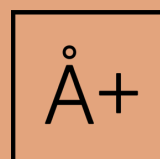


**Billie Clarken**  
Change Blindness



# Billie Clarken

## Change Blindness

\*Change Blindness

“Trap doors” is an ongoing series by Billie Clarken. The five panels displayed in the exhibition space are refrigerator doors. Found as leftovers on the streets, dismantled, collected, and hanged at their purposive height – between eye level and hand grip – the refrigerator doors in a white cube highlight a meaning and perception shift, in which detritus becomes a precious treasure-trove.

The exterior of a refrigerator is often used as a tool for a family to preserve souvenirs from the newly visited places. On the top always stands the “freshest” trip represented by the most recent postcards. Could it be assumed that the stacks of the chronologically ordered memorabilia exemplify the earliest form of Instagram?

The refrigerator, as an everyday object, intrigues the artist. Object poems, which contemplate ordinary items, come into mind. Clarken considers this big memo board to be an interesting space to explore, physically and objectively, to fill in, to overlap different non-linear timelines, reality with fiction, shopping and other to-do lists with postcards, poems, quotations, calendar dates, photos, children’s drawings, grave frottages. Literally, everything a small lodestone can hold.

Yet a closer look reveals that the doors of refrigerators are printed with photographs of refrigerators’ doors, upon which other real elements such as drawings, postcards or photos are overlapped and fixed. This unexpected manner of lifting and moving things confuses the viewer in her/his mental perception. As the title of the exhibition is slowly disclosed, we understand that we failed noticing the differences between what is printed and what is real from the beginning. No flash of light coming from opening the refrigerator is needed to introduce us to the changes of the appearance. Approaching the exhibited objects causes a disappointment of the view.

With humorous ease Billie Clarken transforms the gallery space into a disturbing, sterile room, where recurring copies of images point to a faulty and eluding mental grasp. As a soothing corrective to this, the artist proposes hypnosis – more precisely – two points for the eyes to fixate: a huge Malboro Man captured rotating around its axis and a pocket watch swinging on a chain. Paying closer attention [...]

Majla Zeneli

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\* Change Blindness

a failure to notice changes in the visual array appearing in two successive scenes. This is surprisingly common whenever the brief movement (the transient) that usually accompanies a change is somehow masked or interrupted.

Source: American Psychology Association – Dictionary of Psychology









Trap Door #5 (Refrigerator Death), 2021  
Found objects, UV-printed refrigerator door, velour fabric, 78 x 53.5 x 6 cm

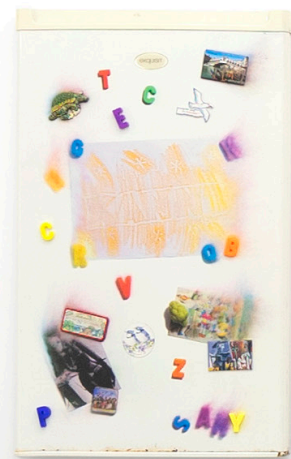


Trap Door #2 (In the Memory of Others), 2021  
Found objects, UV-printed refrigerator door, velour fabric, 79.5 x 49.5 x 8 cm













Trap Door #1 (KANN OR KANNT NOT?), 2021  
 Found objects, UV-printed refrigerator door, velour fabric, 80 x 50 x 6 cm



Trap Door #6 (Signs of Interior Life), 2021  
 Found objects, UV-printed refrigerator door, velour fabric, 95.5 x 59 x 6 cm



Installation view: „Change Blindness“, Åplus, Berlin, 2021







Trap Door #3 (BEHIND EVERY ISSUE IS AN ADVERTISEMENT), 2021  
Found objects, UV-printed refrigerator door, velour fabric, 80.5 x 47.5 x 7 cm



TV Dinner 2, 2021  
Video 4min loop, Monitor mounted in a fridge, pedestal  
148 x 45 x 48 cm





The Hard Road (species-essence), 2018  
Fencing mask, taxidermy rat, 60 x 35 x 27 cm

## On the exhibition Change Blindness by Billie Clarken

In most households, in addition to its purpose of keeping drinks and food fresh, the refrigerator serves as a pinboard to which all kinds of tasks and reminders are attached. Thus, unpaid bills, the children's schedules, and upcoming doctors' appointments usually overlap there to form an impenetrable rhizome. Sometimes however, there also emerges collages, constructed from postcards of traveling friends and souvenir magnets brought back from all over the world.

Billie Clarken also creates collages on refrigerator doors with magnetic letters and buttons, photographic found objects and sketches, etc. Similarly to the method practised by the inventors of photo collage in the 1920s, Billie Clarken reduces montage via photography to one level. In the process, the material aesthetics steps into the background in favor of the subject matter of the image. Subsequently she prints the photographs directly onto the door objects, allowing some of the original fragments to resurface. The eye now oscillates between image and object – what is real, what is fake?

