



# to believe



DAVID CANNON DASHIELL  
ROBERT FLACK  
FRANK HAINES  
RACHEL HARRISON  
BEN JUDD  
SUSAN MACWILLIAM  
JOANNA MALINOWSKA  
SHANA MOULTON  
BEDE MURPHY  
JEANINE OLESON  
CLIFFORD SMITH  
SPIRIT TOURS  
(DAVE HARDY & SIEBREN VERSTEEG)  
SCOTT TRELEAVEN



*curated by* JEFFREY WALKOWIAK  
*for* VISUAL AIDS



to believe

JUNE 3 *thru* JUNE 27, 2010

LA MAMA LA GALLERIA

6 EAST 1ST STREET NEW YORK CITY

212-505-2476

GALLERY HOURS

THURSDAY *thru* SUNDAY 1 – 6 PM



*opening reception*

THURSDAY JUNE 3 ★ 6 – 9 PM

**Performance *by* Jeanine Oleson**  
*I Ran Contraband Spirituality*

**Spirit Tours 2010**

SUNDAY JUNE 6

★ 4 – 6 PM ★

**Screening of works *by* Ben Judd,  
Shana Moulton & Scott Treleven**

★ 7 – 10 PM ★

**Visual AIDS fund-raiser *at* Eastern Bloc**  
Join us for drinks to benefit *To Believe*  
Eastern Bloc  
505 E 6th St btw Ave A & B



SUNDAY JUNE 13 ★ 4 – 6 PM

**Screening of works *by* Susan MacWilliam**

SUNDAY JUNE 20 ★ 4 – 6 PM

**Unarius Screening *hosted by* Bede Murphy**



SUNDAY JUNE 27 ★ 4 – 8 PM

**Performance *by* Ben Judd and Blanko & Noiry**

SYMBOLS *of the* SIGNS *and* PLANETS

☉ SUN

☾ MOON

☿ MERCURY

♀ VENUS

♂ MARS

♃ JUPITER

♄ SATURN

♅ URANUS

♆ NEPTUNE

♇ PLUTO

♁ NORTH NODE

♁ RETROGRADE

♈ ARIES

♉ TAURIS

♊ GEMINI

♋ CANCER

♌ LEO

♍ VIRGO

♎ LIBRA

♏ SCORPIO

♐ SAGITTARIUS

♑ CAPRICORN

♒ AQUARIUS

♓ PISCES

## WHAT WOULD I DO *to* BELIEVE?

JEFFREY WALKOWIAK

In a world full of uncertainty and turmoil—failing economies, war, death, natural disasters, and disease—many people turn to the supernatural, paranormal, or mystical for guidance and solace. An article in *The New York Times* titled “Would You Ask a Psychic for Stock Tips? More Often, Clients Do” (September 22, 2008) stated that many professional psychics and clairvoyants experienced an increase in business when the economy began to plummet. Why wouldn’t a CEO or president of a Fortune 500 business seek answers from the unknown, when he or she was unlikely to get answers in the boardroom or from annual reports?

Beyond financial woes, many people turn to unconventional means or practices when faced with impossible questions, the notion of mortality, or dire situations. *To Believe* brings together a selection of artists and artworks that incorporate the actions and practices related to a range of metaphysical beliefs. Through repetition, observation, and portrayal of these rituals, events, and the characters who perform them, the artists embrace and sometimes question the conclusiveness of these practices and in doing so suspend their own disbelief. The artists in *To Believe* are a mix skeptics and believers, experts and novices, participants and observers, who through their work consider the actions taken to achieve self-fulfillment and enlightenment offered by the otherworldly.

Although as humans we desire exceptional experiences and solutions from anomalous sources, it is part of our psychological constitution to require evidence: proof that would validate these incidents. For years, scientific attempts have been made to debunk supernatural and paranormal phenomena. But striving to explain these occurrences also threatens the loss of power and mystery they obtain. Placing belief in something unexplainable offers a sense of optimism and partially satiates our need for an open-ended universe. It is in this realm of the unknown, the space between dark and light, where art gives us the tools to explore that which lies beyond our understanding.

Paranormal or supernatural experiences share a similitude with visual art; the viewer or participant must be willing to give him- or herself over to the experience, to take a leap of faith when engaging with a work of art. Art, like ghosts or spirits, has the ability to transcend the rational, to exist in a space that straddles time, perception, and belief. Mystical experiences are ineffable—impossible to express in words—yet they offer insight and broaden one’s way of thinking. Perhaps this is why art, as a visual language, is appropriate for conveying these experiences. Art, like science and religion, is created at the threshold between the known and the unknown, between reality and fantasy. It can function as a form of communication, a way of sharing ideas, thoughts, and concerns.

Translating personal experiences through the structure of tarot cards, David Cannon Dashiell in *Invert Oracle*, 1987–88, incorporates personal biography with esoteric meaning, organizing and cataloguing poignant events and experiences from his life. Originally used as playing cards but later adapted for divination, the Tarot offered Dashiell a methodological way to divide and organize his own personal history. What he chose to depict was determined by the structure of the suites of the Tarot.

