

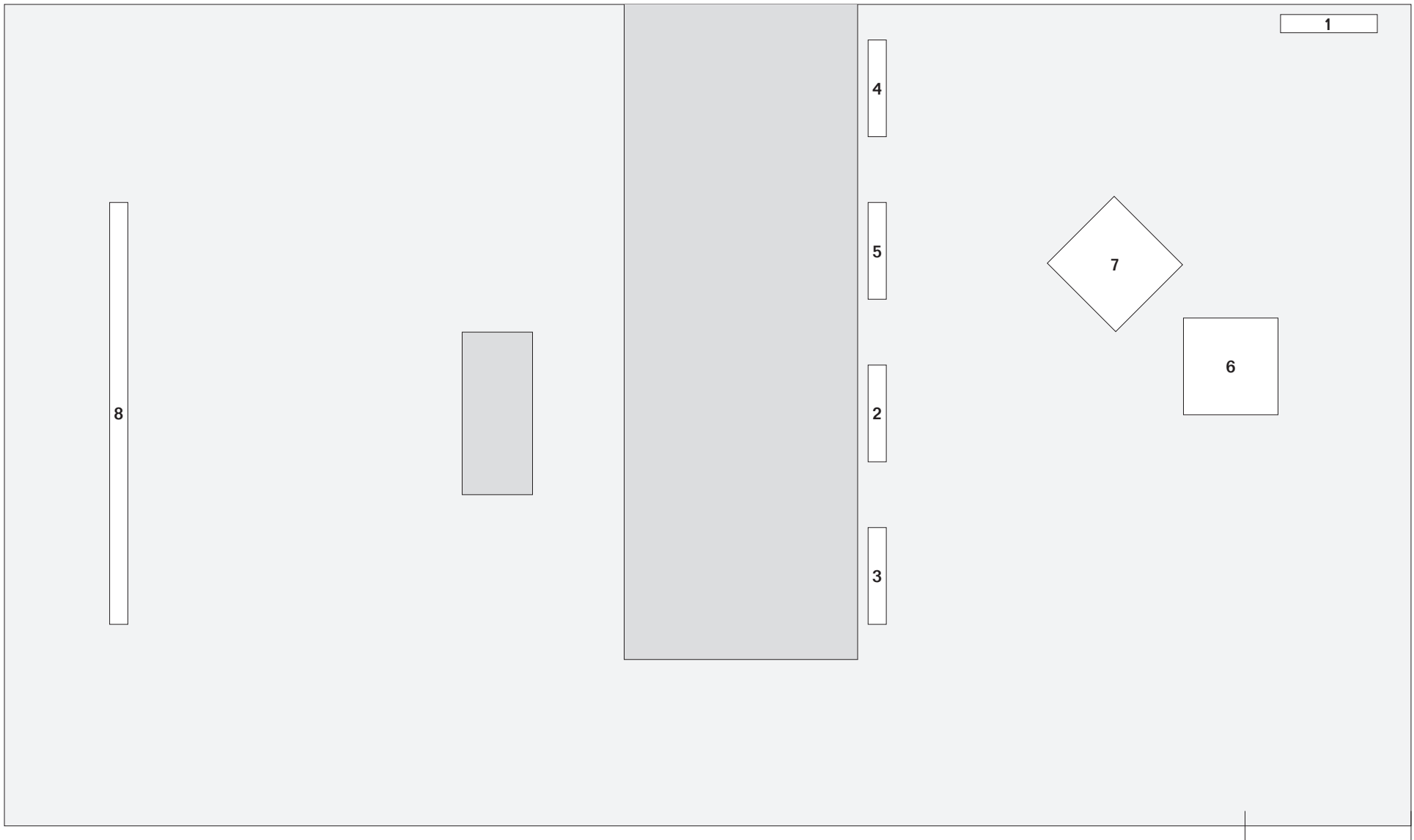
Exhibition Guide

Jenna Bliss
Basic Cable

September 19, 2024–
February 16, 2025

Jenna Bliss's practice encompasses video, film, photography, and sculpture. Her work engages the urban landscape of New York City to stage broader questions about local and global finance, politics, and aesthetics. Jenna intertwines meticulous research and associative image-making to create a body of work informed by experiences both personal and collective. Raised in the suburbs of New York, the artist came of age in the immediate wake of 9/11, and entered the workforce around the 2008 economic crash. Her work tracks these historical moments as they link together in the setting of Wall Street, with the city itself acting as a dynamic participant and grounding Jenna's historical inquiries in the tangible reality of the day-to-day.

