

Perspectives 176

Glen Fogel: With Me...You



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Cover: Video still from *With Me... You*, 2011,
detail

Back cover: Letter from Glen Fogel to FedEx,
November 2, 2010, reproduced as a gallery
handout accompanying *With Me... You*, 2011.

Opposite: Video still from *With Me... You*, 2011,
detail

Perspectives 176 **Glen Fogel: With Me... You**



CONTEMPORARY ARTS MUSEUM HOUSTON



Call me and we can buy love together

LIA GANGITANO

The political significance of the wedding ring has undergone at least one major shift, generationally speaking, during the lifetime of the artist Glen Fogel. By his birth in 1977, the second wave of the feminist movement had liberated women from the either/or choice of a wedding band and, say, a job. During his adulthood, the ring has proven yet again to symbolize rights denied and granted, and to whom. Not surprisingly, the impetus for Fogel's immersive video installation *With Me... You* occurred while he was staying in a motel on the way home from a family wedding, watching Home Shopping Network with his boyfriend.

Studying the photography and display style of HSN, Fogel embarked on a project to videotape wedding and engagement rings in his family's possession, complete with slow-moving two-axis turntables, razor-sharp HD video, and star filters. The finished work is a tightly edited, synchronized five-channel video that spans four generations of the artist's family—from his great grandmother's engagement ring, which was stripped of its jewels, to the rings of his mother and sister—and continues Fogel's pairing of personal history with superimpositions of the self onto found or public material.

Fogel meticulously documented the

development of the project, including his requests for permission through e-mail exchanges, recorded phone calls, and records of his travels to Colorado and California to obtain the rings. One of the featured objects, his mother's wedding ring, was lost by FedEx when he attempted to return it. Fogel's letter to the FedEx claims department became the only document exhibited with the completed work, as part of a handout distributed in the gallery, bringing unforeseen poignancy to the piece while doubling back on its themes of symbolism. If the videos emphasize the symbolic nature of the ring through various distancing effects, the letter complicates this very notion by attempting to describe the literal loss of a symbolic object, posing a counterpoint that perhaps lay dormant in the work all along. Through its absence, the real object exerts its existence in opposition to its fetishized representation.

Critic Nathan Lee has noted the shifting variances achieved in Fogel's work: "Mounted on a gyroscopic mechanism and shot against a variety of monochromatic backgrounds through a star filter, the video monumentalizes family heirlooms. At once sinuous and sinister, luxurious and melancholy, the work is an extension of recent projects in which Fogel reads highly personal materials (love letters, portraits



Video stills from *Quarry*, 2008, single-channel video; original *Law and Order* episode (top) and reenactment (bottom)

of lovers) through spectacular, politically fraught representations (TV crime dramas, political rallies). *With Me... You* forefronts a tense ambivalence between the ring as beloved familial artifact and symbol of state-sponsored relations.”¹

The overall visual environment of *With Me... You* is characterized by undulating color—rotating, seamless images pervade the space with light and its absence, creating effects such as a shifting horizon line and a feeling of immersion as space fills and recedes, at times creating the feeling of being inside a rainbow flag. This ambient, illusionistic space is fractured, every three minutes, by the somewhat humorous sound of an iPhone tone (the one that announces a text message), and at once the videos go dark and the space is brightened by harsh fluorescent light. Within this transformed space, objects that symbolize love are jet-tisoned into an oversize realm of commodification and display, engulfing the viewer in a monumental architecture of advertising.