The visual language of mystical practices is rich with clandestine meanings and references. Frank Haine translates his extensive knowledge of metaphysical practices into abstract sculptures, works on paper, and sound works. Using a vocabulary that recalls ancient rituals, alchemy, the occult, and meditative concentration, his works are transcendently charged with an energy distilled from the signs and symbols of these learned esoteric languages.

Mandalas are employed for focusing our attention on aspirants and as aids for meditation and trance-induced states. Clifford Smith's history as a dancer led him to his current artistic practice of creating delicate mandalas. Incorporating a physical meditative process similar to dance, Smith collects, categorizes, dries, and dyes fragile eggshells. This creative practice allows the artist to achieve a heightened awareness and a feeling of oneness with the universe.

Shana Moulton creates a New Age world teeming with bright colors, self-help therapeutic products, and soul-soothing home decor. Through her alter ego, Cynthia, the artist wavers between skepticism and belief as she exhausts a slew of psychic and physical improvement regimens that comment on contemporary mainstream's endless need for self-improvement.

Joanna Malinowska's work embodies the hope and desire for the miraculous and the improbable. Through video, installation, and sculpture she provides fertile ground for metaphysical manifestations. Her most recent project tests the powers of contact with the other world by giving an object the benefit of a doubt to possess a sort of spiritual power that may be nurtured and grown.

Robert Flack's photographs illuminate the psychic energy that lies within the human body. Using dazzling colors and ornate imagery as a sensual mapping, Flack locates the various chakra points on the body and creates images that reflect the artist's own exploration of physical and spiritual practices for improving well-being.

Susan MacWilliam creates portraits of prominent parapsychologists and psychic researchers through anecdotes, reconstructions, and investigations. Her films function as cinematic séances that channel multiple voices and spirits to portray an individual character and his or her history. By using a documentary-style approach, MacWilliam challenges the supernatural subject matter by depicting individual characters and focusing on ideas about visibility, perception, reality, and illusion.

An individual's belief allows for introspection and meditation that facilitates a new mode of consciousness. This mode of consciousness can be conducive to accessing paranormal occurrences. But belief also functions on a communal level, bringing people together to create a sense of support, unity, and understanding.

Communal activities such as rituals and singing are some of Jeanine Oleson's many focuses. She centers ideas around cultural politics, spirituality, feminism, ethnography, and humor, incorporating the fantastical and the absurd through many forms such as performance, catalytic sculpture, video, and photography. Through her work she revisits historic sources and events as a way of playfully recognizing the omnipresent conflict between the civilized and natural worlds.



Rachel Harrison's series of photographs *Perth Amboy* goes beyond documenting the apparition of the Virgin Mary in the window of a suburban house. In these works Harrison records the accumulation of smears and smudges of fingers left by the many believers who came in hopes of benefiting from the residual aura that miracle left behind. These images serve as testaments to the power of human desire to believe and the translation of that belief into something tangible.

Through an ongoing collaboration with the UFO devotee group Unarius, Bede Murphy frames that organization's creative endeavors as an example of the way art facilitates and represents belief. Inspired by the members of Unarius's faith and the imagery they create, Bede in his own practice produces objects and images that test the perceptions of art, science, fact, and fiction.

Testing his own beliefs and preconceptions, Ben Judd occupies the role of participant and observer in his exploration of specific groups and individuals who hold their own rules and belief systems. He engages with clairvoyants and shaman and re-creates pagan rituals as a means of translating a ritualistic activity based on belief into a moving image.

Scott Treleaven incorporates the visual language of the occult and the polytheistic as a means of capturing moments of discovery. Treleaven's sculpture *Point of Origin*, 2006, evokes the site of ritualistic practices and worship. Embedding the work with queer implications, decorative elements, and a seemingly nonsensical phrase, the artist aims to unveil the profound roots that can be discovered underneath something familiar or common and to reveal the hope and desire that is instilled in inanimate objects.

Spirit Tours, a collaboration between Dave Hardy and Siebren Versteeg, investigates the notion of a journey through a variety of simulated experiences. The pair's practice conflates the physical and the virtual to build an ongoing mythology that exists in the form of relics and memorabilia of often unrealized events.

It seems rather contradictory for a technologically savvy culture to revert back to an arcane system of beliefs. But at this moment it is not inappropriate for artists to revisit or reference metaphysical ideologies from the past. Spiritualism, the Hermetic Order of the Golden Dawn, Wicca, and the Theosophical Society, to name a few, emerged as a result of the socioeconomic and cultural progress made by the industrial revolution. Today's advancements in technology and science race forward at breakneck speed. There are many believers who explore the connection between communication technologies and the otherworldly, but the approach of *To Believe* to the supernatural, paranormal, spiritual, and mystical functions as a pause—a means of acknowledging that one of the privileges gained from these practices and experiences is the achievement of a sense of meaning through action, both mental and physical. In this day and age, when nothing is stable and answers to inexplicable events are scarce and confusing, turning to the unknown is a way to view a composed universe of pattern and purpose; a revelation of a world that is intentionally interconnected.



