

BOY BOX

On View: July 30 - August 28, 2021

Jared Buckhiester

CAConrad

Deborah Czeresko

Karen Hall

BB Kenda

Rose Nestler

Sarada Rauch

Marion Scemama and David Wojnarowicz

Vincent Tiley

Christopher Udemezue

Angela Washko

curated by **Angela Conant**



Jared Buckhiester, *Potential Subject at 68MPH 1-85 SC State Line*, 2021, archival inkjet print, image courtesy of the artist. [Image description: the driver's side window of a yellow truck viewed from below, looking up. The bottom of a man's face, his chin, beard, lips, top row of teeth, are visible on the right side of the image, looking out from inside the cab of the truck. A reflection of the sky and green trees can be seen on the left quadrant of the image.]

Opening Reception: Friday, July 30, 2021, 4 - 8 pm, with curatorial tour at 5 pm and drag castrato performance by “Daren” at 7 pm. [RSVP](#) and masks required for entry.

EFA Project Space is thrilled to present **BOY BOX**, curated by **Angela Conant** and featuring an intergenerational group of artists, with work by: **Jared Buckhiester, CAConrad, Deborah Czeresko, Karen Hall, BB Kenda, Rose Nestler, Sarada Rauch, Marion Scemama and David Wojnarowicz, Vincent Tiley, Christopher Udemezue, and Angela Washko.**

For the purposes of this exhibition, masculinity is defined as a constructed and perceived set of traits as evaluated by a cis-dominated, colonized Western culture, in which masculinity is imposed from external perspectives, and translated into individual performances across the gender spectrum. **BOY BOX** optimistically proposes broader access to the joys and benefits of fluid, detachable masculine traits. The exhibition is not an astigmatic celebration of maleness, but rather a deconstruction of masculinity's history of power, and a rejection of its stigma, one that has fueled racism and the marginalization of people who do not conform to binary constructions of gender. Addressing the hypocrisy of a masculine

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EFA Project Space, The Elizabeth Foundation for the Arts, [323 West 39th Street, 2nd Floor, NYC, 10018](#)
Hours: Tuesday–Saturday, 12–6 pm, and by appointment: www.projectspace-efanyc.org/reservations
www.projectspace-efanyc.org | projectspace@efanyc.org | 212-563-5855 ext 244 | Masks Required.

archetype that, in Western culture, is reserved for white cis-male people, this exhibition aims to complicate and bend masculinity across intersections of identity. To those ends, BOY BOX aims to carefully bring the fragility and preciousness of masculinity down to earth, catching it as it falls from its cultural pedestal. On view are artworks that address masculinity's myriad iterations, frustrating ideas of gender, the male sex, and toxicity.

The United States' surge of mass killings in recent years evinces the damage wrought by the Western tradition of violence as a masculine craft. Where research into the causes of mass violence is inadequate, an observable commonality is that most perpetrators are male-identifying. Meanwhile, modern sensibilities replace and flip archaic gender roles. Heterosexual romance, for example, is the old-fashioned process of quieting hyper-masculine impulse in order to sweeten and garner interest from a prospective sexual partner. This cloak to accessorize the performance of masculinity is a forefather of what we now call consent.

Working to move outside its conventional constraints, this exhibition offers a group of artists' observations and performances of masculinity. Their work shows that we each have not only a unique relationship with the masculine, but a right to its power, swagger and strength.

CAConrad's knife-shaped poems are unapologetically distilled from somatic rituals that have been honed over years of coping with trauma born from anti-gay violence. Their work for this exhibition, which opens with an anecdote of the gun as phallus and the phallus as hero, touches on the history of the AK-47 and ends on a note of solitude and longing.

Jared Buckhiester makes an offering to each subject of his clandestine photography—truck drivers ostensibly without a pot to piss in—: a portable ceramic urinal. The project is imbued with voyeurism and regret, as Buckhiester's father drove him down the highway to pursue his aim of capturing truckers just as they noticed his gaze; a moment placing the artist between threat and threatened. Then, feeling he overstepped a boundary, Buckhiester made each driver their gift.

Deborah Czeresko's chromed tailpipe of blown glass, disembodied from the undercarriage of its vehicle, ejects a silky-white glass glob of smoke. Not shown is another Czeresko work, a glass uterus that can augment a sans-uterine body. This utopian object of postgenderism supposes a world wherein the female reproductive system is not the only possible place for pregnancy and childbirth, and is therefore a mechanism for disrupting traditional gender roles.

Karen Hall is a trained opera singer as well as a drag performer, and their interests find overlap in the figure of the castrato whose prepubescent singing voice is preserved through a disruption of the endocrine system, namely castration. For BOY BOX, Hall—as their drag persona Daren—dresses as their father to perform Soy Carlos, a song they wrote from their father's point of view. The song describes Carlos' experience being a sensitive soul living in the Dominican Republic, where his femininity was a mortal threat.

BB Kenda addresses drag and gender fluidity as well, performing in a video that seems private, with the wall so close to their back they could be in a bedroom closet, and an intimacy that reminds of a teen

singing into the mirror. BB contrasts a pop song, about the protagonist with their husband, with BB's own performance of a bifurcated identity, making the protagonist-antagonist relationship an internal one.

Rose Nestler anthropomorphizes objects by applying gender-specific body parts; sexualizing business suits with fabric bosoms. For BOY BOX, Nestler presents a comically green tool bag with appendages she calls Barbie legs. The piece is as brassy as a bosomy aunt with the utility of a sitcom handyman. Just as bright, but more austere, is Open Lock, a chastity belt of orange faux leather with a stone-toothed mouth.

