

April 25, 2025



*Carolyn Lazard: Two-way. Installation view, Artists Space, 2025. Photo: Greg Carideo. Image Courtesy Artists Space, New York. [A brightly painted red wall with the phrase "TWO-WAY" centered in large white text. The floor in front of the wall, and to the side is covered in a pattern of light blue linoleum tiles. Brown columns stretch into the darkness behind the wall.]*

On the occasion of their 2023 exhibition *Long Take* at the ICA in Philadelphia, Carolyn Lazard addressed the long and awkward history of video in gallery spaces—how it has often required viewers to stand uncomfortably while engaging with time-based media. In response, Lazard proposed a radical idea to the museum: to allow visitors to sit comfortably and actually enjoy the content.

In Lazard's current exhibition at Artists Space, this commitment is extended. The SoHo gallery has been transformed into a two-chamber black box cinema, screening both a fictional and a documentary film, each shot at the simulation center of Elmhurst Hospital, a facility of NYC Health + Hospitals. For viewers unfamiliar with such training environments, the films may appear simply informative. Yet their clinical, detached objectivity comes across as almost ironic—at times funny, grotesque, and even a bit morbid.



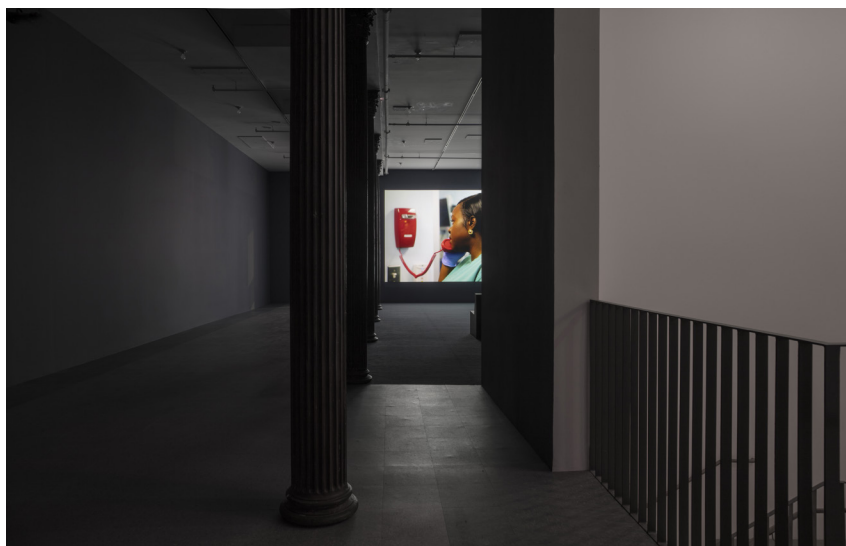
*Carolyn Lazard: Two-way. Installation view (Fiction Contract, 2025; Borne, 2025), Artists Space, 2025. Photo: Greg Carideo. Image Courtesy Artists Space, New York. [A darkened gallery space with dark blue walls, dark blue carpeting, and light blue linoleum tiling. In the foreground a bench is centered in front of a large wall projection. The projection depicts a close-up of a newborn black mannequin laying down, being tended to by medical professionals.]*

Two-way is set up in an inclusive and accessible environment for viewing moving image works. This approach is in line with Lazard's broader practice, which—as their bio states—takes iteration as its primary medium. Lazard's work consistently brings visibility to the experiences of disabled people, which have long been marginalized in public spaces, including art institutions. Having spent significant time in hospitals due to chronic illness, Lazard launched *In Sickness and Study* in 2015, a project documenting the artist's hand holding sci-fi novels, feminist theory, and art texts while receiving intravenous infusions. They also authored *Accessibility in the Arts: A Promise and a Practice* in 2019—a manual aimed at helping cultural institutions implement accessibility. Both of these works create surfaces of visibility and foster debate on ableism both within and outside art.



