

September 20, 2019

PRESS CONTACT

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Curator

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***On Guard NY* curated by Kasia Kay**

Kasia Kay Art Projects and The Storefront Project are pleased to present **On Guard NY**, a group exhibition curated by Kasia Kay, to be on view at The StoreFront Project from October 30 - December 1, 2019. The opening reception for On Guard NY takes place on October 30th, 6-9PM.

The Storefront Project is located at 70 Orchard Street North, New York, NY 10002. Gallery Hours are Tuesday - Sunday 1-6 PM. For more information contact 646.319.2220 or [g@storefrontproject.com](mailto:g@storefrontproject.com). Or Kasia Kay 312-543-6783 and [kasia@kasiakayartprojects.co](mailto:kasia@kasiakayartprojects.co).

On Guard NY is meant to be a reminder of the courage within all of us and to empower viewers to fight for their rights on both personal and collective levels.

The show compares athleticism to the nature of life: keeping us on our feet and on guard at all times. Competitive sports are a performance business and, in this sense, it easily translates to an exhibition.

Once representing masculine destructivity, sports are now a form of femme empowerment.

On Guard NY unites several contemporary female identifying artists exploring sports and women's involvement in them. Using athletic games as a vehicle to examine social, cultural and political changes in a global context through traditional and non-traditional depictions of sport related imagery.

Multifaceted components of identities and practices are also present in the exhibition. With a multisensory experience featuring interdisciplinary works, the show examines not only courage and fears, strength and vulnerability, but also challenges preconceived notions and realities of safety, womanhood, combat, violence and resilience.

On Guard is a two-part exhibition, and it was initiated at Matthew Rachman Gallery in Chicago in November 2018.

On Guard was inspired by the book "Life Doesn't Frighten Me," which combines poetry by renowned author and activist Maya Angelou with illustrations by artist Jean-Michel Basquiat. Angelou's simple and empowering sentences, accompanied by the visually strong images of Basquiat's works, deliver the overall message that life's fears can be dispelled through the power of faith in ourselves.

Artists include: **Katya Bankowsky with Maya Angelou, and Katya Bankowsky with Michele Lamy, Zoë Buckman, Megan Euker, Kasia Kay, Tara Lewis, Betsy Odom, Mimi Plange, Cheryl Pope, Annabelle Schlesinger, Marcela Torres and Amina Zoubir.**

**Katya Bankowsky** is a New York-based director whose work includes the award-winning movie "Shadow Boxers," and many art and music videos. Her work includes TV commercials, branded entertainment and digital campaigns for clients including the NFL, NBA, US Olympics, and more. Two of her short films are featured in *On Guard NY*. "Battle Royale" is an on-going short collaboration between Bankowsky and French fashion icon Michele Lamy about their mutual obsession with boxing and its poetic contradictions. Katya writes, directs and co-stars with Lamy. "Amazement Awaits" is a poem written and performed by Maya Angelou at the request of the US Olympic Committee. Bankowsky filmed Angelou reciting the poem in her Harlem brownstone, then intercut it with archival Olympic footage. The film was projected in the Olympic Pavilion during the Beijing Olympics as an inspiration for the young athletes.

**Zoë Buckman** is a multi-disciplinary artist working in sculpture, installation, and photography, exploring themes of Feminism, mortality, and equality. Her work toes the line between masculine and feminine, industrial and handmade, craft and "high" art, personal and collective. Buckman aims to make her work accessible to all in order to make space for a dialogue on the topic of gender equality and the violence against women. *On Guard NY* features her work that juxtaposes traditionally effeminate mediums and imagery with masculin physicality of boxing glove forms. Buckman's work has been shown in solo exhibitions including Heavy Rag, at Albertz Benda, New York, Let Her Rave at Gavlak Gallery Los Angeles, Imprison Her Soft Hand at Project for Empty Space, Newark; Every Curve at PAPILLION ART, Los Angeles; and Present Life at Garis & Hahn Gallery, New York. Buckman has shown in Institutional and Gallery group exhibitions internationally. Buckman studied at the International Center of Photography (ICP), was awarded an Art Matters Grant in 2017, and lives and works in Brooklyn.

