

THE RENAISSANCE SOCIETY
AUGUST 2017 - JANUARY 2018

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CALENDAR

SAT, AUG 26, 7PM	Performance: <i>Jochen Dehn</i>	PG 3
SAT, SEP 9, 5–8PM	Opening reception and artist talk: <i>Jennifer Packer, Tenderheaded</i>	PG 4
SUN, SEP 24, 3PM	Screening: <i>Dear Watchers in the Shadows</i>	PG 6
SAT, SEP 30, 8PM	Concert: <i>Lea Bertucci</i>	PG 12
WED, OCT 11, 6PM	Exhibition walk-through: <i>Tenderheaded</i>	PG 5
SAT, OCT 14, 3PM	Reading: <i>CM Burroughs</i>	PG 6
SAT, OCT 21, 6:30PM	RenBen 2017	PG 14
WED, OCT 25, 6PM	Discussion: <i>Christina Sharpe and Cauleen Smith</i>	PG 7
SAT, NOV 4, 3PM	Lecture/Performance: <i>Martin Beck</i>	PG 12
SAT, NOV 18, 5–8PM	Opening reception and artist talk: <i>Alejandro Cesarco, Song</i>	PG 9
WED, NOV 29, 7:30PM	Reading: <i>Wayne Koestenbaum</i>	PG 10
WED, DEC 6, 6PM	Discussion: <i>Lynne Tillman</i>	PG 10
WED, JAN 10, 6PM	Exhibition walk-through: <i>Song</i>	PG 9
SAT, JAN 13, 8PM	Concert: <i>Joshua Abrams & Natural Information Society</i>	PG 12
SAT, JAN 20, 7PM	Screening: <i>The Death of Louis XIV</i>	PG 11

Cover: Jennifer Packer, *An Exercise in Tenderness* (detail), 2017. Courtesy of the artist.

INTERMISSIONS



PERFORMANCE
JOCHEN DEHN
ARCHES AND
AVALANCHES
 SAT, AUG 26, 7PM

Jochen Dehn is an artist living in Paris and Hamburg whose performances take the form of tactile experiments and absurdist scenarios that prod at the boundaries of knowledge. “I work with things in my proximity,” Dehn writes, “things we know, things at hand—a rumor, a social structure, a found or constructed object, or a physical or imagined phenomenon.”

The artist’s first performance in the United States, *Arches and Avalanches*, features a series of demonstrations that use the discovery of “nothing” as their starting point, following after polymath inventors like Otto von Guericke

and Blaise Pascal. Taking a page from these contributors to the scientific revolution, Dehn invites you to join his foray into the realm of “effectiveness.”

This is the second iteration of *Intermissions*, a new programming series at the Renaissance Society devoted to ephemeral or performance-based works, staged in the empty gallery in between exhibitions. This recurring platform, organized by Karsten Lund, Assistant Curator, presents two major works every year.

This series is funded by a grant from the Efromson Family Fund. Additional support for this event is provided by the Cultural Service at the Consulate General of France in Chicago and the France Chicago Center.

Above: Jochen Dehn, *God Is Nivea*, 2005.
 Photo: Blaise Adilon.

SEP 9–NOV 5, 2017

JENNIFER PACKER

TENDERHEADED

For her first solo institutional exhibition, New York-based artist Jennifer Packer presents new and recent paintings. *Tenderheaded* brings together multiple strands in the artist's practice, ranging from portraiture to the funerary bouquet. Based in observation, improvisation, and memory, Packer's canvases are intimate and contemplative, rendered in loose strokes and strong color. Like the exhibition title, the juxtaposition of these various modes of representation and production point to possibilities both bodily and emotional, fragile and strong.

Packer's figurative paintings feature a powerful quietude. Each canvas reads as a self-contained world, its subject emerging from or dissolving into its surroundings. She presents those who sit for her—usually family members and friends—with compassion, foregrounding their individual autonomy and carefully guarding their integrity. The artist is one of a number of emerging contemporary painters engaged with questions of representing the black subject; she considers her work to be part of a larger conversation about making these figures visible.

Funerary bouquets are the subject for another ongoing series of paintings that suggest themes of trauma and loss. Packer's floral arrangements recall those of classical still life painters like Henri Fantin-Latour, yet, like her other works, they primarily produce a psychological space. Perhaps innocuous, even

beautiful, on initial view, each suggests a private sorrow that reverberates beyond the fleeting moment of the flowers' public display.

