



Image courtesy of Kerry Downey

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE:

**Failing to Levitate**

June 6 – July 3, 2014

Public Reception: Thursday, June 19, 6-8pm

**Artists:** Anhoek School (orchestrated by Mary Walling Blackburn and Rafael Kelman), Malin Arnell, Ethan Breckenridge, Dillon de Give, Bill Dietz, Danyel Ferrari, Rachel Higgins, Mitch McEwen, Glendalys Medina, Jen Rosenblit

**Curated by:** Kerry Downey and Natasha Marie Llorens  
With guest speaker Heather Love

*Failing to Levitate* is a platform to think about failure and vulnerability in art practices that address sociality, and to think about how these terms might critique of the masculinist idea of self-mastery. The project links spaces, bodies, objects, and events in order to address the ways we gather, socialize, and are affected by the physical conditions of shared space.

We borrow our title from Bruce Nauman's eponymous photograph, which shows the artist earnestly attempting to levitate in his studio and then slumping to the floor awkwardly when he fails. This work speaks to the (still) heroic narrative of the lone artist seeking transcendence through an act of sheer will. We appropriate "failing to levitate" in order to attend, instead, to how physical and social spaces fail us, or create spaces for being vulnerable together, as spaces of possibility.

Rachel Higgin's assemblage of theater seating provides chairs arranged variously in relation to each other, to and away from the "screen." Danyel Ferrari's cumbersome vehicle houses a projector, opening up into an ad hoc stage, a push-cart, and/or a costume of self protection. Jen Rosenblit, working out of dance practice, considers ways to levitate or to hover in the gallery. Malin Arnell's project is a score and a large, empty, dark room, a space without any conversation that is also filled with smoke. Mitch McEwen's helium balloons suspend a lightweight surface through which State secrets collected from wikileaks and other public sources are conducted. Bill Dietz's work uses the People's Mic as a model for an interactive relational listening exercise. The Anhoek School presents a sound work in the form of a radio "pledge drive" for WMYN. The listener will be enmeshed in the triangulation of three specific failures: that of the feminist revolution, that of the cultural commons, and that of abandoned technologies. All these works ask us to lean into the social conditions of listening.

Other works explore the vulnerable co-dependence of service and tutelage. Ethan Breckenridge constructs twelve "pavilions" that vary in dimension and scale to be used by participating artists or not. Dillon De Give's work will **no longer** organize encounters between newly licensed drivers and strangers to explore the tense space of learning to drive when one's individual identity and automobile are collapsed; **it will explore issues of liability using the original project as its departure**. Glendalys Medina presents a video work of herself attempting a 'freeze', or a breakdance move held in place and inserted at the end of a dance routine to show control and strength.

As a result of these varying gestures, experiments, and performances, the social space of the gallery becomes a space of persistent shift; between artists, from performance to event, between built form and embodied experience. If vulnerability is a set of experiences we can bear witness to, in ourselves and interdependently, then failure is not an end—it is instead a space that opens up after an idea or an experience has exhausted itself, after balloons deflate and the smoke clears. We hover in not knowing and struggling to listen.

### **Related Events:**

Friday, June 6 at 6pm *Simultaneous Presence*: Performances by Bill Dietz & Jen Rosenblit

Sunday, June 15 at 12pm Anhoek School presents WMYN 87.9 FM

Thursday, June 19 at 6pm *Failing to Levitate* Public Reception

Wednesday, June 25 at 7pm Heather Love and Jen Rosenblit

Friday, June 27 at 7pm *Do I (Even) Know What I'm Doing?* discussion and *A Pattern* video screening

Tuesday, July 1 at 7pm *others will surely follow* | *Caterpillar*: Performances by Danyel Ferrari & Rachel Higgins and Glendalys Medina

For more information about the exhibition and events, please visit [www.efanyc.org](http://www.efanyc.org). And, follow the projects as they evolve at [www.failingtolevitate.net](http://www.failingtolevitate.net).

### About the Curators:

**Kerry Downey** (born 1979, Florida) is an interdisciplinary artist and teacher and lover of collectives and collaborations. She holds a BA from Bard College and an MFA from Hunter College. Her work has recently been shown at the Center for Curatorial Studies at Bard College (Annandale, NY), Franklin Street Works (Stamford, CT), NURTUREart (Brooklyn), Invisible Dog (Brooklyn), and Horton Gallery (NYC). In October she participated in a group show at REVERSE (Brooklyn), which was chosen as a Critic's Pick in Artforum. Downey was a Queer/Art/Mentorship Fellow in 2012-13 and is a current participant in the Drawing Center's Open Sessions. She teaches at the Museum of Modern Art and in the Hunter College Art Department in New York City. [www.kerrydowney.com](http://www.kerrydowney.com)

**Natasha Marie Llorens** is an independent curator and writer based in New York. Recent projects include "Ajar" at Reverse Gallery, in Brooklyn, and "The Echo of an Address" with Kerry Downey, at Columbia University. She teaches art history and theory at The Cooper Union and curating at The New School, both in New York. She is a graduate of the Center for Curatorial Studies at Bard College and a Ph.D. candidate in art history at Columbia University. Her research is focused on violence and representation in the 1970s and 1980s.

For press inquiries, please contact Lauren Bierly, EFA Project Space Assistant Director at [lauren@efanyc.org](mailto:lauren@efanyc.org) or 212-563-5855 x 234.

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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.

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A Program of the Elizabeth Foundation for the Arts

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