White, Immigrant Women**

Cassidy Dawn Graves December 12, 2017



*Kathleen White, Untitled, 2000, 9 car drawings on storybook paper, 2 x 4 in. each (image via Martos Gallery / Facebook)*

**A Year of Firsts**  
*Opening Thursday,*  
*December 14*  
*at Martos Gallery, 6*  
*pm to 8 pm. On view*  
*through January 27.*

Kathleen White, an artist who worked in mediums such as painting and performance and was a notable figure in the downtown New York alternative arts scene during the AIDS epidemic, passed away

in 2014 after a battle with cancer. Though her physical form is gone, her work is very much alive and well, and can currently be experienced at two places in the city: Martos Gallery in the Lower East Side and Pioneer Works in Red Hook. The latter is a dual exhibition, consisting of photographs of White by Nan Goldin and White's creations made from performer's wigs, many of whom died during the AIDS epidemic. White's work is intimately acquainted with loss, but even moreso focused on the power of friendship and community, particularly within marginalized groups and subcultures.

# MARTOS GALLERY

Sánchez, Rafael, "Spirit Drawings," April 2016



Nan Goldin, *Kathleen at Her Studio*, c. 1996

## Spirit Drawings

Throughout the 1990's Kathleen created ephemeral sculptures utilizing human hair and wigs. The exact beginning of these pieces is difficult to pinpoint, however their overall import came from her close connection to the downtown Manhattan performance world of the late 1980's and early 1990's.

She titled this activity *Spirits of Manhattan*, in which the hair forms were delicately suspended in space in installations throughout the 1990's (New York, Boston, San Francisco). Friends from the drag and performance scene contributed their hair and wigs to the seemingly ongoing project.

The activity represented a double bind: at once a symbiotic affirmation performance of life and creative celebration while death consumed that very community as it was being decimated by AIDS.

Kathleen cared for sick and dying friends, as many in the community did at the time. Still her studio practice continued in full bloom producing a cross-pollination of mediums. Intimate drawings evolved combining pencil, pigment, burns, watercolor and hair on phone book pages with moody self portraits, portraits of friends (hair ancestors) and strangers, eyes and other mysterious beings.

She referred to the drawings as “spirits.”

Rafael Sánchez, NYC, April, 2016  
The Estate of Kathleen White



Kathleen White  
*Self Portrait, Spirit*, 1995  
watercolor, pencil, glue, hair on phone book page  
11 x 8 ½ inches



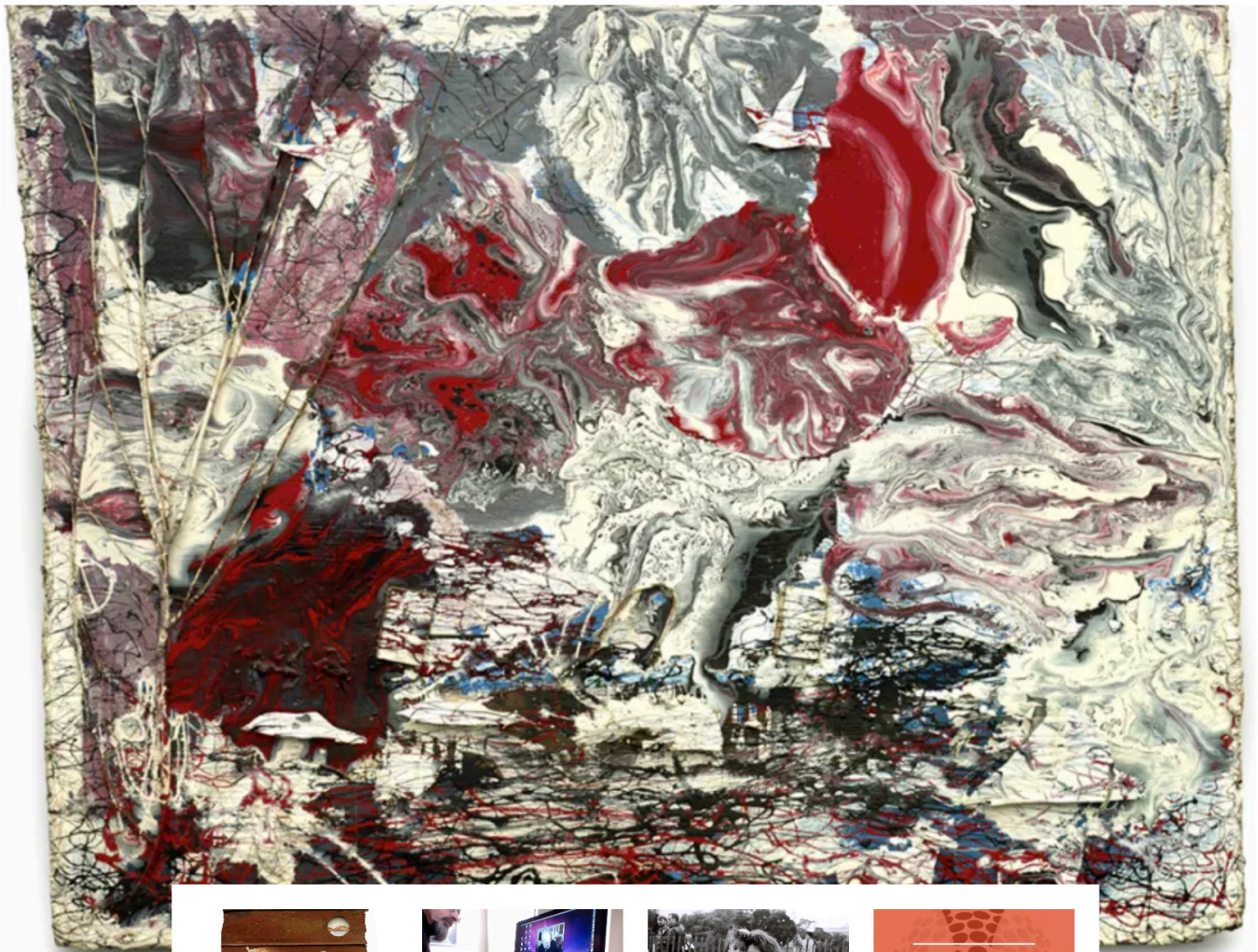
Kathleen White  
*Spirits (McCarthy-McConnell)*, 1995  
watercolor, glue, hair on phone book pages  
11 x 8 1/2 inches

