CALLA HENKEL & MAX PITEGOFF

THE END OF THEATER

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Galerie Isabella Bortolozzi is pleased to present Calla Henkel & Max Pitegoff's third exhibition with the gallery titled *The End of THEATER*. The exhibition presents the complete cycle of episodes from *THEATER*, set and shot at New Theater Hollywood in Los Angeles—the black box theatre space the two artists have been operating since January 2024. Starring Leilah Weinraub, the films construct a narrative around a character named Kennedy interwoven with footage shot during rehearsals of productions staged at New Theater Hollywood. Complementing this, the artists show new video works that derive from their recent play *The End Is New* which premiered at REDCAT, Los Angeles in Fall 2025.

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Because memory is kaleidoscopic and moving image can only do so much, there will never be a perfect document of a performance. It all becomes fiction. *THEATER* is our attempt at confronting this fiction in real time. We filmed what happened in the daily current of our theater on Santa Monica Boulevard: our building was painted red, the neighboring theaters were torn down, all of Hollywood went on strike, the city burned, and we used fiction to make sense of it. Kennedy, played by Leilah Weinraub, stands in as a hazy version of ourselves. She operates the theater, parsing the harsh realities of running a black box in the collapse of the California dream. It's also a love story, unafraid to go off the rails.

The building New Theater Hollywood inhabits has been a theater since the 1980s, and it has had many lives. People often come to the space and tell us stories about the past. In one such tale, we were told that a young Ed Harris moved to town, convinced Sam Shepard to write him a one-man play, rented our theater, and after three sold out weeks, became a star. There is triumph, but there is also a great well of sadness—a result of the desire for things that never came. There is so much loss in performance. Loss of self, of youth, of time. Of nights spent in pursuit of collective action. We became fixated on these stories of what had transpired before, imagining whole ensembles of actors, fictitious groups of friends and lovers, all fighting over lines and meaning. This was the starting point of our play *The End Is New*, from which the two videos in the first gallery are drawn.

Shown in storage boxes, the two videos pull from the archive of a fictitious, long-dissolved experimental theater group that made theater around pools in Los Angeles in the mid-90's. In the play, a documentary filmmaker who was involved with the group cannot stop editing the footage. She begins to live inside the work. Nostalgic to a point of science fiction, these videos are fragments of a Los Angeles pastoral; young wet bodies, rehearsing, scripts in hand. It is an imagined lost history of what came before us. An archive is love, but also a rotting box. Meaning is what you cannot let go of.

– Calla Henkel and Max Pitegoff, February 2026