GALERIE TIMONIER



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Joe Brainard
Pati Hill
Ray Johnson
May 8 - June 6, 2026

Galerie Timonier is pleased to present Joe Brainard Pati Hill Ray Johnson, an exhibition of works by the eponymous artists co-curated with Rebis *Rebis* (Delfina Pattacini and Gaddo Amunni).

The exhibition is accompanied by a text by Richard Torchia.

Joe Brainard (1942-1994; b. Salem, AR, d. New York City, NY) has been included in a number of gallery and museum exhibitions across the United States such as MoMA P.S.1 and the Berkeley Art Museum. His works are also included in many notable private and public collections including The Metropolitan Museum of Art, the Whitney Museum of American Art, the Colby College Art Museum and the Museum of Modern Art, New York. In addition to his many visual art accomplishments, Brainard achieved notoriety for his 1970 Angel Hair publication I Remember, as well as many other publications, leading to The Library of America to publish The Collected Writings of Joe Brainard in 2012.

Pati Hill(1921-2014; b. Ashland, KY, d. Sens, FR) Her practice as a writer—which flourished between 1951 and 1962—was transformed in the early 1970s by her encounter with a photocopier, turning her into a producer of pictures, illustrated texts, and exhibitions, as well as an advocate of xerography. Her work has been featured in recent solo exhibitions at Printed Matter (New York), Air de Paris (Romainville), Kunstverein Munich, Kunsthalle Zurich, Essex Street (New York), and Arcadia University (Glenside, PA). Hill's prints are included in the permanent collections of the Whitney Museum of American Art, NY; The Centre Pompidou, Paris, FR; Bibliothèque National de France, Paris, France and The British Museum, London, UK. The Pati Hill Collection, transferred to Arcadia University in 2017, consists of all of her manuscripts dating from 1932, extensive correspondence, and four decades of artistic production.

Ray Johnson (1927-1995; b. Detroit, MI, d. Sag Harbor, NY) developed a far-reaching exhibition history, with his work presented at venues including the Whitney Museum of American Art and the Museum of Modern Art. His work is represented in numerous major collections, among them the Art Institute of Chicago, the Smithsonian American Art Museum, and Glenstone Museum. Johnson is especially noted for his foundational role in the development of mail art through the New York Correspondence School, as well as for a body of work that spans collage, performance, and ephemeral forms of exchange.

JOE BRAINARD PATI HILL RAY JOHNSON

Text by Richard Torchia

I wanted to make something that had nothing in it that had anything to do with me, and this is where I started. But I realized, very difficultly, that you couldn't. It took me a long time to know that there was no such thing as that, but this is how I started working on a copier.[1]
– Pati Hill

This statement by an 89-year-old Pati Hill addresses the challenges faced by an artist who struggled against the instinct to make her life the subject of her work. The impulse to regard one's biography as a creative resource—an inclination embraced by Joe Brainard and Ray Johnson—was foundational to Hill's practice as an author. Her first book, one of five she published between 1955 and 1962, was a memoir.[2] Written when Hill was 30, it describes a year she spent living alone in an abandoned farmer's cottage in the French countryside. To ensure that she would not be tempted to return to the modeling work that had supported, but interfered, with her writing, Hill cut off most of her hair.

Brainard, Hill, and Johnson each cultivated acute forms of attention, if not a childlike awe, to the material poetics and humor of the everyday, effectively blurring the boundaries between their lives and their protean work. All three artists shared a readiness to make gifts of their art, collaborate, and disavow authorship. Hill, for example, credited the IBM Copier II she used as the "artist" and allowed the machine to "dominate" her work. Mistakenly believing in 1974 that she had discovered the idea of using xerography to document objects and transform photographs—and because she had not met any other "copier artists"—in 1978 she admitted that she was "a little disappointed to find [she] was not the only one."[3]

Brainard was among these. In addition to employing the mimeograph machine in the 1960s to produce collaborative comics with his friends Frank O'Hara, Ted Berrigan, John Ashbery, Kenneth Koch, Peter Schjeldahl, Barbara Guest, Ron Padgett, and others, Brainard also made regular use of Xerox machines to facilitate his collages. His repetition of the phrase "I remember" to generate his memoir, the first iteration of which was published in 1970, prompted novelist Siri Hustvedt to propose that Brainard had "discovered a memory machine,"[4] which, like the copier, can be used by anyone and has, in fact, become an increasingly popular staple of writing classes and workshops. Brainard's own remarks about the process of drafting *I Remember* confirm his deflection of authorship: "I feel like I am not really writing it but that it is because of me that it is being written."[5]