MARTOS GALLERY

# Art in America

## Revisitation Phase: Looking at Art and AIDS

By [Eric Sutphin](#) July 20, 2016 10:48am



Since the apex of the AIDS crisis in the early 1990s, the prognoses of its survivors and people who are newly diagnosed with HIV have shifted dramatically, along with the art and artistic discourse around the disease. The traveling exhibition **“Art AIDS America,”** on view at [the Bronx Museum of the Arts](#) through September 25, features a varied selection of art from the earliest days of the crisis to the present. The exhibition coincides with other shows and events that can be seen as augmenting its perspective by giving additional visibility to AIDS-affected individuals and communities that have been neglected due to racial, gender, or institutional bias.

# MARTOS GALLERY

“Fever Within: The Art of **Ronald Lockett**” at the **American Folk Art museum** is a sensitive and rich survey of the little-known vernacular artist, Ronald “Ronnie” Lockett (1965-1998). Though Lockett’s artistic career was brief, spanning just over ten years, he made over three hundred sculptures, paintings, and other objects in that period. He was born and raised in rural Alabama to parents who saw little value in their son’s interest in art. But his cousin, Thornton Dial, already an established artist, became his mentor and supplied him with materials when resources were short. In the early ’90s, Lockett made wall-mounted assemblages incorporating sheets of heavily rusted tin from a demolished outbuilding on his cousin Dial’s property. He hammered, cut and in some instances painted the battered tin surfaces, creating works reminiscent of Lee Bontecou’s metal assemblages or Rauschenberg’s Combines. Lockett made *Coming Out of the Haze* (1994) during a period of deep depression, shortly after he was diagnosed with HIV. An embossed image of a young buck appears amid furrows and folds of oxidized tin. The buck recurs throughout Lockett’s work as a corollary to the ideal black masculinity, which Lockett, slight and shy, failed to conform to. The artist feared that news of his HIV status would confirm his community’s suspicion that he was gay. Whether he was in denial about his illness or he willingly embraced a premature death, Lockett ignored the symptoms that led to the pneumonia that killed him in 1998.

Stories like Lockett’s are tragic examples of how fear and shame compounded with a lack of advocacy can prevent people with AIDS from receiving appropriate medical and emotional support, even to this day. Whether referring to the stewardship of artists’ archives or to the direct medical, spiritual, and emotional needs of people with AIDS, the notion of care has been a common topic of several programs this summer. During the crisis, artists often assumed the roles not only of activists and advocates but also of caregivers as their friends became sick and began to die. On July 14, **Visual AIDS**, a nonprofit that has used art to shape the discourse around AIDS since 1988, held a panel discussion at **The 8th Floor**, where the group exhibition “In the Power of Your Care” is on view through August 12. Titled “IV Embrace: On Caregiving and Creativity,” the discussion included Rafael Sánchez, an artist who acted as caregiver to Mark Morrisroe and others; **Joy Episalla**, an artist and ACT-UP member; **Lodz Joseph**, a healthcare worker who has worked extensively with HIV/AIDS patients; and **Ted Kerr**, a writer and organizer whose work and research focuses on HIV/AIDS. Both Joseph and Kerr are members of What Would an HIV Doula Do, a collective of artists, writers, activists, and chaplains who work with individuals recently diagnosed with HIV. Kerr moderated the discussion, during which Sanchez and Episalla relayed their personal stories of acting as caregivers to friends, while Joseph offered a more clinical presentation about the importance of “self care” as a necessary precondition to rendering service to others. Kerr described this renewed attention to AIDS and those affected as indicators that we have entered the “revisitation phase;” when issues including women’s health, senior care, poverty, and racial inequality are finally given their due after a long period when HIV had the image of a gay men’s disease.

