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INDEPENDENT NEW YORK SEES INCREASE IN FEMALE ARTIST SOLO PRESENTATIONS

By Katy Donoghue



The 2017 edition of **Independent New York** opens tomorrow to the public, with a private invitation-only preview today. On view through March 5, the fair will take place again at **Spring Studios** in Tribeca. *Whitewall* caught up with Creative Advisor **Matthew Higgs** and Executive Director **Laura Mitterrand** to hear about this year's site-specific projects, the increase in female artist solo presentations, and which fair first-timers to keep an eye out for.

WHITEWALL: The fair takes place at Spring Studios for the second time this year. How has the new home for Independent transformed the fair?

LAURA MITTERRAND: We kept a lot of the significant features that have made Independent unique, and yet the fair looks and feels very different in the new venue. Which is a good thing. We did seven Independent in our previous location, and even though the move was necessary, we felt we had explored most of the configurations and ways of making each edition of Independent feel new and fresh. The new space offers beautiful natural light, and even though it's technically smaller than our space in Chelsea, it feels grander.

WW: Independent feels unlike any other fair taking place in New York at this time of year. Why do you think gallerists and non-profit spaces feel comfortable taking a risk with either a solo or site-specific project at Independent?

MATTHEW HIGGS: Our hope for the Independent, from the outset, was to create a fair that privileged the artist, i.e. to create a context that artists and galleries would be excited about participating in, and consequently feel confident about presenting strong, idiosyncratic bodies of work. I think that the participating galleries understand that over the past eight years we have developed a focused and engaged international audience for Independent, an audience who are specifically interested in encountering new ideas. Independent—in its former home in Chelsea and now at Spring Studios—has always sought to create a viewing experience that mirrors the experience of visiting a gallery, and solo presentations can provide the visitor with an opportunity to consider an artist's work in depth.

WW: Can you tell us about any of site-specific projects planned for this year's edition?

LM: We have several booths that were conceived for Independent, complementing the open plan and natural light. For instance **Melike Kara** has created a superb presentation for **Peres Projects** that plays with the large bay windows of their space. Another work to look out for is by **Eric Schmid**, a young artist from Chicago who is showing with **Neue Alte Brucke**. He's installed his 'poems' which are plastic bags containing medication, it's surprising how fit their title is.

WW: The 2017 edition will see an unprecedented number of solo female artist presentations. Which booths should we be looking out for, and do you see this as an ongoing trend?

MH: We start our conversations with the invited galleries as early as possible, and encourage them to present work that we feel deserves a wider audience. For the 2017 Independent there will be a number of strong solo presentations by female artists—a development which we are keen to encourage, that includes **Garth Greenan Gallery's** presentation of **Howerdena Pindell's** seminal work which was included in the inaugural exhibition at PS1 in 1977; the Pictures generation artist **Barbara Bloom's** solo presentation at **David Lewis**; and **Jay Gorney's** presentation of **Anna Betebeze's** recent work, her first New York solo exhibition in a number of years.

WW: Independent has always rotated its exhibitor list each year. Who are some of the more emerging first-timers to watch for?

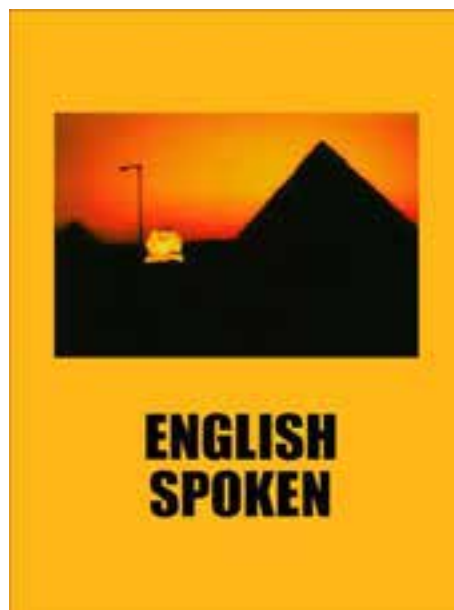
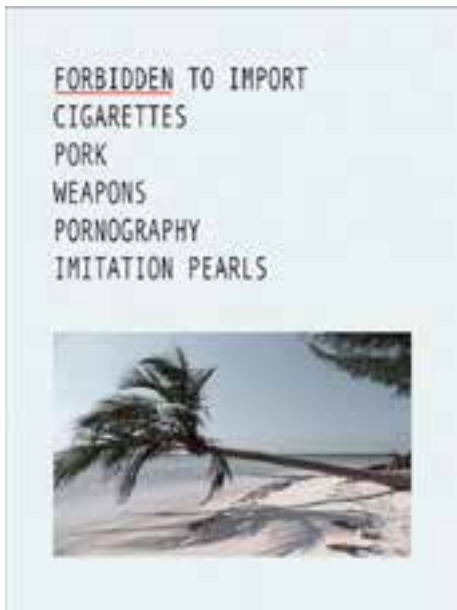
MH: Around 200 galleries are now part of the Independent family, and we continue to draw from this group for each iteration of the fair. We have always tried to keep Independent a focused experience for the visitor, and consequently we only invite around fifty galleries each time. We are always excited to introduce programs that might be new to some of our audience and in 2017 we can confirm the participation of more than 15 new exhibitors, including **Christophe Gaillard** from Paris, who will present the American solo debut of **Michel Journiac**; Vienna's **Galerie Mezzanin** whose program we have long admired; and **Adams** and **Ollman** from Portland, OR, whose program embraces folk and self-taught artists who are collaborating this year with New York's **JTT**.

WW: Looking ahead to April, what can we expect for the second edition of Independent in Brussels?

LM: For our second edition in Brussels we will have an impressive number of projects specifically conceived for Independent, **CLEARING** and **Galerie 1900-2000** will collaborate on a part of their booths, where the artists of one will pick from the inventory of the other; **Marcel Dzama** will curate a show around masks for **David Zwirner**; **Germaine Kruij** will make new site specific works for **The Approach**; **Guillaume Leblon** will conceive the entire booth for **Jocelyn Wolff**, **Project SD**, and **Carleir/Gebauer**. We have some very exciting new additions this year, some of which are returning participants as they've previously exhibited to our New York edition, such as **Mendes Wood DM**, who are concurrently opening a permanent space in Brussels, or **Parra & Romero**, or **Sprüth Magers**, as well as first timers to Independent, such as **Capitain Petzel** from Berlin and **UnitlThen** of Paris, just name a couple.



Howardena Pindell
Video Drawings: Boxing
1976
Garth Greenan Gallery, New York



Barbara Bloom
Travel Posters (Open 24 Hours) (English Spoken) (Did You Hear The One) (Forbidden) (Planned Abandon)
(Unlimited Miles) (No Journalists) (X-Ray Zone)
1981
Courtesy the artist and David Lewis, New York



ANNA BETBEZE
Vessels
2015
Courtesy of Jay Gorney



ANNA BETBEZE
Sludge
2015
Courtesy of Jay Gorney