Packer renders fragments of her paintings in detail while she obscures information in other areas through more abstract mark-making or even leaving the surface blank. The artist paints each canvas over a long duration, returning again and again to rework the surface, "undoing" the image, as she says, until a balance is struck. A narrow palette in each work—chartreuse, mauve, ochre, for example—demands close attention to shifts in hue and tone and often results in subject and environment seeming to collapse into one another.

Packer's practice is marked by its restraint, producing works that are complicated, sometimes elusive, but always generous. Suspicious of realism's capacity to communicate, she recently said, "The more I approach realism, the further I feel from the true emotive quality of the things I'm depicting. I think emotional information is often housed in the image's resistance to a fixed identity... I believe that through engaging with [this] resistance there is a pushing toward something truer, more complex, and long-lasting."

Jennifer Packer, Tenderheaded is supported by the Joyce Foundation.

Opposite: Jennifer Packer, *Say Her Name*, 2017.
Courtesy of the artist.



SAT, SEP 9, 5–8PM
Opening reception
with artist talk at 6pm

WED, OCT 11, 6PM
Exhibition walk-through
Solveig Øvstebø, Executive Director and Chief Curator

EVENTS

SCREENING

DEAR WATCHERS IN
THE SHADOWS

SUN, SEP 24, 3PM
FILM STUDIES CENTER
COBB HALL, 3RD FLOOR
5811 S ELLIS AVE

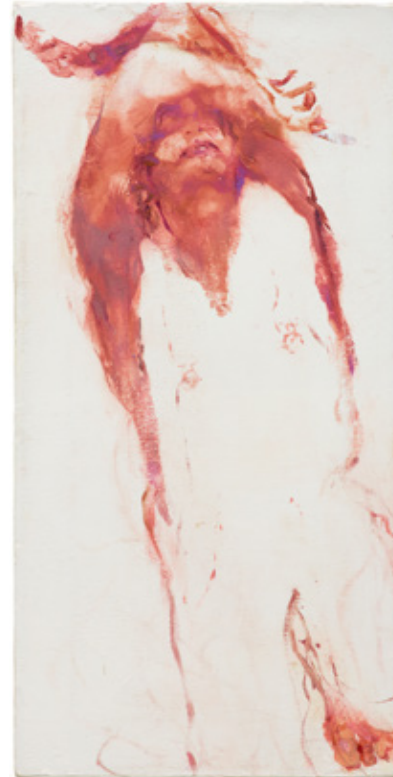
Selected by Jennifer Packer, the videos in this program reflect a range of individual artistic perspectives and subjects, and yet also reveal potential affinities and hints of a shared foundation as black female artists. These works by Tomashi Jackson, Sable Smith, Sondra Perry, Cauleen Smith, and others, variously reflect on memory, identity, personal histories, and digital technology. Together they suggest how moving images can be powerful vehicles for attention and accountability, at once critical and playful.

READING

CM BURROUGHS

SAT, OCT 14, 3PM
KENT HALL, ROOM 120
1020 E 58TH ST

Burroughs brings a formal inventiveness to her poems as they explore the body's vulnerabilities and protective impulses. Her first book, *The Vital System*, tangles with desire and grief, sensuality and survival, violence and illness, building from poem to poem with vivid powers of self-observation. Assistant Professor of Creative Writing at Columbia College Chicago, Burroughs has been awarded fellowships from Yaddo, The MacDowell Colony, and Callaloo Writers Workshop, among others.



Above: Jennifer Packer, *And Dreaming*, 2015. Courtesy of the artist and Sikkema Jenkins & Co., New York.

DISCUSSION

CHRISTINA SHARPE
AND CAULEEN SMITH

WED, OCT 25, 6PM
CLASSICS BUILDING, ROOM 110
1010 E 59TH ST

Jennifer Packer's paintings quietly conjure aspects of black life, questions of visibility, and the public and private dimensions of loss. In this conversation, scholar Christina Sharpe and artist Cauleen Smith discuss related subjects in their own work and beyond. Sharpe's book *In the Wake: On Blackness and Being* (2016) is a vital look at contemporary black life, exploring different registers of the word "wake." Similarly, Smith's films and multimedia works, including a recent project for the Whitney Biennial, face urgent social conditions and the everyday possibilities of the imagination.

