

SOUTH LONDON GALLERY



PRESS RELEASE & CURATORS TOUR LAST SEEN ENTERING THE BILTMORE

Press View: Wednesday 25 June, 4-6pm

Curator Anna Gritz will give a tour at 5pm - [RSVP essential](#)

Exhibition Dates: 26 June – 14 September 2014

Main Gallery, Admission Free

**Richard Artschwager / Barbara Bloom / Guy de Cointet / Richard Healy /
Nan Hoover / Allison Katz / William Leavitt / Darius Mikšys / Ola Vasiljeva**

The living room of a modern apartment. A sliding glass door opens to a garden of tropical plants lit by colored spotlights. A large painting of a South American jungle cat is hung over the long sofa. A man of forty, dressed in sport coat and slacks, stands by the open doors. He is looking into the garden as a young woman comes into the room. He turns to face her.

William Leavitt, *The Tropics* (excerpt), 1974

Last Seen Entering the Biltmore is a group exhibition which brings together new commissions and existing works that summon ideas of artifice, reminiscent of stage sets and scenographic tools. Instead of conjuring illusionary environments, these works knowingly disclose a perspective from the "backstage".

Backstage, in this context, refers to a position that is witness to artistic transformation, experimentation and subversion; a space off-stage or screen where the demands of the centre stage do not apply. *Last Seen Entering the Biltmore* considers experiences mediated through thresholds such as the TV monitor, cinema screen, theatre curtain, and stage, as well as sets and props - objects suspended between rehearsal and ritual, mimicry and fiction.

Featuring a variety of media including painting, sculpture, film and installation, the exhibited works are less concerned with "the theatre" *per se* than with "the art of the theatre". This distinction was made by the British playwright Howard Barker and on this occasion is used in reference to instances when theatre is dragged from its confines and explored through another art form.

Works include American artist **William Leavitt's** scenic stage architectures, which are inspired by soap operas and the plays of Alain Robbe Grillet: sometimes they are built for plays, at other times they stand alone. His works elicit a blankness of southern Californian suburbs, of patios and bungalows, architecture of the oblique, paired with deadpan dialogues, which reveal the absurdity of the banal. **Allison Katz's** new commission for the exhibition combines her graphic work and painting, taking the form of a poster announcing, and

displayed alongside, a new large-scale painting. In *Color Pieces*, pioneering video artist **Nan Hoover** created spatial ambiguities through a muted colour spectrum and subtle play of shadows and lights that are as much a test or rehearsal as a final piece of work.

The title, *Last Seen Entering the Biltmore*, is taken from a collection of stories and plays by Gary Indiana, featuring plays such as *Alligator Girls Go to College* (1979) and *The Roman Polanski Story* (1981). Written for an informal theatre company, the plays offered a sort of community theatre for New York's underground art scene. The title refers to the events surrounding the case of Elisabeth Short, who was last seen entering the Biltmore Hotel in Los Angeles in 1947 before she was found murdered and became known as the Black Dahlia, elevated to iconic status by media frenzy in a city devoted to the production of artifice.

Last Seen Entering the Biltmore is curated by Anna Gritz, the South London Gallery's Associate Curator (Film, Performance and Talks).

With thanks to The Ministry of Culture of the Republic of Lithuania and the Institut Français du Royaume-Uni.

Accompanying Events

The exhibition is accompanied by a conversation between Allison Katz and Richard Healy about their works in the exhibition and their wider practice. In addition, there is a group screening, entitled *Marmalade Me*, that is inspired by the writings of Jill Johnston and brings together film and moving image works, in which the theatre's fourth wall disappears, revealing perspectives that are traditionally concealed from the spectator.

Biographies

Richard Artschwager (1923, Washington D.C.) first studied chemistry, biology, and mathematics at Cornell University, and then informal art studies under Amedée Ozenfant. His solo exhibitions include the Whitney Museum of American Art, New York (1988); Centre Pompidou, Paris (1988); Deutsche Guggenheim, Berlin (2003); and Kunstmuseum Winterthur (2003). In 2012, the Whitney Museum of American Art organised a comprehensive retrospective exhibition, which toured to Los Angeles Hammer Museum and Yale University Museum.