One of the works in “In the Power of Your Care” was a video titled *Medication Reminder* (2015) by **Hunter Reynolds**, an artist-activist who gained recognition for his *Memorial Dress* performance (1993-2007), which involved donning an evening gown printed with the names of more than twenty thousand people who died of AIDS. For the recent video, Reynolds compiled a series of recorded voice messages of his friend, artist **Kathleen White**, who called him daily for a year and a half beginning in 2011 to remind him to take his antiviral medications. Her raspy, gentle voice accompanies animations of pills morphing into kaleidoscopic designs, and glitter-encrusted hands gesturing as pearls spill into containers overflowing with multicolored pills. White died of lung cancer in 2014, transforming *Medication Reminder* into a memorial.



# MARTOS GALLERY

In June, Reynolds joined artist [Vincent Tiley](#) for a performance at the fledgling Christopher Stout Gallery in Brooklyn's Bushwick neighborhood. The two artists wore a neoprene suit that conjoined their bodies. The performance was titled *Knast*, after an iconic, defunct Berlin fetish club. Reynolds was given a leather sling salvaged from Knast by a lover who died shortly thereafter. Before the performance, Reynolds passed the relic to Tiley, a gesture that suggested a call to a younger generation of artists who will inherit the memory and object history of AIDS.

"A Deeper Dive," on view through September 25 at the [Leslie-Lohman Museum](#) of Gay and Lesbian Art in Soho, presents the work of nine artists who are included in "Art AIDS America." It is organized by Jonathan David Katz, one of the curators of the bigger show, in collaboration with Andrew Barron. As the title suggests, "A Deeper Dive" features a more comprehensive array of the selected artists' work. The first images one sees when entering the museum are [Ann P Meredith](#)'s black-and-white photographs of HIV positive women and children from the mid- to late 1980s. Most arresting was *Eleana y Rosa, the Ellipse at the White House, Washington, DC* (1988), which depicts a gaunt, exhausted-looking young girl in the embrace of her mother, who crouches beside her. Meredith said in an interview that when she visited women with AIDS in San Francisco in the early 1980s to take their portraits, she was "asked by a security guard at the apartment building to leave her ID in case they needed to identify her body."

"A Deeper Dive" also includes two 1993 works from [Anthony Viti](#)'s "Elegies" series that include the German Iron Cross, an image taken from Marsden Hartley's *Portrait of a German Officer* (1914). Like Hartley, Viti used the image of the cross as a reference to his own grief and anger. But he raised the stakes by incorporating his own blood into the painted surface. *Corpse* (1986) by Brian Buczak comprises five panels with a combined width of 165 inches. The painting depicts a human skeleton festooned with various objects and symbols—a flaming human heart, an urn, a flayed snake, a tea kettle—that confront the horror of illness and death while also expressing an acceptance of it. In retrospect, *Corpse* looks like a harbinger of the artist's own death in 1987.

"Art AIDS America" has prompted institutions and younger artists to rethink the ways in which AIDS is represented in art. But other artists, activists, and institutions have taken the exhibition as an opportunity to call attention to *who* is represented. We need to see the images of HIV-positive women of color in Meredith's photographs. The supportive care work being carried out by What Would an HIV Doula Do is equally important. We need to know how to talk to a friend or relative who might have been recently diagnosed with HIV. But we can't do that without a diverse and inclusive frame of reference.

# MARTOS GALLERY

Indiana, Gary, "Authentic Success: Kathleen White 1960-2014," *ARTnews*, February 5, 2015

## ARTNEWS

### Authentic Success: Kathleen White 1960–2014

BY *Gary Indiana* POSTED 02/05/15 9:30 AM



A scan from a performance flyer xerox of *The Spark Between L and D* (1987), showing Kathleen White.

COURTESY THE ESTATE OF KATHLEEN WHITE

When Kathleen White moved to New York in 1987 she didn't have any friends, so she painted one. That's the quick story of a picture I can legitimately call haunting: *My Friend*. Seated, or perched, on a yellowish plinth that might be an ottoman or a traveling bag, one elongated forearm resting between his legs, the other extending from a slightly flexed elbow down to brittle fingers in a long red glove, the figure appears near a corner of a carpeted room, scumbled darkness streaked with light forming one wall, a nimbus of flames, even lava, crackling behind his head and shoulder.