## David Cannon Dashiell

TOKYO JAPAN ★ 4 JULY 1952

The work of David Cannon Dashiell (1952–93) has been the subject of solo exhibitions at McBean Gallery, San Francisco Art Institute; New Langton Arts, San Francisco, CA; Artspace, San Francisco, CA; Pro Arts, Oakland, CA; NAWA, Portland, OR and Beyond Baroque, Venice, CA and others. His work has been included in numerous group exhibitions including *Visual Aid at Sixteen*, Yerba Buena Center for the Arts, San Francisco, CA; *In a Different Light*, University of California, Berkeley Art Museum; *System Aesthetics: Works from the Permanent Collection*, San Francisco Museum of Modern Art, CA; *Bay Area Conceptualism—Two Generations*, Hallwalls, Buffalo, NY and *AIDS—The Artists Response*, Wexner Center for the Arts, Ohio State University, Columbus among others.





## Robert Flack

GUELPH CANADA ★ 4 OCTOBER 1957 ★ 8 PM

The work of Robert Flack (1957–93) has been the subject of solo exhibitions at Feature Inc, NYC; MacDonald Stewart Art Centre, Guelph, ON; Galerie Rizzo, Paris, France; Garnet Press Gallery, Toronto, ON; Cold City Gallery, Toronto, ON; Plug In Gallery, Winnipeg, MB and YYZ Gallery, Toronto, ON. His work has been included in numerous exhibitions including *The Invisible Landscape*, Museum of Contemporary Canadian Art, Toronto, ON; *The Cold City Years*, The Power Plant, Toronto, ON; *The New Age Show*, W139, Amsterdam, the Netherlands; *Intimate Strangers*, The Art Gallery of Stratford, Stratford, ON; *AIDS Timeline*, Wadsworth Atheneum, Hartford, CT; *Homogenius*, Mercer Union, Toronto, ON and *The State of Being*, Canada Pavilion, Expo '86, Vancouver, BC among others.



## Frank Haines

DETROIT MI ★ 9 MAY 1973 ★ 5:11 PM

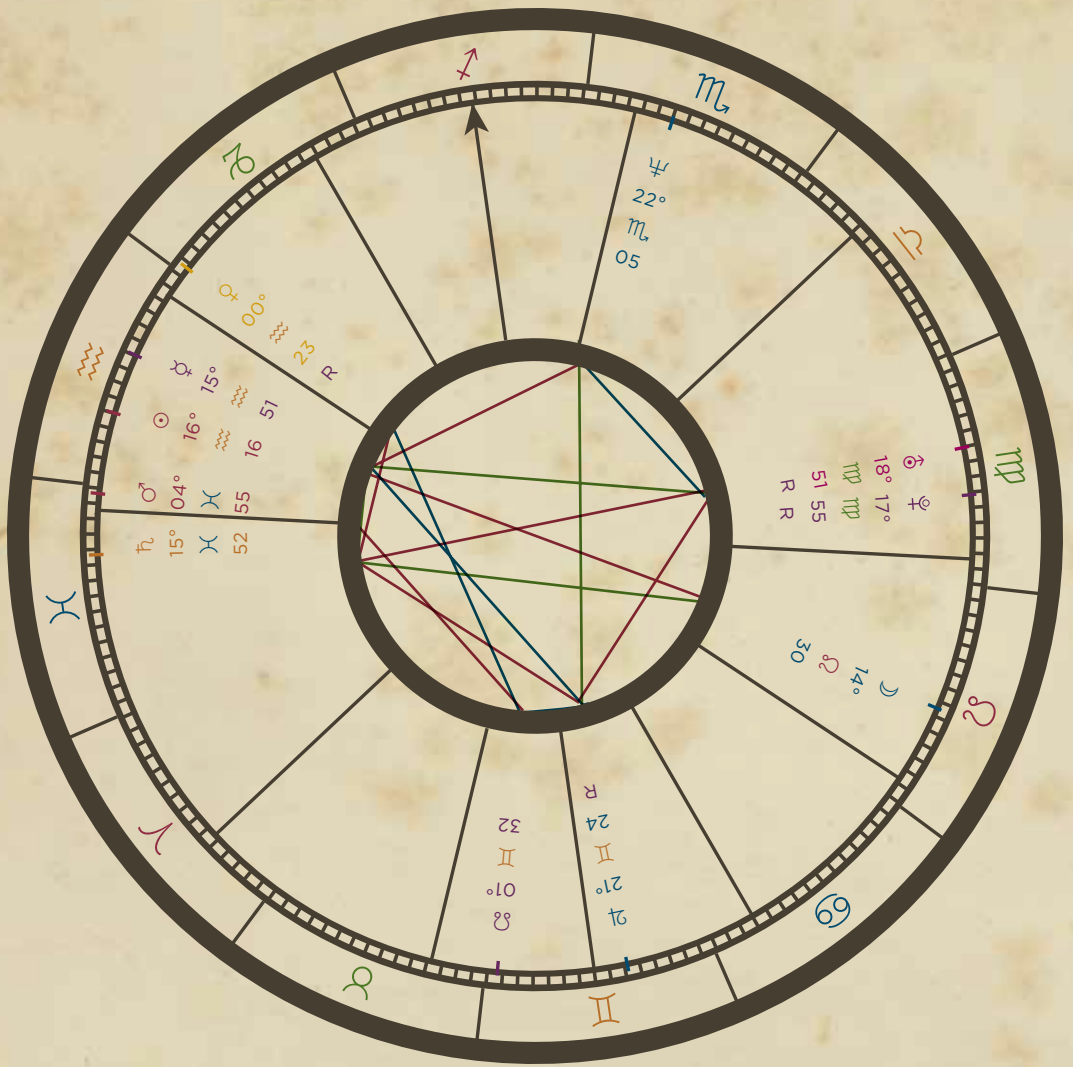
Frank Haines lives and works in New York. He has had solo exhibitions at Lisa Cooley, NYC; Galerie Krinzinger, Vienna, Austria; Three Walls, Chicago, IL; Locust Projects, Miami, FL; Jack Hanley Gallery, San Francisco, CA and Quotidian Gallery, San Francisco, CA. His work has been included in numerous group exhibitions including *Barefoot in the Head*, *Performa '09*, Bruce High Quality Foundation, NYC; *Blood Transfusions for Ghosts*, PS1, Long Island City, NY; *Unnaming Parts*, Blackston Gallery, NYC; *DEAF 2*, Frank Elbaz Galerie, Paris, France; *Bay Area Now 3*, Yerba Buena Center for the Arts, San Francisco, CA and *Weird World*, Headland Center for the Arts, Sausalito, CA among others. He has a MFA from San Francisco State University, and a BFA from Florida State University.