Change blindness – refers to a phenomenon of visual perception in which significant changes in a visual scene are sometimes not perceived by the observer. If this is the case, the observer becomes an almost futile witness. And if we also want to believe the cognitive scientist Markus Reiter, a correct memory is already impossible since our direct perception, i.e. the way we see everything we see, is purely selective. Yet, this incomplete and individual perception feeds our memory, from which, in turn, in interaction with our moral concepts our identity emerges. In order to trigger our memory, Billie Clarken suggests visual memory schemes in a refreshing and uncomplicated way, reminiscent of Arthur Köpcke or, of course, Robert Rauschenberg. In a similar approach the artist combines seemingly unrelated things, texts, or even photographs of the most diverse origins, which then in their interplay, as a team so to speak, allow unexpected stories to come forth. It is these stories that are buried deep in our memory which are uncovered just by a key-stimulus, be it a visual, an auditory or a gustatory one. Just as Marcel Proust's reminiscence of childhood stirred by the taste of madeleine dipped in tea set him off in search of lost time.

Sometimes, however, all it takes is a single image to make the leap back to childhood.

– And then I'm the little boy again, wild about the stories of Ben Cartwright, who lived on the Ponderosa with his three grown sons, Adam, Hoss and Little Joe. The Ponderosa was clearly the most beautiful ranch in the world. Introducing every episode, I was allowed a brief look at the map of it before it suddenly caught fire and cathartically burned before my eyes to make way for great adventures.

Another work by Billie shows a complete refrigerator whose open door reveals two video works. One shows a pocket watch swinging hypnotically back and forth on its chain. The second video shows the Marlboro Man completely wrapped in smoke, taking with him on his adventures anyone who buys a ticket at the cigarette machine. The pendulum invites a journey, just as uncertain and maybe even more dangerous than a ride through the prairie. But mostly it is indeed about relaxation, which our time so needs.

And the cultic tobacco smoke was also about relaxation – at the campfire the medicine man circulated the Kalumet, each person was allowed to take only one, one single puff of it. At this low dose, tobacco produced total physical and mental relaxation.

Dose facit venenum – stupidly, most cigarette smokers do not adhere to the moderate admonition of the old shamans, and so one or the other Marlboro man has died prematurely. Only Robert Norris, the first of these advertising icons, did not die until he was 90; he never smoked.

No one smoked on the Ponderosa either. Dan Blocker (Hoss in the series Bonanza), however, also died very young from gallbladder surgery. His death led to the end of the series, leaving Adam to later run a hospital, Ben to secure the cosmos as commander of the Battlestar Galactica, and Little Joe to receive divine ordinations as a true angel on behalf of the Lord.

Indeed, Billie Clarken's work certainly tastes like madeleines dipped in tea.

Patrick Huber

Translation : Majla Zeneli & Rasmus Kjelsrud



# Billie Clarken

\* 1992 Fairfax, Virginia USA

Lives and works in Berlin

## Education

2019 Guest Student of Monica Bonvicini, Universität der Künste, Berlin, DE

2015 Virginia Commonwealth University, Richmond, VA

Bachelor of Fine Arts, Photography and Film

## Exhibitions (selected)

2021 (Forthcoming) In Difficult Times, Bethanien, Berlin, DE

2021 Change Blindness, Åplus, Berlin, DE

2020 Living With The Arts, KaDeWe, Berlin, DE

2020 Berlin Masters Exhibition, Berlin, DE

2020 Digital Physical, Klasse Bonvicini, Online Exhibition, Berlin, DE

2019 Time After Time, Quaid Gallery, Tampa, FL

2019 The Rest Was Still Unwritten, Berlin, DE

2018 Genital Panic, Cunsthaus, Tampa, FL

2017 Feminine Product, THEVOID315c, Los Angeles, CA

2016 to tell the truth, Showroom Bontemps, Paris, FR

2016 to tell the truth, Noho Studios, London, UK

2016 Paying Attention, Sediment Gallery, Richmond, VA

2016 The Pineapple Shop, SPRING/BREAK Art Show, New York, NY

2016 The Pineapple Shop, LA Art Book Fair, Los Angeles, CA

2016 stARTup Art Fair LA, Los Angeles, CA

2015 Coming Out, Ada Gallery, Richmond, VA

2015 Dear Jo(h)n, Gallery 6, Richmond, VA

2015 Juried Fine Arts Exhibition, Anderson Gallery, Richmond, VA

2015 The Soul and the Pawnshop, Sediment Gallery, Richmond, VA

2015 The Devil Made Me Do It, Yellow Zone Art Space, Richmond, VA

2015 KC Arena Showcase, Haw Contemporary, Kansas City, MO

2015 Juried Fine Arts Exhibition, Anderson Gallery, Richmond, VA

2015 23 Pineapples, Portrait Society Gallery, Milwaukee, WI

## Press/Publications (selected)

Handelsblatt

KubaParis

Contemporary Art Daily

BERLIN ART LINK

BIAS Journal: Fashion & Death

INDIE Magazine

The Fullest Magazine

MISSBISH

COWBOYZOOM

Art Muse NY

Autre Magazine

Art Zealous

Strant Magazine

Paper Boats Vice Digital

Fount Magazine

American Photo Magazine

Len scratch

WeTheUrban

RVA Magazine