*My Friend* shows you something of how Kathleen was, what she looked for in people, and what she hoped to find in the world, and sometimes did, sometimes didn't; this friend is subtle, complicated, more than a little hidden, freakishly beautiful and singular, his visible eye circumspect, his posture expectant; I'll let you bring me into your world, and/but I am who I am. The friend appears to me a shy person in a moment of realization that another human being possibly finds him lovable, maybe for the first time ever. The artist Katie Peyton has a more freighted take: "Haunted by the image of the friend. It is because of the terror in it, though it is accompanied by the sweetness of such an unguarded expression of loneliness. The terror is the fear of living alone, the impossible fact of dying alone. It opens that hot-to-the-touch negative-zero space inside, the black-hole number that can't be brought into focus." One view doesn't negate the other. This life is a fearful, lonely, terrifying thing, even between friends. We don't always feel the space between each other as the existential chasm that it is, but it's there. Still we have a natural desire for the warmth of contact and alliance: the need to love.

Is this friend an alien? If so, good. As an artist, as a person, Kathleen, who passed away last September, was drawn to what academic people like to call "Otherness," and others call out-of-the-ordinary people and things. She was attuned to the wound, and quick to appreciate the extravagant improvisations of the damaged. Her bullshit detector was faster than a bullet and scarily accurate. She loved disobedience and daring.

It isn't possible to summarize an artist's life and work in a few hundred words; I can try to evoke a sense of Kathleen's spirit, and hope that others—many others—will write more detailed, comprehensive articles about the art she produced over several decades: videos, paintings, sculptures, and sound works, remarkable for their emotional punch, aesthetic fastidiousness, wit, and concision. A great deal of her work sprang from loss and translates remembrance—of family members, of friends who died in the AIDS epidemic—into astute, depthful objects and manifestations of continuing resonance. Despite the anguished places she drew it from, her work is spiked with drollery and a sense of the absurd: I immediately think of *The Spark Between L and D* (1987), a performance in which the artist, dressed as a nurse, after socking herself repeatedly in the head, licking blood off her fingers, and wiping them off with paper towels from a medical bag, proceeds to mummify herself in surgical

gauze and tape she extracts from the same bag while singing, in distracted fashion, “On Broadway.” The song becomes muffled and incoherent after she gags herself with a bandage. Like Winnie in Beckett’s *Happy Days*, she has a bag full of interesting, useless palliatives that ultimately reduce her to silence. It’s horrifying. And funny.



*My Friend*, ca.1987–9, oil on canvas, 44" x 34".

COURTESY THE ESTATE OF KATHLEEN WHITE

Kathleen was a long-distance swimmer in an alternative or parallel art stream that has existed in New York and elsewhere throughout the current period of art corporatization, enlivening an otherwise taxidermic art world where supermarket fairs and ingenious money laundering predominate. She showed work when she felt moved to; mere opportunity didn’t suit her way of doing things—once, invited by Ethan Shoshan to exhibit something in “Strange Birds,” a show at the Center for Book Arts where artists displayed “objects that hold significant personal meaning to them,” Kathleen offered nothing as her contribution. “Attachment will bite you in the ass, every time,” she explained. “If you are so attached to some thing that it becomes

your identity, what happens when that thing doesn't exist anymore? The best thing I have is what people have given me, and I have it inside of myself."

Unless it excludes everything else, there's nothing wrong with being career-minded, but Kathleen simply wasn't. She saw the effect celebrity and "personal branding" often had on other artists and didn't find it appealing. Authentic success was another story: she was glad when that came someone's way. She didn't have the envy gene. It simply wasn't there.

Her activity ranged beyond the creation of physical objects, in art carried out by other means. In collaboration with her husband, Rafael Sánchez, this included a sidewalk book table they set up nearly every day for a decade on Hudson Street. "By exposing other people to our 'precious goods,'" Kathleen said, "we're letting go of them, which gives them back to us, because it creates a dialogue that illuminates things that wouldn't necessarily have been brought to light if they'd been left on the shelves." They produced four issues of an "environmental magazine," *alluPiNiT*, that featured contributors such as Hunter Reynolds, Luther Price, and TABBOO!; Kathleen was herself a formidable wordsmith, and one of the best-read people I've known.

And one of the best artists. I was late to recognize this, partly because for some years I basically knew her as a voice on the telephone—a smoky, husky voice—that lived in the same apartment as a friend who was, more often than not, somewhere other than New York; I would call trying to catch the friend and end up talking to Kathleen, sometimes for hours, about everything imaginable. And partly because, during those same years, I avoided galleries and art exhibitions, for reasons I won't go into. As it happens I had seen her work in some group shows, and been startled by it, but didn't realize this "Kathleen White" person was the same Kathleen I spent hours on the phone with. So for years we knew each other intimately well and at the same time hardly at all. On the rare occasions when I saw Kathleen out and about, I knew this stylish woman who resembled Liz Taylor's Gloria Wondrous in *Butterfield 8* (with a more adventurous fashion sense) was Kathleen-who-lives-in-Sharon's-place, but the cognitive drizzle of today's world being what it is, I never entirely put them together until a few years ago. What can I tell you? She wasn't pushy. She didn't implore me to see what she was up to, she wasn't hell-bent on reminding me she was an artist, she didn't mistake me for an art critic or herself for the kind of artist for whom every influential person is there to be used like a Kleenex. I got it, finally, and now that she's gone, of course, I wish I had gotten it a lot sooner.

