

Staged

Matthew McGaughey

Duration: September 20 - November 1, 2025. Fall.

Location: Reisig and Taylor Contemporary (4478 W Adams Blvd, Los Angeles, 90016).

Type: Solo Exhibition.

Staged . Matthew McGaughey. September 20 - November 1, 2025. Solo Exhibition. Los Angeles.

This is Matthew’s first solo exhibition with the gallery. The mechanics of the work consists of multi-channel video + audio, along with sculptural installation.



Kurt, half conscious, performs a song on platform stage. His movements are puppeted by two gimps in denim suits¹

Kert is nekid below staich
Kurt is naked below stage

Kert is pul tu up antu sait af platform bai kimbz
Kurt is pulled up onto side of platform by gimps

Kert is dressed by gimps
Kurt is chrezd per kimbz

Kurt is pulled on to chair on stage
Kert is pul tang tu cher ang staich
Kurt is handed guitar

Kert is hang tu kitar into Kurt’s mouth

Gimps light cigarette for Kurt
Uh kikered is plezd into Kerts mauth
Kurt adjusts the knobs on the amp with help from gimps

Kimbz lait kikered for Kert
One gimps assist Kurt on sitting up in chair with guitar

Kert achutz th’ nops ang th’ amp wedh helb vrum kimbz
The other gimp walks to the small room and plugs in guitar pedal

Back on the stage, Kurt begins striking single chords on the guitar
Wung kimbz asizd Kert ang sitring up ing cher wedh kitar
In small room, gimp presses and depresses guitar pedal

Thi uthor kimb wogz tu thi smol rum ang plux ing kitar bedl

These three actions make up the performance
Bag ang th’ staich, Kert bikingz streging sinkl kordz ang th’ kitar

This continues for a while... |
Ing smol rum, kimb bresis ang tibresis kitar bedl

Kert bikings sinking into meikrofon

This tre akshungs meik up th’ performungs

This kontinuus vor a waid

¹ “I’ll start this off without any words.”

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Deep, Fake

Staged begins with the end of Kurt Cobain (specifically the 1991 album *Nevermind*), and starts with a drained, looping reality this “popular” and “rebellious” figure of the anti-rockstar leaves behind. Or sets into motion. “All of our” actions flattened along the warp-speed disappearing act of any possible dissent: << “Comes the revolution, Comrade, everyone gets to eat roast beef every day.” “But comrade, I don’t like roast beef.” “Comes the revolution, Comrade, you’ll like roast beef.” >>² (The revolution *is* televised. That’s why it never actually happens. At least we get to watch it, maybe even *enjoy* it. . . .) Remember: nobody ever said it’s the revolution we wanted, it’s the one of our dreams; The whole world is watching (sleepily, right before bedtime)—and that’s the problem. But this problem has potential! We just need to get a good look at it, *over there*. After all, a surface is deeper on the outside (but farther on the inside).

Meanwhile, this is the first exhibition at the gallery where we have actually (physically) produced the work in the space of the gallery itself—the gallery appears as itself in the context of this work—as itself, but also as someone else, somewhere else: right here. . . . for now. . . . (Like learning my mother-tongue again, for the first time: remembering how I forget what you remember.) With this staged perspective initially set-up as a way of paying-attention to how “the market”—and at this point, politics—automatically absorbs opposition, converting it into consumable form, “the exhibition,” as well as the gallery itself, are positioned as activities that are obviously always in reach of commodification (if not already in circulation: already *sold-out*). “The artist’s” acts of refusal and gestures of transgression are continually folded back into the very systems they oppose: any performance is already [recorded,] reenacted. Otherwise, they won’t make money. They just won’t cut it. After all, anything cutting-edge still needs to be brought to the center of attention, bought and sold, transacted-on. . . . or else! Or else what? Or, else. (What is-is this, a ‘knock-knock’ joke?)

Knock, knock.
— Who’s there?
Nevermind.
— Nevermind who?
Exactly.

So, can any act of subversion or resistance ‘become famous’ without being totally consumed by the commercialism and capitalism acted against? Can any punk become popular without selling-out? Can any artist become “established” without becoming someone else, somewhere else? (Or is *that* exactly the point?)

Is an avant-garde possible anymore—was it ever?

Or is this all just a macabre charade? *Nevermind*.

² Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick, “Paranoid Reading and Reparative Reading, or, You’re So Paranoid, You Probably Think This Essay Is About You,” in *Touching Feeling: Affect, Pedagogy, Performativity* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2003), 123–151.



{Image courtesy of the artist.}

Work by **Matthew McGaughey** has been included in recent group exhibitions and performances such as *Haunting House* (Departure Lounge, Los Angeles, 2024), *Erotic Codex* (Honor Fraser Gallery, Los Angeles, 2024), *Collapse All Windows and Exit* (1258 W. 2nd St., Los Angeles, 2024), *Untitled Affairs* (Miller ICA, Pittsburgh, 2022), *In the Company of Men* (Platform Gallery, Pittsburgh, 2020), *18-Wheeler Platform Shoes* (Melwood Gallery, Pittsburgh, 2019), and *Gloria!* (Melwood Gallery, Pittsburgh, 2019).

Matthew's commercial work as a composer includes *Criminal Confessions* (Oxygen, 2016–2019), *American Horror Story* (FX, 2014), *The Last Ship* (TNT, 2014–2015), *Cold Case Files* (Oxygen, 2014–2019), *Project Runway* (Bravo, 2004–2019), *Top Chef* (Bravo, 2004–2019), and *The Real Housewives* franchise (Bravo, 2004–2020).

Since 2020, Matthew has been awarded the William S. Dietrich II Presidential Fellowship (2021), ASCAP Screen Music Awards (2021–2023), a Dedalus Foundation MFA Fellowship in Painting & Sculpture nomination (2021), a GuSH Research Grant from Carnegie Mellon University (2021), the Frank-Ratchye Fund for Art at the Frontier (2021). Matthew received a MFA from Carnegie Mellon University, and a PhD in Composition with a focus on extended performance practice and music technology from the University of York in 2004.

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