

COOLEY

JAMIE ISENSTEIN: WILL RETURN



August 27 – October 20, 2013

**Douglas F. Cooley Memorial Art Gallery, Reed College
Reception and catalog release party:
September 19, 6 p.m. at the Cooley**

Public conversation with Jamie Isenstein and WILL RETURN curator
Stephanie Snyder, moderated by PICA visual art curator Kristan Kennedy
September 17, 12:30 p.m., PICA, 415 SW 10th, Suite 300 / pica.org

T : B A : 1 3
TIME - BASED ART
FESTIVAL
PORTLAND, OREGON
09:12:13 - 09:22:13

COOLEY HOURS & INFO
Tuesday–Sunday, 12–5 p.m.
(closed Monday)
3203 SE Woodstock Blvd.
Portland, Oregon 97202
reed.edu/gallery
503.517.7851

DOUGLAS F. COOLEY MEMORIAL ART GALLERY, REED COLLEGE

Jamie Isenstein: Will Return

Douglas F. Cooley Memorial Art Gallery, Reed College
August 27 – October 20, 2013
Public reception: September 19, 6–8 p.m. at the Cooley

Curated by Stephanie Snyder, John and Anne Hauberg Curator and Director, Douglas F. Cooley Memorial Art Gallery, Reed College.

Part of the Portland Institute for Contemporary Art's 2013
Time-Based Art Festival.

Jamie Isenstein: Will Return is an exhibition, an occasion, and a publication. For the past fifteen years, Portland native and Reed College alumna Jamie Isenstein has created objects, drawings, mixed-media sculptures, and installations that engage the artist's body as an artistic medium—a subject of humor, theatricality, and historical representation. In keeping with the tragic-comic slapstick of turn-of-the-century Vaudeville, Isenstein explores the subjectivity of the marginalized individual—the bit-player, the human prop, the butt of the joke, the wisenheimer who gets the last laugh. At times, Isenstein's humor veers toward the bittersweet and the melancholic. The jokes and word-play embedded in her work materialize the pain of others, confronting us with life's most essential predicaments: mortality, for one. Perhaps more than any other object, Isenstein uses the common "will return" sign as a means for discussing the relationship between artist and spectator, and artist and artwork. The sign embodies the inevitable moment when both artist and spectator will no longer return. Or will they? Like all good magicians, Isenstein keeps her secrets close, so don't ask.

Jamie Isenstein was born in Portland, OR in 1975, and lives and works in New York City. She followed Reed College curator Stephanie Snyder's educational path, attending Markham Middle School, Wilson High School, Reed College and Columbia University. She has presented her work in such exhibitions as *It is what it is. Or is it?*, Contemporary Arts Museum, Houston, TX (2012); *MakeUp*, A Palazzo Gallery, Brescia, Italy (2012); *Liverpool Biennial: Touched*, Tate Liverpool, Liverpool, UK (2010); *Marina Abramovic Presents*,

Manchester International Festival, Manchester, UK (2009); *One Minute More*, The Kitchen, New York (2009); *Hammer Projects: Jamie Isenstein: This Way to The Egress*, The Hammer Museum of Art, Los Angeles (2007); *Greater New York 2005*, P.S.1 Contemporary Art Center, New York (2005). Her work is represented by Andrew Kreps Gallery in New York and Meyer Riegger in Berlin/Karlsruhe, Germany. Jamie has been known to disappear, but she will return!

Full color catalog published by the Cooley Gallery and designed by Heather Watkins, with texts by Reed College alumni: Jamie Isenstein, Graham Jones, Stephanie Snyder, and David Velasco.

Douglas F. Cooley Memorial Art Gallery



Artist: Jamie Isenstein
Title: *Acéphal Magical*
Date: 2007
Medium: Two-channel video projection
Dimensions: Dimensions variable
Credit Line: Courtesy of the artist and Andrew Kreps Gallery, New York



Artist: Jamie Isenstein
Title: *Book of the Dead*
Date: 2013
Medium: Guest book, gold paint, leather
Dimensions: 11 x 8.5 x 0.5 in. (27.94 x 21.59 x 1.27 cm)
Credit Line: Courtesy of the artist and Andrew Kreps Gallery, New York



Artist: Jamie Isenstein
Title: *Clap Magic*
Date: 2007
Medium: CRT monitor, "The Clapper"™, single-channel video, custom-made lamp, shade
Dimensions: Dimensions variable
Credit Line: Miller Meigs Collection



Artist: Jamie Isenstein
Title: *Dancing Pop-up Fishing Sculpture*
Date: 2010
Medium: Fabric, glue, paint, "Worm in a Can" gag dinner mints, pillow stuffing, human leg
Dimensions: Dimensions variable
Credit Line: Miller Meigs Collection



