

# Polarities

6 Sep — 14 Oct 2018 at the Totah in New York, United States



Totah presents Polarities, a group exhibition spanning film, photography, sculpture, drawing, and painting, as well as more interstitial media. Polarities features 47 artists, both historical and living.

The idea of the exhibition began with a black and white photograph taken in Detroit by Brandon Ralph. Extending upon the visual themes captured in this work, Polarities overlaps, combines, and gently teases out the dichotomies between black and white scales of coloration, welcoming contrast as much as fulfillment in extremes.

Contributions by Huguetta Caland and R.B. Kitaj capture an anarchic grace and socially-liberated performativity. Caland's Untitled (1970) oil on linen work seems to line up the faces of potential suitors like dresses on a rack. While R.B. Kitaj's oil on charcoal work Primo (1969) stands out as

bridging a long-standing continuity between the concerns of utopian protest from the 1960s and the tenor of political realities experienced today. Contrasting vulnerability and nakedness with the militaristic presence of General Franco, Kitaj's *Primo* humorously embarrasses the purported authority of officialdom and power.

Mel Bochner's painting *Obliterate* similarly dramatizes the conflict between official representations and the social praxis that would undermine them. The painting features the titular word "obliterate", drippingly withdrawn from legibility. As a counterpoint to Bochner's black on black construct, Enrico Castellani's *Superficie Bianca* (or "white surface") signals a withdrawal from the imagistic conventions associated with painting, lingering somewhere between the tactility of sculpture and the formal interests of abstraction. Helen Pashgian's sphere, meanwhile, marks the first time she has used black dye in this particular body of work since the beginning of her career.

Playing off the idea of antipodal extremes creatively informing each other, *Polarities* demonstrates not only the overarching thematic of black and white colored schemata, but showcases the unique way in which coloration can become an instrument toward the destabilization of contrasts.

In the screening room, Gordon Matta-Clark's performance-oriented film *Tree Dance* (1971) will run throughout the exhibition.

Artists featured in *Polarities*: Eve Aschheim, David Austen, Robert Baras, Jean-Michel Basquiat, Lisa Beck, Isak Berbic, Mel Bochner, Alighiero Boetti, William Eric Brown, Alberto Burri, Huguette Caland, Enrico Castellani, Vija Celmins, Anne Collier, George Condo, Dan Covert, Gino De Dominicis, Adeline de Monseignat, Mara De Luca, Aleksandar Duravcevic, TR Ericsson, Alison Hall, Keith Haring, Adam Henry, Samuel Jablon, R.B. Kitaj, David Klamen, Franz Kline, Sherrie Levine, Gordon Matta-Clark, Matthew Metzger, Jonathan Owen, Luca Pancrazzi, Helen

Pashgian, Pablo Picasso, Nathlie Provosty, Brandon Ralph, Paula Rego, Ad Reinhardt, Robert Ryman, Kenny Scharf, Jordan Seiler, Alex Sewell, Joel Shapiro, Cindy Sherman, Beuford Smith, and Andy Warhol.