

ARTFORUM

Hilton Als

THE ARTIST'S INSTITUTE
132 East 65th Street
March 2–August 7

Hilton Als's "One Man Show: Holly, Candy, Bobbie, and the Rest" is strung together loosely, just like the celebrated *New Yorker* critic's personal essays. Voice is structure; memory comes in vivid rushes; friendship is a seismic force. This, the first phase of the artist's six-month season at the Artist's Institute (also the inaugural project of the Institute's new UES address), is a dreamy paean to, as the artist writes, "various personages who lived in a pre-*Transparent*, pre-Caitlyn, pre-anything world." Holly Woodlawn and Candy Darling, the figures named in Als's title, were trans Warhol Superstars; but Bobbie, we learn, was not famous—just a luminous friend, represented here by a small image in a corner of this elegantly makeshift installation. In *Bobbie*, 2016, an old-fashioned projector shows vintage slides of an angelic blond, a gender-indeterminate young person. In one picture, they are standing in the sun on the street, almost smiling, gazing at a point slightly above an unknown photographer.



View of "Hilton Als," 2016.

The gallery is kept dim, lit by all manner of budget mood lighting. In one room, colored bulbs with messy, exposed cords accent Judy Linn's striking black-and-white portraits of drag legend Ethyl Eichelberger from 1990, while a loop of louche art films plays on an adjacent wall, as a disco mix made by Als pumps from little computer speakers. Elsewhere, a handful of flickering liquid tea lights sit on the floor, not too far from the piece *Stormé, Bobbie and the Rest*, 2016, in which a classroom overhead projector throws a faint image of Bobbie onto the wall—and onto Diane Arbus's 1961 portrait of butch dreamboat and Stonewall hero Stormé DeLarverie.

This is not a photography show, though photos anchor it; and it's not a group show, though many artists haunt it. This is curating as artistic practice, as shrine-making—a "one-man" exhibition that engenders so much more.

— Johanna Fateman

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