## David Hardy

SHARON CT ★ 30 MAY 1969 ★ 12:30 PM

Dave Hardy (Spirit Tours) lives and works in New York. He has had solo exhibitions at Art in General, NYC; La Mama La Galleria, NYC; living room D lyx, Malmo, Sweden and Southern Exposure, San Francisco, CA. His work has been included in numerous exhibitions including *Re-Accession: For Sale by Owner*, The FLAG Art Foundation, NYC; *The Line of Time and the Plane of Now*, Harris Lieberman Gallery, NYC; *Make it Now: New Sculpture in New York*, Sculpture Center, Long Island City, NY; *Greater New York 2005*, PS1, Long Island City, NY and *Colony*, Hudson Clearing, NYC among others. He has a MFA from Yale University, a BA from Brown University, and attended Skowhegan School of Painting and Sculpture.



## Rachel Harrison

NEW YORK NY ★ 5 FEBRUARY 1966 ★ 8 AM

Rachel Harrison lives and works in New York. She has exhibited internationally including solo exhibitions at the Hessel Museum, Bard College, Annandale-on-Hudson, NY; Migros Museum, Zurich, Switzerland; San Francisco Museum of Modern Art, CA; Milwaukee Art Museum, WI and the Contemporary Art Gallery, Vancouver, BC. Her work has been included in numerous exhibitions including *Abstract Resistance*, Walker Art Center, Minneapolis, MN; *Making Worlds*, 53rd Venice Biennale; *AlterModern*, Tate Triennial, London, UK; *2008 Whitney Biennial*, Whitney Museum of American Art, NYC; *Unmonumental: Falling to Pieces in the 21st Century*, New Museum of Contemporary Art, NYC; *The Uncertainty of Objects*, Hirshhorn Museum and Sculpture Garden, Washington, DC and *Make It Now: New Sculpture in New York*, Sculpture Center, Long Island City, NY among others. She has a BFA from Wesleyan University.



## Ben Judd

LONDON UK ★ 16 JANUARY 1970 ★ 1 PM

Ben Judd lives and works in London. He has had solo exhibitions at PS Gallery, Amsterdam, the Netherlands; Lugar a Dudas, Cali, Columbia; Vilma Gold, London, UK; Kunstbunker, Nuremberg, Germany and others. His work has been included in numerous group exhibitions including *Fourteen Interventions*, Swedenborg Society, London, UK; *From Ritual to Theatre, Ancient and Modern*, London, UK; *Concerning Dual Transmissions*, Royal College of Art, London, UK; *City Beats*, Dorsky Gallery, Long Island City, NY; *Errant Ways*, Banff Centre, Banff, Canada; *Seeing is Believing*, Photographer's Gallery, London, UK; *Strangers: The First ICP Triennial of Photography and Video*, ICP, NYC and *Albanian Biennale*, Tirana, Albania among others. He has a MFA from Goldsmith's College, and a BFA from the University of Humberside.

