



Even cowboys get the blues

March 29 – May 3, 2025

Martha Edelheit

Wayne Koestenbaum

Martin Laborde

Thomas Lanigan-Schmidt

Bruce Pavlow

Ben Taylor

curated by

Baptiste Pinteaux



Martha Edelheit, David S., seated with hands clasped, c. 1971
Pencil on paper, 21.6 x 27.9 cm

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press release

After nearly thirty years in Sweden, last summer **Martha Edelheit** returned to Manhattan's Fifth Avenue where she had begun her career in the early 1960s as a painter, and, more discreetly, as a filmmaker, by way of a few charming short films signed "Martie Marbles". When I visited her last February, she was working on a large canvas: a nude portrait of a couple of friends languidly sprawling on a bed of spring flowers. Her assistant, a young painter with magnificent blonde curls, looked as though he had stepped straight out of the drawings she made in 1971 – works soaked in a raw, sunlit eroticism, that are exhibited here for the first time.

Less than a decade separates these nostalgic apparitions (a portrait of Susan Sontag and other ghosts of early 1970s America) from the photographs that **Bruce Pavlow** took in San Francisco in 1978, most of which depict gay and trans people who had found refuge in the same house to rest up and to make some new friends, before maybe hitting the road again together. The gentleness of the photographs and the peacefulness that emanates from them is almost enough to make one forget the content of the film Pavlow was shooting at the same time: as its title suggests, *Survival House* relates their harsh journeys and the hostility of American society that brought these people together, revealing the underbelly of a dream that his second mid-length film, *M.A.S.S.*, deconstructs by reducing Hollywood to its barest expression: a world of mechanical clichés.

Wayne Koestenbaum's entire body of work is infused with a similar but very different passion for cinema, whose mythological figures (young male leads and forgotten starlets) and raw erotic power he takes up in his 16mm films, his literary collages, and the nudes he sketches in his New York studio. Koestenbaum is also a musician. One only has to watch his ingenious films, whose soundtracks he composes and performs himself on piano: the way they are structured around a simple and deceptively random melody, enriched by multiple and subtle harmonics; their vigorous simplicity, the joyful sense of improvisation, and the unabashed thrill of experimentation that drives them.

It is not stars and starlets but rather small, chubby cherubs that populate the illustrations on tissue boxes that **Thomas Lanigan-Schmidt** has been creating over the past two years. They seem to travel through circuits of wires and manifest themselves in a lightbulb, or else appear in the reflection of a window or the background of a television screen. These small "chamber sculptures" (as in "chamber music,") have the same fragility that characterizes many of his assemblages from the early 1970s. These cut-out portraits of sportsmen and beefcakes infused with a flamboyant masculinity have been suspended for the past fifty years in a mixture of glitter, tinsel, cardboard, plastic bags, and staples – a way of freezing a fantasy with the irresistible appeal of a pornographic B-movie, at once flashy, clichéd, and seemingly forever on the verge of deflating.

Their joyful, overflowing eroticism lights up the whole exhibition, calling forth an emotion that finds an echo in **Martin Laborde's** collages: in their apparent simplicity, which serves as a deliberate caricature of a muddled and urgent desire; in their deliberate choice to strip the medium down to its bare essentials (packaging, magazines, printer paper); in their repetition and in their refusal to speak to anything other than what they are, namely a simple operation of selection, sampling, and synthesis. Through a strange reversal, these little agglomerations ultimately attain a materiality close to the clippings that make them up, becoming innuendos on glossy paper once again.

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Amidst these composite, sometimes dissonant and anachronistic forms, **Ben Taylor**'s work stands out for the quality of his images – flat, ultra-defined, and instantaneous – whose subjects seem to surface from liquid prints. Nearly fifty years after Pavlow, he sketches out the portrait of a generation that remembers those who came before and, by representing themselves, strives to carry the memory of forgotten genealogies, both human and aesthetic. The carefully defined yet clumsy appearance of these apparitions and the welcome optimism that radiates from them enter into a seductive resonance with the works of each of the other artists present in the exhibition.

In a conversation a few days before the opening of the exhibition, Wayne Koestenbaum described it as “a piece for a chamber orchestra” or “a sextet for unusual instruments.” And indeed there are six rather unusual instruments here, both in terms of the sounds they produce and the ways in which they are used. The different bodies of work all seem to have developed in a field that was somehow unfavorable to them, finding their way in the shadow of other, more significant practices by embracing “minor” registers. Together, they create a singular melody – something a lonesome cowboy might sing to keep himself going as he crossed the desert, and a tune that others might pick up and whistle in turn.

