

ESSEX FLOWERS

19 Monroe St
New York, NY 10002



Carolina Saquel, Untitled (Landscape), photography. 2014–2016. Reflections upon landscape, vision, movement /stillness. Dust. The repetition of (almost) the same. 2018.

Magic Lantern

**Zachary Fabri / Benin Ford / Fabienne Lasserre / Jonathan Miralda
and Andrés Villalobos / Richard Roth / Carolina Saquel / Maria Walker**

November 11 - December 11, 2022

Opening Reception: Friday, November 11, 6 - 8pm

Performance by Zachary Fabri: Sunday, November 20, 3pm

Curated by Calvin Burton

*For the mass loomed before her; it protruded; she felt it pressing on her eyeballs.
-Virginia Woolf, To the Lighthouse*

A parable tells the story of a group of blind men who have never heard of an elephant and are given an opportunity to imagine what an elephant is by touching one. Approaching from different sides, each man touches only one part of the animal's body—trunk, leg, tusk, torso—and arrives at a different conclusion: it must be a snake, a tree, a spear, a boulder. Each man is convinced he is right and the others wrong.

It isn't possible to apprehend the whole picture, so we work with the parts available to us. Our mind tends to make sense of the unfamiliar by reaching for the familiar, creating ballast in an unsteady world. And so the center of things eludes us. But while the mind is adept at interpreting experience, our bodies remain subject to forces beyond our ability to rationalize or explain. In the realm of the sensory, then, we may hope to find alternate routes, through a broader array of perspectives and towards a deeper awareness of the relationship of parts to whole.

This exhibition gathers work that suggests a connection between the body and its surroundings through the senses of sight and touch, and their conflation in the haptic. Haptic seeing, or "touching with the

eyes,” is a form of close viewing (in contrast to “optical” vision, which can be understood as *seeing from a distance*). As described by psychologist James J. Gibson, “the haptic is the sensory system through which one feels an object [relative] to the body and the body relative to an object... and by which... one is literally in touch with the environment.” Haptically-charged objects implicate the body, both in their form, and in their reception by the subject. Bypassing the brain, such objects act directly upon the central nervous system, placing bodily sensation at the center of experience.

Dust—a substance at once of earth and air—presides over the exhibition. It is a central subject in the two videos included (by Zachary Fabri and Carolina Saquel), each of which draws on the physical and ephemeral nature of the material to activate possibility within, and for, the senses. While dust is a thing we can see (and touch), it also entails an obscuring of vision, evoking the limitations of sight conveyed by Wallace Stevens in *Poem Written At Morning*:

The truth must be
That you do not see, you experience, you feel,
That the buxom eye brings merely its element
To the total thing, a shapeless giant forced
Upward.

Dust also forms the basis for the pigments used in paint and ink; suspended in liquid and spread across a surface, such pigment doesn’t lose its geological valence, even as it is received by the eye as color. The paintings in the exhibition activate this condition in various ways—Richard Roth’s paintings escalate vision to the level of touching, while both Maria Walker and Fabienne Lasserre develop their work through direct, intuitive contact with materials. Meanwhile, both Benin Ford’s painting and Jonathan Miralda’s and Andrés Villalobos’ airbrush drawings get to the heart of the matter by seeming to materialize the act of seeing itself.

The title of the exhibition refers to a technological predecessor to the stereopticon and stereoscope. Two identical “slides” (which, prior to the invention of photography, were hand-painted on glass) were projected together on a wall to create a “three-dimensional” image. The light source for the projections was originally a flame (the “lantern”). It is tempting to imagine that these images, though composed purely of light, were *in fact* corporeal, and that this momentary embodiment of form, though explicable in scientific terms, could not be completely extricated from the presence of some unknowable force, what some might call “magic.”

The materialization of sight (or visualization of touch) is more than just the co-experience of two senses—it is closer to a new (sixth) sense, a kind of supra-sensorial activity. Such sensory amplification pushes us beyond knowing in the conventional sense to a point where we can no longer rely on our cognitive faculties—a short-circuiting of the mind’s ability to convert experience into knowledge. Connecting with the unknowable, we unlearn something, leaving space for alternatives to understanding, and even possibilities for reconciliation.

- Text by Calvin Burton

Visit Essex Flowers’ [website](#) for a full curatorial text and additional information about the artists.

Zachary Fabri lives and works in New York. Exhibitions include CUE Art foundation (NY), Ludwig Museum (Budapest), Recess (Brooklyn), Art in General (NY), The Studio Museum in Harlem, El Museo del Barrio (NY), The Walker Art Center (Minneapolis), The Brooklyn Museum, The Barnes Foundation (Philadelphia), and Performa. He has further participated in projects at the Museum of Modern Art (NY), the Sharjah Biennial (UAE), and Pace gallery (NY). Awards include The Louis Comfort Tiffany Foundation Award, the Franklin Furnace Fund for Performance Art, the New York Foundation for the Arts fellowship, and the BRIC Colene Brown Art Prize.