Johnson's pioneering use of the photocopier, begun in 1962, was critical to the operations of his New York Correspondence School, which used the postal system to enable interactive, image-text discourse across a changing network of "receivers" and "senders," placing him in an administrative role that was often overwhelming. The Xerox machine and the postal system enabled what Ellen Levy has referred to as a "lifelong performance of disappearance" for Johnson.[6] They were also

a way to flirt with immediacy and chance, which were essential to his approach: "I provoke the mailbox to provide me with the subject of my lecture; I will read what appeared that day."[7] Likewise, Hill wrote, "The production of accidents is perhaps the feature of the copier which most endears it to the artist."[8]

Despite Hill's attempt to employ instant reproductive technology to distance her life from her art, her works in this exhibition, like those by Brainard and Johnson, nevertheless constitute forms of self-portraiture and autobiography. Each of the three xerographs on view demonstrate what Hill called her "straight" application of the copier as a camera rather than "as glue (to unite collages, remake portions of drawings, etc.)," which is how she might have described Brainard and Johnson's use of the machine.[9] Regardless, for all three artists, the copier became a device to negotiate the slippery, shape-shifting dynamics between material images, objects, and text.

Untitled (bustier) is an example from Hill's 1976 "Garments" series, which she began due to "the striking way seams, lace, buttonholes and zippers reproduced."[10] (Other images in the series include scans of garments Hill sewed herself. Brainard, too, was fascinated by women's clothes and as a boy designed dresses for his mother.) Hill's use of pink paper here may be an analog for her own body, which she claimed never to place on the machine. She wrote that "many copier artists are women and some copy themselves exclusively. I don't copy myself, but I modeled for years on account of the peculiar feeling of 'reality' it gave me. The reality of an object *may*be."[11]

Intimacy, containment, staging, and presentation are critical to all these works on paper, as well as their size. The life scale of Hill's three xerographs gives them an immediacy and uncanny presence, especially regarding the dimensions of the copied object in relation to the standard-size sheets on which they are printed. The bustier pushes against the vertical edges of its page. The ice skate, which fits perfectly on the sheet, is simultaneously static and speeding away.

Brainard's *Cracker Collage* also exploits the life scale of the images printed on the sides of the original Carr's packaging to become a persuasive example of *trompe l'oeil*. The work's grid of twenty loaded *hors d'oeuvres* looks ready for a kindergarten tea party. Each flat stack of garnishes –fragments of play money, a hand-painted four-leaf clover, monarch wings, jokes about abstract painting, and a real pansy (a punning leitmotif in Brainard's work)—appears more festive than the next. These painstaking accumulations of scraps recall the minutiae that fill the vials in the pharmacies and museum boxes of Joseph Cornell, an artist revered by both Brainard and Johnson. Brainard's pencil drawing of eight lovingly rendered cherries—evidence of the quality his attention as well as his draftsmanship—possesses a sensuous charm that is quietly sober in comparison with the confetti of *Cracker Collage*.

Like Hill and Brainard, Johnson is represented by three works in this exhibition. Two collages feature photographic portraits of Johnson with his face obscured by "moticos," cut-out images, including black and white photocopies spattered with paint, mounted on laundry cardboard and then abraded with sandpaper, a technique Johnson developed as a means "to call attention to

surface as surface."[12] Both collages feature oblique allusions to works by Marcel Duchamp—his postcard of the *Mona Lisa*, *L.H.O.O Q.* (1919), minus the pencil-drawn mustache and goatee, and snow shovel readymade, *In Advance of the Broken Arm* (1915). Johnson's transposition of "Hi Cowgirl" into "Haiku Girl" exemplifies his "verbal antics"[13] and how "Anything that attracted his attention could be itself but could also point to something besides itself."[14] A third, smaller collage from 1980 built upon an envelope addressed to Chuck Close comments on the accretive process of sending (and re-sending) art through the mail. The inscription "Dear Marilyn Monroe" not only evokes Johnson's affection for the work of Andy Warhol, but also a line from Brainard's memoir: "I remember when I went to a 'come as your favorite person' party as Marilyn Monroe." The work also becomes a coincidental reference to Pati Hill's final project, an artist's book entitled *Rose Marilyn* (2012) inspired by the actress. This shared regard for Monroe is but one of numerous overlaps in the practices and sensibilities of the three artists, which include a passion for comics, commercial packaging, "how-to" illustrations, and the design of book covers, among many others.