Basic Cable gathers a series of found light boxes overlaid with film stills; short video works of superimposed Super 8mm footage; and a 30-minute film titled *True Entertainment* (2023), which follows the fictional artist Lola Van Haas and her gallery at a prestigious art fair in the lead up to the 2008 economic crisis. The works allude simultaneously to the technological and economic infrastructures that surround us and to the ideological matrix that runs below the city. The artist, here, functions as a rogue agent of disruption whose modus operandi is observatory and speculative: an *agent observateur*.



1. *Chanel, Orange, 2023*
Found light boxes, Super 8mm pigment print
2. *Celine, Chocolate Pears, 2023*
Found light boxes, Super 8mm pigment print
3. *Duane Reade, Tomato Sauce, 2023*
4. *Apple, Omelet, 2023*
Found light boxes, Super 8mm pigment print
5. *Western Union #3, 2023*
Found light boxes, Super 8mm pigment print

6. *Spectacle, 2021*
Super 8mm film transferred to HD video, 1:43 minutes
7. *Conspiracy, 2021*
Super 8mm film transferred to HD video, 1:46 minutes
8. *True Entertainment, 2023*
HD video, 31:59 minutes
- * *Connecting the Dots, 2021*
Super 8mm film transferred to HD video and animation, 1:52 minutes
Streaming through Amant's security monitor, viewable upon request.

1. *Chanel, Orange*, 2023
2. *Celine, Chocolate Pears*, 2023
3. *Duane Reade, Tomato Sauce*, 2023
4. *Apple, Omelet*, 2023
Found light boxes, Super 8mm pigment print

Four sculptures made from found light boxes featuring outdated food advertisements are juxtaposed with film stills of boarded-up high-end retail stores in Manhattan during the peak of COVID-19 in 2020. The original light box images show, respectively, a pot of tomato sauce, a hand making an omelet, chocolate-covered pears, and an orange being sliced. These items are starkly contrasted with street scenes of large sheets of plywood barricading storefronts from Apple, Chanel, Celine, and Duane Reade. The film stills come from the artist's ongoing personal archive of Super 8mm film, which she has been recording since 2016 throughout New York, from the Bronx to Brooklyn, often anchored by the altered skyline of Manhattan's downtown and now mostly filmed in the heart of the Financial District where her studio is located. The resulting

superimposition of film stills with the found light boxes depicting imagery one can imagine originally displayed in a strip-mall diner or food court renders a simultaneously disorienting and illuminating vision of a foreclosed American dream.

5. *Western Union #3*, 2023
Found light boxes,
Super 8mm pigment print

Another light box work, *Western Union #3* (2023), takes a used Western Union sign and pairs it with a 2020 film still captured at Zuccotti Park—a public park in the Financial District of Lower Manhattan, New York City, in which a masked woman sits hunched over her phone.

Situated one block away from the World Trade Center, Zuccotti Park, then known as Liberty Plaza Park, was used as a recovery area during the attacks on September 11, 2001. During the Occupy Wall Street movement in 2011, the park was inhabited by protesters who spent days and nights there demonstrating against economic and social inequality. *Western Union*

#3 brings a quiet image of Zuccotti Park during the early days of the COVID-19 pandemic together with the once-dominant American multi-national financial service corporation Western Union.

6. *Spectacle*, 2021
Super 8mm film transferred to HD video, 1:43 minutes
7. *Conspiracy*, 2021
Super 8mm film transferred to HD video, 1:46 minutes
- * *Connecting the Dots*, 2021
Super 8mm film transferred to HD video and animation, 1:52 minutes

Spectacle, *Conspiracy*, and *Connecting the Dots* form a series of films that Jenna refers to as *Now Vacant*, which focus on image production in the wake of the September 11, 2001, attacks. Again, culling from the artist's Super 8mm archive, the films employ a dark sense of humor. The overlaid imagery forms its own semiosis, allowing the limitations of both the camera's technology and the site of the Financial District to determine the film's meaning.

Towering above eye level, *Spectacle* and *Conspiracy* play on two box monitors placed on pedestals that resemble the Twin Towers. In *Spectacle*, a plane soars in the clouds above a busy street around the iconic Stock Exchange building, where people in professional attire walk to and from work. The film progresses from the street view to a scene of an orange sunset punctuated by the Lower Manhattan skyline seen through a chain-link fence. As if to view the Lower Manhattan skyline from a moving subway train, *Conspiracy* layers the reflection from a subway window on the number 6 train line with a view of One World Trade Center and the surrounding buildings. The film moves through a sequence of amusement park lights and commercial neon signage that is commonplace in city neighborhoods: ATM, OPEN, and NAIL SALON. Mapping multiple city points, *Connecting the Dots* animates a series of blue lines that arbitrarily plot a set of markers on the New York City skyline. The film's movements are dizzying and disorienting. *Connecting the Dots* is streaming through Amant's

security monitor, viewable upon request. Together, the films both activate and obscure images, mixing fact and conspiracy in the still unfolding historical wake of 9/11.