*Gary Indiana is a New York-based artist and writer whose work over four decades, including a new film, YOUNG GINGER, will be sampled at Envoy Enterprises in NYC in March.*

# MARTOS GALLERY

Howe, David Everett, "Goodbye to a neighbor," *Baudrillard's at Bergdorf*, September 9, 2014

## Baudrillard's at Bergdorf

### Goodbye to a neighbor



Nan Goldin, *Kathleen*, NYC, 1993

When Alex and I first moved to New York City, in the summer of 2006, we moved into a tiny one bedroom apartment in the Lower East Side, at 151 Ludlow Street. It was a second floor walk-up, in a grimy tenement building. Graffiti was caked all over the door; my Dad continues to joke that when he first came to help us move in, there was a homeless man sleeping in the doorway. It was, in essence, the kind of place New York City dreams were made of, right in the heart of things; pigeons cooed outside my window; the front of the building was overwhelmed with noise from the street, the back blissfully quiet; you could walk out the front door, and get a coffee across the street, and a drink down the block. Mountains of trash spilled off the curb, and rats occasionally ran across your feet at 3 in the morning. This was just before the area became completely gentrified, when there were still good bars to go to, and everything seemed genuinely run-down. It had its drawbacks, but I loved (and still love) the place.



Nan Goldin, *Kathleen at the Bowery Bar, NYC, 1995*

It seemed fitting then that our neighbors were Kathleen White and Rafael Sanchez, an artist couple. They lived literally down the hallway. They were very nice, but I thought at the time a little bizarre. They would ask our plans for the summer solstice; created colonies of worms in the big back yard, which for some reason I never really used; and built a massive, portable dolmen, which was reconstructed periodically. The thing was fucking huge, and kind of amazing (you can see me posing with it below, with some sort of cardboard cut-out stewardess we found in the trash).



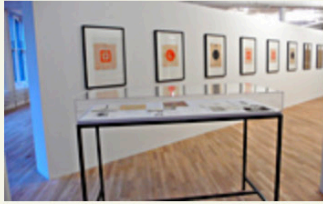
Anyways, I don't think I fully appreciated Kathleen and Rafael until much later, after I had moved out and started to become more involved at PARTICIPANT, where they were also part of the community (both Kathleen and Rafael had a solo show of paintings and drawings there, in 2004). But like with most New York neighbors, there's a weird intimacy involved even when you're basically strangers. Like when a homeless man snuck into our building, and pulled down a massive ladder in the middle of the night, waking everyone. Or when there was some sort of fire scare, and we stood out in the hallway together, sort of watching and waiting. When I was moving out, Kathleen came in when the apartment was nearly devoid of furniture, and gave me her email to keep in touch, in case I wanted to write anything in her and Rafael's magazine, *aLuPiNiT*.

I never did, and we never became close. But when Kathleen died last week of cancer, it made me a little sad to think that that part of New York is gone, as she was so wrapped up in that building for me, and that time when I was new here, and the city was exciting, and exotic - just as much as the building's smells, or the way the radiators clanged in the winter. You may never really know someone well, but that doesn't mean they never had a presence to you.





### GOTHAM ART & THEATER by Elisabeth Kley



Installation view of "Rip It Up and Start Again" at Artists Space



Installation view of "Rip It Up and Start Again" at Artists Space  
Panoramic view of William S. Burroughs' bedroom in "the Bunker" at 222 Bowery, New York City (2010)  
Photo by Daniel Pérez



**William S. Burroughs**  
*Target*  
1997  
Artists Space



**Charles Henri Ford**  
*Poem Posters*  
ca. 1964  
Courtesy Mitchell Algus Gallery  
Artists Space

**William S. Burroughs**, the inimitable literary master of hard living and apocalyptic horror, was a heroin addict who cut off his own pinkie, worked as an exterminator, and accidentally killed his common-law wife in 1951 while attempting to shoot a cocktail off the top of her head as they were playing William Tell. Nevertheless, he retained a lifelong affection for firearms and continued target practice for the rest of his life.

What does this have to do with art? Find out at Artists Space, where "Rip it Up and Start Again" can be seen until Feb. 20, 2010. Curated by an impressive assortment of presenters, including poet John Giorno, gallerist Mitchell Algus and fictional artist **Claire Fontaine**, this fascinating show brings together works by Burroughs, artist **Ray Johnson**, poet Charles Henri Ford, musician Arthur Russell and Philippe Thomas (who started a fictional public relations agency called readymades belong to everyone®). All of them shared an interest in collaboration, collage and breaking down the boundaries between visual, written and musical art.