Paired with paintings of enlarged love

letters written to the artist, the icon of the ring in all its overwrought sentimentality again becomes problematized by the potential impact of the artist’s detailed revelations of his intimate relationships and their demise. The interlocking narrative revealed across the correspondence involves a complex relationship between the artist and an older man who expresses conflicted desire for him, although he knows that “Glen” is in a fraught relationship with someone his own age, also an author of letters on view. Seemingly lecherous at first glance, this platonic involvement led to the artist coming out, with the older man fostering a relationship between the two younger men. The names of the letter writers have been changed but remain consistent throughout this body of work. As Holland Cotter noted of the letters, “read together they add up to a heated tangle of adolescent angst: infatuation, fear of rejection, rivalrous anger, weepy resignation.”²

The situation elaborated in the letters was also the subject of an earlier work,

Fogel’s single-channel video *Quarry* (2008), in which he inserted himself into an episode of *Law and Order: Special Victims Unit*, replacing the character of a convicted pedophile through shot-for-shot altered reenactments, identifying himself as both criminal and victim. Similarly, the pairing of the emblematic rings and the all-too-real letters, both extravagant versions of sentiment, is devised to explore the contradictions of growing up, including an unlikely mentor who appears to help the artist navigate through an unconventional adolescence—one in which who he is and who he is supposed to be do not necessarily equate.

In previous exhibitions, Fogel’s pairing of works has served to perform this kind of strategic conflict. He exhibited the video installation *Art from Kansas City* together with a sound/light sculpture titled *Glen from Colorado*. The works, conceived as companion pieces, function as distinct yet related portraits of the artist: one is mapped onto a preexisting memoir, *I Had to Say Something: The Art of Ted Haggard’s Fall* by the male escort Mike Jones, and the other is from the artist’s personal archive of letters. The book is a

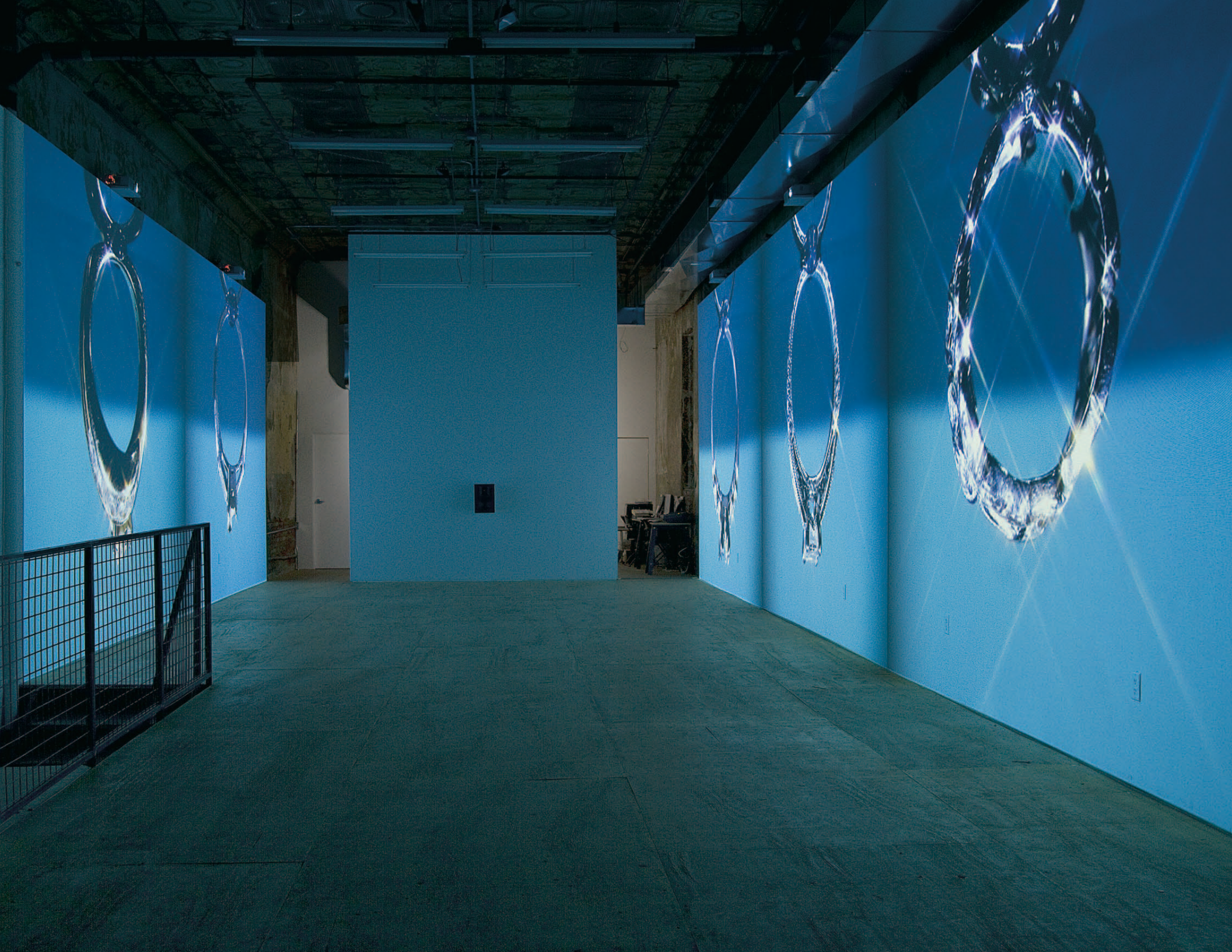
detailed, first-person account of male escort Mike Jones’s intimate relationship with Ted Haggard, the former pastor and founder of New Life Church in Colorado Springs. Haggard served as the head of the National Association of Evangelicals from 2003 to 2006 and is often credited with bringing the evangelical voting bloc to George W. Bush. Haggard used the pseudonym Art when he would visit Jones in Denver, the artist’s hometown. Critic David Everitt Howe noted of this work: “Glen Fogel has proved particularly adept at interpolating personal narrative into the messy politics of media culture. For his 2009 installation *Art from Kansas City*, he appropriated male escort Mike Jones’s memoir of his relationship with evangelical icon Ted Haggard. Blacking out the majority of the text, Fogel inserted his name in lieu of the author’s, and left uncensored sentences containing the word ‘Art’—Haggard’s pseudonym—turning it into a tidy, efficient pun parodying an artist’s inherently compromised political position.”³

