



NEW YORK

Anne Morgan Spalter

Stephan Stoyanov Gallery // November 29, 2011–January 6, 2012

FOR HER FIRST SOLO exhibition in New York, the new-media pioneer Anne Morgan Spalter presents “Traffic Circle,” a series of kaleidoscopic videos, all from 2011. Installed as two projections and three monitors mounted on easels, Spalter’s video series takes images of city traffic lights and roadways as its subject, inverting them into intricate constellations of stars and arabesques. The three-minute digital video work *Traffic Light, Main Street, Central Falls, Rhode Island* presents a traffic light in real time, splintered into a circular formation against an alternating pastel background. In *Sunrise Over Rockefeller Center*, footage of the Midtown Manhattan landmark complex shot from a high-rise apartment is digitally processed to appear as an undulating, kaleidoscopic eight-pointed star.

Spalter’s geometric compositions point to her tendency to work with and

bridge subjects traditionally thought to exist within a “right brain, left brain” dichotomy: Both mathematics and technology act as major components of her oeuvre, as does the modern art historical landscape. Further, the title “Traffic Circle” suggests a double entendre, referring both to the road junction at which traffic moves around a cement island and to her literally circular forms comprising images of traffic.

This verbal approach, along with Spalter’s tendency

to work with mathematics, technology, and the landscape, evince the artist’s previous career as an academic: She taught the first new-media art classes in the early 1990s at both Brown University and the Rhode Island School of Design, in Providence, only recently leaving academia to pursue her career as an artist full-time. Although Spalter clearly deserves recognition for trailblazing in early ’90s art and tech academia, it’s painful to admit that her work serves as a quintessential example of

the rapidly evolving generation gap among artists who work with technology. No longer is it conceptually engaging to reference so literally the technical support of video itself or the aesthetics endemic to its software—although, like all new mediums (most notably photography), perhaps new media has to endure a period of sussing out its relationship to medium-specificity. Beyond this blunder, Spalter succeeds in creating visually dynamic manifestations of city life.

—Karen Archey



ANNE MORGAN SPALTER AND STEPHAN STOYANOV GALLERY, NEW YORK

FROM TOP:  
Anne Morgan Spalter  
Still from *Sunrise Over Rockefeller Center*, 2011.  
HD video, 3 min.

Still from *Evening Taxis*, 2011.  
HD video, 3 min.

## NEW YORK

### Rona Yefman

Derek Eller Gallery // November 18, 2011–January 7, 2012

THE WORD *FREEDOM* IS so rhetorically overused that it often denotes very little. When the Israeli artist Rona Yefman employs it in interviews, however, it is loaded with meaning and typically describes the intensely challenging, and very specific, struggles of gender variants—often individuals who are close to her. The focus of her recent solo exhibition at Participant Inc., in New York, was a series of collaborative works she made during the course of a decade with her brother, Gil, who transitioned from male to female, then back to male again. Paired with her sibling in photographs and videos, Yefman played with their personalities and body types, blurring gender roles to render them effectively dubious.

For her first solo exhibition at Derek Eller Gallery, "Marath a Bouke, project #4," Yefman presents a series of photographs and videos, the culmination of a nine-year collaboration with Martha Bouke, an 80-year-old Jewish Holocaust survivor and

grandfather. Bouke moonlights, in Yefman's words, as a female "diva, provocation, fiction, art piece, and poetic soul." He wears a Venetian mask or a red bandanna to conceal his identity, and with Yefman's facilitation, poses as various female archetypes: the glamorous naïf, the cabaret dancer, the riot grrrl. In one photograph, he stands in front of a still from the 1967 film *Bonnie and Clyde*, doubling Faye Dunaway's Depression-era gunslinging moll. In another spread, his crimped auburn wig and denim skirt evoke a crude conflation of Dolly Parton and Loretta Lynn. With his exposed hairy legs and noticeably aged frame, Bouke is no stunning beauty. But that matters little. Yefman's role is to help him articulate his poignant fantasies, with both their ups and downs. On a small monitor, he's seen in juxtaposition with iconic modern artworks, as if siphoning their aura for his own; and in a two-channel video installation, he discusses, among other things, the tribulations of being mistaken for a terrorist



on a city bus. With a light authorial touch, Yefman's works shine with such unaffected trials, helping Bouke realize, at least in part, his nearly implausible dreams—and in the process, adding real pathos to the subject of gender identity. —David Everitt Howe

**Rona Yefman**  
*Meirav in White*,  
*Tel Aviv*, 2004,  
2002–11. Color  
photograph,  
17 x 15 in.

## CHICAGO

### Mark Booth

Devening Projects + Editions // December 11, 2011–January 21, 2012



out by hand-cut vinyl stencils on negative white space, while prismatic tessellations in gradients of gray and silver foray beneath and around the text. Booth's playful attention to form here belies any recollection of or reference to historical Conceptualism's aesthetics of administration. Text comes first; design and forms later. The artist's capricious designs attempt an aesthetic flattening—a playful shifting of weight

A FLAT MALE VOICE SPEAKS: "A cloud of spiderwebs lodged in a bush is represented by the odor of feet emanating from a sockless child. The odor of feet emanating from a sockless child is represented by a shelf of half-read books. A shelf of half-read books is represented by a sodden spring grass enveloping a naked foot." This recursive signifying chain continues throughout Mark Booth's audio installation *God Is Represented by the Sea*, 2011.

The listener is then confronted by "The Sea Is Represented by an Irregular Shape," 2011, a series of 13 monochromatic texts on paper that comprises another string of statements excerpted from the same infinite chain. Texts like "An irregular shape is represented by space" and "Space is represented by carbonated water" are marked

from one foot to another—the gravity of semiotics on one and perhaps the not-so-pure pleasure of light, form, and volume on the other. It's all play, the endless game of signification. No pictorial image could possibly illustrate what is communicated by these texts.

Booth's project, however, begins with sound: an aural experience that continues in the mind's ear beyond the physical act of hearing. The closed, albeit infinite, loop of meaning and never-ending difference is presented as artistic sacrifice. Perhaps exhausted by the totality of text, and questioning the liberation offered by radical mutability, Booth's works here cry out for a new mode of analysis. They may manifest in the form of text, both aurally and visually, but they point much further beyond. —Michelle Hyun

**Mark Booth**  
*Rings of Saturn (God Is Represented by the Sea)*, 2011. Acrylic on Dura-Lar, two sheets, 25 x 52 in.