Baptiste Pinteaux

The exhibition is accompanied by a limited-run publication featuring a series of erotic texts by the artists in the exhibition (Martha Edelheit, Wayne Koestenbaum) and by other writers (**Riley Mac, James Robert Baker**).

Thanks to Ana Baliza, Alice Centamore, James Horton, Sibylle de Laurens, Théo Pessa and Sofi Sinibaldi.

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communiqué de presse

Après trente ans passés en Suède, **Martha Edelheit** regagnait l'été dernier New York, la 5ème avenue de Manhattan où elle avait entamé sa carrière de peintre et celle plus discrète de cinéaste (quelques courts métrages réjouissants signés « Martie Marbles ») au début des années 1960. Quand je lui ai rendu visite en février dernier, elle travaillait sur une grande toile, le portrait d'un couple d'amis nus, alanguis sur un parterre de fleurs. Son assistant, un jeune peintre radieux couronné de boucles blondes semblait tout droit sorti des dessins qu'elle réalisait en 1971, baignés d'un érotisme cru et solaire, exposés aujourd'hui pour la première fois.

Moins de dix ans séparent ces apparitions nostalgiques (le portrait de Susan Sontag, les fantômes de l'Amérique du début des années 1970), des portraits que **Bruce Pavlow** réalise à San Francisco en 1978 : des hommes gays pour la plupart et des personnes trans ayant trouvé refuge dans une maison communautaire le temps de se refaire une santé, rencontrer de nouveaux amis avec qui prendre la route. La douceur des photographies, le calme qui s'en dégage, feraient presque oublier ce que le film que Pavlow réalise au même moment (au titre plus explicite, *Survival House*), fait voir : les trajectoires heurtées qui les ont conduits jusqu'ici, l'hostilité de la société américaine et les coulisses d'un rêve que son second moyen-métrage (*M.A.S.S.*) décompose en réduisant Hollywood à sa plus simple expression : un monde de clichés mécaniques.

Toute l'œuvre de **Wayne Koestenbaum** est elle aussi traversée par sa passion pour le cinéma – ses figures mythologiques (jeunes premiers flamboyants et starlettes oubliées du muet), sa puissance érotique, déclinée dans les films qu'il tourne en 16 mm, ses collages littéraires, les nus qu'il réalise dans son atelier new-yorkais. Wayne Koestenbaum est aussi musicien. Il suffit pour s'en convaincre de voir ses films qu'il accompagne au piano, leur façon de se construire sur une mélodie simple et faussement aléatoire, complexifiée par de multiples harmoniques, et de constater le goût réjouissant de l'improvisation, la joie d'une expérimentation décomplexée qui y préside.

Ce ne sont pas des stars mais des angelots dodus qui peuplent la plupart des illustrations que **Thomas-Lanigan Schmidt** réalise depuis près de deux ans sur des boîtes à mouchoir. Ils y voyagent dans un circuit de câbles et surgissent dans une ampoule, le reflet d'une vitre ou d'une télévision. Ces petites sculptures « de chambre » (comme il y a des musiques de...) ont la même fragilité que les assemblages qu'il réalise au début des années 1970. Ce n'est pas de la résine, mais une matière de paillettes, de guirlandes, de cartons, de sacs plastiques et d'agrafes qui enferme depuis cinquante ans des portraits d'hommes miniatures à la virilité excentrique – un moyen de figer un fantasme à la fois tape-à-l'œil, cliché, et prêt à se dégonfler à tout moment comme dans un film porno de série B.

Leur érotisme joyeux, à la fois fantasque et mainstream, éclaire toute l'exposition. L'émotion qu'ils procurent se retrouve dans les collages de **Martin Laborde**, leur simplicité apparente, la caricature assumée qui y est faite d'un désir brouillon, le choix de réduire au maximum son médium (des emballages, des magazines, des feuilles d'imprimante), leur répétition, et le refus de discuter d'autre chose que ce qu'ils sont, une opération simple : sélection, prélèvement, synthèse. Par un retournement étrange, ces petits condensés retrouvent finalement une matérialité proche de celles des coupures qui les composent : des sous-entendus sur papier glacé.