Born in Los Angeles in 1951, **Barbara Bloom** is an artist who can turn collections into riveting stories, objects into talismans, and an exhibition into a vortex. Her practice shows a deep care for the objects and histories that make up our collective cultural holdings – suggesting and coaxing us to will further dimensions into an experience of life – ones that are subjective, reflective and fuelled by the imagination.

Guy de Cointet (1934-1983) is a French artist who was based in Los Angeles from the late 1960 until the 1970s. This artist's enigmatic body of work inhabits a very poetic space of the written word and theatre. Working with language, performances, paintings and prints, de Cointet was heavily influenced by Raymond Rousset, and like him was interested in creating imaginary systems. He wrote entire books with invented coded languages, an approach which also informed his numerous drawings.

Artist **Richard Healy**, a graduate of the Royal College of Art, lives and works in London. He was born in 1980. His work encompasses a number of media including video, sculpture, installation and print. Selected exhibitions include: *I love you Me either*, Project Native Informant, London (2014); *Prone Positions*, Rowing, London (2013); *Vetiver*, Marian Cramer Projects, Amsterdam (2012); *But Mr Architect!*, Furnished Space, London (2012); *Dumb*, The Brno House of Art, Brno (2012); *Strategies for Building*, Outpost, Norwich (2011); *Young British Art*, Limoncello, London (2011); *Hey Guys!*, Fotograf, Prague (2011).

Nan Hoover (1931-2008) was an American-born artist, who worked primarily in Amsterdam. She produced formalist works that are highly sensual. Her video works have been exhibited at festivals and institutions internationally, including Documentas 6 and 8, Kassel, Germany; Stedelijk Museum, Amsterdam; Centre International d'Art Contemporain, Montreal; The Museum of Modern Art, New York; Kijkhuis, The Hague; Sydney Video Festival; Berlin Film Festival; Kunstmuseum, Bern; and Museum Folkwang, Essen, Germany.

Allison Katz was born in 1980 in Montreal, Canada. She graduated with an MFA from

Columbia University in 2008. Her recent solo exhibitions include *Adele* (Piper Keys, London), *Regardless* (Laura Bartlett, London), *Perra Perdida* (Lulu, Mexico City– in collaboration with Camilla Wills) and *The Thames started moving / someone in Oxford is running a bath* (Johan Berggren, Malmö). Forthcoming solo shows take place at Boatos, São Paulo and Kunstverein Freiburg.

Born in Washington, D.C. and currently living and working in Los Angeles, **William Leavitt** is among a generation of Los Angeles artists integral to the development of conceptual art in the 1960s and early 70s. Drawing on the fictions and fantasies that power Los Angeles' chief industry as well as its singular architectural landscape, Leavitt's distinctive body of work consists of distilled filmic moments that are familiar, yet estranged. His recent solo exhibitions include *Sidereal Time*, gta Exhibitions, Institute of the History and Theory of Architecture, Zurich (April-May 2014); *Space Junk*, Greene Naftali, New York (2013); *Tensile Structures*, Margo Leavin Gallery, Los Angeles (2012); *Theater Objects*, Museum of Contemporary Art, Los Angeles (2011); and *Warp Engines*, LAXART, Los Angeles (2009). Leavitt staged his play *Habitat* at The Kitchen, New York in May 2013.

Darius Mikšys was born in 1969 in Lithuania. His varied projects include the attempted production of Gilles Peterson's shroud; proposing an ABBA museum in Qantas plane for Tempelhof airport in Berlin; creating a body of sculptures titled *My Jeff Koons*; organizing performance series *Artists' Parents' Meeting*; and establishing the very first Lithuanian cricket club named *Abdul Aziz's Holiday IX*. Mikšys has recently shown work at the ICA, London, 7th Shenzhen Sculpture Biennale, the 54th Venice Biennale 2011 and at numerous international institutions.

Ola Vasiljeva was born in 1981 in Latvia and lives and works in Amsterdam, Netherlands. Recent solo exhibitions include *Jargot*(2014) at Art in General, New York; *Prix de Rome*, de Appel, Amsterdam, Netherlands (2013); *Cinq à sept, kim?*, Contemporary Art Centre, Riga, Latvia (2013); *OAOA Vestibule*, Galerie van Gelder, Netherlands (2012); among others.

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Image: William Leavitt, Cutaway View, 2008. Mixed-media installation with acrylic-on-canvas painting. Courtesy of the artist and Greene Naftali, New York

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