

signs and symbols

Linda Cummings

Slippages at 89 Greene

February 16 – March 25, 2023

Opening reception: Thursday, February 16, 6 – 8pm

*Location: 249 Houston Street

89 Greene at signs and symbols is delighted to present *Slippages* by artist **Linda Cummings**. Curated by **Kathy Battista**, this installation revisits images from the artist's series of black-and-white photographs, *Slippages* (1992-2002), in which delicate white slips perform interventions in cultural and institutional sites built by and for men. All the artworks were created on 35mm film with an SLR analog camera, with no digital intervention or postproduction. Each work was printed by hand in a traditional darkroom using silver gelatin paper. In today's world of Photoshop and selfie apps, these photographs stand in stark contrast, revealing an authenticity that we no longer can take for granted.

Cummings began *Slippages* shortly after Anita Hill's testimony to the U.S. Congress alleging sexual misconduct by Clarence Thomas, then-nominee to the Supreme Court:

In resistance, and defiance of gravity, I tossed an empty slip into the air, inserting 'hysterical gestures' into highly gendered environments while photographing its fluid transit through the frame. The project was fueled by the deep social anxiety and technological instability mounting as the Industrial Age of the 90's gave way to the Information Age, leaving gendered hierarchies in panic and "up in the air."

A feminine, intimate garment, each slip evokes the gendered body that once wore it. For a decade, Cummings collected secondhand slips and staged these private (and often guerilla) performances in spaces historically dominated by men – steel factories, sports stadiums, operating theaters, churches and American monuments, some of which no longer exist, for example the former Yankee Stadium in the Bronx. Some of the photos seem to act as reminders of feminist achievements, such as Title IX in sports and education, while others underscore the enduring power of patriarchy. The restricted access of these spaces was both symbolically significant and a logistic obstacle, and the artist herself often resorted to trespassing. But each resulting photograph bears witness to a moment of hope as the white slip soars, suspended in a state of possibility. The slip, free and fleeting, rejects the rules of its surroundings.

'Slip' also suggests something elusive, something that slides between opposites – the domestic and public, feminine and masculine, interior and exterior, visible and invisible, art and its

observer. To slip as to fall, or a slip as fabric on skin. Embracing this ambiguity, Cummings asks how a 'slip' can disrupt boundaries of gender identity and belonging.

While Cummings initially responded to a social and political urgency in 1992, *Slippages* remains just as urgent a message today, over thirty years later in the aftermath of #MeToo and the overturning of Roe v. Wade. A reflection on the past and present positions of women, these photographs invite us to imagine entirely new structures and futures.

linda cummings (b. Valley Forge, PA) studied fine arts at the Cleveland Institute of Art, Nova Scotia College of Art & Design and Rutgers University. Cummings is the recipient of numerous fellowships and awards, including the Whitney Museum of American Art, the Bronx Museum of Art, Yaddo Artist Colony, the Vermont Studio Center and the New Jersey Printmaking Council. Her work has been featured in leading fine art publications such as BLIND SPOT magazine, *Graver La Lumiere* exhibition catalogue, and the "Director's Cut" of APERTURE. Cummings' work is included in many private and museum collections, including the National Museum of American Art at the Smithsonian, Washington, DC; Brooklyn Museum of Art, Brooklyn, NY; Bronx Museum of the Arts, Bronx, NY; Lehigh University Art Gallery, Bethlehem, PA; Muskarell Museum, Williamsburg, VA; NYU/Langone, New York, NY; New York Health and Hospitals Corporation, New York, NY; Yale New Haven Hospital, New Haven, CT; Museo Nazionale della Fotografia de Brescia, Brescia, Italy; and Musee Jenisch, Vevey, Switzerland. Since 1996, she has taught at the International Center of Photography in New York City. Cummings lives and works in New York City and Branford, Connecticut.

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