Benin Ford lives and works in Brooklyn, NY. He was a recipient of the Joan Mitchell Foundation's Painters and Sculptors Grant in 2013 and has guest lectured at New York University and the University of Massachusetts, Amherst. He has collaborated with choreographer Nia Love on the research platform and serial performance project *gl(host)*, concerning the material and gestural afterlives of transatlantic slavery.

Fabienne Lasserre lives and works in Brooklyn, NY. Exhibitions include TURN Gallery (NY), Hallwalls Contemporary Arts Center, (Buffalo); Parisian Laundry Gallery (Montreal); and Palazzo Costa Tretenerro (Piacenza, Italy), Safe Gallery (NY), and 315 Gallery (NY), Ceysson de Bénétière (Luxembourg); Contemporary Arts Museum (Houston); Museo de Antioquia (Medellin), and Musée d'art contemporain de Montréal. Awards include a John Simon Guggenheim Fellowship, a Saint-Gaudens Memorial Fellowship, and a Sharpe-Walentas Studio Program award.

Jonathan Miralda Fuksman lives and works in Mexico City. Exhibitions include guadalajara90210 (Mexico City); Museo del Pueblo de Guanajuato; GAM (Mexico City); Museo Carrillo Gil (Mexico City); MUSAS (Sonora); Estudio Marte 221 (Mexico City); Galería MERCADO NEGRO (Puebla); Galería Toca (Mexico City); Paseo de las Artes Pedro de Mendoza (Buenos Aires); and ESPAC (Mexico City). He has received grants from FONCA and la Fundación Colección Jumex.

Richard Roth's work has been exhibited nationally and internationally. Exhibitions include Valletta Contemporary (Malta); Galerie Rob de Vries (The Netherlands); The Suburban (Oak Park, IL); Rocket Gallery (London); the Virginia Museum of Fine Arts; Reynolds Gallery (Richmond, VA); Feigen, Inc. (Chicago); the Whitney Museum of American Art (NY); OK Harris Gallery (NY); and Castelli Warehouse (NY). Awards include a Visual Artists Fellowship in Painting from the National Endowment for the Arts. He is also the co-editor of the book, *Beauty is Nowhere: Ethical Issues in Art and Design*, and author of the novel, *NoLab*, published by Owl Canyon Press in 2019.

Carolina Saquel lives and works in Paris, France. Exhibitions and film/video festivals and screenings include Espai 13, Fundació Joan Miró, (Barcelona); Kadist Art Foundation (Paris); Harbourfront Centre (Toronto); Musée d'Art Moderne et Contemporain de Strasbourg; Grand Palais (Paris); Espace Culturel Louis Vuitton (Paris); Bloomberg Space (London); and Württembergischer Kunstverein (Stuttgart).

Andrés Villalobos Cuevas lives and works in Mexico City. Exhibitions include Documenta 15 (Kassel), Museo Carrillo Gil (Mexico City), MUSAS (Sonora), Leopold Museum (Viena), Galería Toca (Mexico City), Gwangju Biennial (Korea); Yakarta Biennial (2015), Venice Biennial (2015), Museo Universitario del Chopo (Mexico City), and Museo de Arte Moderno (Mexico City). Collaborative projects include membership in Arts Collaboratory Network and founding of the artist cooperatives *Cráter Invertido* and *Vacaciones de trabajo*. He has published various book collections through funding from FPCC and organized two animation conferences with support from IMCINE, in addition to receiving various grants from FONCA (2017, 2016, 2014, 2003).

Maria Walker lives and works in Bronx, NY. Her work has been shown widely in the United States, including in New York, Los Angeles, Chicago, Philadelphia, Baltimore, and Provincetown. In 2011 she attended the Skowhegan School for Painting and Sculpture. Walker's work has been published or featured in the *Smithsonian Magazine*, *Artforum.com*, *The Brooklyn Rail* and *New American Paintings*.

Calvin Burton lives and works in Brooklyn. Previous curatorial projects include Present Company (Brooklyn) and Spring Break Art Fair (New York). Exhibitions of his work include Reynolds Gallery (Richmond), Tappeto Volante Projects (Brooklyn), Present Company (Brooklyn), Jack Hanley Gallery (New York), Cuchifritos (New York), Branch Gallery (Durham), Samson Projects (Boston), The Bronx Museum (Bronx), ADA Gallery (Richmond), Raw & Co. (Cleveland), Second Street Gallery (Charlottesville), and Galería Ramón Alva de la Canal (Xalapa).