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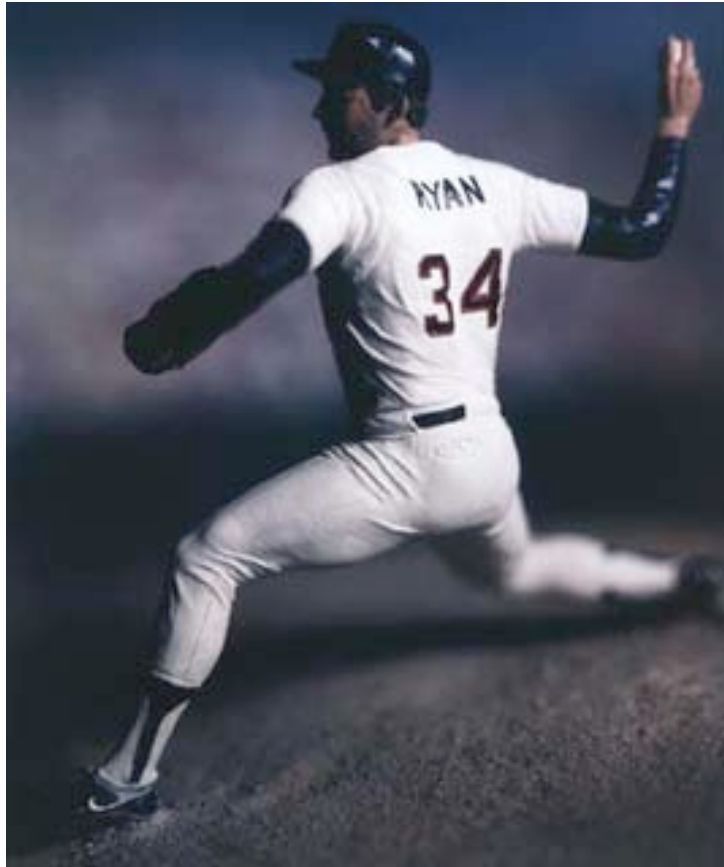
All things photographic from New Mexico and beyond since 2009

**ISSUE SIX - March 2010**

## Interview with LAUNCHPROJECTS' Cyndi Conn and Ben Lincoln

by Jennifer Schlesinger

One of the advantages to living in one place for a long time is to be able to watch your contemporaries grow, mature and evolve from the person they once were when you first met them. I've had the advantage of watching Cyndi Conn grow from the Director at EVO Gallery to go on to be the Visual Arts Director and Curator for the Center for Contemporary Arts to now co-owning her own art space and business with partner Ben Lincoln, LAUNCHPROJECTS that is devoted to supporting artists. Cyndi has a distinct eye for contemporary art and a reputation for supporting artists throughout her career. Ben has the business and financial experience, as well as an oenology background and an interest in the arts. The position they are in now allows them the freedom to pursue the artists they feel passionate about, no holds barred. I interviewed Cyndi and Ben at LAUNCHPROJECTS after they recently found their new home in the historic district of Santa Fe, having acted remotely from December 2008 until November 2009. They represent a small group of contemporary artists that include a small handful of photographers.



**Jennifer Schlesinger: Prior to being the Director of EVO contemporary in Santa Fe. You were previously the Director and Curator of the Center for Contemporary Arts in Santa Fe. How soon after your departure from CCA did you know you wanted to begin Launch Projects? Tell us about your inspiration to begin Launch.**

Cyndi Conn: I relocated to Santa Fe from Paris, France to be the Director of EVO Gallery. After four years at EVO I took the position of Visual Arts Director and Curator of the Center for Contemporary Arts. I resigned from that position in December, 2008. At that time, my partner and former CCA board member Ben Lincoln and I began to brainstorm how to function in the art world in a different way. Having worked in both the gallery and non-profit world, we knew we wanted to promote a small group of artists in every aspect of their career including collections placement, museum exhibitions, residencies, grants, and gallery representation in areas beyond the United States. We also loved traveling with and advising collectors so LAUNCHPROJECTS came about as a physical space dedicated to all of these goals and projects.