Its companion, *Glen from Colorado* (2010), is a fluorescent sculpture figuring the name GLEN as a luminescent/linguistic



Glen from Colorado, 2010, installation view at Sikkema Jenkins & Co., New York City

Pages 6–7: *With Me... You*, 2011, installation view at PARTICIPANT INC, New York





Goldye, 2011, installation
view at Callicoon Fine
Arts, New York

surrogate. A speaker directed at the light emits the voice of text-to-speech software reading letters written to the artist, often about him, with the sound of the voice controlling the intensity of the light. Both these works conflate minimal forms with emotionally, psychologically, and politically charged material, exploring the complexities of identity formation and in this case presenting a double narrative: Glen as Art's whore, and art as Glen's camouflage.

Call me and we can buy love together (2009) is a series of more than one hundred numbered photographs taken with a cell phone camera in New York City subways. The images depict closely cropped faces in advertisements that have been marred by various forms of graffiti, revealing the persistence of homophobia, racism, sexism, and violence through at times uncomfortable forms of public discourse. While *Call me* suggests complicity in the capitalist advertising apparatus and *With Me... You* an exclusion from it, Fogel's latest work assertively co-opts the most iconic of class-elevating commodities, the automobile, into the realm of emotionality. *Goldye* (2011) repurposes his late grandmother's Cadillac, which he inherited by default, into a light and sound piece of epic nostalgia. As critic

Corrine Fitzpatrick observed: "Cadillac was named in 1902 after Antoine de la Mothe Cadillac, the founder of Detroit. When General Motors filed for Chapter 11 reorganization in 2009, President Obama proclaimed 'the beginning of a new GM' that would be 'once more a symbol of America's success.' The spectacle of Fogel's Seville, out of whack and muttering abjectly, offers sad retort."⁴ *With Me... You* falls within this constellation of works and continues the artist's career-long inquiry into the intersection of personal drives and social rules—elucidating unstated sites for radical social experimentation in the wake of increasing alienation. Like his ongoing series of trompe l'oeil love letters, it is part of an evolving portrait of the artist, often painted by others.

