First Institutional Survey of Video Work by Artist Trevor Shimizu Staged Between Lisbon and Philadelphia Opens This Winter, Presented by Institute of Contemporary Art

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On the occasion of the tenth anniversary of Kunsthalle Lissabon in Portugal, ICA is one of four arts organizations invited to participate in a pioneering partnership to test and examine how geographical and organizational differences challenge notions of institutional identity. From November 20, 2019 through February 1, 2020, ICA will take over the Kunsthalle’s exhibition space and digital platforms, transforming the Lisbon institution into an extension of its Philadelphia building to present Trevor Shimizu: Performance Artist, the first exhibition devoted to the artist’s video work. In addition to this intercontinental presentation, ICA will stage an addendum to the exhibition in the museum’s Project Space in Philadelphia from January 25 through May 10, 2020.

“We understand dialogue as a very productive force,” wrote João Mourão and Luís Silva, co-founding directors of Kunsthalle Lissabon, in a joint statement. “Collaborations are very important to us in the sense they represent dialogues made visible and, more importantly, made public. We collaborate mostly with similar institutions, like-minded platforms who are committed to thinking critically about the world and the place contemporary art has in it.”

Trevor Shimizu: Performance Artist presents more than twenty works dating from the early 2000s to the present, including videos, video paintings, and online interventions, offering a prescient and poignant commentary on affect and identity in our socially mediated moment. While Shimizu is recognized primarily for his wryly humorous paintings and drawings, the artist’s media works help to reframe his broader practice as an expanded form of performance. Although his time-based works are often produced using lo-fi and off-the-shelf digital technologies, they resonate with the strategies employed by an earlier generation of video artists such as Dan Graham, William...
Wegman, and Shigeko Kubota. Like artists who picked up Portapaks and camcorders in previous decades, Shimizu uses the tools at hand both to record actions for the camera and to employ the language of mass media for other means.

“Trevor Shimizu’s media works not only shed light on his practice as a kind of performance of the figure of the artist, but also his unique reflection on male vulnerability and the construction of the self,” said Alex Klein, Dorothy and Stephen R. Weber (CHE ’60) Curator at ICA. “This is especially resonant in our current moment in which social connectivity risks atomization and alienation, speaking to shared insecurities and a collective need to belong.”

For Shimizu, video in its expanded sense has a provocative relationship to painting. In his ongoing series of video paintings, Shimizu pairs his existing videos with large unstretched paintings with holes that have been cut out to fit a device. These painterly frames for video, as seen in Happy Friends Day (2016–2019) and Inside Out Toys Unboxing (Compilation): Disgust, Joy, Sadness, Anger (2017–2019), are produced in one of two distinct genres: monochromes and gestural abstractions. Shimizu sees both modes of working as coming from the perspective of a character, which can in turn be understood as a kind of performance of the role of the artist. With his deadpan delivery, it is sometimes difficult to discern Trevor Shimizu the individual from the artist as character. The dry humor that permeates his artwork thus acts as a kind of mask for his critical investigation into identity and the presentation of the self.

“The character is both a slightly exaggerated parody of myself combined with someone I could relate to and felt like criticizing,” said Shimizu. “The embarrassment of living can be great material—I try to exploit it whenever I can.”

Trevor Shimizu: Performance Artist is organized by Alex Klein, Dorothy and Stephen R. Weber (CHE’60 ) Curator. The exhibition is accompanied by the related publication Broadcasting: EAI at ICA, which features Shimizu’s work at ICA in 2018, co-developed with Rebecca Cleman, Director of Electronic Arts Intermix (EAI), and designed by Geoff Han.

This exhibition is part of the initiative I is for Institute, which examines the perceptions and parameters of contemporary arts institutions as a way to create a space for dialogue about how we might reimagine them. The project unfolds through a series of exhibition collaborations and conversations with curators and directors reflecting on their work and its institutional and local contexts. The conversations are archived online at iisforinstitute.icaphila.org. I is for Institute is an ongoing initiative organized by Alex Klein, Dorothy and Stephen R. Weber (CHE’60 ) Curator, and Tausif Noor, 2017–2020 Spiegel-Wilks Curatorial Fellow. The project was co-developed with Gee Wesley, 2015–2017 Spiegel-Wilks Curatorial Fellow, and received additional support from Laurel McLaughlin, Brunilde Sismondo Ridgway Curatorial Fellow, Bryn Mawr College.

