



TAMMY RAE CARLAND: Tammy Rae Carland at Jessica Silverman Gallery

Written by Genevieve Quick
March 7, 2014

In Tammy Rae Carland's 2010 show at Jessica Silverman Gallery, *Funny Face I Love You*, she explored comedians' (and by proxy artists') masochistic desire for an audience, while also suffering from stage fright or fear of rejection, especially in the self deprecating humor of legendary female comedians, like Phyllis Diller. In her most recent exhibition, Carland's single channel video and the exhibition title, both *Live from Somewhere*, pays tribute to Gilda Radner. In this new work Carland expands her repertoire to include broader ideas of theater, representation, illusion, and photography. The show's press release nicely frames her work (specifically regarding the video included in the exhibition) as playing on the tension between "stood up" and "stand up." I would also add "stand in" to her rhetoric play, as Carland positions various levels of representation against each other as stand ins for the elusive referent.

Carland's video *Live from Somewhere* presents several possible scenarios that explore "stood up," as a group or individual who fail to show up. Based on the opening scene from Radner's 1979 one woman show, Carland's video features a spotlight panning across a velvet draped stage with a row of vintage theater seats. While spotlights typically focus on the star of the show or its emcee, Carland's spotlight, like a nervous searching eye, never finds its resting point. Moreover, Carland toys with the viewer's expectation by never opening up the curtain to reveal the star of the show, who might be a "no show" or too shy to reveal their presence. When the gallery is empty, the uninhabited row of theatre seats compliments this sense of the absence, but this time the viewers'. Anxiously, *Live from Somewhere* positions the presence of the performer against the viewers in a series of scenarios, where one or both have been "stood up."

Additionally Carland explores "stood up" and "stand up" through objects that test the limits of verticality in a series of seductive photographs staged in grand theaters. *Balancing Act* (2013) takes "stood up" to its absurdist end with a dizzying number of precarious stacked chairs while *Ghost Light* (2013) depicts a vertical mop that appears to be mopping the stage, but without a mopper.

In *Tipping Point* (2013) a jumble of entangled ladders suggest metaphorically the potential folly or failure as one might strive for height when climbing a ladder. Without depicting an active agent (like a person), the mop, stack of chairs, and jumble of ladders have a strange mysteriousness. Either the vertically oriented objects were “stood up” by stagehands as props or absurd maintenance, or the objects have magical become animate, and possibly “stood up” themselves.

Like René Magritte’s iconic *The Treachery of Images (This is Not a Pipe) (La Trahison des images [Ceci n’est pas une pipe])* (1929), which uses text and image to acknowledge the painted image as representation, Carland’s *This is Not a Brick* (2013) creates a system of cascading representations that “stand in” for the original. In Carland’s image, black curtains are tied back to theatrically frame a concrete and brick wall. Faux brick paneling leans against the image’s brick wall to reinforce the artifice within the picture plane. In addition, Carland pits the object’s shape and form against its surface and pattern, as a faux brick clad a megaphone and a silhouette of a woman’s leg are not exclusively brick, megaphone, or woman’s leg, but multi-layered representations. Carland has created a photograph, itself a reproduction, with objects that exist on multiple levels of representation, or stand ins.

Carland’s work is filled with visual puns and subtle word play that plays on viewers expectations and the illusion of theater and photography. By smartly withholding bits of information, like the context and narrative, Carland creates ambiguous scenarios that probe levels of anxiety and humor.



Tipping Point, 2013, chromogenic print, 37.5 x 50 inches, edition of 5 and 2 AP