

COCO HUNDAY

NOT CANCELLED ART FAIR
SOUTHERN US EDITION

FEATURED ARTISTS

BAHAREH KHOSHOOEE
CHRIS MEERDO
LIBBI PONCE
SUE HAVENS
THAD KELLSTADT
WALTER MATTHEWS

INQUIRIES

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WWW.COCOHUNDAY.COM



Libbi Ponce, installation view, March 2020

Coco Hunday

Tampa, Florida

cocohunday.com

[@cocohunday](https://www.instagram.com/cocohunday)

COCO HUNDAY (est. 2016) is an alternative exhibition space located in Tampa, Florida. The venue focuses on presenting solo shows of emerging and mid-career artists, with the recent exception of *RULERS*—an open, unjuried exhibition inviting *any artist* to submit original works of handmade rulers with mechanical, political, or poetic implications (co-organized by Jason Lazarus and Sue Havens). Coco Hunday is directed by artist Jason Lazarus.



Thomas Kong, *FILLERUP*, March 26–May 29, 2016.

Interview with Coco Hunday

with Founder Jason Lazarus

Questions by Emily Burns

Hi Jason! Coco Hunday is a gallery that you built out in the garage of your home. Can you tell us about how you first got the idea to create a space, and why you chose that location? What was the process of the buildout and getting started?

Chicago is where I lived for many years, went to graduate school, and served as adjunct faculty at the School of the Art Institute of Chicago. The city has a rich tradition of alternative spaces that I participated in actively as an artist, curator, organizer, and writer (even writing reviews). I also Co-Founded a website, Chicago Artist Writers, that asks artists to write reviews of alternative space exhibitions. When I moved to Tampa to take a full-time teaching position at the University of South Florida, I knew I wanted to start a space and continue this activity and activate my home space and engage new colleagues, friends and students. Finding a great home with a detached garage solved the space problem, and I worked with graduate students to help build the space out with great excitement.

Can you tell us the backstory on the name?

Coco Hunday is a phonetic spelling of a car dealership called Cocoa Hyundai in Cocoa, FL; the name represents two of the paradigms artists work under here in FL: late capitalism (Hyundai, a multi-national conglomerate) and cocoa (our tropical/cultural/meteorological context here in FL)—what could be more perfect?! As a gallery name, it is a kind of readymade.





Thomas Kong, *FILLERUP*, March 26–May 29, 2016.

The space is really stunning! In particular I love photos where you can see the interior and exterior simultaneously. Are there advantages to a gallery that opens so widely to the outdoors? Are your openings like block parties?

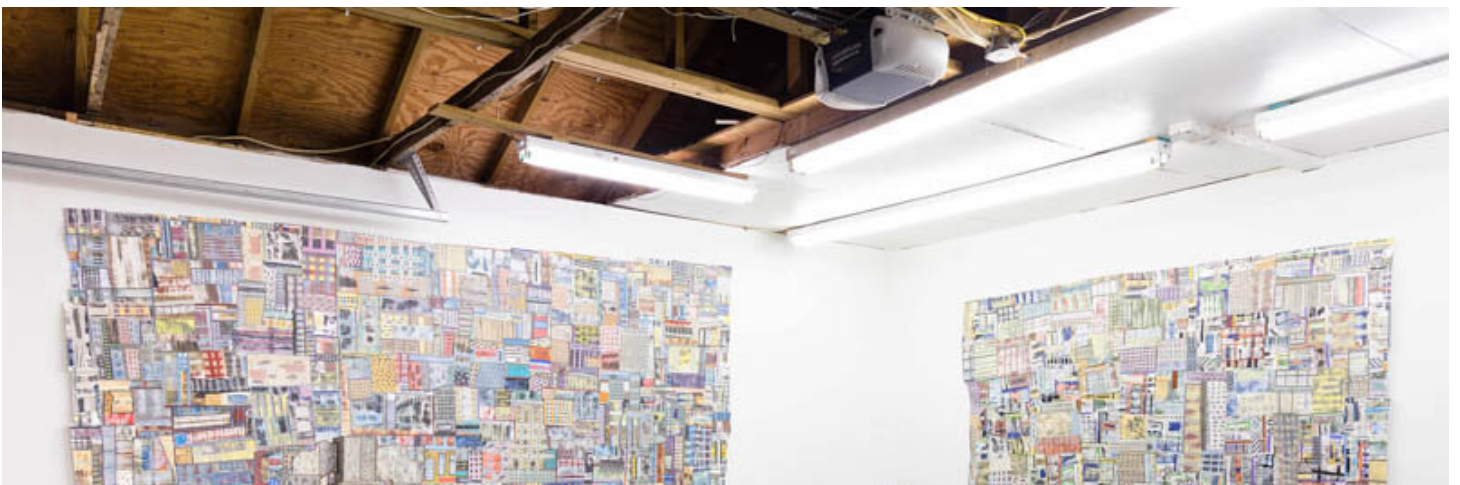
Thanks! Florida is an outdoor-friendly place where the sun is a default, but intense humidity dominates. This creates problems for protecting artwork, but the property is laid out in a socially friendly way that spreads folks around the property which is activated differently by each artist. The sociality is, of course, critical, and conversations, community, and criticality are the currencies we try to generate. Most openings feel like a long, slow barbeque!

What is the art community like in Tampa? Are there many contemporary art galleries? How about other artist-run galleries?

