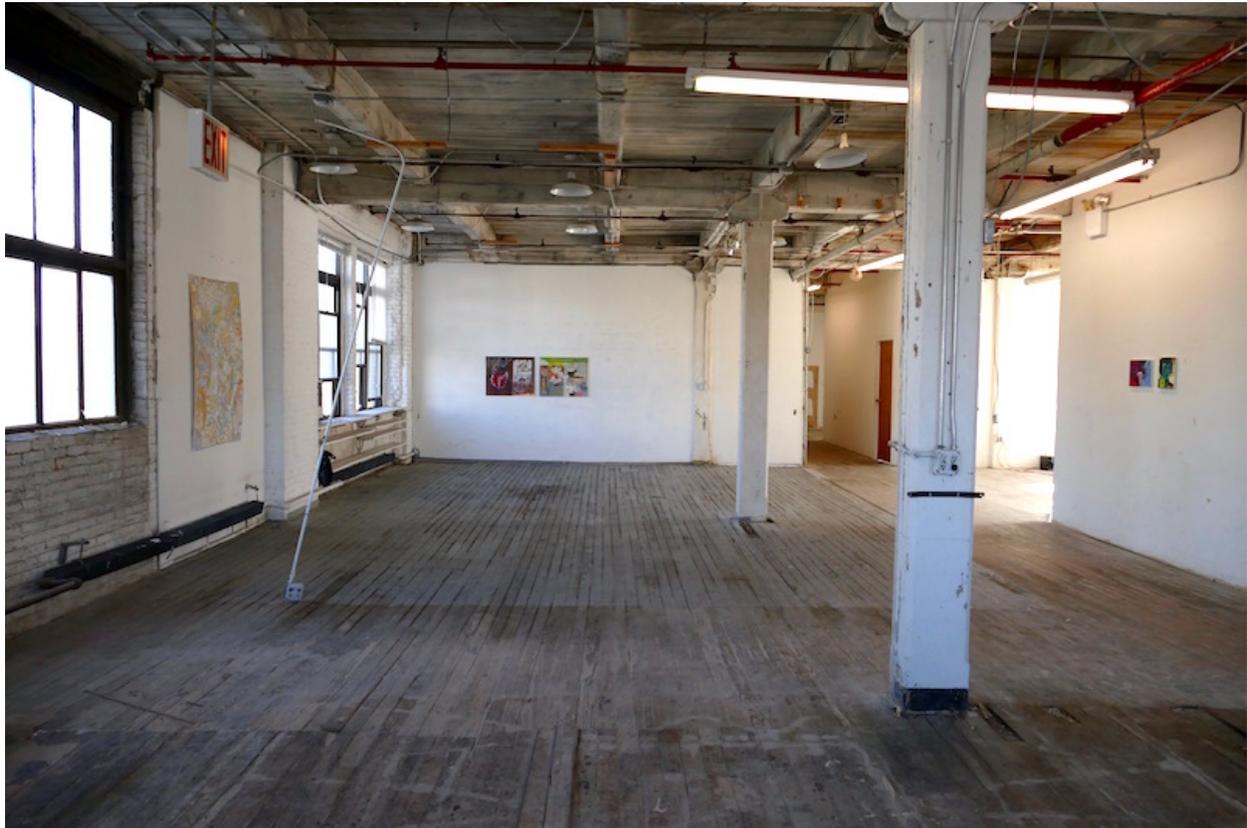


ARTNEWS

Humble Home for a Banana in a Bag: The New Gallery Shimizu Brand Dreams Beyond Queens

BY *John Chiaverina* POSTED 06/06/17 12:35 PM



Group installation at Shimizu Brand in Long Island City, Queens.
COURTESY SHIMIZU BRAND

“We have ended our time in the music business as New York Video Photography Group. We are sorry to have failed to be good at music. But now we are starting an art gallery. Please continue to listen to our Soundcloud page.”

Thus began the first post on Instagram for the newly crystalized art gallery Shimizu Brand, a collaboration between the artists and musicians Trevor Shimizu and Josh Brand. The two friends have been working together for around five years now, after a formative collaboration that involved Brand taking some photos of Shimizu that would eventually end up on the card for the artist’s first solo show. “We didn’t know each other super well at the time, but I thought it would be fun to start a photo agency together, where we could do music videos and fashion photography and stuff like that,” Brand said. “We didn’t get very far with it.” (Though they did direct a video for the indie band Deerhoof in 2016.)

Shimizu and Brand dubbed themselves New York Video Photography Group, a name that stuck around even when they changed their focus from documentation to music. The artists “tried to start a band and started a Soundcloud page,” Shimizu said. “No one liked it.” On a trip to Japan, Brand once left some CDs on a record store’s doorstep, hoping to be discovered—but no dice. The NYVPG name has also graced a record label—they released a collaboration between Shimizu and the musician Cass McCombs from 2003. “Our last recording was just keyboard and drums, and I added some spoken word, computer voice,” Shimizu said. “Josh never replied to my email about it, so that was pretty much the end of our group.”

Both artists have their own distinguished individual practices—Shimizu’s paintings were included in a larger 2014 Whitney Biennial piece by Gaylen Gerber, while a series of Brand’s photograms were included in the 2010 Biennial—but Shimizu Brand is the duo’s latest collaborative pivot. They share a space in Long Island City, Queens—Shimizu first rented the studio around a decade ago with the artist Josh Kline, and Brand has been there now for around three years—that has so far shown a total of two exhibitions: an April solo show by the painter Eric Palgon and a more recent, more involved series of four concurrent shows featuring a long list of artists including Kline, Sascha Braunig, Jessica Friedman, and Rafael Delacruz. Both were only up for one night. The Palgon show was originally supposed to be confined to one area outside the duo’s studio, but a last-minute change in the layout of the warehouse—multiple walls were broken down, allowing for more unclaimed room—allowed it to expand. “So he did kind of a giant, serious painting show,” Brand said.



Chris Milic's *Giorgio Doesn't Know*.
COURTESY SHIMIZU BRAND

The May exhibition also took advantage of the newly spacious floorpan. By the time I visited, most of the work had been taken down, but one piece in the section curated by the artist Quintessa Matranga remained on view: Chris Milic's Giorgio *Doesn't Know*, a work hanging on a power fixture that Shimizu described as a "banana in a bag." (I saw a plastic deli bag but cannot confirm the fruit.) I wondered if perhaps Giorgio was the artist's local grocer, but I was off base. "He just told me that he thought the name was funny," Shimizu said. "We had a friend named Giorgio, and I thought maybe he was talking about that Giorgio. But it was just a coincidence."

As for the future of the gallery, Shimizu and Brand are soon to vacate their Long Island City space and mentioned a desire to pull off a few more low-key solo shows during their final days there, all to be quickly installed, documented, and dismantled. Shimizu mentioned yet another pivot: his brand Dan Graham Skateboards, which for now is more of an idea but revolves partially around board designs as well as "a homage to Dan using two-way mirror glass to skate on." Graham is purportedly supportive of the concept. There is talk of a new location too, with the duo expressing interest in opening a gallery somewhere in Japan. "I don't know," Shimizu joked, "wherever we can get the biggest space and make the most money."