8. *True Entertainment*, 2023
HD video, 31:59 minutes

True Entertainment's opening scene features a hit song from 2008 (which coincidentally has had a recent moment of TikTok virality) as each character is introduced accompanied by sparkle sound effects interspliced with champagne toasts and kitsch editing transitions. Jenna began working as an editor on reality and other unscripted television in 2007. Drawing from this experience, she employs and appropriates the stylistic tools, tropes, and structures of “scripted reality” to reflect the pop culture of the time. So-called “scripted reality” was a televisual genre specific to the early 2000s that marked the transition from 1990s sitcoms like *Friends* to the reality television of the Kardashians. The genre used the scripted and contrived structure of the sitcom, yet

played on the voyeuristic appeal of watching the unpredictability of real people coping with what is perceived as real life. *The Hills* most notably encapsulated the genre, airing from 2006–2010 on MTV. The genre was highly produced, with carefully constructed storylines and scripts for monotone and affectless dialogues carried out by non-actors. Jenna turns to “scripted reality” for its film-editing techniques, dissociated method acting, and the fashion and technological trends of the period. Through an anthropological lens, the film captures art world stereotypes: irrational artists, thirsty gallerists, the sexy assistant, obsessive collectors, and name-dropping students. Early-aughts technology, including flip phones and early Apple laptops, make an appearance, with a nod to the first Apple iPhones. In a dramatic turn, rather than celebrate the record-breaking sales, Lola (the artist) has a breakdown, an indication that there is something ominous brewing beneath the surface of this exuberant art market. However, as the art handlers pack up the works and decide

to start their own gallery, the cycle is clearly far from over.

Film Credits:

Cast: Kiah Butts, Patrick Callahan, Andrea Galata, Kathleen Alicia Kelly, Emilie Paap, Mariana Parma, Noelle Ramsey, Raquel Orendáin Shrestha, Benji Sills, Mitch Tebo, Piper Lyric Verbrick, Jacob A. Ware, Jeremiah Wenutu

Voice actors: Jillian Dini Bliss, James Duesterberg, Michèle Graf

Produced by:
Haus am Waldsee,
Felix Gaudlitz

Camera: Alex Ashe,
Marcus Odom
Sound: Teresa-Esmeralda Sanchez
DIT: Marlon Diaz
Script Supervisor & PA:
Lukas Paramo
Stylist: Bunny Lampert
Set: Tony Chrenka,
Ellis von Sternberg
Assistant Editor: Dan Ernst
Color: Na Thirakomen
Sound Mix: Jeff Seelye

Special thanks to: Guillaume de Saint-Seine/Listen to Your

Eyes Collection, Massimo Giorgetti, Anna Gritz, David May, Ivan Gaytan, Jillian Dini Bliss and James Duesterberg

Thanks to: Oskar Weiss, Stefan Auer, Casandra Hermann, Margherita Castiglioni, Stephan Jaeger & Petra Kieler, Anna Ruhdorfer, Victoria Forrester, John Bliss, Leslie Hendelman, Olivia Shao, Alex Fleming, John Almanza, Erin Cao, Ben Scott, Dominic Palarchio, Beatrice Hilke, Mike Crane, Sam Pulitzer, Janit Dini Bliss, Heidi Schlatter, Mary Helena Clarke, Aily Nash, Adelita Husni-Bey, Carissa Rodriguez, Anya Komar, Lise Soskolne, Kara Kazanoff, Jody Graf, Andrea Fourchy, Willa Nasatir, Annie Ochmanek, Caleb Considine, Marysia Paruzel

Jenna Bliss is an artist, filmmaker, and video editor. She lives in New York. Recent solo exhibitions include *Haus am Waldsee, Berlin (2024)* and *Homing at Ulrik, New York (2022)*.

All works courtesy of the artist, Felix Gaudlitz, Vienna, and Ulrik, New York.

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Amant is a non-profit arts organization in Brooklyn, NY. We are a non-collecting institution, which gives us the freedom to focus on experimentation, process, and dialogue through exhibitions, public programs, and artist residencies.

GALLERIES

Thursday–Sunday

12pm–6pm

CAFÉ & BOOKSTORE

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9am–2pm

Thursday–Sunday

9am–6pm

Free for all.