ALEJANDRO CESARCO

SONG



Alejandro Cesarco describes his practice as addressing questions of “repetition, narrative, and the practices of reading and translating.” Artworks take the form of film and video, prints and photographs, text and drawings, among others, and evince a deep engagement with the histories and aesthetics of Conceptual Art. With a poetic, sometimes romantic, other times melancholic air, they represent a sustained investigation into time, memory, and how meaning is felt.

Many of Cesarco’s artistic strategies point to the influence of literature on his practice, structurally and conceptually, directly and indirectly. Certain works take the form of the index, the dedication, and the table of contents. Texts by authors such as Robert Walser, Jorge Luis Borges, Marguerite Duras, and Clarice Lispector are quoted in structure or subject matter. A similar “personal canon” could be drawn from the fields of cinema and art. Overall, Cesarco’s methodologies variously mine the possibilities of tropes and archetypes, inspiration and appropriation, genre and style.

At the Renaissance Society, *Song* features a selection of previous work alongside two newly commissioned projects. This tightly conceived exhibition suggests themes of reading, re-reading, duration, directionality, and chronology. The installation of artworks in *Song* carries a particular tempo, closer to the time of reading than the time of looking. Rhythm is created in Cesarco’s work by silences and withholdings—an aesthetic that the artist has elsewhere characterized as “muted melodrama.” Through an insistent repetition and austerity of means, Cesarco creates a pattern that begins to reveal how the works’ emotions lay in their tone: it is this tone and speed, and the particular mode of attention that they demand, that communicate equally as much as what is being narrated.

SAT, NOV 18, 5–8PM
Opening reception
 with artist talk at 6pm

WED, JAN 10, 6PM
Exhibition walk-through
 with Karsten Lund, Assistant Curator

EVENTS

READING

WAYNE
KOESTENBAUM

WED, NOV 29, 7:30PM
LOGAN CENTER FOR THE ARTS,
PERFORMANCE PENTHOUSE
915 E 60TH ST

A versatile writer and performer, Koestenbaum brings a sharp intelligence and inimitable style to his work. His books include poetry collections such as *The Pink Trance Notebooks* (2015) and prose works such as *Humiliation* (2011) and *Hotel Theory* (2007). Recently Koestenbaum has been writing an ongoing series of fables that take certain artworks as catalysts. For this program, Koestenbaum moves between spoken and musical components: part reading, part improvisation.



DISCUSSION

LYNNE TILLMAN

WED, DEC 6, 6PM
CLASSICS BUILDING, ROOM 110
1010 E 59TH ST

Tillman is a singular voice in the landscape of American writers and the author of twelve books, including *What Would Lynne Tillman Do?* (2014). Her latest novel, *Men and Apparitions*, forthcoming in March 2018, explores the human drive to create and keep images, and what it means to live in a culture glutted with pictures. For this program, Tillman talks with Alejandro Cesarco about narrative tropes and playing with genre, in their own work and elsewhere.

SCREENING
THE DEATH OF
LOUIS XIV

SAT, JAN 20, 7PM
LOGAN CENTER FOR THE ARTS,
SCREENING ROOM
915 E 60TH ST

Selected by Alejandro Cesarco, *The Death of Louis XIV* (2016) is a sumptuous and wry chamber drama by Albert Serra, one of the most radical filmmakers working in independent cinema today. French New Wave legend Jean-Pierre Léaud stars as the elderly “Sun King,” whose demise plays out amongst a steady flow of doctors, courtiers, and relatives. With a contemplative pace and elegantly composed images, Serra draws on extensive historical research to recreate the final days of Europe’s longest-reigning monarch.

Opposite: Alejandro Cesarco, *Untitled (Remembered)*, 2014. Courtesy of the artist and Tanya Leighton Gallery, Berlin.

Above: Alejandro Cesarco, *Musings*, 2013. Courtesy of the artist and Tanya Leighton Gallery, Berlin.

OTHER EVENTS

CONCERT
LEA BERTUCCI
SAT, SEP 30, 8PM
BOND CHAPEL
1025 E 58TH ST

A compelling voice in new music and sound installation, Bertucci has a nuanced feel for acoustic phenomena and the way sound moves through a particular space. The New York-based musician and sound artist takes an experimental approach whether she's performing alone with amplified woodwinds, composing for strings and other instruments, or incorporating tape collage, electronics, and multi-channel speaker arrays.