**Cheryl Pope** is an interdisciplinary visual artist that questions and responds to issues of identity as it relates to the individual and the community, specifically in regards to race, gender, class, history, power and place. Her practice emerges from the act and politics of listening, and the majority of her work relates to various sports culture. "Up Against" performance video is featured in *On Guard NY*. Pope received her BFA and Master's in Design from the School of the Art Institute, Chicago, where she is now an Adjunct Professor. Pope studied under artist Nick Cave for twelve years, was a teaching artist at the Museum of Contemporary Art for seven years, and worked in multiple community based organizations throughout Chicago. Recent exhibitions and projects include her solo at Rockford Art Museum, Rockford, IL (2019), Declaration, the inaugural exhibition at the Institute of Contemporary Art, Richmond, VA (2018); Queen's University, Belfast, Northern Ireland (2018). A recipient of a 2015 3Arts Award, Pope's work is in the collections of the Museum of Contemporary Art, Chicago; Joan Flasche Artist's Book Collection, Chicago; Seattle Art Museum, WA; and Museum of Fine Arts, Richmond, VA. A native Chicagoan, Pope is currently based between Chicago and New York. She is represented by Monique Meloche Gallery and Galleria Bianconi.

**Marcela Torres** is a social strategist, bringing into action performance, objects, workshops and sound installation. Torres pairs alternative learning methods with martial arts, creating a platform for the audience to witness a true representation of conflict. In *On Guard NY*, Torres exhibits photography and performs "Agentic Mode," deconstructing martial art techniques while experimenting with sound. Torres's motions build an audial symphony as a means to represent the complicated mind-space of violence, the fine line of victim, aggressor, and retaliation. Torres has performed at the Museum of Contemporary Art Chicago, Three Walls Gallery, Performances is Alive: Miami Art Week, Detroit's Fringe Festival, New York City's Itinerant Festival and Virtual International Exchange in Boston. Torres has exhibited work at the Flatlands Gallery in Houston Texas, Fosdick Nelson Gallery at Alfred University, Acre Gallery in Chicago and Green Gallery at Yale School of Art.

**Mimi Plange** is a founder of her own eponymous luxury ready-to-wear fashion brand MP. Africa remains a limitless font of inspiration for the Ghanaian-born designer, who constantly seeks out the unusual in African traditions, landscapes and lore, and reinterprets these themes in a refreshingly modern way. MP clothes are aimed at the new, international and democratically-minded consumer. For the *On Guard NY* exhibition, Plange creates intricately decorated boxing gloves that express the idea of individuality and identity. She tells a story of what it means to stand out in a sea of white noise and fight for what you believe in most, you.

A graduate of the San Francisco Fashion Institute of Design and Merchandising, MP holds a degree in Architecture from the University of California at Berkeley. She has received many acclaims and awards for her work in the fashion industry, including International Emerging Designer of the Year in 2011 at the Mercedes-Benz Africa Fashion Week held in South Africa. The year after, she was named Designer of the Year. In 2017 Plange took part in the Celebration of Design Event hosted by Michelle Obama at the White House. Her work has been featured in many prestigious international magazines, including The NYT, Vogue.com, Ebony Magazine, and many more.

**Megan Euker** explores the narratives and histories that objects hold. She questions how changing materials and fabrication methods alters meaning. With the final form becoming wood, cast metal sculptures and printed words, she goes after that which is considered golden, precious, impermanent and irreplaceable as in the athlete's body, accessories and personal stories. Her works include sculptures and a nonfiction book of stories, relics and images linked through the sport of boxing. Some examples include 3D-scanned and CNC (computer-numerical-control) routed wood sculptures based on HAE's boxing shoes from the prestigious 1939 Golden Gloves competition.