Sarada Rauch connects antiquity with the Mr. Olympia body-building competition, having traveled to Archanes, north of Heraklion, Crete, and filmed herself flexing Mr. Olympia-style in an ancient Greek amphitheater built on top of a Minoan burial ground. Sports have emerged in other BOY BOX artists' works as a masculine space, an arena for playacting battle that foregrounds competition and physical condition.

Marion Scemama and David Wojnarowicz collaborated on several Super 8 video works in the late 1980s. The two pieces on view represent polar possibilities of opposition to masculine dominance. What is this Little Guy's Job presents a quiet moment of speculation on the gentle creatures of the earth, while Last Night I Took a Man is a manifesto on mass death caused by homophobic hatred. Wojnarowicz combated homophobia on the front lines of the AIDS crisis in the 1980s and 90s. His adversary was the ancestor of "toxic masculinity:" a pervasive cultural hatred born from conformist attitudes toward maleness and gender performance, a hatred which made it impossible for his community and loved ones, and ultimately for himself, to survive.

Vincent Tiley's encrusted leather jacket is an enveloping mouth penetrated by a horn. Lined with resin casts of human teeth, the interior is transformed into a bony textile. Impossible to wear, the piece is a found object enclosure made dangerous via confrontation with its human interior. The work calls on the conceptual logic of Duchamp's ready-mades as well as Arte Povera, and exemplifies Tiley's affinity for the visual language of kink.

Christopher Udemezue draws from the story of Victoria Montou, a Haitian Revolutionary fighter in the army of Jean-Jacques Dessalines, to whom she was also a surrogate mother. In his recent work, Udemezue incorporates the "undercommons" of his own Jamaican roots—to borrow Fred Moten and Stefano Harney's term for self-organization—by recreating familial ritual. His work confronts the risks of being female, or being a feminine male, in a Caribbean culture.

Angela Washko virtually immerses herself in the masculine domain of World of Warcraft, the multi-player game that peaked in popularity in the early to mid 2000s, and whose players are presumed to be majority male-identifying. In the game, players create avatars that need not correspond to their non-virtual performance of gender. Washko engages with players on their digital turf, via her own avatar, asking questions about feminism and gender identity, garnering responses from her playmates that are both sensitive and combative.

The curator thanks the participating artists, the EFA Project Space staff, and Anneliis Beadnell, Guy Ben-Ari, Jenny Jaskey, Pamela Koch, P.P.O.W Gallery, Mike Ronzitti, Kiki Smith, Max Sherwood and Joan Conant Sherwood.

Artist and curator bios are available on our website. An exhibition catalog will be made available and released at a public event on Thursday, August 26, 2021 from 6-8 pm at EFA Project Space. Please see our website for all upcoming events and for more information about the exhibition and access. The exhibition remains on view Tuesday - Saturday from 12 pm to 6 pm and closes on Saturday, August 28, 2021.

[Note: Due to a clerical error, Christopher Udemezue's name did not appear on the artist list in a previous version of this announcement.]

Exhibition Events

[Opening reception](#) – Friday, July 30, 4 - 8 pm [RSVP](#) & Masks Required for Entry

Curatorial walkthrough with Angela Conant at 5 pm, drag castrato performance by “Daren” at 7 pm.

Closing reception and catalog release – Thursday, August 26, 6 - 8 pm RSVP & Masks required for entry.

PRESS INQUIRIES

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EFA Project Space, launched in September 2008 as a program of **The Elizabeth Foundation for the Arts**, is a collaborative, cross-disciplinary arts venue founded on the belief that art is directly connected to the individuals who produce it, the communities that arise because of it, and to everyday life; and that by providing an arena for exploring these connections, we empower artists to forge new partnerships and encourage the expansion of ideas.

The Elizabeth Foundation for the Arts (EFA) is a 501(c)(3) public charity. Through its three core programs, **EFA Studios**, **EFA Project Space**, and **EFA Robert Blackburn Printmaking Workshop**, EFA is dedicated to providing artists across all disciplines with space, tools and a cooperative forum for the development of individual practice. EFA is a catalyst for cultural growth, stimulating new interactions between artists, creative communities, and the public. www.efanyc.org. EFA Project Space has received public funding from the New York City Department of Cultural Affairs in Partnership with the City Council, The Andy Warhol Foundation for the Visual Arts, the Shelley & Donald Rubin Foundation, and the National Endowment for the Arts, the Lower Manhattan Cultural Council, as well as from generous individuals in our community. EFA Project Space's SHIFT: A Residency for Arts Workers is supported by the Stavros Niarchos Foundation (SNF), Teiger Foundation, the Willem de Kooning Foundation.

ACCESSIBILITY AND COVID-19

Online reservations are recommended 24 hours in advance of your visit, via efaproject.space/reservations.

Reservation slots of 30 minutes each can be made for parties of up to 5 people at a time. *Note that masks are required to view the exhibition and must be worn at all times.*

EFA Project Space is located on the 2nd floor of 323 West 39th Street, between 8th and 9th Avenues. The building has an ADA wheelchair accessible elevator that provides access to the gallery from the ground floor. There are all-gender single stall bathrooms and an ADA approved bathroom on the 3rd floor. The space is not scent-free, but we do request that people attending come low-scent. Admission to the building does not require an ID, but you will be asked to sign-in and out to facilitate contact tracing, as necessary. The closest MTA subway station is the Port Authority A, C, E stop which is ADA wheelchair accessible. Texts and programs are in English. Large format texts can be provided with an advance request. EFA Project Space is committed to nurturing an intergenerational environment and we encourage children & kid noise at our events. Please notify us of any accessibility needs by email to projectspace@efanyc.org, or by phone at (212) 563-5855 x 244.



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