







**mickey mouse has grown up a cow**

curated by  
Joe Mama-Nitzberg

University Art Museum  
University at Albany  
State University of New York



Frances Stark  
This Is Not Exactly a Cat Video: w/ David Bowie's "Starman", 2007  
Video, color, sound, 10 minutes 9 seconds  
Courtesy of Galerie Buchholz, Berlin/Cologne/New York

"It's on America's tortured brow  
That Mickey Mouse has grown up a cow""

—Lyric from "Life on Mars" by David Bowie,  
from his 1971 album *Hunky Dory*, which also  
includes the song "Andy Warhol."

The exhibition *Mickey Mouse has grown up a Cow* was organized to be viewed in conjunction with, and to be in conversation with, the exhibition *Younger Than Today: Photographs of Children (and sometimes their mothers)* by Andy Warhol curated by Corinna Ripps Schaming. *Mickey Mouse has grown up a Cow* presents four contemporary artists working in video. While some of the artists do work predominantly in video, others work in a multitude of media. The videos in this exhibition address aspects of the representation of children and often parenting, both visually and culturally. They can all also be seen in relationship to the work of Andy Warhol, especially his film practice.

The artists in the exhibition could be said to be identified as members of the cringe-worthily named "Generation X." The four, Kalup Linzy, Yoshie Sakai, Frances Stark, and Abbey Williams were born between 1967–1977. This was the first "Post Warhol" generation, the generation that came of age at the same time that Warhol's cultural theories and dictums—cable television, the Internet, reality stars, etc.—came to fruition.

As the exhibition title is a line from David Bowie's "Life on Mars," there is also a direct relationship to David Bowie. With his gender-fluid glamour and his gift for iconic appropriation, Bowie might also be called a "post-Warhol"

artist. Two of the pieces, Frances Stark's *This Is Not Exactly a Cat Video: w/ David Bowie's "Starman,"* 2007 and Abbey Williams *OMG*, 2015 utilize Bowie songs in their soundtracks. Both Stark and Williams also cast their own children in their work.

*This Is Not Exactly a Cat Video: w/ David Bowie's "Starman"* documents Stark's young son and his friend watching and reacting to two different David Bowie promotional films. As viewers, we are allowed a voyeuristic view of their viewing. We watch them watching. In doing so, we ask ourselves, are the children performing for the camera, for the parent/director Stark, or are they just children joyously reacting without inhibition? As in Andy Warhol's *Vinyl* when Edie Sedgwick and Gerard Malanga dance to "Nowhere to Run," the answer is, most likely, all of the above. In Stark's piece, we are keenly aware of our voyeurism, and we love it. The children "perform" in a truly self-conscious/unselfconscious manner that only children can. Or perhaps in a similar manner to Warhol's superstar "children" ... or a reality television performer. The children are nearly ecstatic in their reaction to Bowie. They scream and dance without inhibition. They are obnoxious and adorable. Here one might recall the larger-than-life reactions and amphetamine-fueled rantings of a Warhol superstar like Ondine or Bridget Polk. In those cases, perhaps the obnoxious outweighs the adorable, but we celebrate the childlike freedom and defiance nonetheless.

Abbey Williams includes her young son in both *Great*, 2015, and *OMG*, 2016. In *OMG* she also uses her own image in her role as mother. She dresses herself and her son in kitschy matching outfits, a relationship we can see in many of the Polaroid portraits in *Younger Than Today*. Williams speaks to Warhol in both pieces in several other ways. Warhol was utilizing the most up-to-date technology available to him in his film practice as well as referencing pop-cultural forms of mainstream media. *Great* is a static smartphone filming of William's son as he repeats the same word for most of the piece. Here we see a contemporary echo of a Warhol screen test, like those seen in *Younger Than Today*. Williams also explores repetition (Warhol) and looks to our contemporary lack of ability to address duration (Warhol again). In *OMG*, Williams utilizes state-of-the-art video editing technology to

include multiple "screens" in one monitor. We see texts on smartphones, viral videos and archival imagery as well as original photography of Williams and her son. Warhol's split-screen film *Chelsea Girls* was embracing technology and portraying the chaos and cacophony of his world in 1966. In a contemporary fashion, Williams's *OMG* is doing something similar 50 years later.

In a press release for an exhibition of his films in 2010, the Andy Warhol Museum described a whole segment of his film practice as "soap opera-like experimental dramas." Here we must see this Warholian impulse carried on in Kalup Linzy's *First Soap Opera*, 1994, and Yoshie Sakai's *Koko's Love: Episode 1*, 2014. They each revel in their soap opera-like qualities. Linzy and Sakai both explore this uniquely soapish duality: the melodramatic banal.