Support for the research and development of I is for Institute has been provided by The Pew Center for Arts & Heritage.
ABOUT TREVOR SHIMIZU  
Trevor Shimizu (born 1978; lives Long Island City, NY) has had solo shows at the Rowhouse Project, Baltimore; and Kunsthall Charlottenborg, Copenhagen. His work has been exhibited at Electronic Arts Intermix, New York; the White Columns Annual, New York; the Whitney Biennial, New York; the Queens Museum of Art, New York; Detroit Institute of Arts; and the High Museum of Art, Atlanta. He is represented by 47 Canal, New York; Misako & Rosen, Tokyo; and Galerie Christine Mayer, Munich.

ABOUT ALEX KLEIN  
Alex Klein is Dorothy and Stephen R. Weber (CHE’60) Curator at the Institute of Contemporary Art, University of Pennsylvania, which she joined in 2011. Recent exhibitions at ICA include Suki Seokyeong Kang: Black Mat Oriole (2018, co-curated with Kate Kraczon); Broadcasting: EAI at ICA (2018, co-organized with Electronic Arts Intermix); Nathalie Du Pasquier’s first museum survey BIG OBJECTS NOT ALWAYS SILENT (2017, co-organized with the Kunsthalle Wien); Myths of the Marble (2017, co-organized with the Henie Onstad Kunstsenten, Norway, and accompanied by a critical reader published by Sternberg Press); Barbara Kasten: Stages (2015), the first major survey of the artist’s work; and Julia Feyrer and Tamarra Henderson: Consider the Belvedere (2015). She is currently working on a multifaceted website and exhibition initiative, I is for Institute, which includes collaborations with RAW Material Company, Senegal; and Kunsthalle Lissabon, Portugal.

ABOUT THE KUNSTHALLE LISSABON  
Kunsthalle Lissabon is a small-scale contemporary art institution located in Lisbon, Portugal. Imagined as a performative reflection on institutional activity, it is celebrating its tenth anniversary in 2019 by disappearing and being taken over by four international institutions that will open local outposts in Lisbon. It was founded in 2009 by João Mourão and Luís Silva, who are its current directors. Kunsthalle Lissabon commissions and presents new projects by international artists who have never shown in Portugal, as well as projects by local artists who do not have access to production infrastructure. Recent projects include solo exhibitions by Caroline Mesquita, Engel Leonardo, and Sol Calero. Along with exhibition making, publishing is another core activity, and the institution produces several books each year.

The Kunsthalle Lissabon is supported by República Portuguesa, Direção-Geral das Artes, FfAI, and Coleção Maria e Armando Cabral. For more information visit kunsthalle-lissabon.org.

ABOUT THE INSTITUTE OF CONTEMPORARY ART AT THE UNIVERSITY OF PENNSYLVANIA  
The Institute of Contemporary Art at the University of Pennsylvania is a non-collecting institution presenting exhibitions at the forefront of contemporary practice and culture that challenge audiences to think in new ways. The ICA is free for all to engage and connect with the art of our time. Since its founding in 1963, ICA has served as a laboratory for the new, introducing and supporting the production of urgent and important contemporary art, beginning with ICA’s inaugural show of paintings by Abstract Expressionist Clyfford Still, followed by the first museum show of works by Andy Warhol in 1965. Throughout its history, ICA has been instrumental in identifying and developing many promising artists before they attained prominence within the international art world, some of whom include—in addition to Warhol—Richard Artschwager, Vija Celmins, Alex Da Corte, Karen Kilimnik, Barry Le Va, Glenn Ligon, Robert Mapplethorpe, Agnes Martin, Rodney McMillian, Pepón Osorio, Cauleen Smith, and Charline von Heyl.