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Au milieu de ces formes recomposées, parfois anachroniques, l'œuvre de **Ben Taylor** se détache par la facture de ses images plates, ultra-définie, où le sujet semble poussé à la surface d'une impression liquide. Près de cinquante ans après Pavlow, elles dessinent le portrait d'une génération qui se souvient de celles qui l'ont précédée et fait l'effort, en se représentant, de porter le souvenir de généalogies humaines et esthétiques oubliées. Ces apparitions, à la fois volontaire et maladroite, sont portées par un optimisme bienvenu, qui se retrouve chez tous les artistes réunie.s ici.

Dans un échange précédant de quelques jours l'ouverture de l'exposition, Wayne Koestenbaum l'imaginait comme « une pièce pour orchestre de chambre », « a sextet for unusual instruments ». Il s'agit en effet de six instruments atypiques, à la fois par le son qu'ils produisent et la manière qu'ils ont d'être utilisés. Chacune des œuvres exposées aujourd'hui semble s'être développée sur un terrain qui ne lui était a priori pas favorable, à l'ombre d'une autre pratique plus importante, en embrassant des registres « mineurs », par intermittence. Ensemble, elles produisent une mélodie singulière, quelque chose que pourrait siffloter pour se donner du courage un cowboy traversant le désert, et être repris par d'autres en sifflotant.

Baptiste Pinteaux

L'exposition est accompagnée d'une publication en tirage limité, qui rassemble une série de textes érotiques écrits par les artistes de l'exposition (Martha Edelheit, Wayne Koestenbaum), et d'autres (**Riley Mac, James Robert Baker**).

Merci à Ana Baliza, Alice Centamore, James Horton, Sibylle de Laurens, Théo Pesso et Sofi Sinibaldi.

MARTHA EDELHEIT

Born in 1931 in New York, United States

Lives and works in New York, United States

Martha Edelheit was born in New York City in 1931, where she lived until moving to Sweden in 1993. She recently moved back to Manhattan. She is known for both her frank depictions of sexuality and her lush and vivid work is at once critical, sensual, and humorous.

Edelheit studied at the University of Chicago, New York University, and Columbia University in the 1950s where she studied with artist Michael Loew and art historian Meyer Schapiro. She established herself in the center of the downtown avant-garde, becoming a member of the Reuben Gallery where her first solo show was held in 1960. She, like other members Jim Dine, Rosalyn Drexler, Allan Kaprow, Claes Oldenberg, Lucas Samaras, and Robert Whitman, were expanding the definitions of art-making with the creation of Happenings and experimental objects.

By the early 1970s, Edelheit became involved in the Women's Art Movement as an activist and art worker amongst other movement (The Women's Caucus for Art, the Women's Institute for Freedom of the Press). She was also a member of Fight Censorship, alongside other women artists foregrounding eroticism, including Joan Semmel, Judith Bernstein, and Hannah Wilke.

Her work has been included in museum exhibitions internationally, including Kunsthalle Bielefeld, Germany, Fondation Vincent Van Gogh, Arles, France or the Jewish Museum, New York, among others. It will be featured in the 2025 exhibition *Sixties Surreal* at the Whitney Museum of American Art. She curated the exhibition *Erotic City* currently on view at the Eric Firestone Gallery in New York.

WAYNE KOESTENBAUM

Born in 1958 in San José, California, United States

Lives and works in New York, United States

Wayne Koestenbaum is a poet, critic, novelist, artist and performer. He is the author of more than twenty books, including *Camp Marmalade*, *Best-Selling Jewish Porn Films*, *Andy Warhol* and *The Queen's Throat*. His essays and poems have been widely published in periodicals and anthologies, including *The New Yorker*, *The New York Times*, *The Paris Review* or *Artforum*. His literary archive is in the Yale Collection of American Literature at Yale's Beinecke Rare Book and Manuscript Library.

Koestenbaum has exhibited his own paintings in solo shows at White Columns, 356 Mission, and more currently at Gattopardo, Los Angeles. His first piano/vocal record, *Lounge Act*, was released by Ugly Duckling Presse Records in 2017; he has given musical performances of his improvisatory Sprechstimme soliloquies at The Kitchen, REDCAT, Centre Pompidou, Walker Art Center, The Artist's Institute, and the Renaissance Society.