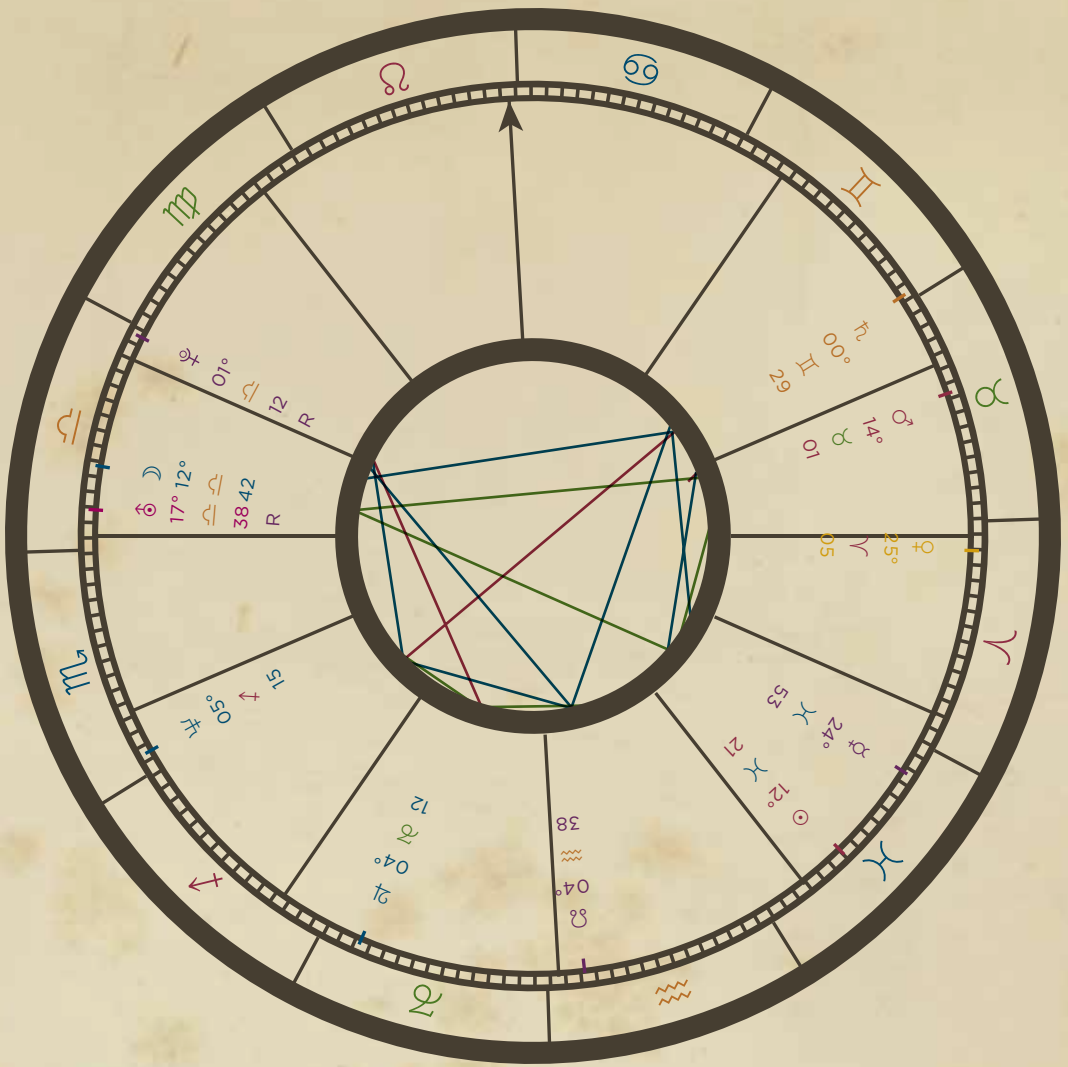


## Susan MacWilliam

BELFAST NORTHERN IRELAND ★ 5 MAY 1968 ★ 5 AM

Susan MacWilliam lives and works in Belfast. She has had solo exhibitions at the 53rd Venice Biennale; National College of Art and Design Gallery, Dublin, Ireland; Gimpel Fils, London, UK; Likovni Salon, Celje, Solvenia; Limerick City Gallery of Art, Ireland and Jack the Pelican Presents, Brooklyn, NY among others. Her work has been included in numerous group exhibitions including *8th International Photo-Triennial*, Villa Merkel, Esslingen, Germany; *Not Necessarily in that Order*, Presentation House Gallery, Vancouver, BC; *Seeing is Believing*, Photographer's Gallery, London, UK; *New Art from Northern Ireland*, The Katzen Arts Center at American University, Washington, DC among others.





