

## **Stan Douglas**

b. 1960; Vancouver, Canada

*Luanda-Kinshasa*, 2013

Video, color, sound; 6:01 hours

Courtesy the artist and David Zwirner, New York/Hong Kong

Stan Douglas's films, photographs, and installations often reexamine past events at specific sites. His intricately composed jazz film *Luanda-Kinshasa* is set in a reconstruction of Columbia Records' 30th Street Studio in New York. Operated by the record label between 1948 and 1981, "The Church," as it was known, produced such groundbreaking albums as Miles Davis's *Kind of Blue* (1959) and Pink Floyd's *The Wall* (1979). *Luanda-Kinshasa* documents a fictional recording by ten musicians selected by the artist and Jason Moran. They improvise collaboratively, following Douglas's prompt to imagine what Davis might have done after his 1971 record *Live-Evil*.

Dividing the room into two areas, Douglas shot half of the film during one session and the other half the following day. In order for this strategy to work musically, Moran made the songs interchangeable, formulating a way for the music to flow together seamlessly. The film itself combines and recombines edits to allow for musical variations, emphasizing a compositional process that defies expectations of a linear narrative.



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## Glenn Ligon

b. 1960; New York, NY

### *The Death of Tom*, 2008

16mm film transferred to video, black-and-white, sound; 23 min.

Courtesy the artist and Hauser & Wirth, New York; Regen Projects, Los Angeles; Thomas Dane Gallery, London; and Chantal Crousel, Paris

Artist Glenn Ligon critically investigates the legacies of painting and conceptual art as well as language and identity. For *The Death of Tom*, his first foray into filmmaking, Ligon set out to re-create a scene from a 1903 silent film adaptation of *Uncle Tom's Cabin* (1852), the abolitionist novel by Harriet Beecher Stowe. In the 1903 movie, white actors performed the principal roles in blackface. During his project, Ligon discovered that his camera had not been properly loaded with film, resulting in what he describes as “blurry, fluttery, burnt-out black-and-white images, all light and shadows.” Viewing the ghostly footage, the artist realized that only abstraction could address the history and enduring repercussions of America’s structural racism.

Ligon, who knew the original silent film was accompanied by piano, invited Jason Moran to improvise a score. Ligon suggested as a starting point the vaudeville song “Nobody” (1905). Moran homed in on Ligon’s haunting moving images and played, as he describes it, “to the shadows.”



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“I love playing music from the past, but considering America’s desire to raze cultural landmarks, why not fabricate those spaces as well? Architecture continues to inform music, from the big bands of the Savoy Ballroom, to the small groups at the Three Deuces. From the vast ballroom to the tiny corner stage.”  
—Jason Moran

Shown together for the first time are three sculptures that make up Jason Moran’s *STAGED* series, homages to the iconic jazz venues of New York’s past: Harlem’s Savoy Ballroom, midtown Manhattan’s legendary Three Deuces, and Slugs’ Saloon of Alphabet City. From the 1920s to the 1970s, these sites brought club-goers together with luminaries from the worlds of free jazz, bebop, swing, and big band in unique and unprecedented ways. Here, Moran reimagines the architecture of these cultural landmarks, creating monuments to a lost and powerful history. For most of the exhibition’s duration, these spaces will be populated with musical instruments and activated by the sounds of work songs, whistling, and other recorded samples. At various times, the pieces become concert stages for *Jazz on a High Floor in the Afternoon*, a performance program curated by Moran featuring guest artists.

For schedule and ticketing information, please visit [whitney.org/Jazz](http://whitney.org/Jazz).

## **Jason Moran**

b. 1975; Houston, TX

### *STAGED: Savoy Ballroom 1, 2015*

Wood, paint, aluminum panels, fabric, carpet, lights, audio equipment, speakers, electrical cables, and sound

Collection of the artist; courtesy Luhring Augustine, New York

With a curved wall stretching up to form a low overhang, *STAGED: Savoy Ballroom 1* is loosely based on Harlem's Savoy Ballroom, a block-long venue located on Lenox Avenue between 140th and 141st Streets, where big band jazz and swing ruled from the mid-1920s to the late 1950s. Club-goers there encountered the most prominent bandleaders, Lindy Hoppers, and jazz singers of the day, including Duke Ellington, Ella Fitzgerald, and Chick Webb. The pristine veneer of Moran's sculpture, lined with Dutch wax print fabric, is seductive but impenetrable. This creates a tension that is further heightened by the repetitive droning sounds and enunciations of the recorded Black work songs—in particular, the sampled field recordings of Louisiana State Penitentiary (Angola) prison workers.



