

JOAN is delighted to host the first solo exhibition in Los Angeles of work by the much loved, *sui generis*, Pittsburgh-born, New York-based, experimental filmmaker, Peggy Ahwesh. Ahwesh will show four varied video installations based on films made between the early aughts and 2019: *The Star Eaters*; *Lies & Excess*; *Bethlehem*; and *Kansas Atlas*.

The films will be installed amidst a choreographed “Curtain Accompaniment,” designed in direct response to the films, by L.A. artist, Yunhee Min.

The exhibition is curated by Linda Norden.

Peggy Ahwesh is a media artist who got her start in the 1970’s with feminism, punk and amateur Super 8mm filmmaking and is recognized for using a palette of technologies and practices including Pixelvision, drone and heat-sensitive cameras, 16mm film, Machinima, and others to create the textures and aesthetics required for her subject matter. Her work is currently on view at the Museum of Modern Art (MoMA)’s exhibition “Private Lives Public Spaces.” A large retrospective exhibition of Ahwesh’s work will take place in 2021 at Spike Island, Bristol, UK, curated by Erika Balsom.

Her work has previously appeared in exhibitions at The Kitchen, New York; Foxy Production, New York; Los Angeles Contemporary Exhibitions (LACE), Los Angeles; Maccarone, New York; Salon 94, New York; Murray Guy, New York; Chateau Shatto, Los Angeles, CA; Berwick Film & Media Arts Festival, Berwick-upon-Tweed, UK; Gasworks, London, UK; and Arts Santa Mònica, Barcelona, Spain; The CUNY Graduate Center James Gallery, NYC, among others.

Her films and videos have been presented at the Whitney Biennial, New York; New Museum, New York; Film at Lincoln Center, New York; MoMA PS1, Queens, NY; Carnegie Museum of Art, Pittsburgh, PA; The Tate Modern, London, UK; British Film Institute (BFI), London, UK; Guggenheim Museum, Bilbao, Spain; Pompidou Center, Paris, France, among many others.

Film retrospectives include: “Girls Beware!,” Whitney Museum, New York; “Peggy Ahwesh,” Filmmuseum, Brussels, Belgium; “Peggy Ahwesh,” Anthology Film Archives, New York, NY; “Peggy’s Playhouse,” Yerba Buena Center for the Arts, San Francisco; Carpenter Center for the Visual Arts, Harvard University, Cambridge, MA; “Peggy Ahwesh,” Reina Sofia Museum, Madrid, Spain; among others. Her films have been featured in numerous film festivals such as New York Film Festival (NYFF), Berlin International Film Festival, London Film Festival, Toronto International Film Festival (TIFF); International Film Festival Rotterdam (IFFR); among others.

Ahwesh has received grants and awards including from the Jerome Foundation, the Guggenheim Foundation, Creative Capital, New York State Council of the Arts (NYSCA), and the Alpert Award in the Arts. Peggy Ahwesh was born in Canonsburg, PA and currently lives and works between Brooklyn, NY and the Catskills. Her works are represented by *Microscope Gallery in New York*.

The Star Eaters, 2003

A short and inconclusive treatise on women and gambling, set amidst the abandoned decay that was once a glamorous Atlantic City, *The Star Eaters* is a melancholy, non-linear portrait of a woman as she attempts to trace her memories and make sense of her life against a backdrop of seedy casinos and dreary off-season hotels. Telling her story in voiceover, she drifts through real and remembered relationships. The allure of risk-taking and excessive behavior, of play acting and a penchant for failure, combine in this fairy-tale, sentimental education. With Jackie Smith, Alex Auder, Aaron Diskind and Ricardo Dominguez.

“Ahwesh continues to explore a mix of fictive and documentary styles, with the aim of producing work that she has called ‘narrative- like.’” (from Berwick Film Fest catalog)

The Star Eaters, 2003, single-channel video, 24 minutes. Courtesy of the artist and Microscope Gallery

Lies & Excess, 2003

Lies & Excess was an abandoned version of the project that became *The Star Eaters*, shot a year earlier on 16mm. What remains is a reel of selects from various scenes and some outtakes that have an open, magical quality of potential and free association, a poetic gloss on the film it became.

Lies & Excess, 2003 (unfinished), single-channel video, 20 minutes. Courtesy of the artist and Microscope Gallery

Bethlehem, 2009

“Working through my archive of accumulated video footage, I pretended it was found footage from anonymous sources, editing memories like a string of pearls. A tribute to the Bruce Conner of the period of *Valse Triste* and *Take the 5:10 to Dreamland*, with their deliberate pace and bittersweet memory of home, ended as a dedication to my father, as I wound my way through personal

miscellany with distance and a broader aim.” –Peggy Ahwesh

Bethlehem, 2009, 4-channel video installation, 8 minutes. Courtesy of the artist and Microscope Gallery

***Kansas Atlas*, 2019**

Otherworldly depictions of the ordinary from the vantage point of a bird. Aerial, stereoscopic and abstract views of a landscape conjured through the rubrics of the Freudian ‘uncanny being’. The Kansas landscape has become one dominated by the likes of the Koch brothers and vigilante justice, the strident voice of religion and extreme pro-lifers. I am left wondering why? Kansas is a kind of metonymy for the country as a whole. It is the ‘heartland,’ and the geographic center of the lower 48 states. With a voiceover text by Marianne Shaneen.

Kansas Atlas, 2019, 4-channel video installation, glass domes, 15 minutes 31 seconds. Courtesy of the artist and Microscope Gallery.

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