

SITUATIONS

“Jackie Klempay of Situations”, Collecteurs, online, March 4, 2019.

Collecteurs

Jackie Klempay of Situations



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As part of NADA's New York Gallery Open, Collecteurs speaks to gallery owners about the current cultural landscape and why community is the key to the vitality of the overall arts ecosystem. Here we speak to Jackie Klempay of Situations.

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Collecteurs: What inspired you to start the gallery? What need were you trying to fulfill? And why did you choose LES?

Jackie Klempay: My friend, artist Josef Bull turned me onto Terrance McKenna's "History Ends In Green" lecture:

"We have to stop CONSUMING our culture. We have to CREATE culture. DON'T watch TV, DON'T read magazines, don't even listen to NPR. Create your OWN roadshow. The nexus of space and time where you are — NOW — is the most immediate sector of your universe. And if you're worrying about Michael Jackson or Bill Clinton or somebody else, then you are disempowered. You're giving it all away to ICONS. Icons which are maintained by an electronic media so that, you want to dress like X or have lips like Y... This is shit-brained, this kind of thinking. That is all cultural diversion. What is real is you, and your friends, your associations, your highs, your orgasms, your hopes, your plans, your fears. And, we are told No, you're unimportant, you're peripheral — get a degree, get a job, get a this, get that, and then you're a player. You don't even want to play that game. You want to reclaim your mind and get it out of the hands of the cultural engineers who want to turn you into a half-baked moron consuming all this trash that's being manufactured out of the bones of a dying world."

We were working together at a gallery in Chelsea and McKenna's words encouraged me to start organizing my own shows in Brooklyn. I've moved around the corner from my current gallery. When I saw the space was open, I decided to keep the gallery thing going in the LES/Chinatown storefront on 127 Henry Street.

C: Local support systems seem to be the key to success in the current cultural landscape. We'd love to know more about any current support systems you have in your neighborhood.

JK: Everyone who knows me knows that I would die without [FIERMAN!](#) [David Fierman](#) runs the gallery next door to mine. It's nice to have someone close in case I need to run out for a coffee, but most importantly, the close proximity has sparked a lot of conversation and therefore collaboration. Last year we garnered attention for a 2-gallery exhibition of Scott Covert's grave rubbing paintings titled The Dead Supreme. We also occasionally work on deals together and share a NADA booth in Miami. NADA is another amazing resource — Heather Hubbs and everyone at the organization work hard to unify a network of galleries across the globe who share a common goal, but have different needs and desires. It's great having them as neighbors.

I collaborate with other galleries as well. Our current show, Fresh Fruit, features eight artists under age 30 using figuration, and was organized by Benjamin Tischer, co-owner of INVISIBLE-EXPORTS. We were at Lucky Strike after a Drawing Center opening, talking about how we both gravitate toward under-recognized, older artists. The pitfall is overlooking younger artists who are making amazing work. This exhibition is a step toward correcting the inclination to "wait to see how the plot develops before engaging the narrative."

Last but not least, [AAD](#) (Art Against Displacement) is a resource imperative to staying current on local issues. They form political action, organize meetings, and send emails about local politics and new/ongoing neighborhood developments.

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C: As consumption of culture shifts more and more online. What creative ways are you exploring to continue to be relevant? What part does the community play in this?

JK: Online presence just seems like one part of the whole thing, but obviously seeing an artwork in person can't be replaced by a 640px by 640px phone snap. This summer we had a piece by Andrés Bedoya that was made out of cigarette ash. He threaded a thin chain with unlit cigarettes from floor to ceiling, and then lit the whole thing on fire until it was just ash and chain. There's no way to capture that online—the smell, the scale, you have to be there! Part of the equation is that artists need physical space to work out their ideas. Artists want people to see their work in real life and those people love taking selfies with artwork as a memento.

I'm not sure relevant is the right word. Actually, it seems really natural to participate online. As life shifts, it makes sense that the gallery mirrors what's happening in reality. We reach an audience outside of New York using technology and I personally love going down the hashtag rabbit hole. The gallery is just a conduit — reflecting both real and digital space.

C: It's becoming increasingly challenging to drive steady foot traffic into gallery spaces. What brings your gallery visitors?

JK: Great shows and reviews always help!! One of my favorite shows from this fall by Corinne Jones included a piece, *Islands of the Lost Sea*, where she stacked moving blankets on top of 'floor paintings.' The blankets were an invitation for the viewer to have a seat. The intention was to create an area designated for discussion - a physical space to communicate possibly untold, lesser known or marginalized stories. People really came and hung out, which was amazing. Similarly, during his exhibition, Abdolreza Aminlari made a huge pot of Ash Reshteh and served people until it was gone — the soup is served at special Iranian events during the winter and we read Hafez, a 14th century poetry, used in divination.

C: Tell us a little bit about your program. What initiatives does your gallery support?

JK: SITUATIONS has a mostly feminist/queer agenda. We represent 8 artists: Abdolreza Aminlari, Andrés Bedoya, Raynes Birkbeck, Mariah Dekkenga, Delia Gonzalez, Whitney Hubbs, Corinne Jones, and Jerry the Marble Faun. We also support a lot of performance and are really open to experimentation. The space is a pipeline for ideas. We recently started a writing initiative that promotes an author alongside the artist we are exhibiting — via poster, broadsheet, zine, reading or event, website/email, etc. Our aim is to highlight creative and artistic approaches to writing and inspire collaboration between written and visual artistic outlets. Participants include Cedar Sigo, Candystore O. McCritter, Tommy Pico, AA Bronson, Beverly Dahlen, Hafez, Alison Gingeras, etc. Everything is translated into Mandarin by Kevin Hsieh who worked at the gallery for a year. He works at 303 now, but he's awesome and still does the translations for us.

C: So many of the gallery spaces have interesting "past lives." Does yours have one?

JK: I first remember visiting my space when Bureau used it as their "back room" in the aughts. Lionel Maunz was having a show and opened up so I could see a large sculpture he made. Artists have used the storefront as a studio, and a man came in last week saying he lived there—even raised his son there!—but moved to Sweden. Our maintenance guy José is always telling me crazy stories too—he told me Mr. Lucky bought the entire building in the 1970's for \$10,000.

Photography: Jonathan Grassi

Artwork: Jeffrey Cheung Support 2018 (acrylic on canvas)