In 1958, Burroughs's friend **Brion Gysin** accidentally sliced up some newspaper words and rediscovered the idea of scrambling text into writing. Burroughs began using the technique to disorient the reader in a full-length 1961 novel, *The Soft Machine*. Johnson, the father of mail art, founded his New York Correspondence School in 1962, sending cryptic combinations of images and words on far-flung peregrinations. Two years later, Ford began assembling phrases from ads and headlines into evocative poems packed with double entendres.

A long diagonal wall in the center of Artists Space's open gallery is adorned on one side with a row of practice targets peppered with bullet holes and signed by Burroughs. The other side features a life-sized panoramic photograph of Burroughs's New York loft, where he lived from 1974 to 1980, and kept until he died of a heart attack in 1997 at the age of 83. More used targets can be seen hanging on the walls, along with a piss-colored, bullet-holed painting, the famous hat, a manual typewriter and a Burroughs cash register (his father invented the adding machine).

# MARTOS GALLERY



Works by Ray Johnson at Artists Space  
Courtesy Richard L. Feigen & Co.



Works by Ray Johnson at Artists Space  
Courtesy Richard L. Feigen & Co.



Works by Ray Johnson at Artists Space  
Courtesy Richard L. Feigen & Co.



Works by Ray Johnson at Artists Space  
Courtesy Richard L. Feigen & Co.

While Burroughs was killing household insects in Chicago, Charles Henri Ford (1913-2009) was in New York publishing *View* (1940-47), an avant-garde magazine with contributions from luminaries including Duchamp, Picasso, Dali, Henry Miller and Jean Genet. He also wrote poetry, and in the '60s he made an eye-popping series of "poem posters," large-scale photo silk-screens of collages combining images and words that worked as visual art and poetry at the same time, resembling ornamental Andy Warhol ransom notes.

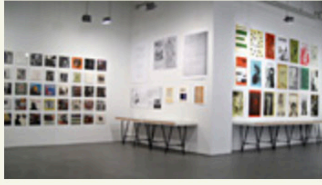
Photo-offset faces and figures are layered over and under collages of abstract shapes and words cut from magazines and newspapers. Plates appear in different combinations, with text hiding behind images, or image hiding behind text, depending on the colors of the ink -- ranging from hot reds and oranges to moody purples and browns.

Contrasting typefaces and aggressive cropping are vintage '60s pop, and Ford's contrary aphorisms and puns are equally subversive. *Fallen Woman*, for example, is an image of a female figure sprawling on her back with her arms stretched out. A hand holding a knife is poised above her body, and the words "Plan now" issue like a flower petal from a central circular image of an unplugged drain, perhaps a reference to the victim's life draining away. The word on another petal completes the phrase: "plan now for nowhere."

Ray Johnson (1927-1995), youngest of the three, was recognized as a genius only after he died, probably by suicide. A posthumous 1999 retrospective at the Whitney and a popular 2002 film have since appeared, along with regular exhibitions at Richard L. Feigen & Co. uptown, the gallery representing his estate. "Ray Johnson. . . Dali, Warhol and others: 'Main Ray, Ducham, Openheim, Pikabia,'" an in-depth collection of homages, parodies and dialogues with modernist artists and works of art, was on view there just last spring.

At Artists Space, six vitrines contain a more heterogeneous smattering of the letters, lists, drawings and collages Johnson tirelessly spewed out, weaving an impish web of interrelationships that turned 20th-century culture into a single extended personal salon filled with wacky encounters. Engineering an imaginary meeting between Jacques Derrida and Harpo Marx, for example, Johnson sent a letter to Derrida (really his friend Alan Bass) recounting an envelope's attempt to find Marx in "Jacquesonville" Florida.

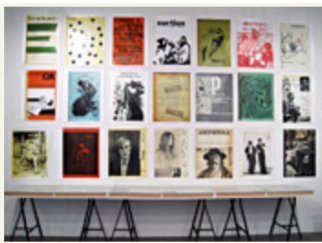
# MARTOS GALLERY



Installation view of "Ecstatic Peace Poetry Journal, Issue #10" at White Columns



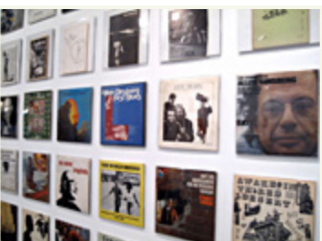
Installation view of "Ecstatic Peace Poetry Journal, Issue #10" at White Columns



Installation view of "Ecstatic Peace Poetry Journal, Issue #10" at White Columns



Installation view of "Ecstatic Peace Poetry Journal, Issue #10" at White Columns



Installation view of "Ecstatic Peace Poetry Journal, Issue #10" at White Columns

Another vitrine is filled with a series of riffs on ships attacked by giant octopi, and the next is devoted to the poet Marianne Moore. A yellowed newspaper photograph features Moore in her signature hat sitting stiffly between two empty chairs. A heart has been cut from her upper torso, and "Marianne Moore's lapels" is scrawled below. Nearby is a photocopy of note cards from Moore refusing visits, showing that rejection never slowed down Johnson - the ultimate fan. "Thank you very much," one says, "but I am compressing myself rather than expanding."