Carolyn Lazard: *Two-way*. Installation view (*Fiction Contract*, 2025), Artists Space, 2025. Photo: Greg Carideo. Image Courtesy Artists Space, New York. [A darkened gallery space with a video projection centered on a dark blue wall. The projection depicts a close-up of a black birthing mannequin reclined on a hospital bed in a blue patient room. A newborn mannequin swaddled in a hospital receiving blanket lays on the birthing mannequin's chest.]

Clinical environments resurface in the gallery space and the two videos. *Fiction Contract* (2025), shown on the right side of the gallery, documents a childbirth simulation involving an all-Black team of healthcare professionals, alongside a Black birthing mannequin named Jayda. The term "fiction contract" refers to the mutual agreement among simulation participants to engage with the scenario as if it were real, while remaining aware that it is, indeed, not. The film maintains a documentary tone, depicting the situation of Jayda giving birth (narrated by a voice whose source is seated behind a window, separated from the labor room) with an upcoming complication given the baby's size, as the mother lives with diabetes. Fortunately, the procedure ends successfully and Jayda "delivers" her newborn. The rigid formalism of the scene and the evident fact that both mother and baby are inanimate mannequins strikes a painful emotional dissonance. As the exhibition text notes, the work critically examines the use of simulation in medical training and its implications for addressing racial disparities in maternal healthcare.



Carolyn Lazard: *Two-way*. Installation view (*Fiction Contract*, 2025; *Borne*, 2025), Artists Space, 2025. Photo: Greg Carideo. Image Courtesy Artists Space, New York. [A darkened hallway leads into an open gallery space with dark blue walls, dark blue carpeting, and light blue linoleum tiling. In the background a video is projected onto the farthest wall. The projection depicts a nurse in green scrubs using a red telephone affixed to the wall.]

The second video, *Vital* (2025), screened in the gallery's left chamber, is a fictional narrative. Set in the same simulation center, the video's protagonist, played by the visual artist Martine Syms, is a Black birthing person attending their first prenatal visit. What begins as a routine appointment quickly devolves into a sequence of awkward moments and institutional disappointments: their gynecologist cancels at the last minute; the substitute doctor, played by the writer and actor Cyrus Dunham, avoids answering their questions; a nurse at reception informs them their insurance won't cover the visit. Bureaucratic violence, unpredictability, and vulnerability define the medical experience depicted in both works. In both videos, drawing from Jean Baudrillard's 1981 philosophical work *Simulacra and Simulation*, the simulation center becomes a hyperreal space where care is no longer tied to lived experience, but endlessly loops within its own signs and performances.[1] Lazard blurs the line between real and fictional to reveal how institutional care is at once deeply scripted and fundamentally unstable.

As the exhibition is conceptually transparent and formally restrained, it allows the viewer to frame and connect it to a foundational text in the history of medicine: Lazard's *Two-way* reflects Michel Foucault's *The Birth of the Clinic* in exposing how the medical gaze is rehearsed and institutionalized, turning the patient into a subject of knowledge even within simulated care.[2] The training videos stage not just clinical procedures, but also the racial and bureaucratic dynamics embedded in them—most strikingly through the figure of Jayda, the Black birthing mannequin.



*Carolyn Lazard: Two-way. Installation view (Vital, 2025; Borne, 2025), Artists Space, 2025. Photo: Greg Carideo. Image Courtesy Artists Space, New York. [A darkened hallway with dark blue walls and light blue linoleum tiling leads into an open gallery space with dark blue carpeting. On the left sits a bench, which faces a large wall projection on the right. The projection depicts a black patient in a blue hospital gown sitting in a chair. The projection is partially obscured by a wall.]*

Carolyn Lazard: *Two-way* is on view at Artists Space from February 28 through May 10, 2025.

[1] Jean Baudrillard, *Simulacra and Simulation, The Body, in Theory: Histories of Cultural Materialism* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1983).

[2] Michel Foucault, *The Birth of the Clinic: An Archaeology of Medical Perception* (New York: Vintage Books, 1994).

Edited by Jubilee Park