

Artists Space Re-emerges as an Enduring Downtown Alternative

The hardy noncommercial gallery, founded in 1972, has put down roots in a cast-iron building in TriBeCa.



At Artists Space, Duane Linklater's "dislodgevanishskinground," 2019, with 12 tepee poles, steel cable, white paint, charcoal, rope, with tepee cover. via Artists Space; Daniel Pérez

By **Jason Farago**

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In the mid-1970s, the pioneering art historian and activist Douglas Crimp identified a new tendency in the work of [young artists like Sherrie Levine and Robert Longo](#): They were turning away from the abstract and conceptual work then in vogue, and appropriating images from movies and advertising to distort the aims of mass media. Mr. Crimp, [who died this year at 74](#), brought these artists together in a landmark show called ["Pictures"](#) at a small alternative gallery called [Artists Space](#) — which endures as a turning point in art history, and a classic of downtown New York.

Downtown has changed beyond recognition, its cold-water lofts overtaken by shoe boutiques and tourist-trap restaurants. But Artists Space, now 47 years old, remains a noncommercial site of experimentation. It has hosted

signal solo presentations by Adrian Piper, Barbara Kruger, Mike Kelley and Hito Steyerl, as well as group shows like “Pictures” and [“Witnesses: Against Our Vanishing,”](#) a 1989 exhibition on the AIDS crisis, organized by Nan Goldin and [targeted by Jesse Helms](#).

The institution has had to play cat-and-mouse with New York’s landlords, and to stay afloat it has roved among half a dozen locations in SoHo and TriBeCa. In 2016, a penthouse construction project pushed Artists Space out of its last home on Greene Street. Now it arrives, after three years in temporary digs and with a sweet 20-year-lease I wish I could negotiate on my own apartment, in a cast-iron building at 11 Cortlandt Alley, just off Canal Street, where artists can have the run of a high-ceilinged ground floor and perform in a spacious basement.

Jay Sanders, Artists Space’s executive director, has chosen to reopen with what you might call an anti-statement show: [four artists of different generations](#), not linked by a curatorial conceit or even a title. The quartet’s works are scattered together, as if four solo shows have been overlaid atop one another, in a form of exhibition that harks back to Artists Space’s earliest experimental days. (Although there is a strong color harmony: lots of white and beige.)



Detail view of Danica Barboza's "Anima of a Relationship [The 'SV' Edition] (Section B)," 2019. Materials include clay, white acrylic paint, textured paint, tea bags, and a Mac computer. via Artists Space; Daniel Pérez



Yuki Kimura, "Wardrobe Extensions Version 5," 2019. The artist reinstalled furniture from her childhood bedroom: three wood wardrobes with metal hardware. via Artists Space; Daniel Pérez

The most intriguing of these four artists is the eldest. [Yuki Kimura](#), an artist based between Kyoto and Berlin, removed three custom-built wardrobes from her childhood bedroom; she has reinstalled them in various configurations in shows worldwide, and integrated them here into the architecture of Artists Space's new home. One of these empty armoires

stands flush against a white gallery wall, while an extended piece of drywall fuses the minimalist furniture into the cast-iron building. Tender and memory-haunted, Ms. Kimura's intervention makes the gallery into a domestic space. She also offers a simple display of 21 stainless-steel circular vessels, modestly positioned on the floor and suggesting an act of hospitality.

[Duane Linklater](#), from Moose Cree First Nation in northern Ontario, contributes a pair of large sculptures that redeploy indigenous materials into wordless, melancholy formations. A gravity-defying cone of 12 tepee poles has been screwed into the wall, its cover drooping to the floor; other poles stretch up from the basement, wrapped in mink and rabbit fur coats that recall tourniquets. Mr. Linklater's mixing of hard and soft surfaces finds an interesting (if less precise) counterpoint in the assemblage sculptures of the New York artist [Danica Barboza](#), this show's most junior figure. She bundles old computers, televisions, shower curtains and sex dolls into disjunctive units that recall the mashed-up sculptures of Isa Genzken.

The young artist [Jason Hirata](#), from Seattle and New York, has strewn a room with digital projectors displaying only a default start-up screen, while throughout the galleries are found drink bottles filled, sorry to say, with human urine. These slacker gestures, aggrandized with an eye-rolling statement from the artist that the "artworks are finished when they have been returned," undercut the ambition of the other three participants.

Still, Artists Space is a place with room for missteps, where connections can be uncertain and young practitioners don't need to obtain preapproval of dealers or grantmakers. In a high-pressure art world, where judgments are ever faster and prices ever higher, that may be its most valuable function.

Danica Barboza, Jason Hirata, Yuki Kimura, Duane Linklater

Through Feb. 9 at Artists Space, 11 Cortlandt Alley, Manhattan; 212-226-3970, artistspace.org.

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