Other highlights include a drawing called *256 Spanish Stuffed Queen Olives*, resembling a herd of goggling eyes, and a calligraphic invitation to send for a free copy of Ray Johnson's new book *Cannibal Piss*. Ray Johnson's history of Lucy Lippard (1966-71) includes "Lucy trips over Montgomery Clift's fingernails" and "Teeny Duchamp has damp shoes" -- wonderful bits of poetry showing that Johnson's genius was as literary as it was visual.

## "Ecstatic Peace Poetry Journal"

Clearly on a similar wavelength, Sonic Youth founder and publication collector Thurston Moore once asked, "Can you find someone to pay me to draft a script about the lives of Allen Ginsberg and William Burroughs and their intersecting relationship through the countercultural 20th century?" Although Moore is best known for ferociously atonal noise rock, he is also a major poetry fan and a cultural historian, having written histories of Grunge and '70s No-Wave rock.

"Ecstatic Peace Poetry Journal, Issue #10," an exhibition held in honor of the tenth edition of a magazine Moore began publishing yearly in 2001, is on view at White Columns. Inspired by the homemade mimeographed poetry magazines from the '60s, EPPJ is an eponymous publication (often co-edited by Byron Coley) that includes poetry and a few images from pioneers like Bill Berkson, Tuli Kupferberg, Gerard Malanga and Richard Hell, side by side with offerings from younger contributors including **Jutta Koether**, Jocko Weyland and Georganne Deen.

Blown up covers and pages from EPPJ can be seen on the entry walls, but the bulk of the show is a raucous gathering of vintage publications from Moore's collection displayed in vitrines. Reproduced posters of covers and inner pages hang on the walls, along with some poetry LPs. Most of the books and zines were mimeographed and given away or sold for a dollar or less.

# MARTOS GALLERY



Sánchez and Kathleen White rearrange entire publications on tables. *BOOKS RECORDS TAPES*



Rafael Rafael Sánchez & Kathleen White  
*BOOKS RECORDS TAPES*  
Ongoing  
Art in General



Rafael Sánchez & Kathleen White  
*BOOKS RECORDS TAPES* (detail)  
Ongoing  
Art in General



Rafael Sánchez & Kathleen White  
*BOOKS RECORDS TAPES* (detail)  
Ongoing  
Art in General



Rafael Sánchez & Kathleen White  
*BOOKS RECORDS TAPES* (detail)  
Ongoing  
Art in General

Free love, drugs and marijuana are celebrated in a trip back to the psychedelic era, a time when uninhibited poetry sprouted as freely as weeds in an empty lot. Cover images range from vaguely Egyptian doodles to Warhol photos, sex scenes, nudes, and abstract stripes and dots. Wonderful titles include *Sick Fly*, *Suction*, *Drainage*, *Purr* and *Meatball*. The summer 1967 issue of *The Willie*, "promoting ACID in the Maggot Eye" was edited by "willie the snort gobbler w/football hair for earmuffs," and "dirty poems for your suicide lives" are by Neeli Cherry and Charles Bukowski. The exhibition closes on February 20.

## "Double Bill"

Rather than juggling phrases and words, Rafael Sánchez and Kathleen White rearrange entire publications on tables. *BOOKS RECORDS TAPES*, a year-round situational art piece and street sale they've been curating on the sidewalk in front of his apartment for years, can now be seen indoors at Art in General in a show called "Double Bill," was curated by Redmond Entwistle.

The project by Sanchez and White at first resembles other motley collections of scavenged items often peddled on sidewalks, but closer inspection reveals that this arcane assemblage of books and magazines seems to be engaged in an animated silent dialogue.

A flyer from Mark Morrisroe's posthumous 1994 exhibition at Pat Hearn gallery is placed in front of a book about stain removal, bringing the scribbles and chemical blotches that often appeared on his photographs to mind, as well as their sexual content. Nearby is a collection of all five issues of *Dirt*, the Xeroxed magazine made by Morrisroe and Lynelle White from 1975-77, as reproduced by *aLLuPiNiT*, a non-profit organization founded by Sánchez and Kathleen White in 2007.

A pamphlet called "Bats need friends" sits by a vintage cross-dresser's newspaper called *The Transvestian*, conjuring Transylvanian drag. Magazines and music scores hang diagonally from the front of the tables, including a publication on doll collecting, a manual for "safety and security for older Americans" and the score for a song called Mitzi's Rendezvous, or "Pussy." And in the collection of maps and guidebooks below, "Journey into the Universe" is opposed by "One Big Prison: Freedom of Movement in Gaza."