Notes

1. Nathan Lee, "With Me... You," press release, Yama, Istanbul, 2011.
2. Holland Cotter, "Glen Fogel: With Me... You," *New York Times*, February 25, 2011.
3. David Everitt Howe, "Glen Fogel: With With Me... You," *Art Review*, no. 49 (April 2011): 115.
4. Corrine Fitzpatrick, "Glen Fogel, Callicoon Fine Arts," Critics' Picks, artforum.com, accessed September 24, 2011.



From *Jess* (September 30, 1994), 2010

8/20

Dear Glen-

Glen Fogel, what magic and enchantment that name is to me, now more than ever before. You, both the ideal and the mortal, have taught me the meaning of Love and what it is to feel Joy. On the other hand, through some unintentional carelessness, you have dropped me deeper into heartbreak than I have ever fallen before. But, I know that in you I have had great fortune. And, in you I have met a great friend. At times I've laid in my bed, especially lately now that you are so soon to leave, and wept and asked what strange and/or personal purpose was to be accomplished by me coming here, by me coming to this...wall of...Friendship.

Had I to this all over again I would change some few things but not many. If somehow some guardian spirit would have warned me four years ago of the vast consequences of my attendance at a certain Rose garden party I would still have gone to be struck like lightning by you. And I would still have come looking for you through the chaotic daze of the world, for whatever my faults or personally tainted visions I have faithfully followed the most arduous path of Love. Obviously, had it all been up to me from the very beginning, I would have made it so you loved me completely also but...

You are a good person Glen. That may sound trite to you, "good person," but I believe it is a rare thing. You are a good person. You are a generous person. Whenever, primarily due to my own insecurity, I have been hurt by you, you have acted quickly to soothe the pain and to reassure me. Moreover, I cannot tell you what it has meant to me that at times you have reached out to give me your touch or even a kind word of concern. You are truly worthy of my love. And, I wish to be always worthy of it too.

This love I have for you burns hot within my heart with all the joy it brings to me and yet also with a deep sadness for I fear it shall never be reciprocated in kind. But, to feel this Joy I would bear that slight pain. Above all else, I desire to be true to my love. I desire to love you not just for as long as I can, for what is it to promise that? I desire to love you forever. I want the future to roll on and on and my love to stay as constant as the blue of the sky. I am human and clouds and thunder will sweep over me at times, but at a kind word from you the fearful storms will flee and the sky shall shine again in truest blue.

My love of you and my friendship with you are the twin crowns on my personal standard. I never want to let them down or abandon or betray them in pain even unto the world's onslaught. Perhaps someday for me there will be another but nevertheless I shall never forget you. And, I shall always look back to this day with only love and respect.

Go where you will and believe what you will and love whom you will but never doubt I love you and never doubt I am your Friend.

Where does all this lead? It all leads to this: Another Request, or, more properly a refinement of a past Request. Yes, this is an imposition upon you, and this is pure selfishness but Grant me this wish:

Lay down with me for forty-five, or so, minutes; let me hold you in my arms while Tchaikowsky's 6th symphony plays.

For this I shall afterwards give you a gift of love beyond price, a gift you may already know you possess but that I feel I should give you nonetheless. And by doing this we shall fittingly close the first chapter on a wondrous time of our lives...

Yet we shall wait eagerly for this great and fantastic story of Life and Love and Friendship to further unfold, apart and together.

No, that is too passive. Let us afterwards, if you will consent to this Request, part as greatest of Friends, yet as far more than Friends too, as Life-Long Companions in the great quest. Let us not wait, let us spur on our lives like riders urging their horses, surging for the finish line and victory and next race beyond.

Glen, I know I am not Lucas. I know I am not a woman. But, let me be Jamie to you. Let me always be true to Me and to you. Let me express my affection to and for you. Let me know that you know I love you. Let me know my love is accepted. Be generous, indulge me, Accept this gift of Love. Grant me this Glen, do this for ME, do this for no other reason but that I truly love you.