Kalup Linzy has made a career of exploring the soap-opera form in his video work. In this piece, we see a teenaged Linzy in his "first soap opera", made for his environmental science class in 1994. Along with Linzy himself, the cast is made entirely of other teenagers and younger children, many of whom are Linzy's family members. There are no "adults" in the piece. Like Warhol, Linzy explores his "self" through mediated imagery and pop forms. Also like Warhol, Linzy is invested in the representation of so-called marginalized people. These are not your usual "soap opera" stars. As with the Warhol superstars of the 1960s, these African-American children of the 1990s were not who you would have seen performing on "As the World Turns" or "Beverly Hills 90210." Their amateur acting is presented, as in Warhol, with a sort of dignity and kitsch bravado.

Yoshie Sakai's *Koko's Love: Episode 1*, 2014 is another "soap opera-like experimental drama". Through green-screen technology, Sakai herself plays all the roles. She is the mother, the father and all the children. Like Linzy (and like Warhol), Sakai portrays a soap-opera drama with a "cast" not often seen on network television; in this case it is the Asian-American family. As in Warhol, Sakai challenges traditional gender roles and cultural stereotypes through melodrama and kitsch. She also presents multiple selves. Through this multiplicity of roles and personas, we know Sakai somehow more, yet somehow less. In a Warhol "soap opera", we watch a

drag superstar like Mario Montez crossdress and play themselves while playing someone else. In these “camp” Warhol films I believe we approach a “truth” about gender and other social constructs through exaggeration and detachment. The same must be said of Sakai’s *Koko’s Love: Episode 1*.

In *Younger Than Today*, Corinna Ripps Schaming encourages us to look at Warhol in a different light. Most often Warhol has been explored through a dystopian lens of glamour, death, market value, etc. Perhaps we should know better than to be so literal-minded. Just like a child, Warhol is less straightforward than he might at first appear. In *Mickey Mouse has grown up a Cow*, we find innocence, sentimentality, tenderness, and nurturing alongside irony, critique, and mourning. This ability to encompass seemingly opposing tendencies is what is perhaps the most Warholian trait of all.

Joe Mama-Nitzberg  
Curator

## about the curator

Joe Mama-Nitzberg is an artist, educator and creative director living in Catskill, New York. He received a master of fine arts from ArtCenter College of Design in Pasadena, California. His artwork has been featured in exhibitions at Grant Wahlquist Gallery, Galerie Catherine Bastide, Marc Foxx Gallery, Seattle Art Museum, the Salzburger Kunstverein, the Renaissance Society, the Louisiana Museum of Modern Art (Denmark), and White Columns, among others. His work is in the collection of the Walker Art Center, and he is the recipient of a 2015 Art Matters grant. He has been a creative director for Arista Records, Interscope Records, and Mark Seliger Photography, and he has taught in both the Tisch School of the Arts and the Steinhardt School of Culture, Education, and Human Development at New York University.

## artists' biographies

### Kalup Linzy

Born in 1977 in Clermont, Florida. Lives and works in Brooklyn, New York.

Selected solo exhibitions include *Tangled Up* at David Castillo Gallery in Miami Beach, Florida (2018); *Queen Rose Family (da stories)* at Sundance Film Festival in Park City, Utah (2016); *Art Jobs and Lullabies* at Philip J. Steele Gallery, RAMCAD, in Lakewood, Colorado (2015); *If it Don't Fit* at Studio Museum of Harlem in New York (2009); *L@TE: Friday Nights @ BAM/PFA* at Berkeley Art Museum in Berkeley, California (2010); *If it Don't Fit* at the Studio Museum in Harlem, New York (2009); and *All My Churen*, curated by Malik Gaines, at LAX ART in Los Angeles, California (2006); among others.

Selected group exhibitions include *America is Hard to See* at The Whitney Museum of American Art in New York City (2015); The Museum of Modern Art, New York City; and MoMA P.S. 1, Long Island City, New York, among others. Linzy has had multiple performances and screenings including the Carpenter Center at Harvard University in Cambridge, Massachusetts; The Metropolitan Museum of Art in New York City; The Kitchen in New York City; The Hammer Museum in Los Angeles, California, and the Museum of Contemporary Art in San Diego California.

Linzy received an MFA at the University of South Florida in Tampa, Florida (2003) and a BFA at University of South Florida in Tampa, Florida (2000).

### Yoshie Sakai

Born in 1970 in Torrance, California. Lives and works in Gardena, California.

Selected solo exhibitions include *We Interrupt Your Regularly Scheduled Programming To Bring You...KOKO'S LOVE* at Louisiana Tech University School of Design in Ruston, Louisiana (2018); *KOKO's Love: Screening and Performance* at Torrance Shipman in Brooklyn, New York (2017); *KOKO's Love* at Groundspace Project in Los Angeles (2017); *KOKO's Love: A Soap Opera Tale of One Family* at Antenna in New Orleans Louisiana (2016); and *The Dark Room presents Yoshie* at Torrance Art Museum in Torrance California (2012).