# MARTOS GALLERY



Text painting by Mary Billyou in "Double Bill" at Art in General



Still from *Monuments* by Redmond Entwistle in "Double Bill" at Art in General

Sánchez is also a visual and performing artist who starred (wearing diapers) in his 1999 full-length version of Aeschylus's *The Libation Bearers* (performed to lip-synced tunes from the rock band Queen's early catalogue). His stencils sometimes make stealth appearances on various publications. A pile of books on Che Guevara, Castro and revolutionary Cuba, for example, is near an elementary science textbook with a gold silhouette of Castro on the cover over a cloudy sky.

An edition of William Wordsworth poetry published in 1970 has a worn spine touched up with gold leaf. The slipcase is stenciled with a silhouette of Wordsworth, after a tracing from the Bewick engraving on the frontpiece inside -- turning the English Romantic's face into a jagged black mask. This artist's book is available for only \$80, and the rest of the items can also be bought during gallery hours at prices ranging from \$2 to \$2,225 for some very rare items.

The exhibition also features Suzanne Goldenberg's rickety sculptures made from fragile bits of cardboard balanced on a framework of scrap wood, some black and white text paintings by Mary Billyou and *Monuments*, a film by curator Redmond Entwistle that recreates a visit to New Jersey's industrial wasteland by **Dan Graham**, **Robert Smithson** and **Gordon Matta-Clark**. The show is up until Mar. 20, 2010.

**ELISABETH KLEY** is a New York artist and writer.

MARTOS GALLERY

# The New York Times

## *Art in Review; The Name of This Show Is Not: Gay Art Now*

By **Roberta Smith**

July 7, 2006

Consistent with the provocative title of the beautiful, cannily installed show he has organized, the artist Jack Pierson announces in the gallery's news release that "the notion of Gay Art" strikes him as "somewhat passé." His show, he writes, "is an ode to its passing."

Containing artists living and dead, known and obscure, gay, straight and unspecified, the show begins with David Dupuis's haunting portrait of himself as an old man and ends three rooms later with works by Louise Fishman, Robert Rauschenberg, Jasper Johns, Bill Rice and Matthew Barney. In between you'll find Marsden Hartley painting flowers, Deborah Kass remaking Andy Warhol's portrait of Liza Minnelli, Caroline Thompson evoking (stylistically) the great Florine Stettheimer, Kathleen White conjuring up small bubbly abstractions, and a veritable mountain of Mardi Gras garb by Andrea Fraser.

Paul Lee brings new life to the assemblage with grisaille soda cans, and Kembra Pfahler, Hugo Guinness, Daniel McDonald, Jared Buckhiester and Antony of Antony and the Johnsons provide other surprises. Rob Pruitt contributes a painting of a silver and gold spider web, Gilbert & George an image that initially resembles a human brain but isn't.

Being a little bit pregnant may be impossible, but it seems likely that most people are a little bit gay, if they are lucky, regardless of their sexual orientations. That's because being gay, like being black or female, can foster the sense of heightened awareness that is essential to creativity, regardless of lifestyle, art style or identity.

MARTOS GALLERY

# The New York Times

## *Art in Review; The Name of This Show Is Not: Gay Art Now*

By **Roberta Smith**

July 7, 2006

Consistent with the provocative title of the beautiful, cannily installed show he has organized, the artist Jack Pierson announces in the gallery's news release that "the notion of Gay Art" strikes him as "somewhat passé." His show, he writes, "is an ode to its passing."

Containing artists living and dead, known and obscure, gay, straight and unspecified, the show begins with David Dupuis's haunting portrait of himself as an old man and ends three rooms later with works by Louise Fishman, Robert Rauschenberg, Jasper Johns, Bill Rice and Matthew Barney. In between you'll find Marsden Hartley painting flowers, Deborah Kass remaking Andy Warhol's portrait of Liza Minnelli, Caroline Thompson evoking (stylistically) the great Florine Stettheimer, Kathleen White conjuring up small bubbly abstractions, and a veritable mountain of Mardi Gras garb by Andrea Fraser.

Paul Lee brings new life to the assemblage with grisaille soda cans, and Kembra Pfahler, Hugo Guinness, Daniel McDonald, Jared Buckhiester and Antony of Antony and the Johnsons provide other surprises. Rob Pruitt contributes a painting of a silver and gold spider web, Gilbert & George an image that initially resembles a human brain but isn't.

Being a little bit pregnant may be impossible, but it seems likely that most people are a little bit gay, if they are lucky, regardless of their sexual orientations. That's because being gay, like being black or female, can foster the sense of heightened awareness that is essential to creativity, regardless of lifestyle, art style or identity.