Brainard, Hill, and Johnson each relocated to New York City from different parts of the United States when they were in their early twenties. Brainard and Johnson moved within the same circles and knew each other. Hill, however, never became part of the city's art community despite her husband, Paul Bianchini, founding one of the first commercial galleries to sell Pop Art in the early 1960s. Clearly the outlier among this trio, Hill is only now finding an audience for her hybrid, idiosyncratic work, in part, thanks to the examples of modesty, openness, and generosity established by Brainard and Johnson, who likewise waited for wider recognition. This welcome exhibition brings them into a conversation worth continuing.

Notes

1. *The Pit and The Century Plant, New York*: Harper and Brothers, 1955.

2. Pati Hill, interview by Avis Berman, Roy Lichtenstein Foundation Oral History Project, September 26, 2010.

3. Pati Hill, *Letters to Jill,* (New York, Kornblee Gallery, 1979), p. 106.

4. Siri Hustvedt, *The Shaking Woman or a History of My Nerves*, (Sceptre, 2010).

5. Joe Brainard, Letter to Anne Waldman, 1969.

6. Ellen Levy, Interview with David Ebony, "Unraveling Ray Johnson: on capturing the recursive art of disappearance," *BOMB Magazine*, April 3, 2025

7. Ray Johnson, Interview with Diane Spodarek and Randy Delbeke, *The Detroit Artists Monthly*, Feb. 1978. ("When I have to give a lecture, I can be pretty sure that I will receive something in the mail that morning that I can wear at my lecture: a T-shirt, a ring, it's magical, I'm dealing with magic.")

8. Pati Hill, Artist Statement, *Electra: Electricity and Electronics in the Art of the XXth Century*, Musée d'art moderne de la Ville de Paris, 1983, p. 356.

9. Pati Hill, *Letters to Jill*, (New York, Kornblee Gallery, 1979), p. 118

10. Ibid., p. 30.

11. Ibid., p. 100.

12. William S. Wilson, *Frog Pond Splash, Collages by Ray Johnson with Texts by William S Wilson*, (Siglio, 2020), text from an untitled email received by Jonathan David Katz, c. 2012, p. 50.

13. William S. Wilson, *Frog Pond Splash, Collages by Ray Johnson with Texts by William S. Wilson*, (Siglio, 2020), p. 25.

14. William S Wilson, "With Ray" The Art of Friendship." *Black Mountain College Dossiers No. 4 Ray Johnson*. North Carolina, Black Mountain College Museum and Arts Center, 1997.

