

MIT List Visual Arts Center

PRESS RELEASE



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MIT List Visual Arts Center presents *Ericka Beckman: Double Reverse*, the largest solo presentation of the artist's works to date at a US institution.

Opening reception: Thursday, May 23, 2019, 6:30-8:30 PM

Artist Talk by Ericka Beckman: Thursday, June 6, 2019, 6:30 PM

Opening reception and artist talk free to the public.

Cambridge, MA, May 15, 2019—The MIT List Visual Arts Center is pleased to present *Ericka Beckman: Double Reverse*, on view from May 24-July 28, 2019. With selected films spanning over thirty years of Beckman's career, this is the largest solo presentation of the artist's work to date at a US institution. In conjunction with the exhibition, the public is invited to an opening reception on Thursday, May 23, 6:30 PM. On Thursday, June 6, 6:30 PM, Ericka Beckman will give an artist talk about her work. Both events are free and open to all.

Since the mid-1970s, Ericka Beckman (b. 1951, United States; lives and works in New York and Boston) has forged a signature visual language in film, video, installation, and photography. Often shot against black, spatially ambiguous backdrops, her moving image works are structured according to the logic of child's play, games, folklore, or fairy tales, and populated by archetypal characters and toy-like props in bright, primary colors. Throughout her work, Beckman engages profound questions of gender, role-playing, competition, power, and control. The four films comprising this tightly focused survey underscore Beckman's ongoing interest in mining connections between games and gambling, the larger structures of capital, and the often gendered conditions of labor.

In her groundbreaking film *You the Better* (1983), a group of men (played by artists Ashley Bickerton, Tony Conrad, Keith Sanborn, and others) engage in a series of enigmatic ball games, competing against a house that always wins. The rules Beckman devised to guide the performers draw on the sports betting game of jai alai, as well as various casino games, resulting in repetitive, ritualistic actions, which in their futility level a critique at the consumerist principles undergirding both. *Cinderella* (1986) presents a feminist restaging of the titular fairy tale alongside a plot line referencing the legacy of industrial manufacturing. Rather than toiling in the stepmother's house, Beckman's protagonist is a worker in a metal furnace who, after several aborted attempts to woo the prince, decides to strike out on her own.

The artist has produced more recent works on location, rather than in the studio, integrating the spatial politics of industrial and purpose-built architectures into the work. *Switch Center* (2003), for instance, is a kind of post-Soviet, post-industrial ballet filmed in a defunct water purification plant outside Budapest. Beckman's most recent work, *Tension Building* (2016), was shot at the Harvard University Coliseum and the Municipal Stadium in Florence, Italy. Set to an insistent, percussive score performed by the Minute Man Marching Band, the film considers the linked architectural features of the two stadiums alongside the excesses of embodied labor involved in college sports pageantry and competition. Over the last decade, Beckman has shown major films from the 1980s and 90s in installation settings with sculptural elements and theatrical lighting. *Double Reverse* will feature these installations, providing the first opportunity to more fully survey Beckman's contribution in a US museum.

Ericka Beckman's work has been shown at festivals, museums, and galleries around the world, including solo exhibitions at KANAL–Centre Pompidou, Brussels (2019); Zabłudowicz Collection, London (2018); Secession, Vienna (2017); Kunsthalle Bern, Bern (2013); Le Magasin, Grenoble (2014); the Tate Modern, London (2013); and the Hirshhorn Museum and Sculpture Garden, Washington, D.C. (1989). Group exhibitions and screening presentations include *The Pictures Generation 1974-1984* at The Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York (2009); four Biennials at the Whitney Museum of American Art, New York; MOCA, Los Angeles; the Walker Art Center, Minneapolis; and many others. Beckman's works are in the public collections including the Whitney Museum of American Art, New York; the Museum of Modern Art, New York; the Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York; The High Museum, Atlanta; Anthology Film Archives, New York; the British Film Institute, London; Wexner Center for the Arts, Columbus; and the Centre Pompidou, Film Collection, Paris. She is a Professor in Film and Video at MassArt, Boston.



The exhibition is accompanied by a 104-page, fully illustrated catalog with contributions by exhibition curator Henriette Huldish and others, published by Hirmer Verlag.

Ericka Beckman: Double Reverse is organized by Henriette Huldish, Director of Exhibitions & Curator, MIT List Visual Arts Center.

Exhibitions at the List Center are made possible with the support of Fotene Demoulas & Tom Coté, Audrey & James Foster, Idee German-Schoenheimer, Joyce Linde, Jane & Neil Pappalardo, Cynthia & John Reed, and Terry & Rick Stone. In-kind media sponsorship provided by 90.9 WBUR. Additional funding for *Ericka Beckman: Double Reverse* is provided by the National Endowment for the Arts.

General operating support is provided by the Massachusetts Institute of Technology; the Council for the Arts at MIT; Philip S. Khoury, Associate Provost at MIT; the MIT School of Architecture + Planning; the Mass Cultural Council; and many generous individual donors. The Advisory Committee Members of the List Visual Arts Center are gratefully acknowledged.



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