Love
JAMIE

BIOGRAPHY

Born 1977 in Denver
Lives and works in New York

MFA, Milton Avery Graduate School of Arts, Bard
College, 2010

Selected One-Person Exhibitions

2011
Goldye, Callicoon Fine Arts, New York

2009
Call me and we can buy love together, Callicoon Fine
Arts, Callicoon, New York

2008
Quarry, The Kitchen, New York

2006
June 25, 2005, Momena Art, New York

2004
Release System, Galeria Andre Viana, Porto, Portugal

Selected Group Exhibitions

2011
B-B-B-BAD, Kustera Gallery, New York
Coming After, The Power Plant, Toronto
*Readykeulous \ The Hurtful Healer: The
Correspondence Issue*, Invisible-Exports, New York
So Many Letdowns Before We Get Up, Platform:
Centre for Photographic and Digital Arts,
Winnipeg, Canada
Unfold, apart and together, Golden Gallery, Chicago

2010
Fifty Artists Photograph the Future, Higher Pictures,
New York
Evas Arche un der Feminist, Gavin Brown Enterprise,
New York
A Word Like Tomorrow Wears Things Out, Sikkema
Jenkins & Co., New York

2009
All Suffering Soon to End!, Callicoon Fine Arts,
Callicoon, New York
Artist of the Month Club, Invisible-Exports, New York
Buddy List, Space 414, New York

2007
Can I Get a Witness, Longwood Art Gallery, New York
Psychic Inheritance, Thomas Erben Gallery,
New York

2005
Log Cabin, Artists Space, New York

2004
Queeries, Shedhalle, Zurich

2003
*Chironex Fleckeri oder Momente in der Schwebe
(Mulholland Drive)*, NGBK, Berlin
Game Over, Grimm Rosenfeld Gallery, Munich
School Is Out, Southfirst Gallery, New York

2002
Ascension, Sara Meltzer Gallery, New York
Whitney Biennial: 2002 Biennial Exhibition,
Whitney Museum of American Art, New York

Selected Screenings

2011
Portraiture in Queer Experimental Cinema,
University of Buffalo, New York

2010
The Sense Ritual, MIX Film Festival, New York

2009
Stranger on the Road, Center for Performance
Research, New York

2008
A Personal Shout, GLBT Film Festival, Turin, Italy.
Travels to White Columns, New York in 2009.

2007
Hybrids, Millennium Film Workshop, New York
Ocularis at 10, Museum of Modern Art, New York
13th Chicago Underground Film Festival,
Music Box, Chicago

2005
Millennium Film Workshop, New York
(one-person screening)

2003
Pressure System, Andrew Kreps Gallery, New
York; Chicago Filmmakers, Chicago; Woodland
Pattern Gallery, Milwaukee; University of
Wisconsin, Madison (one-person screening)

2002
Spectrum of the Senses & Multiplying Mirrors,
The London Film Festival, England
Wavelengths, Toronto International Film Festival

2001
Big As Life: An American History of 8mm Film,
Museum of Modern Art, New York

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2011
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New York Times, February 25, 2011.
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You." *Art Review*, no. 49 (April 2011): 115.
"Goings on About Town Art, Glen Fogel, With
Me... You at Participant Inc." *New Yorker*,
February 28, 2011.
McClellmont, Doug. "Top Ten Shows in New York."
Saatchi Online Magazine, January 31, 2011.
Wise, Lloyd. "Reviews: Glen Fogel." *Artforum* 49
(April 2011): 220.

2010
"Critics Pick: Best in Sculpture." *Time Out New
York*, April 2010.

2009
Coburn, Tyler. "Future Greats: Glen Fogel, Ann
Lislegaard, Justin Beal, Sam Lewitt." *Art
Review*, no. 30 (March 2009): 80.