## Joanna Malinowska

GDYNIA POLAND ★ 2 MARCH 1972 ★ 9:15 PM

Joanna Malinowska lives and works in New York. She has had solo exhibitions at Canada, NYC; Smack Mellon, Brooklyn, NY; Dobra Witryna, Warsaw, Poland and Galeria Okna, Contemporary Art Centre, Warsaw, Poland. Her work has been included in many group exhibitions including *Knight's Move*, Sculpture Center, Long Island City, NY; *Star City: The Future Under Communism*, Nottingham Contemporary, UK; *Performa '09*, NYC; *Manipulations of Deceit*, International Biennial of Contemporary Art, National Gallery of Art, Prague, Czech Republic; *Post-Diasporas: Voyages and Missions*, 1st Moscow Biennial of Contemporary Art, Russia and *Geography of Changes*, Kunstmuseum, Bern, Switzerland among others. She has a MFA from Yale University, a BFA from Rutgers University, and attended Skowhegan School of Painting and Sculpture.



## Shana Moulton

OAKHURST CA ★ 7 JULY 1976 ★ 3:04 PM

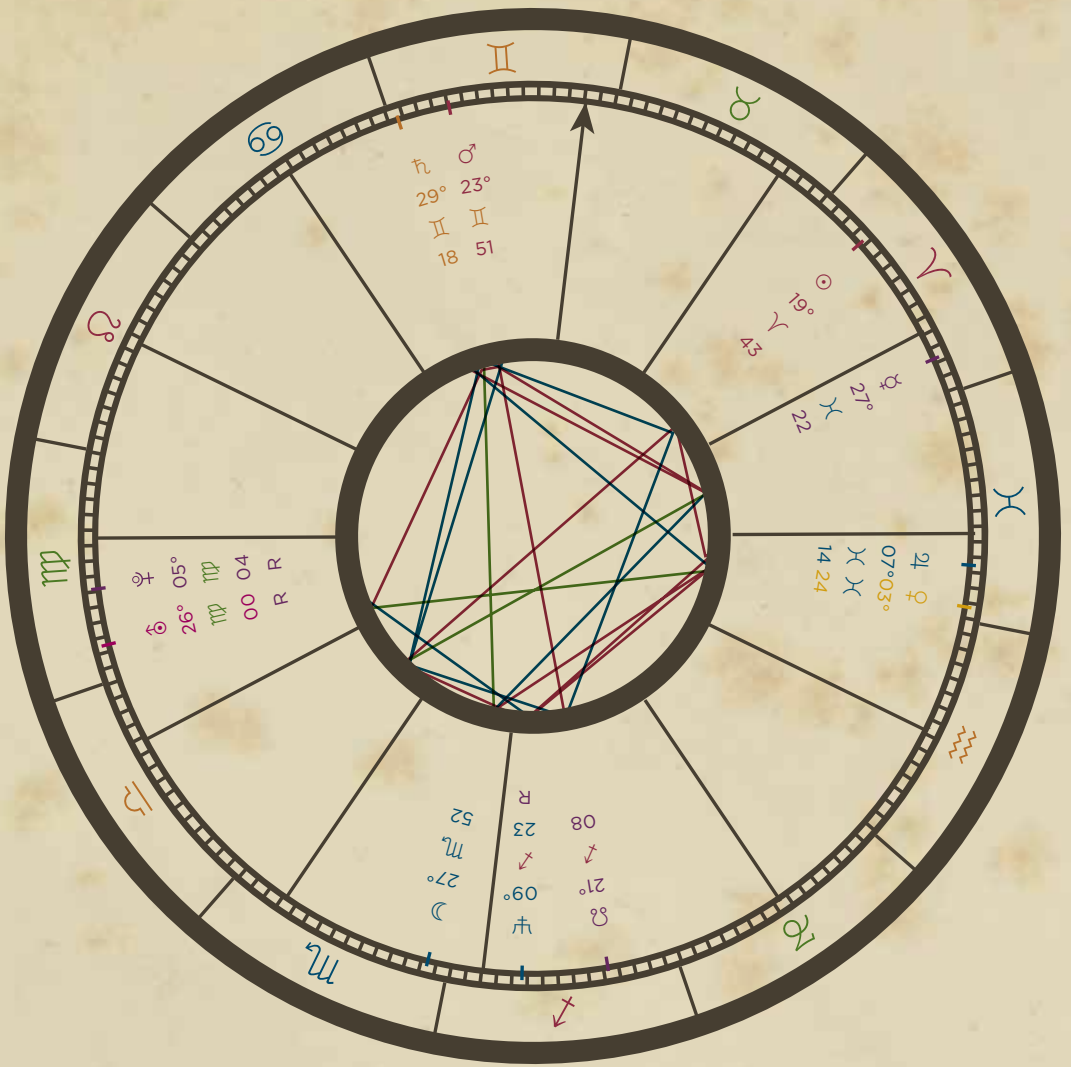
Shana Moulton lives and works in New York. She has had solo exhibitions at Migros Museum, Zurich, Switzerland; Art in General, NYC; Biefelder Kunstverein, Bielefeld, Denmark; Pianissimo, Milan, Italy; Contemporary Museum of Art, Uppsala, Sweden and Gimpel Fils, London, UK. Her work has been included in numerous group exhibitions including *Temple*, Ring Gallery, Zagreb, Croatia; *Supergirl*, Nexus, Philadelphia, PA; *Dream Room Project*, Palazzo Dalla Rosa Prati, Parma, Italy; *Futurist Life Redux*, *Performa '09*, NYC; *Arnhem Mode Biennale*, La Maison de Poupe, Historisch Museum Arnhem, the Netherlands; *Float*, Socrates Sculpture Park, Long Island City, NY; *Pandora Box*, The Lab, San Francisco, CA among others. She studied at the University of California, Berkeley, Carnegie Mellon University, Skowhegan School of Painting and Sculpture, and De Ateliers, Amsterdam, the Netherlands.