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## **Jason Moran**

b. 1975; Houston, TX

### *STAGED: Three Deuces, 2015*

Wood, paint, aluminum panels, fabric, carpet, lights, construction hardware, aluminum ductwork, iPad, electrical cables, drum set, piano, bass, wood stool, and sound

Collection of the artist; courtesy Luhring Augustine, New York  
Piano by Steinway & Sons

This work from the *STAGED* series evokes a corner of the legendary Three Deuces. Located on West 52nd Street in midtown Manhattan, the venue was home to bebop jazz. Clubs on “The Street,” as it was known, hosted Miles Davis, Dizzy Gillespie, Charlie Parker (aka Bird), and Max Roach, among others. These innovators were so dynamic and free onstage that they “played themselves out of the corner,” as Moran notes.

With the rise of bebop in the 1940s, musicians no longer sought to entertain audiences or inspire them to dance, and shifted the focus of concerts to the unique artistry of individual performers instead. In the smaller setting of Three Deuces, musicians created melodies that often sounded like improvisations, thus jazz continued to evolve. Many believe that jazz attained a higher cerebral level there. The installation’s Steinway Spirio player piano emits improvisations performed by Moran.



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## **Jason Moran**

b. 1975; Houston, TX

### *STAGED: Slugs' Saloon, 2018*

Wood, paint, jukebox, bass, drum set, sawdust, construction hardware, wallpaper, plexiglass mirror, tin, fabric, vintage outlet cover, and sound

Commissioned by the Walker Art Center, Minneapolis;  
T. B. Walker Acquisition Fund, 2018

*STAGED: Slugs' Saloon* draws upon the architectural features of the iconic jazz venue it's titled for to evoke an atmospheric scene. More dive bar than jazz club, Slugs' Saloon was a long, narrow space with exposed-brick walls, colored light fixtures, a mural by painter Bob Thompson, and floors covered in sawdust. Located on East Third Street between Avenue B and Avenue C in New York's then seedy Alphabet City from 1964 to 1972, it was home to the experimentalists of free jazz, including Albert Ayler, Jackie McLean, Sun Ra's Arkestra, Pharoah Sanders, and Cecil Taylor.

With mirrors that swing out from the sides of the bandstand—a notable departure from the original Slugs'—Moran's installation features a multitiered platform with a wooden floor, vintage upright piano, and drum set. On its lower level sits a single chair and a Wurlitzer Americana II jukebox, surrounded by sawdust and programmed with whistling tunes and audience incantations from the Village Vanguard, where Moran and The Bandwagon have a standing gig every third week of November.



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From left to right:

**Jason Moran**

b. 1975; Houston, TX

*Run 2*, 2016

*Run 6*, 2016

Charcoal on paper

Walker Art Center, Minneapolis; Butler Family Fund, 2017

In his ongoing *Run* series, Jason Moran gives material presence to sound. To make these works, he tapes elongated pieces of paper, at times vintage player piano rolls from his collection, to the keys of a piano or keyboard. Capping his fingers with charcoal and dry pigment, he improvises music and the paper catches the movements of his playing. What results are imprints of piano keys, ripped surfaces, and accretions of black, blue, and sienna.

*Strutter's Ball*, 2016

Charcoal on paper

Walker Art Center, Minneapolis; Butler Family Fund, 2017

*Blue (Creed) Gravity 1*, 2018

Dry pigment on paper

Collection of the artist; courtesy Luhring Augustine, New York

*Black and Blue Gravity*, 2018

Dry pigment on paper

Collection of the artist; courtesy Luhring Augustine, New York

*Black Run*, 2018

Dry pigment on paper

Collection of the artist; courtesy Luhring Augustine, New York

*Between State 1*, 2019

Dry pigment on Gampi paper

Collection of the artist; courtesy Luhring Augustine, New York

*Chorus 1*, 2019

Dry pigment on Gampi paper

Collection of the artist; courtesy Luhring Augustine, New York

*Two Wings 2*, 2019

Dry pigment on Gampi paper

Collection of the artist; courtesy Luhring Augustine, New York

*Between State 3*, 2019

Dry pigment on Gampi paper

Collection of the artist; courtesy Luhring Augustine, New York

From left to right:

**Jason Moran**

b. 1975; Houston, TX

*Fourth band member, c. 1990*

Sony MiniDisc and disc

Collection of the artist

For Jason Moran, the Sony MiniDisc player and recorder became “the fourth member of the band, helping frame and inspire” his work for nearly twenty years. Moran began to think about how the device could be used as a tool in his performances after seeing free jazz innovator Muhal Richard Abrams employ prerecorded audio in a solo piano concert in 2001. Experimenting with his own live performances, Moran began recording musical intros, interludes, and outros for his trio, The Bandwagon, on the MiniDisc. He later created audio with other source materials to use in concerts—from artist talks and spoken foreign languages to readings by his grandparents of his ancestors’ names. “I’ve gone through a number of them,” says Moran of the audio players. “Some have died, some have lived, but it reminds me that finding a way to blend the inner and outer worlds could be accomplished with the MiniDisc.”