**JS: You have a wonderful building on East Palace Ave in Santa Fe's Historic District. You had mentioned that you weren't looking for a gallery space, but you lucked out in finding this one when you were on a search for an office space. What was your original intention with Launch and how has it changed now that you have an unpredicted, spectacular Santa Fe building?**

Cyndi Conn/Ben Lincoln: We began looking for a space that functioned as an office where we could show works to collectors and curators. When we found this space we recognized that we could be more than a private office, and could actually create site-specific installations and exhibitions in our front room. We are fortunate to be able to curate projects and exhibitions in addition to the work that we do behind the scenes. That is now a significant element of LAUNCHPROJECTS' mission.

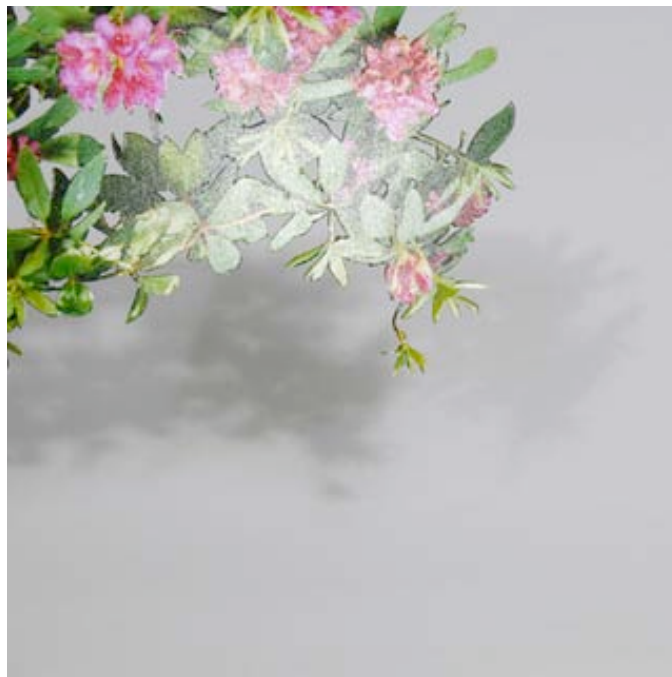


**JS: What is LAUNCHPROJECTS' mission, and tell us who is involved? What niche would you say does Launch fill in Santa Fe?**

CC/BL: LAUNCHPROJECTS is a private exhibition venue focused upon the long-term development of artists' careers by acting as a liaison to international galleries and museums, building collections; and to educate audiences with provocative, engaging, and relevant exhibitions and installations.



The gallery world today frequently treats art as a commodity similar to any other luxury item – a purse, a car, furniture. In many cases the meaning and intention of the work – why art fundamentally matters – is lost. LAUNCHPROJECTS hopes to provide its audience and collectors an environment to re-engage with art. Our approach is largely art-historical in nature and our intention is to contextualize what is happening now within a broader lens of art history.



**JS: Tell us about the photographers you represent and your 2010 exhibition schedule of them.**

CC/BL: We represent Zoe Danae Falliers and the portraiture of Nic Nicosia. We handle Robert Stivers' color photography, and secondary market work including Liu Bolin, Dan Graham, David Levinthal, Yao Lu, and Hiroshi Sugimoto. A few LAUNCHARTISTS work in various media including photography such as our current solo exhibition by Argentine artist Lucrecia Troncoso;



CC/BL: Zoe Danae Falliers describes her work as “an exploration of the boundaries between photography and drawing, fast and still, pop and conceptual, handmade and fabricated, psychological and spiritual, fixed and limitless, abstract and representational.” She considers her body of work photographic drawings. The process for the foundation of the images is photographic – the evolution and final production is drawing. Falliers explores the evolution of the perceived landscape – created by the pervasive acceleration of images – which has exponentially intensified, and dulled, our cognitive understanding of our environments, memories, and culture. Danae Falliers is an artist, designer, and teacher. She was born and raised in

Colorado, has lived in San Francisco and Los Angeles, and currently lives and works in New Mexico and Denver. She earned a BFA from California College of the Arts, and a MFA from the University of Southern California. She has taught photography, as well as digital art and theory, at Otis Parsons School of Art and Design, the College of Santa Fe, the University of New Mexico and the University of Denver. Danae will have a solo exhibition at LAUNCHPROJECTS in September 2010.



