

ARTFORUM

A. K. Burns and Katherine Hubbard

RECESS ACTIVITIES, INC.

41 Grand Street, Ground Floor

October 28–December 11

A. K. Burns and Katherine Hubbard's project "The Brown Bear: Neither Particular, Nor General" is a salon in all senses of the word. Over the course of two months, visitors are invited to propose and receive haircuts and hair removal (or extension) services by the artists, who are working in Recess's small storefront, at times surrounded by concurrent happenings that also blur the line between performer and participant.

A pleasantly chaotic ambiance reigns in this space. Discarded locks are left to accumulate in piles on the floor. Saturday performances, many of which solicit participation from attendees, add another node of activity and dismantle any conceivably remaining formality in the gallery. A copy machine permits perusers of the shallow shelves lining the room to create take-home versions of literature—ranging from newspaper clippings about body hair to photographs pulled from fetish porn and treatises like "What the Well Dressed Dyke Will Wear" by Liza Cowan. At its core, the forum is an effort to jog participants into simply opening their mouths and talking in a space filled with language but absent of didactic hierarchy. Available for copy is a Xerox of *Miss Furr and Miss Skeene*, Gertrude Stein's 1922 short story that centers on an ambiguous and absurdly repetitive use of the word *gay*; the iteration is brimming with playfulness but also with an urgency, as if Stein were, with each mention, carving a place for the taboo meaning of the term. Burns and Hubbard capitalize on a similar format by approaching their audience obliquely, prompting us through personal, performative actions to utter our own version of the word and realize our own complicity in deciding what queer looks like.



View of "The Brown Bear: Neither Particular, Nor General," 2010.

— T. J. Carlin