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The New York Times |

ART & DESIGN

'Pier 54'

DEC. 4, 2014

Art in Review

By **KAREN ROSENBERG**

In the summer of 1971, the curator Willoughby Sharp invited 27 mostly young, mostly Conceptual artists — all men — to explore the abandoned Pier 18. Their actions, documented in photographs that were exhibited at MoMA, spoke to the dangerous or illicit (or both) associations of the city's piers in that era. Gordon Matta-Clark suspended himself from a ceiling rafter, and Vito Acconci donned a blindfold and walked perilously close to the water's edge.

Last summer, with "Pier 18" in mind, the High Line Art director Cecilia Alemani enlisted an equal number of female artists to stage events and actions on Pier 54, at West 13th Street. The art was clandestine and ephemeral, in the "Pier 18" spirit, but black-and-white pictures of the proceedings, by the photographer Liz Ligon, can now be seen in a smart, lean and well-timed show in Chelsea.

Some artists use specific "Pier 18" projects as starting points, like Leah Raintree's homage to Jan Dibbets's serial sunset photographs. But not everything is a straightforward homage: Liz Magic Laser, for instance, reinterprets Dan Graham's photographing-while-being-photographed interaction as a very of-the-moment "dance of dueling surveillance techniques" between Ms. Ligon and a drone. Along with other projects that engage Ms. Ligon as a combined performer/documentarian, Ms. Laser's piece speaks to the shrewd use of photography that distinguishes the social-media-

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savvy "Pier 54" artists from their predecessors.

The restaging of historical exhibitions has become a familiar gimmick, but "Pier 54" feels more pointed than many such exercises (and not just because of its all-female roster). The recent [announcement](#) of a new, billionaire-funded \$130 million park to be built on the pier makes the show less a wistful dialogue with the art world and city of over 40 years ago than an attempt to preserve the waterfront as a permissive, public space.

120 11th Avenue, at 20th Street, Chelsea

Through Dec. 13

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