Selected group exhibitions and screenings include *Aliens with Extraordinary Abilities* at Fellows of Contemporary Art (FOCA) in Los Angeles, California (2017); *LA x Kobe Exchange Exhibition* at Kobe Design Center, Kobe, Japan (2016); *19<sup>th</sup> Annual Antimatter Film Festival* at Open Space Arts Centre in Victoria, BC, Canada (2016); *Divisions* at Skowhegan HQ in New York City (2016); and *Femmes' Video Art Festival* at Los Angeles Contemporary Exhibitions (LACE) and the Situation Room in

Los Angeles, California (2016). Sakai received an MFA at Claremont Graduate University (2009) and a BFA at California State University in Long Beach (2004).

### Frances Stark

Born in 1967 in Huntington Beach, California. Lives and works in Los Angeles, California.

Selected solo exhibitions include *UH-OH: Frances Stark 1991-2015* at the Museum of Fine Arts in Boston, Massachusetts (2016) and at The Hammer Museum in Los Angeles, California (2015); *Intimism* at The Art Institute of Chicago in Chicago, Illinois (2015); *Sorry for the Wait* at greengrassi in London, United Kingdom (2015); *Frances Stark: My Best Thing* at Ian Potter Museum of Art, The University of Melbourne in Melbourne, Australia (2013); and MoMA PS1 in Long Island City, New York (2011).

Selected group exhibitions include *2017 Whitney Biennial* at The Whitney Museum of American Art in New York City (2017); *Viva Arte Viva* at the Venice Biennale in Venice, Italy (2017); *Giles* at Gagosian Gallery in Athens, Greece (2016); *The Grand Balcony* at La Biennale

de Montreal, in Montreal, Canada (2016); *Collected by Thea Westreich Wagner and Ethan Wagner* at Centre Pompidou in Paris, France (2016); *Electronic Superhighway* at Whitechapel Gallery in London (2016); *Material, issue 1 launch party* at The Museum of Contemporary Art in Los Angeles, California (2015).

Stark received an MFA at the Center College of Design in Pasadena, California (1993) and a BFA in Humanities at San Francisco State University in San Francisco, California (1991).

### **Abbey Williams**

Born in 1971 in New York City. Lives and works in Brooklyn, New York.

Solo exhibitions include *Project Room* at Skibum MacArthur in Los Angeles, California (2017); *(STILL)* at Bellwether Gallery in New York City (2009); *Project Room* at Bellwether Gallery in New York City (2007); *present company excluded* at Barbara Walters Gallery at Sarah Lawrence College in Bronxville, New York (2006); and *Moon in Gemini* at Foxy Production in New York City (2003).

Selected group exhibitions and screenings include *Several Years Have Passed*, curated by Jenny Nichols, at Soloway in Brooklyn, New York (2018); *Loss for Words*, curated by Max Warsh, at BAM and *Garden Dwellers* at Regina Rex, both in New York City (2017); *Leaden Hearts*, curated by Lisi Raskin, at Riccardo Crespi Gallery in Milan, Italy (2016); *Tenderness*, curated by Alex Jovanovich, a Transborder Arts broadcast on public access cable TV in New York City (2015); and *this might not be for now*, curated by Skowhegan Alliance, at Cabinet in Brooklyn, New York and Public Fiction in Los Angeles, California (2014).

Williams received an MFA at the The Milton Avery Graduate School of the Arts at Bard College, Annandale-on-Hudson, New York (2003) and a BFA at The Cooper Union for the Advancement of Science and Art in New York City (1993).

## **exhibition checklist**

Kalup Linzy  
*First Soap Opera*, 1994  
Video, 12:42 minutes; color; sound  
Courtesy of David Castillo Gallery

Yoshie Sakai  
*Koko's Love: Episode 1*, 2014  
Video, 11:14 minutes; color; sound  
Courtesy of the artist

Frances Stark  
*This Is Not Exactly a Cat Video: w/ David Bowie's "Starman"*, 2007  
Video, 10:09 minutes; color; sound  
Courtesy of Galerie Buchholz, Berlin/Cologne/New York

Abbey Williams  
*OMG*, 2016  
Video, 6:06 minutes; color; sound  
Courtesy of the artist

Abbey Williams  
*Great*, 2015  
Video, 2:15 minutes; color; sound  
Courtesy of the artist



Support for this exhibition is provided by the Office of the President, Office of the Provost, The University at Albany Foundation, University Art Museum Endowed Director's Fund, and University Auxiliary Services.

