

Carina Brandes, 'Blow Up'

By ROBERTA SMITH MARCH 17, 2016

Americans looking at the black-and-white photographs in “Blow Up,” the second solo show of the German artist Carina Brandes at Team Gallery, may think of the often uncanny performance-oriented photographs of Lucas Samaras, Carolee Schneemann, Jimmy De Sana, Cindy Sherman and others. Yet Ms. Brandes’s images are convincingly singular.

Roughly shot and developed, they feature a naked woman (the artist or a stand-in), her face obscured, engaged in bizarre, often blurry frolics freighted with unspecified meanings and a sense of autonomy. The setting is almost always a beach at night — a place that exists out of time, perhaps in fantasy or myth. The images are minimally lit, to luminous effect.

In one image, the woman is suspended in the air, midjump, the beach behind her. We see her through an oculus shaped like a five-pointed star, a spirit trying to lure us into another world. With more care, her outstretched limbs might have aligned with its points, like the [Vitruvian Man](#). But Ms. Brandes works quickly, even impatiently, uninterested in pinning things down.

In another photograph, the woman falls backward into the darkness. She seems inebriated, challenged by strong headwinds or an unseen angry god. Her sidekick in this incident is an inflatable Bugs Bunny who is even blurrier, but grins reassuringly. Elsewhere, Ms. Brandes’s head crests the top of a wall or barrier, while Bugs cheers her on.

The quest continues when our heroine crouches at water’s edge as if performing a ritual, looking a bit like Hercules or Sisyphus as she grips an enormous balloon, casting large shadows.

Ms. Brandes’s art invites us to improvise our own meanings, inspired by her visions of female agency and imagination in action.



This untitled photograph by the German artist Carina Brandes is part of her solo exhibition at Team Gallery. Team (Gallery Inc.), New York

[Team Gallery](#)

47 Wooster Street, SoHo

Through April 3