

# VAS VISUAL ART eNEWSLETTER

September 9, 2023

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## Annetta Kapon, “Proxy Gallery”

by Jody Zellen

The Floating Gallery LA, Los Angeles, California

Continuing Through September 30, 2023



Mirena Kim, “I’m Worried About Fitting In,” Proxy Gallery #85, 2023

In 2013, Annetta Kapon held her first exhibition at Proxy Gallery: a cube that measures 12 x 12 x 12 inches. The exhibition wasn’t the cube, the gallery was. In the ten years since its opening, Proxy has presented 85 exhibitions. Invited artists and curators can use the space however they choose, decorating the inside and/or the outside of the box, or even not using it at all. Proxy has been nomadic at times. It lived for a while on a wall at the Otis College of Art graduate studios in Culver City, but also traveled to Greece and Paris. To celebrate Proxy’s achievement, The Floating Gallery — another nomadic space — is exhibiting documentation of each project, as well as the Proxy venue itself, where viewers can see exhibit #85, by Mirena Kim.

Kapon created Proxy Gallery as a “conceptual project that allows a platform for discourse.” It was formed out of discussions with her students about creating their own conditions to make and show work, regardless of limitations.

Proxy fits within the parameters of Kapon’s premise. While she creates separate collages, sculptures and installations, Kapon has also been influential as a professor of art, as her students (many of whom have exhibited at Proxy) will attest. In this unique space, she is the sole proprietor and decision maker. She invites other artists and accepts proposals. She writes insightful press releases “to get the discursive ball rolling,” as she puts it.

Like any conventional gallery, Proxy has a website, opening and closing receptions, is occasionally reviewed, and has printed business cards and invitations. The fact that it is a miniature, physically unendurable space is beside the point. In fact, its small size and the challenges that size poses for each artist is what makes Proxy unique.

The entire history of Proxy is presented here. Each exhibition is represented by a single square image that is dated and captioned. These are installed in two long horizontal rows across opposing walls of the space. The works are hung chronologically so viewers can easily trace the history of the exhibits and exhibitors. Some Proxy artists are well known, others unknown, perhaps students or artists from Greece or Paris where the gallery has traveled. A few of the artists have had multiple exhibitions over these ten years.



Renée Petropoulos, "Outburst-Conjugation 2,"  
Proxy Gallery #81, 2022



Sharon Barnes, "Holla Holla Holla,"  
Proxy Gallery #75, 2021

Kapon and her student Katie Thoma inaugurated the gallery with an exhibition of their own works in January 2013. From there, contributors rose to the challenge in different ways: Shiva Aliabadi covered it in faux fur (referencing Méret Oppenheim's "Le Déjeuner en fourrure," 1936) and carried it to myriad commercial gallery openings in the Los Angeles area. Susan Siltan created "Exchange" in 2015, covering the front of the gallery cube with a box of expired Agfa Photography paper that had belonged to the late Allan Sekula. Siltan inserted a peep hole into the center of the Agfa box that allowed viewers to see into the gallery; there they saw a hand-written message that read, "Who is it ... Who's There?" In 2022 for her second Proxy exhibition, Renée Petropoulos inserted her head into the box to create a performance piece entitled "Outburst-Conjugation 2," presented at the Athens School of Fine Arts.

During the pandemic, the exhibits were virtual and documented by the artists. In some instances, the exhibitors would forgo the actual box in favor of surrounding walls, as in the installation "Holla Holla Holla" by Sharon Barnes (2021). What is most striking about the exhibition at The Floating Gallery is the fact that the uniformity of Kapon's presentation (each exhibit is represented by a single still photographic image) does not diminish the uniqueness of any of the projects but rather calls attention to the various creative ways that the artists approached the limited parameters of the space. Full disclosure, I was a Proxy exhibitor myself in 2016.

Kapon gave each of her artists "carte blanche" to create a new work that was not, as she states, "a miniature version of what they usually do," but rather a thought-provoking and conceptually savvy solution to the specifics of a space that happens to be a 12 by 12 by 12 inch cube. While primarily documentation, "Proxy



Annetta Kapon, "Proxy Gallery," 2023, installation view at Floating Gallery LA. Photo: Antonis Ricos

"Gallery 10 Years" is also a work of art, one created by Kapon over ten years that is a nuanced and smart celebration of works being made by a range of artists in and beyond Los Angeles.

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