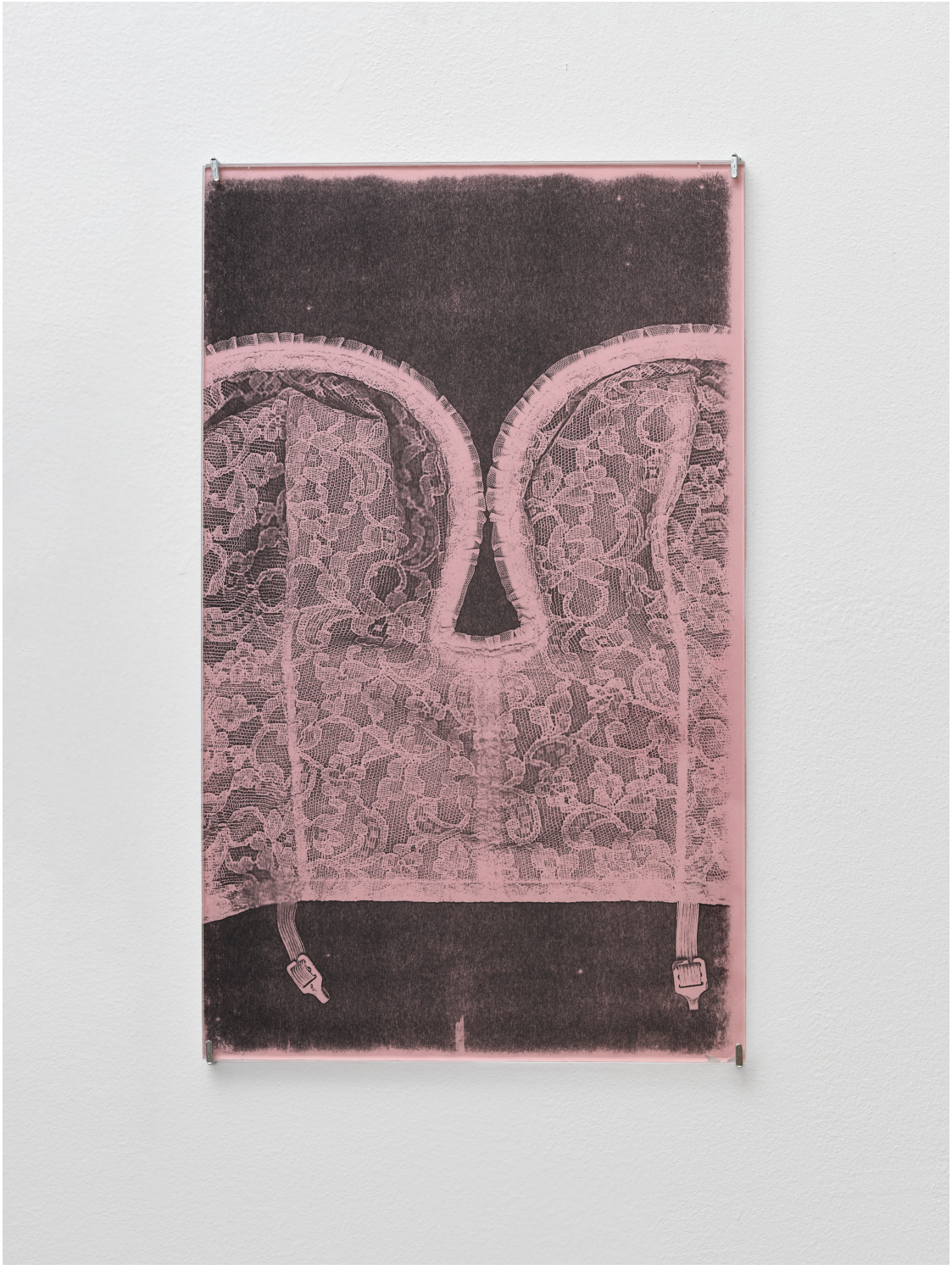




Ray Johnson
Untitled (Dear Marilyn Monroe, To: Chuck Close), 1980
mixed media collage on illustration board
unframed: 9 1/2 x 14 1/2 in. | 24.1 x 36.8 cm. | dated: 8.12.94

Provenance:
The Ray Johnson Estate

Exhibition History:
New York, Richard Feigen & Co., Ray Johnson... Dali/Warhol... And Others, 2009
New York, Zach Feuer Gallery, Signed, Sealed, Delivered, 2011
New York, Richard Feigen & Co., Please Return To, 2015
Berlin, Salon Berlin, JR - Adrian Piper - Ray Johnson, 2019



Pati Hill
Untitled (bustier)
From the series "Garments"
xerograph on colored paper
unframed: 14 x 8 1/2 in. | 35.5 x 21.5 cm. |1976
(unique)



Joe Brainard
Untitled
collage
unframed: 10 x 8 in. | 25.4 x 20.3 cm. | n.d.



Ray Johnson
Untitled (Mask with Green Mona Lisa)
mixed media collage on corrugated cardboard
unframed: 13 1/2 x 10 1/3 in. | 34.3 x 26.2 cm. | dated: 2.17.92, 10.10.91

Provenance:
The Ray Johnson Estate

Exhibitions:
New York, Richard L. Feigen Gallery, Ray Johnson...Dali/Warhol and Others..., 2009
New York, Richard L. Feigen Gallery, The Human Image, 2016
Princeton, Princeton Art Museum, Art About Art, 2023
Los Angeles, BLUM, Ray Johnson, 2024



Joe Brainard
Untitled (Cracker Collage)
mixed media collage
unframed: 13 5/8 x 10 5/8 in. | 34.6 x 27 cm. | 1975



Pati Hill
Untitled (scarf)
xerograph on paper
unframed: 16 3/8 x 11 5/8 in. | 41.6 x 29.5 cm. |1983
(unique)