Koestenbaum's brief essay-films, originally seen on Instagram are the most recent development of his interdisciplinary, multi-media practice.

MARTIN LABORDE

Born in 1983 in Paris, France

Lives and works in Nice, France

From 2017 to 2024, Martin Laborde lived and worked in Lisbon, Portugal, where his studio hosted episodic installments of Ampersand—an independent program he co-founded. Past exhibitions include among others works by Zoé Beloff, Keren Cytter, Moyra Davey, Jana Euler, Sylvie Fanchon, Tina Girouard, Richard Hawkins, Pati Hill, Chris Langdon, Bern Porter, Wolfgang Stoerchle. Formely in Lisbon, Ampersand is currently itinerant. In 2025, Ampersand signed the solo exhibition on Jean Painlevé à Culturgest Lisbon, and recently open an exhibition with Ana Jotta at Gallery Marian Goodman, Paris titled « Beaucoup, peu, rien » (on view until May 9, 2025).

Laborde is one of three editors of the art magazine octopus notes and one of the editors of the upcoming publication Peau d'Ana, a conversation with Ana Jotta. His work was recently presented at Treize, Mala & FarO. Dope Press (Los Angeles), Giselle's Books (Marseille) and Daisy (Paris) are currently preparing a book compiling recent years of his collage practice, to be published late 2025 featuring among others texts by Wayne Koestenbaum, Oscar Tuazon, and Marie Canet.

THOMAS LANIGAN-SCHMIDT

Born in 1948 in Elizabeth, New Jersey, United States

Lives and works in New York, United States

Thomas Lanigan-Schmidt's mixed-media constructions, collages, and installations are marked by a trashy opulence concocted from household items and dollar stores. Mimicking Byzantine decoration with cellophane, aluminum foil, tinsel and glitter, Lanigan-Schmidt pioneered a maximalist aesthetic in the late 1960s that explored gay sexuality, class struggle, and religion. Mingling high with low, and sacred with profane, Lanigan-Schmidt bucked the reductive tastes of conceptualism and minimalism that dominated his youth, creating a radically decorative practice that, despite its influence, has never been properly assimilated into the history of American art.

His work is represented in the collections of the Metropolitan Museum of Art, Whitney Museum of American Art, MoMA, Brooklyn Museum, Ludwig Forum für Internationale Kunst, among others. He has exhibited extensively throughout the United States and Europe, and was the subject of the critically acclaimed 2012 retrospective at MoMA PS1. In June 2009, Lanigan-Schmidt was honored by President Barack Obama for his courageous participation in the 1969 Stonewall rebellion, and he was the keynote speaker when the Stonewall Inn became a national monument in 2016.

BRUCE PAVLOW

Born in 1958 in San Francisco, United States

Lives and works in New York, United States

Almost twenty years separate Bruce Pavlow's 1988 exhibition at White Columns, New York, alongside Cady Noland, from his return to the studio in the early 2010s. In the meantime, he worked for an American distribution company specialized in French independent films, reflecting a passion already visible in his first two films produced in the late 1970s.

A remarkable document from the first decade of the gay liberation movement, Pavlow's *Survival House* (1978) is a beautifully evocative yet long-overlooked analog slideshow. It explores a San Francisco shelter on Haight Street that provided refuge for homeless gay and transgender people in the late 1970s. The series of color photographs capturing both the melancholic liminality of its domestic spaces and the deep sense of community among its inhabitants. This work and the film that he shot simultaneously offers a poignant portrait of survival and solidarity.

Bruce Pavlow's work has been exhibited at institutions such as The Institute of Contemporary Art, London, The University Art Museum, Berkeley, White Columns, New York, Soho Center for the Arts, New York, American Fine Arts, New York, and Shoot the Lobster, New York.

BEN TAYLOR

Born in 1992 in Philadelphia, United States

Lives and works in New York, United States

Ben Taylor is a New York-based photographer whose work has been featured in i-D, Buffalo Zine, The Face, and Interview Magazine. His portraits capture a new generation of musicians, writers, and marginalized communities. Recently, his work has been exhibited at Ampersand, Lisbon, and the Emily Harvey Foundation, New York.