Cue sheets from *Milestone*, 2005

Score on manuscript paper

Collection of the artist

*The Death of Tom*, 2011

Score on manuscript paper

Collection of Glenn Ligon



From left to right:

**Jason Moran**

b. 1975; Houston, TX

*Slang*, 2011

Score on manuscript paper

Collection of the artist

*Reanimation*, 2012

Score on manuscript paper

Collection of the artist

*Atomic Count Basie*, 2016

Meteorite and watch

Collection of the artist; courtesy Luhring Augustine, New York

*Selma*, 2014

Score booklet

Collection of the artist

From left to right:

**Jason Moran**

b. 1975; Houston, TX

*Looks of a Lot*, 2014  
Music box and wood

Collection of the artist

*She Cares—Hill*, 2016  
Music box and wooden hat block part

Collection of the artist; courtesy Luhring Augustine, New York

*She Cares—Slang*, 2016  
Music box and stove burner

Collection of the artist; courtesy Luhring Augustine, New York

To make these sculptures, Moran combines hand-cranked music boxes with objects of sentimental value. The music box in *She Cares—Slang* rests upon a lacquered burner from the stove that belonged to Moran's grandmother, Bennie Ruth Chester. Moran poetically describes this burner—taken from the stove around which his family gathered after church every Sunday—as “an amplifier.”

When wound, each of these boxes plays music from a set of instructions: a prepunched score. Moran can be seen performing the *Looks of a Lot* box in the excerpts from his collaboration with Theaster Gates. The programmed nature of these instruments resonates with the work of conceptual artist Sol LeWitt, whose wall drawings exist only as sets of rules to be executed. Moran explains that the orderly structure of LeWitt's work inspires him; “There's one phrase that [choreographer] Bill T. Jones said: ‘What is the art you make versus the art you love?’ Now, the art I love is Sol LeWitt. The art I make is messy as hell, but Sol LeWitt is not that. Somehow he sets up the grid for you to be that other thing, so that you are in relationship to it rather than the mirror of it.”

From left to right:

**Jason Moran**

b. 1975; Houston, TX

*WINDS, 2015*

Score on manuscript paper with cardboard and tape

Collection of the artist

*Trade Winds, 2015*

Score on manuscript paper with cardboard and tape

Collection of the artist

*Untitled, 2015*

Score on manuscript paper with cardboard and tape

Collection of the artist

*Between the World and Me, 2018*

Score on manuscript paper

Collection of the artist

From left to right:

Handbill for Chick Webb Halloween party, 1937,  
and facsimile of handbill (reverse)

Morgan and Marvin Smith, *Ella Fitzgerald  
Singing with Chick Webb Band*, 1938

Photographs and Prints Division, Schomburg Center for  
Research in Black Culture, The New York Public Library.  
© Morgan and Marvin Smith

Postcard from the Savoy Ballroom, c. 1930

Collection of Jeff Gold

Austin Hansen, *View of the Savoy Ballroom  
at Night, on Lenox Avenue between 140th and  
141st Streets, in Harlem, New York*, c. 1950

Photographs and Prints Division, Schomburg Center for Research  
in Black Culture, The New York Public Library. Photographs by  
Austin Hansen used by permission of the Estate of Austin Hansen

Floor plan of the Savoy Ballroom, n.d.

Manuscripts, Archives, and Rare Books Division,  
Schomburg Center for Research in Black Culture,  
The New York Public Library

From left to right:

William P. Gottlieb, *Street View of the  
Three Deuces*, 1948

William P. Gottlieb/Ira and Leonore S. Gershwin Fund  
Collection, Music Division, Library of Congress

Souvenir card with photograph, n.d.

Collection of Jason Moran

Charlie Parker, *Bird on 52nd St.*, 1957

William P. Gottlieb, *Tommy Potter, Max Roach,  
Charlie Parker, Miles Davis, and Duke Jordan  
Performing at Three Deuces*, 1947

William P. Gottlieb/Getty Images

From left to right:

Superdrupe|Studios, poster for  
Slugs' Saloon, March–April 1967

Private collection

Raymond Ross, *Jazz at Slugs',  
New York (left to right: Bob Thompson,  
Nancy Dannenberg, unidentified,  
A. B. Spellman, Danielle Spellman,  
and unidentified)*, 1964

Bob Thompson Papers, 1949–2005, Archives of  
American Art, Smithsonian Institution. © Raymond  
Ross Archives/CTS images

Handbill for Slugs' Saloon, October–  
November 1966

Private collection

Albert Ayler Quintet, *At Slug's Saloon,  
Vol. 2, May 1, 1966, 1982*

*Sounds & Fury*, 1965

Published by Taylor Castell, Inc. Private collection