Several of her sculptures and paintings are exhibited in *On Guard NY*.

Megan Euker has the MFA degree from The School of the Art Institute Chicago, where she also teaches. She has exhibited internationally.

**Kasia Kay** works in bronze, ceramics and paper. Within each medium, her stylistic approaches may vary, though there are common themes across all of them. She is influenced by daily life, introspection, various cultures and history. Kay challenges conventional methods in the art world both as an artist and an art curator, through interdisciplinary methods and exhibitions in public spaces. She exhibits a couple of her sculptures in *On Guard NY*. In *Soft Touch*, she juxtaposes notions of demure and delicate feminine sensibilities with the strong feminist fighter quality. It's also Kay's homage to Meret Oppenheim's "Object" (Paris, 1936). #LDFM, a pairing of a soft, leather and hard, bronze boxing gloves signifies a shift of one's perception about intensity of an experience of the struggle, accomplishment and endurance. The work reflects on the "Life Doesn't Frighten Me" book, a direct inspirations for her curation of *On Guard*.

Kasia Kay has a BFA degree from Columbia College Chicago, where she studied curatorial practices and art criticism, as well as ceramics, paper and metal casting. She has participated in multiple art residences in the US. Kay has also gained curatorial education from European Cultural Academy in Venice, Italy, and NODE Curatorial Studies Center, Berlin, Germany.

**Betsy Odom** employs techniques that are often associated with masculinity and plays with stereotypical associations around gender, sexuality, and sports. The works, with subtly interjected artist's humor, challenge perceptions of the craft as decorative or lacking in conceptual rigor, and instead complicate how gender and identity are projected onto materials, objects, and ideas.

Couple of Odom's sculptures are exhibited in *On Guard NY*.

The artist received her MFA from Yale University School of Art and her BFA from the San Francisco Art Institute. She is the recipient of numerous grants and awards including a DCASE Grant, Illinois Arts Council Artist Grant, and West collection Acquisition Prize. Recent solo and group exhibitions include *Everlast* at Corbett vs. Dempsey, *Let's Be Honest* at 4th Ward Project Space in Chicago, *Oh No* at Terrain Projects in Oak Park, IL, and *Freedom Culture* at The Journal Gallery in Brooklyn, NY.

**Annabelle Schlesinger** is a 17 year old painter and student. She has been studying and exhibiting painting, drawing and glass blowing since she was 5 years old.

"Fight Like a Girl" painting that is exhibited in On Guard NY, was inspired by #metoo" movement and hypermasculinity. Annabelle wanted to suggest new perspectives and evoke a potential for new reality for women and men. In the end, one's 'masculinity' or 'femininity' do not define who one is, but instead, it is an individual's strength of character that will impact the world. This is Schlesinger's first gallery exhibition, and we're very excited to show her work.

**Tara Lewis** is a multidisciplinary artist, primarily producing paintings and photographs that dive into youth culture anthropology with a pop twist. Lewis creates large scale oil portraits of models wearing t-shirts, pageant sashes and other wearables designed and printed by the artist that center on evolving perceptions of youth, irreverence, identity, teen trends, girl empowerment, social issues and pop culture, often referring to pre-internet sources in re-freshed and boldly mundane ways. The Preppy Handbook, Seventeen, various movies and MTV stand as huge inspirations for oil portraits. Lewis shows a couple of paintings from her "Most Likely" series in On Guard NY.

Lewis designs and prints her own text idioms onto wearable objects such as sashes, t-shirts, trophies and ping pong paddles, which she considers unique limited edition print objects. These objects re-examine stereotypes & explore timeless youth culture and serve as a trampoline for artworks. The interaction of word & image is central to her work. The models in her works bring their own character and prop handling to the shoot, which is a collaborative process.

Lewis has spent over a decade as a Professor and Chair of the Department of Art at Phillips Exeter Academy, a New England prep boarding school and pursued her undergraduate art degree at the University of New Hampshire and graduate degree at Tufts University and The School of the Museum of Fine Arts, Boston.