Artist: Jamie Isenstein
Title: *Delicious After Dinner Mints*
Date: 2010
Medium: C-print
Dimensions: 19 x 14.5 in. (48.26 x 36.83 cm)
Credit Line: Courtesy of the artist and Andrew Kreps Gallery, New York



Artist: Jamie Isenstein
Title: *Eyehole*
Date: 2005
Medium: Brass, copper, plastic, enamel, acrylic, cardboard, glass mirror
Dimensions: 8.5 x 2.5 x 3 in. (21.59 x 6.35 x 7.62 cm)
Credit Line: Courtesy of the artist and Andrew Kreps Gallery, New York



Artist: Jamie Isenstein
Title: *Infinite Disco Soft-Shoe*
Date: 2002 - 2004
Medium: Single-channel video on CRT monitor
Dimensions: Dimensions variable
Credit Line: Courtesy of the artist and Andrew Kreps Gallery, New York

Douglas F. Cooley Memorial Art Gallery



Artist: Jamie Isenstein Acc. No. TL.2013.12
Title: *Inside Out Headshots (Skeleton and Lotion)* Object Type: Photograph
Date: 2004
Medium: Pen and lotion on black and white photographs
Dimensions: 10.5 x 8.5 in. (26.67 x 21.59 cm)
Credit Line: Courtesy of the artist and Andrew Kreps Gallery, New York



Artist: Jamie Isenstein Acc. No. TL.2013.7
Title: *Inside Outside Backstage Vase* Object Type: Sculpture
Date: 2011
Medium: Natural and artificial flowers, ceramic vase, water
Dimensions: Dimensions variable
Credit Line: Courtesy of the artist and Andrew Kreps Gallery, New York



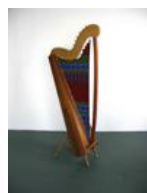
Artist: Jamie Isenstein Acc. No. TL.2013.8
Title: *Intermission Sign* Object Type: Sculpture
Date: 2013
Medium: Brass easel, stretched canvas, acrylic
Dimensions: 59 x 37 x 23 in. (149.86 x 93.98 x 58.42 cm)
Credit Line: Courtesy of the artist and Andrew Kreps Gallery, New York



Artist: Jamie Isenstein Acc. No. TL.2013.2
Title: *Magic Fingers* Object Type: Sculpture
Date: 2003
Medium: Gilded picture frame, picture light, plastic hemisphere, human hand or "Will Retu"
Dimensions: Dimensions variable
Credit Line: Collection of Thea Westreich Wagner and Ethan Wagner



Artist: Jamie Isenstein Acc. No. TL.2013.3
Title: *Magic Jacket* Object Type: Sculpture
Date: 2009
Medium: Tailcoat, coat rack, hanger, appearing flowers, two foam balls, thumb tip, two si
Dimensions: 66.5 x 17.5 x 13.5 in. (168.91 x 44.45 x 34.29 cm)
Credit Line: Courtesy of the artist and Andrew Kreps Gallery, New York



Artist: Jamie Isenstein Acc. No. TL.2013.6
Title: *Rug Woogie X* Object Type: Sculpture
Date: 2013
Medium: Performance on harp with yarn
Dimensions: Dimensions variable
Credit Line: Courtesy of the artist and Andrew Kreps Gallery, New York



Artist: Jamie Isenstein Acc. No. TL.2013.10
Title: *Snuffer* Object Type: Photograph
Date: 2008
Medium: C-print
Dimensions: 19 x 24 in. (48.26 x 60.96 cm)
Credit Line: Courtesy of the artist and Andrew Kreps Gallery, New York



Artist: Jamie Isenstein Acc. No. TL.2013.17.1-2
 Title: *Untitled (ear plug and ear)* Object Type: Drawing
 Date: 2013
 Medium: Watercolor and pencil on paper
 Dimensions: 12 x 16 in. (left), 14 x 11 in. (right)
 Credit Line: Courtesy of the artist and Andrew Kreps Gallery, New York



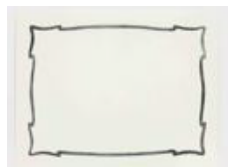
Artist: Jamie Isenstein Acc. No. TL.2013.15.3
 Title: *Untitled (Green, blue, red polka dot clown shoe with kiltie)* Object Type: Drawing
 Date: 2013
 Medium: Watercolor and pencil on paper
 Dimensions: 12 x 16 in. (30.48 x 40.64 cm)
 Credit Line: Courtesy of the artist and Andrew Kreps Gallery, New York



Artist: Jamie Isenstein Acc. No. TL.2013.15.1.a-b
 Title: *Untitled (Purple boot clown shoe)* Object Type: Drawing
 Date: 2013
 Medium: Watercolor and pencil on paper
 Dimensions: 12 x 16 in. (30.48 x 40.64 cm)
 Credit Line: Courtesy of the artist and Andrew Kreps Gallery, New York



