

# BROADWAY

Lars Fisk

*10SNE1*

January 21 - February 25

Opening reception and performance activation Saturday, January 21, 11-6PM

Whatever isolation people experienced during the 2020 pandemic lockdown was, to residents of the remote enclave of Red Hook Brooklyn, both compounded and barely noticed at all. Lars Fisk, who lives and works there in a stacked shipping container house and an adjacent studio, mostly carried on with his solitary practice fashioning astonishingly complex sculptures from glass, steel, brick and wood. Apart from the occasional neighborly drop-in, he saw very few people.

As a result, when New York emerged from the fearful slumber of Covid, Fisk himself blossomed in late spring with a hunger for human connection. As luck would have it, he was invited by a Red Hook neighbor to join their softball league. Fisk had never really played before, but took a chance and shook off the isolation to give it a shot. He has described the profound uplift of multi-generational camaraderie and shared purpose; of competition and physical exertion in almost euphoric terms.

As summer wound down, Fisk was determined to find a way to perpetuate this endorphin rush. Simultaneously, he had also been playing tennis with some regularity, and, as is his inclination, had been researching the history of the game. He was delighted to discover that the game (known first as Court Tennis) originated in the Middle Ages with opponents paddling a cord-wound leather ball back and forth off of the sloping roofs of the stalls at the close of the public market—a version of what many a contemporary suburban kid would recall as a game of “Roofball”.

This gave Fisk the idea of creating a winter-ready racquet sport inside his studio. This portion of his workspace had been set aside for formal display of works that were complete but hadn't yet been shipped out for exhibition—a place to present works to his now close-knit Red Hook community in an in-crowd acknowledgement of the locals' contribution to his work and happiness. Therefore, this site (a White Cube with an absurdist twist of the traditional wattle and daub and timbering of Tudor architecture) became the obvious location for the court. Here, any neighbor or visiting friend that came to play and help develop the rules of this makeshift new sport became *de facto* performers—became the artwork that this space was designated to display. A low net was set up and a loose set of rules were developed to keep the play lively and competitive. Fisk experimented with different wall treatments (clapboard, asphalt shingles, etc.) that complicated the angle of rebound of volleyed shots and produced a controlled chaos that slowly refined itself as his visiting collaborators learned the peculiarities of the court.

Fisk was pleased that his passions for architecture, sculpture, competition and bonhomie had successfully converged in this new sport/performance/artwork and he began to develop the idea and how it might be realized within a more formal exhibition space. In preparation for the show, he expanded upon the theatrical possibilities (both in presentation and potential for audience) that the commercial gallery setting in Tribeca would provide. The result is a kind of non-site environment that evokes an outer borough environment of vinyl sided clapboards and shingled rooftops that form the irregular angles and planes that recalls the architecture of Court Tennis. A

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basement bulkhead door emerges from the floor at a 45-degree angle perfect for bewildering bank-shots; a pre-fab bay window presents a multi-faceted surface refracting the ball in unexpected ways; an open garage shelters a sculpture based on a boxy 1970s Volkswagen “Thing” whose windshield is also fair play. Two more of these themed vehicle sculptures (one evoking a military ambulance and the other a preposterously tricked out off-road vehicle with aftermarket flood lights and winch) are arrayed in the court’s adjacent “gallery” acting alternately as obstacles, artworks and seating for viewers of the match. The sculptures’ angular geometry acts as a catalyst for the court’s faceted architecture, unifying the exhibition as a whole.

Formal concerns aside, the development of the game has naturally teased out conversations about court etiquette, dress and decorum as signifiers of class, and the twinned elitisms of the tennis club and art world. Within the exhibition these are reflected in the players’ tennis whites and the ritualistic manners of play. Perhaps as an antidote to this reality, the hope is that Fisk can expand his community by inviting exhibition visitors to engage with both the built environment and discrete artworks and to become a part of the artwork itself. In the process, he may simultaneously democratize the lofty status of tennis and the gallery space itself.