## Bede Murphy

SCHENECTADY NY ★ 30 APRIL 1968 ★ 11 PM

Bede Murphy lives and works in New York. He has had solo exhibitions at Irvine Contemporary, Washington DC; THINK LAB, Hudson, NY; Cornell Dewitt Gallery, NYC; Palet, NYC; A-Street, Boston, MA and The Space at Arts Media, Boston, MA. His work has been included in numerous group exhibitions including *LA 2019: Cults, Collectives and Cocooning*, 18th Street Art Center, Santa Monica, CA; *Change at Babylon*, Kathleen Cullen Fine Arts, NYC; *Salon I*, The Oni Gallery, Boston, MA; *Making Waves*, Provincetown Art Museum, MA among others. He has a BFA from Massachusetts College of Art.



## Jeanine Oleson

ASTORIA OR ★ 4 APRIL 1974 ★ 4:27 PM

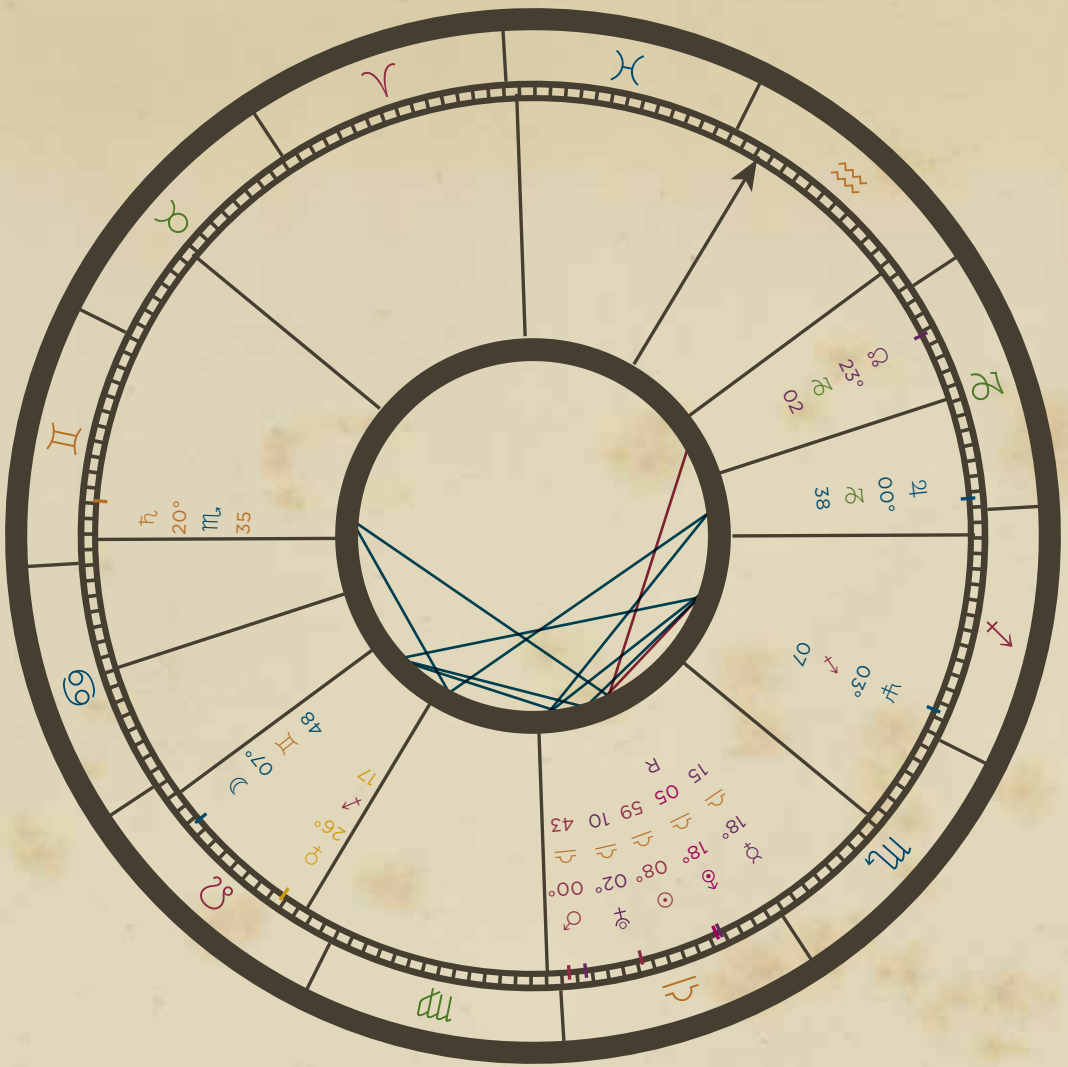
Jeanine Oleson lives and works in New York. Her work has been exhibited extensively including *Ecstatic Resistance*, X Initiative, NYC; *State Fair*, Socrates Sculpture Park, Long Island City, NY; *Solution*, DiverseWorks, Houston, TX; *Shared Woman*, L.A.C.E., Los Angeles, CA; *Ridykelous*, Participant Inc, NYC; *re:source*, Art in General, NYC; and *It's a Cruel World*, White Columns, NYC among others. She received a MFA from Rutgers University, a BFA from the School of the Art Institute of Chicago, and attended Skowhegan School of Painting and Sculpture.