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Exhibition views
Credits: Anna Denisova

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Exhibition views
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Exhibition views
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Thomas Lanigan-Schmidt, Lollipop Knick-Knack (High Heel), 2003
mixed materials, 16 x 21 x 9 cm



Thomas Lanigan-Schmidt, Mouse House, 1969
mixed materials, 18 x 10 x 7 cm



Thomas Lanigan-Schmidt, Lollipop Knick-Knack (Watering the flowers), 1970
mixed materials, 33 x 20.3 x 10.2 cm



Martin Laborde, Reloaded/Combinatory collage (Fruits), 2024
collage on paper, 21 x 29.7 cm



Martha Edelheit, *Lady in a Night Club*, c. 1960-62
ink and watercolor on paper, 21.6 x 27 cm



Ben Taylor, Caleb, 2024
Injekt print on Canson Infinity 310g, 60 x 80 cm



Martha Edelheit, Lady in a Night Club, c. 1960-62
ink and watercolor on paper, 21.6 x 27 cm



Martha Edelheit
David S., 3 back studies, 1971 / Paul, 1972
graphite on paper, 37.5 x 55.9 cm, each



Wayne Koestenbaum, Theda Bara with Bubbles, 2023,
silkscreen on paper, 27.5 x 35.5 cm



Martha Edelheit, Portrait of Susan Sontag, c. 1962
ink on paper, 21.6 x 27.9 cm



Bruce Pavlow, Survival House 1977, 75 Haight Street, 1978
Slideshow of 60 analog slides



Martin Laborde, Reloaded/Combinatory collage (Horse), 2024
collage on paper, 50 x 65 cm



Bruce Pavlow, Survival House 1977, 75 Haight Street, 1978
Slideshow of 60 analog slides

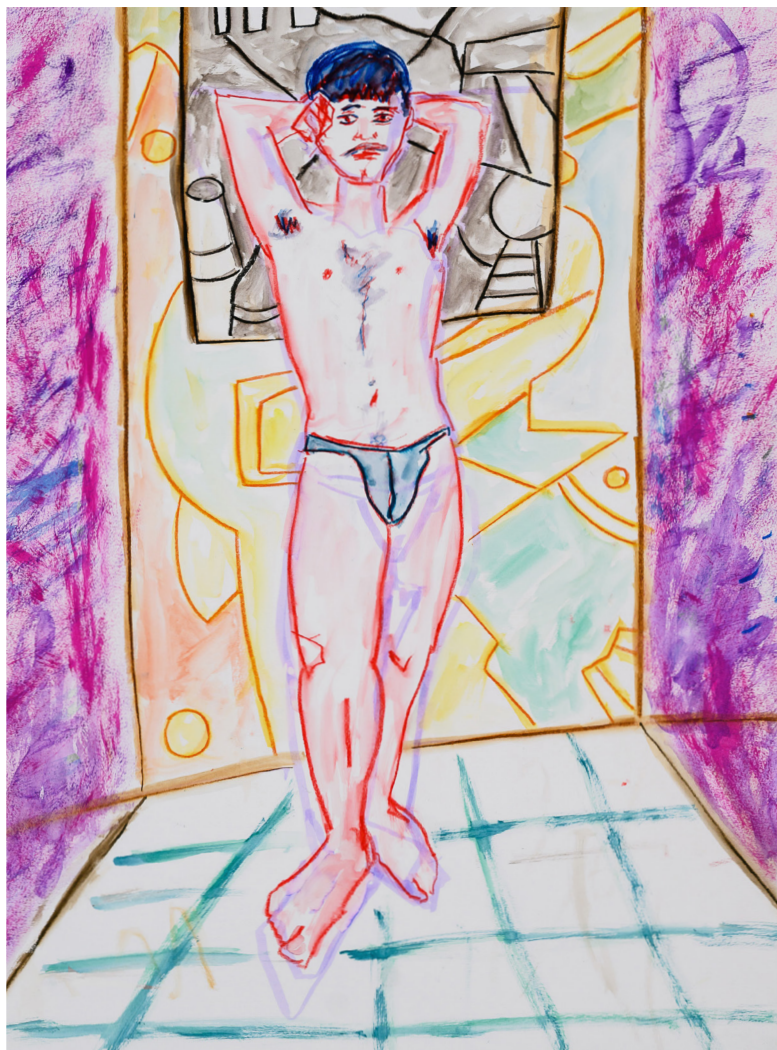
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Wayne Koestenbaum, Jesse, 2021
pencil and watercolor on paper, 45 x 61 cm

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