It is earnest and committed, there is a great community here with a highly diverse range of makers and practices. We are lucky in Tampa to have the long-running non-profit space Tempus Projects as a sort of heartbeat for our local scene, their programming is robust and they also have an artist-in-residence program—they are growing right now in exciting ways. Quaid Gallery is also a long-running art-collective/exhibition space that occupies a beautiful space nearby as well, and their schedule is packed with local and national artist exhibitions and diverse programming. Parallelogram is most like a sister space to us in that they are also a garage space with both local and national artists represented in their programming. Last but not least, CUNSTHAUS is a collective of women artists, curators and art professionals who support and engage collaborative curating and practice, a very critical space for our community! We are highly supportive of each other but this feels second nature--we are all each other's first audience!

In addition to running the gallery, you are also an artist, curator, and educator. The materials and methods you employ in your work seem very diverse and wide-ranging. How does running the gallery and curating intertwine with you practice as an artist? I guess I am curious if your interests are vast in both dimensions.

Being a teacher, running a space, having a studio practice are all part of my ecosystem—to me, organizing a good solo exhibition for someone else brings the same pleasure as my own work, the same goes for teaching—it really is part of my work as I am part of the artists' work and vice versa, and the same goes for teaching both directions.





Sue Havens, *ACTUAL FORMS*, September 2017. Photo by Pat Blocher.

You focus on providing a platform for emerging artists to mount solo exhibitions—can you tell us more about the artists you have shown or would like to show in the future?

Mounting solo exhibitions is very important to me, ‘anchored by solo presentations’ means we leave room to experiment but most of our programming is solo exhibitions which allows for more in-depth focus on the artist's values, research, and what it is to create an experience that is particular to that artist. Also, it's hard to get solo exhibitions for younger artists, and I like to think of Coco as a space for artists, one at a time, to flex, take chances, engage in non-market gestures/objects, etc. We also try to do an interview with each artist depending on their interests that is more substantive than typical artist interviews tend to be (a great example of this is our interview with local artist Walter Matthews on cocohunday.com, and another one is in development between current artist Gina Osterloha and Carmen Winant!). The artists we show are both local and national which is the exact dialogue I hope to create in the program. We take exhibition proposals (email jasonlazarus.com@gmail.com) which is another way of saying "there are artists I don't know yet who may be the ones I'd like to show in the future, please get at me!" :)





RULERS group exhibition at Coco Hunday, summer 2019. Photo by Pat Blocher.

What has stood out as the biggest joy in running the space so far? The biggest challenge?

Conversations with the artists, one by one, is the biggest joy. Looking for ways to push each artist, myself, the experience of the work and the space, I'm deeply moved when great collaborative answers come from continually asking 'How can this be better? More challenging? More ambitious?' Biggest challenges are time and money of course!

What is a typical day like for you? How do you balance and organize all of your many tasks and goals?

I have a value that helps to keep the work of the gallery in check—there is no break-neck pacing of the gallery shows and artists, I am the first to push things back if they are not ready due to anyone's needs, conflicts, or pressures. We are not a monthly cultural production, we operate on an enthusiasm surplus, so the mantra 'less is more' applies. Each of my goals is interdependent I think. For example, I'm a better artist, teacher, and community member when I engage meaningfully with other artists and their work and the space. I'd frame it as a kind of mosaic of interests and questions that pull me through the balancing act to get things done.

Is there anything in particular about you that makes balancing all of these roles possible, or even, fun?

At heart, I am an excited (43-year-old) teenager seeking to *be moved* and to *move*...everything follows from this...





In your view, what is one role of artist-run spaces today?

I'm going to answer this by including the text for an exhibition called Coco Hunday Presents at Atlanta Contemporary. AC invited us to mount an exhibition that represents our space, so included a work from each artist we've shown and a work for each artist we've committed to exhibiting in the next year:

"...artists don't always have the time to exhaustingly point out, belabor, and advocate against all the structural problems and practices of large cultural institutions. They are looking for care, partnership, and support. Artist-run spaces, whether home, storefront, or online, are more critical now than ever for developing—without major market pressure and institutional politics—emergent poetics with their own critical economies...artists and audiences are looking for meaning now when 'the future,' as Bifo Berardi proposes 'is over...its last vestiges were squandered in the schemes of a heavily futurized financial capitalism.' Perhaps these spaces, not necessarily able to expand, or even last (and why should they? --they are often built on temporary surplus) are where real and meaningful economies can proliferate. —JL 2019

Can you tell us a bit about the current solo show, *PRESSURE PLEASURE* by Gina Osterloh?

For her exhibition, Gina wanted to activate the gallery as a safe space to try out a new performance called "Mirror Woman." For over a decade, she's been using photography as both a psychological and physical site, a platform to challenge viewer expectations of portraiture, challenge fixed notions of identity like projections of gender and race. In Gina's words, "Through the act of looking and being looked at, one's face and skin absorb a tremendous amount of pressure— to fit in and match a myriad of predetermined social constructs...I am interested in pressure and pleasure as tandem forces in practices of looking, and how they form notions of self and other."

Her exhibition consists of a video, a photograph, two steel-welded custom text works, and a performance space that was a stage for her opening reception performance, it is very distilled and elegant much like her work! Rather than a single work in a cacophonous group show, I believe giving an artist literal space in a solo exhibit is one of the best ways we can serve the artists who exhibit here. Gina's hour-long performance at the opening, almost fully taping her head and torso, was a performance, an experiment, and a slowing down of time, the psychological tautness achieved a wonderful apex in the last few minutes. This performance will potentially generate new photographic work for Gina Osterloh!

Whats up next for Coco Hunday?

NYC artist and USF alum Bahareh Khooshooee in January 2020!

Thanks for taking the time to talk with us!

*To find out more about Coco Hunday, check out their **website**.*

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