2008
Hou, Christine. "A Look at Glen Fogel." *ArtSlant*,
March 27, 2008.
Howe, David Everitt. "Mika Tajima: The Double /
Glen Fogel: Quarry." *Art Review*, no. 23 (June
2008): 150.

2006
Halter, Ed. "Screen Dream: The Audio-Visual
Journeys of Glen Fogel." *Millennium Film
Journal*, no. 45–46 (Fall 2006).
McAdams, Shane. "Glen Fogel." *Brooklyn Rail*,
June 2006, 31.

2005
Cotter, Holland. "Log Cabin." *New York Times*,
January 28, 2005.

2004
Alvarez, Darrell. "Reports." *Filmmaker Magazine*,
Winter 2004, 22.
Mookas, Ioannis. "Been Underground So Long, It
Looks Like Up to Me: New York Underground
Film Festival 2004." *Senses of Cinema*, no. 31
(April–June 2004).
Osório, Helena. "Corpos em movimento." *Visão
Sete*, September 9, 2004, 21.
Pomar, Alexandre. "Imagens plurais." *Jornal
Expresso*, September 25, 2004, 42–43.

WORKS IN THE EXHIBITION

From Jamie (August 20), 2010
Oil on canvas
2 parts, 62 x 48 inches each
Courtesy Callicoon Fine Arts, New York

From Jamie (date unknown, blue ink), 2011
Oil on canvas
62 x 48 inches
Collection of Gerry Feldman

From Jess (September 30, 1994), 2010
Oil on canvas
62 x 48 inches
Collection of William Cournoyer

From Lucas (date unknown), 2010
Oil on canvas
62 x 48 inches
Collection of Andre Sakhai

From Lucas (date unknown, apology, front),
2011
Oil on canvas
62 x 48 inches
Collection of Gerry Feldman

With Me... You, 2011
5-channel video, solid-state relay, fluorescent
lights, sound
19:45 minutes (loop)
Courtesy Callicoon Fine Arts and
PARTICIPANT INC, New York

FedEx Claims
Re: Claim #1102528695
Date 11/2/10

To Whom It May Concern,

I am writing this letter to give my personal account of FedEx claim #1102528695. I am the shipper, and my mother, Linda Fogel, was the recipient.

I am an artist who lives and works in New York City. I am currently working on a project that involves videotaping and photographing all of the wedding rings in my immediate family. This will culminate in an exhibition at Participant Inc., a not-for-profit gallery in New York's Lower East Side this upcoming January, 2011.

Most of my family lives in Denver, so in order to complete this project I travelled there over the summer to borrow the rings from my family. They were somewhat reluctant, but I promised to be very careful and return them either in person, or through FedEx, with the proper insurance. Once I completed photographing the rings, I contacted my family members. I asked if they preferred I send them the rings immediately, or wait until Thanksgiving, when I could deliver them person. My mother opted to have me send her ring back in anticipation of a trip her and my father were taking prior to Thanksgiving. I asked her the value, and told her I would send it FedEx, and insure it fully.

On Friday, October 29th, I packed the ring carefully at my apartment. I put the ring in a small blue pouch my mother had given me to carry it in. I placed the blue pouch in a small box that I had at the apartment. I prepared an online shipment through FedEx.com, and insured it for \$6000. I printed the label and went to my local FedEx pickup location. At the store, I placed the small box with ring in it into an official FedEx Small Box, and then filled the remaining space with newspaper. I sealed the box and gave it to the employee.

Today, November 2nd, my mother received the FedEx box. All of the package contents remained, but the ring was no longer in the box. As a result, my family and I are devastated. The diamond in the ring belonged to my father's mother, and was given to him to use for my mother's engagement ring. My father clearly remembers the moment that his now deceased mother removed her earring with that diamond in it, and handed it to him. The ring is irreplaceable- the stones and band can be replaced, but the history cannot.

It is my hope that FedEx will properly reimburse us for this loss.

Sincerely yours,



Glen Fogel

Glen Fogel

Brooklyn, NY 11208

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[REDACTED]@glenfogel.com



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