

JENNA BLISS

Now vacant.

20.03.–08.05.2021

Artist and filmmaker Jenna Bliss's (b. 1984 in Yonkers, New York) exhibition at the Stadtgalerie comprises four video works whose point of departure is the September 11, 2001 terrorist attacks. The central work in the exhibition, *Professional witnesses*. (2021), consists of eight episodes. Eight actors in their roles as survivors—a delivery man, a paramedic, a janitor, an office worker, an artist, a retired firefighter, a student, and a Wall Street broker—recount their personal experiences of 9/11. *Professional witnesses* could be described as a “mockumentary”—a faux-documentary film genre whose subject matter is often the form and conventions of documentary film itself. Based on the film-editing technique, casting, image format and fashion styles, the fictional time period of the video's production can be approximated to 2002 (shortly after 9/11). Bliss's white-background studio setting for the interviews, as well as the exhibition poster, mimic advertising styles from the early 2000s such as Benetton, Gap, Old Navy, and documentary filmmaker Errol Morris's Switch campaign for Apple in particular. The scripted interviews were inspired by actual testimonies recorded and archived by artist and filmmaker Ruth Sergel in her project *Voices of 9.11—A People's Archive* (2002–2003), as well as interview transcripts of first responders from the 9/11 Commission Report and secondary materials. The monologues pay heed to the reality of one's own individual experience of social inequalities—thus subverting the formal language of commercials from the 2000s where diversity merely serves as a cipher for market-based liberal individualism. In so doing, the artist's use of sardonic humor produces a tension through which to interpret these scripted interviews. Overall, the exhibition stages an interplay of various temporalities. It creates a vacuum, a vacancy. No present, no spectacle. The planes remain in the sky.

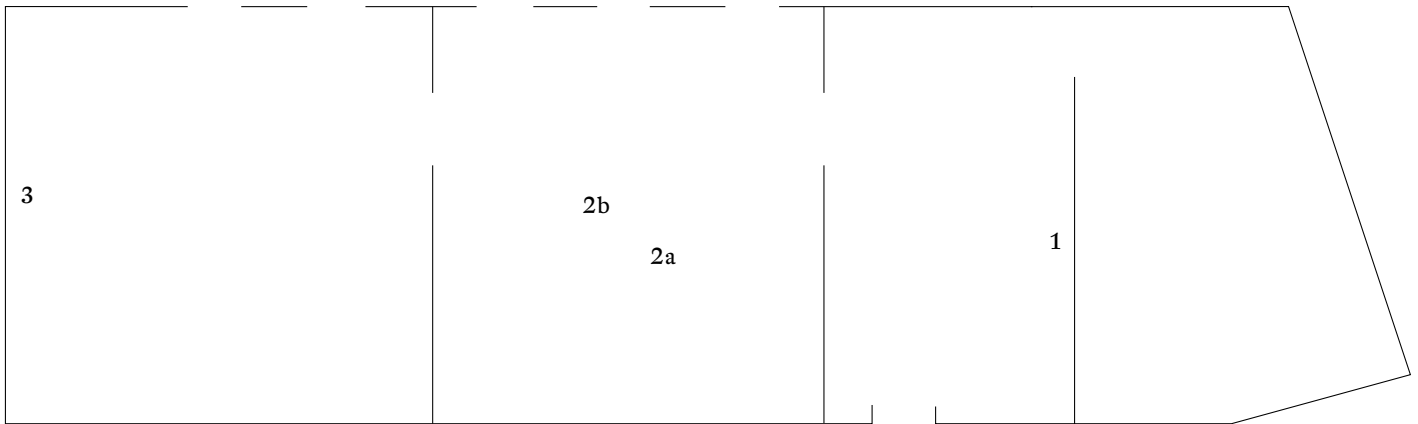
In her practice, Bliss mixes filmic technologies from different eras. Both the material she appropriates and that which she produces herself is therefore always inscribed with a specific material and ideological time-code. These various temporalities transmit their own semiotics that Bliss then merges together via montage. The resulting dissonance produces no (ahistorical) simultaneity, no permanent presence. Rather, the artist reveals the ideologies within these mechanisms and alludes to their historical connec-

tions and contingencies. The title of her previous exhibition, *late responder*, implies delay. Bliss says of her practice in the text accompanying the exhibition: “Though it may be naive, it's not necessarily nostalgic to use nearly abandoned technology as a weapon of resistance.” Her works play with temporalities, with ostensibly awkward moments in time and disruptive shifts as her own strategy of image production and distribution. In the future, she promises, fragments from current and previous exhibitions will be incorporated into a feature-length film: a history of Wall Street's persistence marked by catastrophe, from 9/11 to the economic crisis of 2008 and Hurricane Sandy, to the political protest movements formed in their wake and whose ambiguous effects are currently being negotiated.

¹ Alexandra Symons Sutcliffe: *Private Publics – Jenna Bliss*

JENNA BLISS (b. 1984 in Yonkers, New York), Lives and works in New York. Solo exhibitions/movies (selection): *Late Responder*, Galerie Felix Gaudlitz, Vienna (2020); *The People's Detox*, documentary (2018); *Poison the Cure*, Outpost Gallery, Norwich (2017); Group exhibitions (selection): *Cutting the Stone*, Miguel Abreau Galery, New York (2019); *Straying from the Line*, Schinkel Pavillon, Berlin (2019); *Subsets*, Christian Andersen Gallery, Copenhagen (2019); *Ex-Voto: The body + the institution*, Galway Arts Centre, Galway (2018).

FLOOR PLAN



1
Connecting the dots, 2021
HD Video TRT
1:52

2a
Spectacle, 2021
SD Video TRT
1:43

2b
Conspiracy, 2021
SD Video TRT
1:46

3
Professional witnesses., 2021
SD/HD Video TRT
1:00:33

Events
As soon as events are possible again, the dates will be communicated on our website.

Upcomming
Yannic Foray
20.05. – 10.07.2021

Stadtgalerie
PROGR
Waisenhausplatz 30
3011 Bern
stadtgalerie@bern.ch
www.stadtgalerie.ch

Opening hours
Wednesday – Friday
2 am–6 pm
Saturday
12 am–4 pm