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NEWS

THE ARTIST'S INSTITUTE, MANHATTAN'S INDEFINABLE ART SPACE, HEADS UPTOWN

BY *Andrew Russett* POSTED 02/23/16 10:00 AM

Inaugurates Upper East Side branch with Hilton Als season

For the past five years, the [Artist's Institute](#) has been one of the more pleasantly peculiar exhibition spaces on the Lower East Side—or really anywhere in Manhattan. It divides its programming into six-month seasons, devoting each one to a different artist whose practice inspires all sorts of intriguing exhibitions and events. The first time I visited its modest storefront, one evening in 2011, during season one, which was focused on the French Fluxus practitioner Robert Filliou, Ajay Kurian and Anicka Yi [had covered a good portion of the floor with bread dough](#). People trampled all over the sticky stuff, which was later baked into loaves. These were, thankfully, not consumed.

Now, with ten seasons under its belt, the Artist's Institute is moving uptown, to a ground-floor space at 132 East 65th Street, a handsome town house owned by Hunter College, which helped found the Institute and whose students are involved with the project through a class. "A town house feels right for the Artist's Institute because it's intimate," Jenny Jaskey, its director, told me as she took me around the freshly renovated new location one recent rainy afternoon. "Our new space is bigger than what we had—and thank goodness we're climate controlled now—but it still maintains the right scale."

Among the new space's amenities are library shelves, which are now home to tranches of books pertaining to each of the past seasons' artists, who have included Haim Steinbach, Jimmie Durham, Lucy McKenzie, and Carolee Schneemann. The newest set of books feature writings by Hilton Als, whose season begins at the Institute on March 2. Though Als's work as a critic is well known, "people may not realize that Hilton has a history of making visual art," Jaskey said. "In the '90s he made collaborative works with the photographer and filmmaker Darryl Turner."

"I'm also very interested in the world that Hilton creates for us," she continued, "and how he always, through his writing—which bridges portraiture, and memoir, and criticism—he always comes back to himself and his history and how that weaves in with other people. He's someone who's been a touchstone for thinking for so many artists."

Many events will be devised and announced as the season progresses, but Als has already signed on to organize three shows at the Institute, including one that addresses the history of trans women in New York in the 1970s.

Though the Artist's Institute typically shows some work by each season's artist, it tends to take a broad approach with their careers. "I am as interested in the things an artist makes as I am in what they love and care about—those things that fuel their production," Jaskey said. "So I hope we can visualize their world here."



The new home of the Artist's Institute, at 132 East 65th Street.
 COURTESY THE ARTIST'S INSTITUTE



Jenny Jaskey.
 COURTESY THE ARTIST'S INSTITUTE



The first issue of *Pierre's*, the magazine of the Artist's Institute. The cover shows the key to its original space on the Lower East Side, which Pierre Huyghe melted down to what he termed its "native state."
 COURTESY THE ARTIST'S INSTITUTE

To that end, another new effort is afoot: a regular magazine for the Artist's Institute, whose first issue, *Pierre's* ([tied to Pierre Huyghe's season](#)), just dropped. It is a delectable thing—a thick, weighty glossy on which it seems no expense was spared, with contributions by a crew that spans Huyghe's diverse interests and diffuse network, including Ian Cheng, Jonathan Lethem, Camille Henrot (a typically winning photo spread), and Sean Raspet (a scratch-and-sniff page). There are high-res photos of Huyghe's work. There is a glow-in-the-dark section, too.

"The most important part of our name is the possessive, 'Artist's Institute,'" Jaskey told me. "I think that that possessive relates to how we think about working with an artist. I want this to feel like Hilton's institute, Pierre's institute."

The Institute tends to pick artists with ardent fan bases. Als certainly fits that profile, as does the next season's artist, Sharon Lockhart. "It's intentional, maybe, that the artists we have chosen are artists who mean so much to other artists," Jaskey said, when I asked her about that. She added, "We aim to be a generative space for other artists in New York to think about their own work."