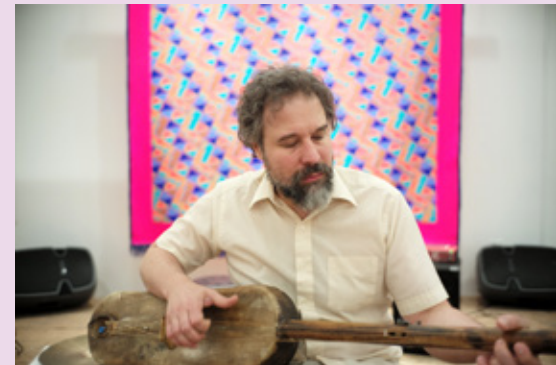
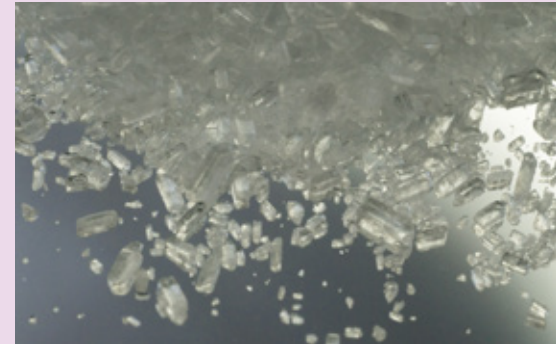
LECTURE/PERFORMANCE
MARTIN BECK
SAT, NOV 4, 3PM
SWIFT HALL
1025 E 58TH ST

Beck examines the paradoxes of history and intersections of art and architecture in his finely calibrated installations and conceptual artworks. Here, the artist presents a performative lecture commissioned by the Renaissance Society to coincide with the Chicago Architecture Biennial. Branching out from investigations into Chicago and its design histories, this new work draws out wide-ranging insights and hidden narratives.

CONCERT
**JOSHUA ABRAMS
& NATURAL
INFORMATION
SOCIETY**
SAT, JAN 13, 8PM
BOND CHAPEL
1025 E 58TH ST

This Chicago-based band, led by Joshua Abrams, uses traditional and electric instrumentation to develop layered aural environments with a psychedelic feeling. Their music builds on the hypnotic qualities of the gumbri, a three-stringed instrument used by the Gnawan people in West Africa, while also drawing on a range of contemporary forms including jazz, minimalism, and krautrock. At Bond Chapel, the group presents a new piece, featuring an expanded line-up of musicians.

Opposite, from top:
Lea Bertucci. Photo: Walter Wlodarczyk.
Martin Beck, 2017. Courtesy of the artist.
Joshua Abrams & Natural Information Society,
with painting by Lisa Alvarado. Photo: Charlie Gross.



ren ben

THE RENAISSANCE SOCIETY
BENEFIT GALA AND
ART AUCTION

SAT, OCT 21, 6:30PM

HALF ACRE BEER CO.
2050 W BALMORAL AVE
CHICAGO, IL 60625

The annual RenBen Gala and Art Auction invites the Renaissance Society's supporters to come together for a lively evening of food and drink, art and conversation.

All proceeds from the event directly benefit the 2017-18 season of exhibitions, events, and publications. Year after year, a successful RenBen bolsters our commitment to artists and their ideas, and ensures that we remain free and open to the public.

Individual tickets: \$500 each
Tables for ten: from \$5,000

For more information, to purchase tickets, or to make a donation, please visit our website:
store.renaissancesociety.org

VISITING INFORMATION

All exhibitions and events take place at the Renaissance Society unless otherwise noted.

All are free, open to the public, and require no booking.

Follow us on social media:

Twitter and Instagram: @RenSoc

Facebook and Vimeo:
The Renaissance Society

Opening hours

Tue-Fri: 10am-5pm

Sat and Sun: 12-5pm

Closed Mondays, between exhibitions, Nov 23-24, and Dec 23-Jan 1.

Group visits

We are pleased to accommodate visits from schools, universities, and other groups, and our library and archives are open to researchers by appointment. Please contact us to arrange a visit.

SUPPORTERS

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SEP 9–NOV 5, 2017

JENNIFER
PACKER
TENDERHEADED

NOV 18, 2017–JAN 28, 2018

ALEJANDRO
CESARCO
SONG

THE RENAISSANCE SOCIETY

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Contemporary art
exhibitions, events,
and publishing