## Clifford Smith

HAVELOCK NC ★ 29 NOVEMBER 1955 ★ 3:38 AM

Clifford Smith lives and works in Southern Florida. His work has been exhibited widely including the Pensacola Museum of Art, FL; Polk Art Museum, Lakeland, FL; Martin and Pat Fine Center for the Arts, Miami, FL; Museum of Contemporary African Diaspora Art, Brooklyn, NY; Broward Art Guild, Fort Lauderdale, FL; Tenri Cultural Center, NYC; Hudson Guild, NYC; Le Petit Versailles Garden, NYC and Art in General, NYC among others.



## Scott Treleven

BURLINGTON CANADA ★ 1 OCTOBER 1972 ★ 10:38 PM

Scott Treleven lives and works in Paris. He has had solo exhibitions at John Connolly Presents, NYC; Marc Selwyn Fine Art, Los Angeles, CA; Kavi Gupta, Chicago, IL and The Breeder, Athens, Greece. His work has been included in numerous exhibitions including *Compassion*, Institute for Art, Religion and Social Justice, NYC; *'Male' Collection of Vince Aletti*, White Columns, NYC; *La Biennale de Montreal*, QC; *Darkness Ascends*, Museum of Contemporary Canadian Art, Toronto, ON; *Log Cabin*, Artists Space, NYC and *Sinbad in the Rented World*, Art Gallery of York University, Toronto, ON among others. He studied at the University of Toronto, Ontario College of Art & Design and York University.





## Siebren Versteeg

NEW HAVEN CT ★ 5 AUGUST 1971 ★ 8:15 AM

Siebren Versteeg (Spirit Tours) lives and works in New York. He has had solo exhibitions at the Museum of Art at Rhode Island School of Design, Providence, RI; Hallways, Buffalo, NY; Max Protech, NYC; Rhona Hoffman, Chicago, IL; Ulrich Museum of Art, Wichita, KS; Wexner Center for the Arts, University of Ohio, Columbus and the Museum of Contemporary Art, Chicago, IL. His work has been included in numerous exhibitions including *Image Transfer*, Henry Art Gallery, Seattle, WA; *PAN*, Palazzo Delle Arti Napoli, Naples, Italy; *The Cinema Effect*; *Illusion, Reality and the Moving Image*, Hirshhorn Museum and Sculpture Garden, Washington, DC; *International Biennale of Contemporary Art*, National Museum of Art, Prague, Czech Republic and *Water, Domestic*, The Renaissance Society, Chicago, IL among others. He has a MFA from the University of Illinois, Chicago, a BFA from the School of the Art Institute of Chicago, and attended Skowhegan School of Painting and Sculpture.

## LA MAMA LA GALLERIA

As an extension of the internationally acclaimed La Mama Experimental Theatre Club, La MaMa La Galleria is a nonprofit gallery committed to nurturing artistic experimentation in the visual arts. La Galleria's programming responds to questions raised by the larger cultural, artistic, and intellectual community.

## VISUAL AIDS

Visual AIDS utilizes art to fight AIDS by provoking dialogue, supporting HIV+ artists, and preserving a legacy, because AIDS is not over.

Visual AIDS is the only contemporary arts organization fully committed to HIV prevention and AIDS awareness through producing and presenting visual art projects, while assisting artists living with HIV/AIDS. We are committed to preserving and honoring the work of artists with HIV/AIDS and the artistic contributions of the AIDS movement.

**visualAIDS.org**

### *VISUAL AIDS is generously SUPPORTED by*

Broadway Cares/Equity Fights AIDS, The Calamus Foundation, The Gesso Foundation, The Horace W. Goldsmith Foundation, The Mary Duke Biddle Foundation, New York City Department of Cultural Affairs, New York Gay Pool League, New York State Council for the Arts, NYU Community Fund, Starry Night Fund of Tides Foundation

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