Nic Nicosia is best known for his staged photographs of domestic scenes and photographic constructions created within confined space. In his site-specific portraiture commissions, Nicosia utilizes his sense of theatricality, early film studies, and intuition to create singular photographs for clients and their families. Nicosia's work has been exhibited throughout the world in numerous solo and group exhibitions, including the Whitney Biennials of 1983 and 2000, Documenta IX in Kassel, Germany. His work is in the permanent collection of museums such as the Museum of Modern Art, New York, the San Francisco Museum of Modern Art, The Whitney Museum, The Guggenheim, Los Angeles County Museum of Art, and the Art Gallery of Ontario to name a few.



CC/BL: The photographs in Lucrecia Troncoso's current exhibition follow her pursuit of transforming and re-making the natural environment using its own materials. In this series, she has photographed gardens throughout France. Once the photographs are printed, she then cuts out the photographs and re-stages the miniature floral installations on a set in her studio. Re-lit and completely re-contextualized, these minimal installation shots are both a homage to nature and a continual reminder of the artists' hand in the process. Lucrecia Troncoso is an artist based in Berkeley, California. She grew up in rural Argentina and later traveled abroad to further her studies, receiving an MFA in New Practices from San Francisco State University in 2005. Her work has been shown in the San Francisco Bay Area, Los Angeles, and other California locations, New York, Chicago, Miami, Santa Fe, and internationally in Argentina, Turkey, and Spain.



**JS: Do you have a personal aesthetic that you are looking for with artists? If artists want to be represented by you, what process can they go through to show you work?**

CC/BL: I have known all of our artists for many years. Many were in solo and group exhibitions at CCA under my directorship. Integrity over time in the development of objects and ideas, regardless of the physical manifestation of the work of art, is critical. We support and grow with our artists over time, and that is a relationship built on trust over time. Our process is very thorough and we will represent no more than 10 artists due to the time and attention we give to every artists' career. We are constantly looking and meeting new artists. Our doors are open to any artist who wants to begin a discussion.



**JS: I know you've been involved in art fairs with Launch before, having a booth at Art Santa Fe, etc. What plans do you have for future fairs?**

CC/BL: We plan to exhibit at Art Santa Fe again this year – it is critical to support Art Santa Fe and local art venues. Santa Fe has incredible potential to become one of the most important contemporary art markets in the country. Support by dealers, galleries, collectors, curators, and art lovers is the only way that will become a reality. We will spend much of 2010 traveling to different fairs in the US and Europe to devise an exhibition strategy for years to come.

**JS: What future plans do you have for Launch?**

CC/BL: To continue the long-term development of artists' careers, building relationships with museums, curators, collectors, and to continue presenting provocative, engaging, and relevant exhibitions and installations.



**JS: Lastly, Cyndi, you have been studying for your Masters and will graduate in May. You had mentioned that for your final thesis you will have an exclusive interview/biographical study on an artist. Will you tell us more about that and how will that fit into your future plans?**

CC: My final thesis is an exploration of the lives and careers of three courageous women who shifted the boundaries of the twentieth-century art world: Betty Parsons, Marcia Tucker, and Alanna Heiss. Each in her own way fundamentally challenged and changed the way the world perceives and interacts with art. I have been fortunate to work one-on-one with Alanna Heiss, the founder of P.S.1. A thorough understanding of the history of modernism, the New York art world, and how the contemporary market developed is essential to creating a long-term business strategy. The ongoing research with notable New York directors and curators helps us keep a close eye on developments in the art world beyond Santa Fe.

Image List:

David Levinthal, Untitled, Nolan Ryan, 2004 20×24

Liu Bolin, #14 Hiding in the City, 47×37

Lucrecia Troncoso, red flowers france, 2009, 15×15, archival pigment

Lucrecia Troncoso, rhododendron, 2009, 15×15, archival pigment

Zoe Danae Falliers, mxsea2 2010, 20×26

Nic Nicosia, Incredible Browns

Lucrecia Troncoso, two white flower bushes, 2009, 15×15, Archival Pigment

Zoe Danae Falliers, whitesands2 2010, 20×26

Zoe Danae Falliers, mxsea2, 2010, 20×26

Lucrecia Troncoso, white flower vine, 2009, 15×15