Artist: Jamie Isenstein Acc. No. TL.2013.16.1-3
 Title: *Untitled (Silent film inter-title border with arrows)* Object Type: Drawing
 Date: 2013
 Medium: Watercolor and pencil on paper
 Dimensions: 11 x 14 in. (27.94 x 35.56 cm)
 Credit Line: Courtesy of the artist and Andrew Kreps Gallery, New York



Artist: Jamie Isenstein Acc. No. TL.2013.16.2
 Title: *Untitled (Silent film inter-title border with curves)* Object Type: Drawing
 Date: 2013
 Medium: Watercolor and pencil on paper
 Dimensions: 11 x 14 in. (27.94 x 35.56 cm)
 Credit Line: Courtesy of the artist and Andrew Kreps Gallery, New York



Artist: Jamie Isenstein Acc. No. TL.2013.15.2.a-c
 Title: *Untitled (Yellow, turquoise, red clown shoe)* Object Type: Drawing
 Date: 2013
 Medium: Watercolor and pencil on paper
 Dimensions: 12 x 16 in. (30.48 x 40.64 cm)
 Credit Line: Courtesy of the artist and Andrew Kreps Gallery, New York



Artist: Jamie Isenstein Acc. No. TL.2013.14
 Title: *Waxworks* Object Type: Photograph
 Date: 2009
 Medium: C-print
 Dimensions: 30 x 40 in. (76.2 x 101.6 cm)
 Credit Line: Courtesy of the artist and Andrew Kreps Gallery, New York

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Her punch lines are dead serious

By JOHN MOTLEY

SPECIAL TO THE OREGONIAN

Jamie Isenstein has a knack for disappearances — or, at the very least, deflections.

In her midcareer survey “Will Return” at Reed College, where she graduated in 1998, the New York artist presents a range of ingenious illusions that allow her to be literally present and symbolically absent.

There’s “Dancing Pop-up Fishing Sculpture,” 2010, a multicolored quilted costume festooned with a life preserver that reads “Gone Fishing.” When Isenstein dons it, only a single leg and arm protrude, at once concealing and exposing the artist.

For “Magic Fingers,” 2003, which greets visitors to the gallery, the artist has fashioned a secret chamber behind a wall displaying an oval gilt frame. When the artist is present, her hand appears in the frame. When she leaves, it’s replaced by a simple “Will Return” sign.

And “Clap Magic,” 2007, pairs a video of the artist’s hands in profile, intermittently clapping, with a lamp in the gallery controlled by remote device The Clapper, which claps on and off ad nauseam.

Like the magicians and vaudevillians that her work often references, Isenstein understands that artists, in metaphorical terms, trade in similar crafts. Artwork, like a magic trick or a gag, diverts our attention away from the person behind it; not wanting to miss the magic, we lose sight of the magician.

And as these figures recur throughout her work, a deadly serious punch line lands: The performer, if we wait long enough, will always disappear, but the illusion lives on.

In that sense, Isenstein’s work is preoccupied with the existential joke of mortality, laughing it up at the grave finale that awaits us all. But in



EVAN LALONDE

An installation view of Reed College alum Jamie Isenstein's solo show, “Will Return,” at Reed's Cooley Gallery.

her work, Isenstein gambles on the last laugh. After all, if a work of art is immortal and she, in one form or another, inserts her body into her art, some of that immortality is bound to rub off. At least in the controlled space of a gallery, her hands — or their moving image — can exert a ghostly influence on the material world forever, turning a light on and off into infinity.

If this obsession with death sounds morose, Isenstein’s approach to the subject is surprisingly buoyant and frequently funny. The wonderful photograph “Snuffer,” 2008, turns a fear of death into slapstick: As a hand enters the closely cropped frame to ex-

tinguish a burning candle, the candle jukes right, bending hard at a cartoonish right angle.

As a fear of mortality is foisted onto the inanimate candle, we can laugh at a comfortable remove. But elsewhere, Isenstein doesn’t let us off so easily, reminding us we’re equally implicated.

When I visited the show, I signed my name in the customary guest book without realizing it was one of Isenstein’s works of art. If I’d flipped to its cover, I could have read its title: “Book of the Dead.”

John Motley is a Portland freelance writer; motley.john@gmail.com



COURTESY OF JAMIE ISENSTEIN AND ANDREW KREPS GALLERY, NEW YORK.

Isenstein’s “Acéphal Magical,” 2007, two-channel video projection, dimensions variable.

review

Jamie Isenstein’s “Will Return”

Where: Reed College’s Cooley Gallery, 3203 S.E. Woodstock Blvd., 503-517-7851

Hours: Noon-5 p.m. Tuesdays-Sundays

Closes: Oct. 20

Admission: Free

Website: reed.edu/gallery