**Amina Zoubir** lives and works between Paris (France) and Algiers (Algeria). She is an artist, filmmaker and video art curator. **Currently, Amina Zoubir is one of four artists representing Algeria at The Venice Biennale 2019.** The Algeria Pavilion, "Time to Shine Bright," May 11- November 24, Fondamenta S. Giuseppe 925, Venice.

On Guard NY features Zoubir's mixed-media work that delivers a message of the courage to empower. With immaterial language laser-carved in a solidified wax block, the work is a play with issues of transience and permanence.

Zoubir has a Master degree in theory and practice of contemporary art and in new media from the University Paris 8, and DESA in graphic design from the School of Fine Arts of Algiers. She is currently pursuing her Ph.D research at the AIAC laboratory (art of images, contemporary art) at the University Paris 8. Zoubir's career spans many productive years and her work has been extensively exhibited internationally.

*Kasia Kay Art Projects presents curatorial projects and pop-up shows in collaboration with art and cultural partners while exposing both local and international artists at various stages of their careers. Founder and curator Kasia Kay was a highly respected gallerist and art dealer prior to focusing on curatorial work. She has worked with an international clientele and participated in renowned international art fairs since 2006. Interested in eliminating a conventional experience from the gallery space, she has curated and produced exhibition projects and site-specific installations at venues in Chicago, Miami and New York.*

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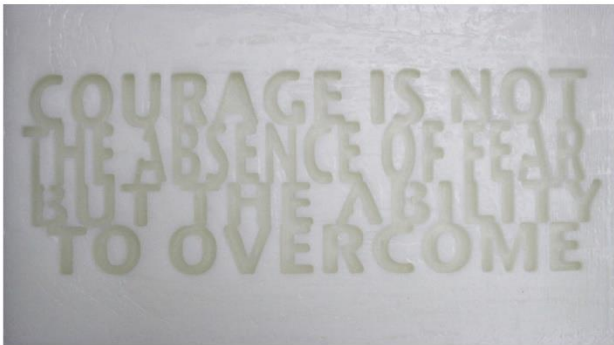




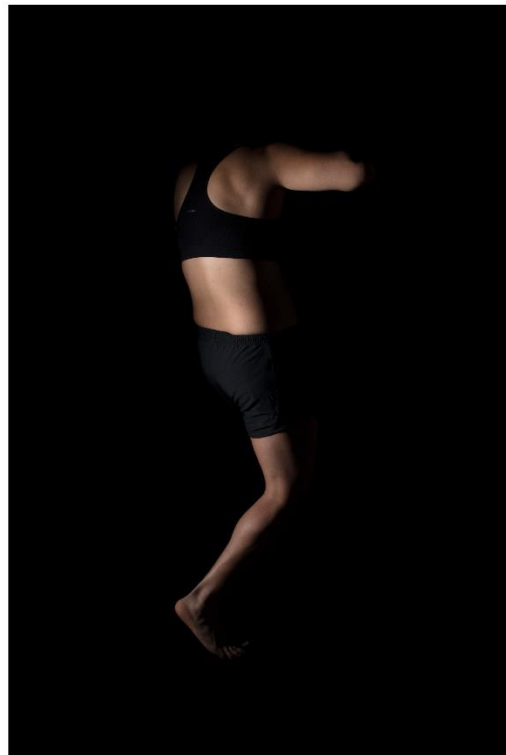
Tara Lewis  
Most Likely II, 2019  
Oil on Canvas  
48"Wx60"Hx1.25"D



Betsy Odom  
Bulldog 10: Mitt, 2018  
Tooled leather, paint, fabric, webbing, grommets  
12 x 12 x 7"



Amina Zoubir  
Courage, 2017-2019  
Wax Material, 19x11.5x2in, Ed. 3



Marcela Torres  
The Podium #1, 2016  
Photograph by Jesse Meredith  
Edition of 5  
60" h x 40" w