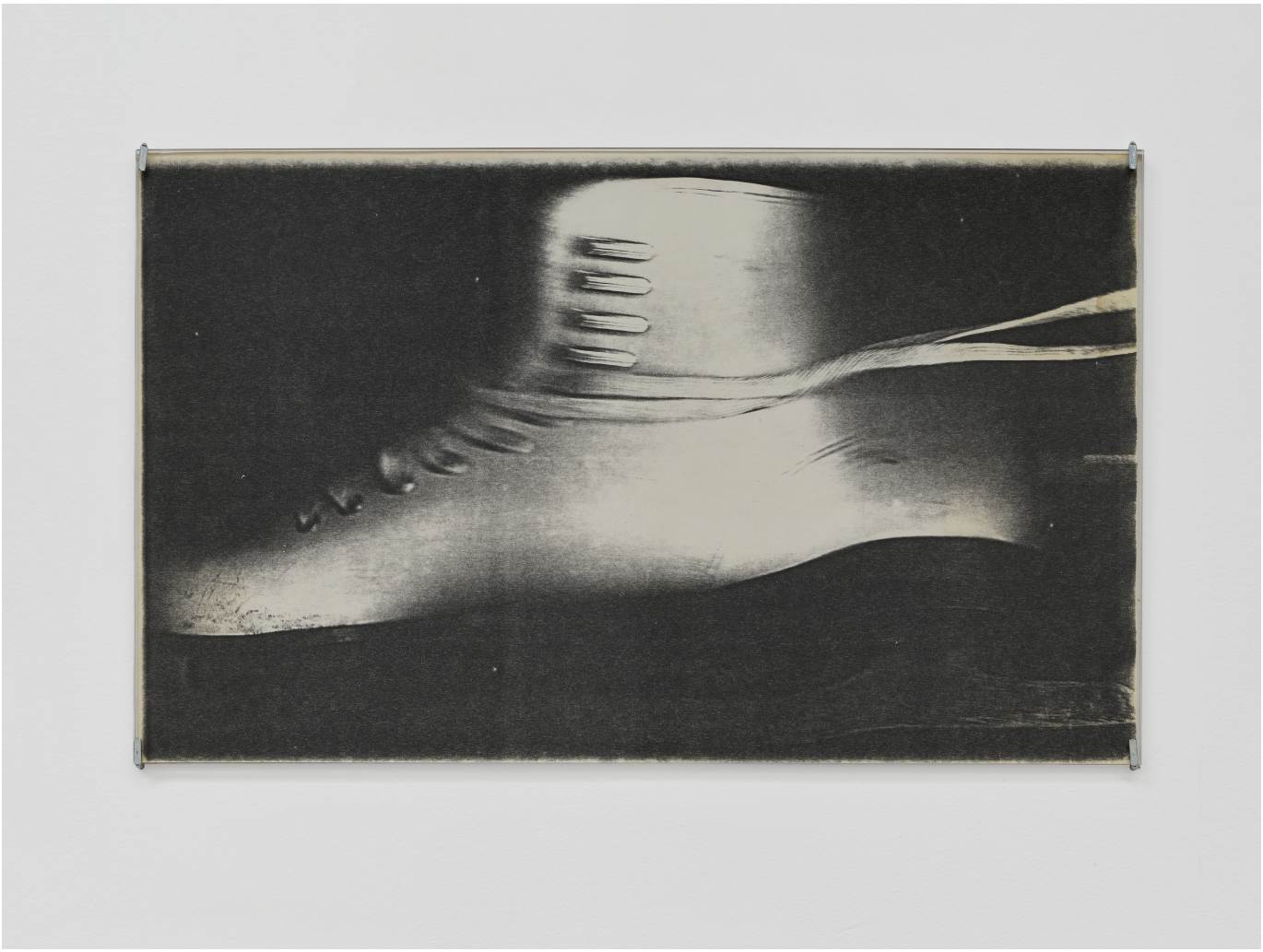
Ray Johnson
Untitled (Self Portrait with Fish, Shovel and Fahlen)
mixed media collage on corrugated cardboard
unframed: 32 x 8 1/4 in. | 81.3 x 21 cm. | dated: 8.18.93

Provenance:
Collection of the Ray Johnson Estate

Exhibitions:
Berlin, Museum Frieder Burda | Salon Berlin, JR – Adrian Piper – Ray Johnson, 2019



Joe Brainard
Untitled
pencil on paper
unframed: 14 x 11 in. | 35.6 x 27.9 cm. | n.d.



Pati Hill
Untitled (ice skate)
xerograph on paper
unframed: 8 1/2 x 14 in. | 21.5 x 35.5 cm. | c. 1977-1979
(unique)


NOT NOTHING
RAY JOHNSON
POP HEART SCHOOL RAY JOHNSON GHOST

