

MATTHEW MARKS GALLERY

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ARTFORUM

CRITICS' PICKS

New York

“So I traveled a great deal. I met George, Ebbe, Joy, Philip, Jack, Robert, Dora, Harold, Jerome, Ed, Mike, Tom, Bill, Harvey, Sheila, Irene, John, Michael, Mertis, Gai-fu, Jay, Jim, Anne, Kirby, Allen, Peter, Charles, Drummond, Cassandra, Pamela, Marilyn, Lewis, Ted, Clayton, Cid, Barbara, Ron, Richard, Tony, Paul, Anne, Russell, Larry, Link, Anthea, Martin, Jane, Don, Fatso, Clark, Anja, Les, Sue, and Brian.”

**MATTHEW MARKS GALLERY | 522 WEST 22ND STREET
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July 6–August 18**

One of the pleasures of this exhibition is seeing artists deviate from their typical mediums: Witness the suite of trance-inducing drawings by the filmmaker Jordan Belson, poet Joanne Kyger's heady video that riffs on Descartes, and a series of low-res street photographs by the poet Tisa Walden. A romantic sense of freedom blossoms here, which could be linked to the fact that all of the featured artists hail from Northern California (and were alive during the Summer of Love fifty years ago). Also on view are brightly hued taxonomic paintings of nudibranchs on pitch-black backgrounds by Isabella Kirkland, exquisite abstract wooden sculptures by Robert Strini, and large-format photorealist paintings of domestic interiors by Jack Mendenhall. All sing the body electric.

Organized by the artist Vincent Fecteau and the curator Jordan Stein, the elegant show takes its lengthy title from a line in Kyger's video, wherein she recites her poem *Descartes and the Splendor Of* via voice-over. Like the rest of the works, her piece is an excellent prompt for thinking about *ekstasis*, a philosophical standing outside the self and testing the limits of finitude, which in some mystic traditions leads to a union with a nonhuman divine entity. In *Descartes*, 1968, the only video Kyger ever made, she articulates her ontological argument of “Mother God,” who has “created all.” “I think hence I am. Or I doubt hence I am. Or I spin hence I am. Or I reject hence I am. You get the picture,” she notes. Each section of the work's six parts is distinguished by varying early video effects, and throughout she reconciles the quotidian with the ecstatic—by puffing on a cigarette and lounging on a couch in one scene, while the voice-over lays out her heuristic proof. In a way, the show feels like a memorial to the free-form thinking of this undervalued poet-mystic, who passed away this past March in Bolinas at eighty-two.



Joanne Kyger, *Descartes*, 1968, single-channel video, black-and-white, sound, 11 minutes 14 seconds.

— Lauren O'Neill-Butler