

EXHIBITION REVIEW

# EXO EMO

Greene Naftali, New York  
June 29 – August 11, 2017

Jeff Paul

*EXO EMO*, curated by Antoine Catala and Vera Alemani, gathers thirty-one works by over nineteen artists and collectives, occupying three divided spaces at Greene Naftali as well as the hallway, front office, and even restroom of the gallery. The exhibition's ambiguous title and the absence of any wall text leaves the viewer with only a cryptic press release for textual guidance. The document is made up of a series of solicitations by the curators for a short sentence or two from each artist about their respective emotional relationship to their work. Collectively, these statements allude to the show's organizing themes of consumerism, consumption, and commodification. The exhibition itself presents an ambitious, though somewhat disjointed, array of works that "vacillate between horror and humor," as one contributor attests.<sup>1</sup>

The few works created prior to 2001 project an air of emptiness, one of embodied despair. Art Club 2000's two photographs, *Untitled (Conran's 2)* (1992-3) (Figure 1) and *Untitled (Times Square/Gap Grunge)* (1992-3) restage the subtext of corporate visual language, peering into the melancholic lethargy echoed by a generation of teens maturing in the 1990s. Daniel Pflumm's lightboxes, affixed above eye level on the adjacent wall, reflect their status as beacons of advertising signage; the logos of Dr. Oetker and Rite Aid transform into hard-edged abstractions with the removal of their familiar typefaces.<sup>2</sup> Pflumm's work, like that of Art Club 2000, conveys the bleak inescapability of corporate entities' production and control of mass culture, and in turn, mass society.

With the above noted exceptions, the exhibited works were largely created after 2001 and appear rooted in abjection and dark humor. Nicolas Ceccaldi's three black canvases with multicolored razorblades, for instance, mimic the equalizer apparatus of audio recording, reflecting the early-mid 2000s mainstream iteration of the emo music genre and subculture with a reputation for self-harm. John Miller and Richard Hoeck's large-scale projected video work *Mannequin Death* (2015) depicts clothed mannequins tumbling to their death, jabbed by a disembodied mannequin arm. Other highlights include Dean Kenning's kinetic

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<sup>1</sup> Press release for *EXO EMO*, [www.greenenaftaligallery.com/exhibitions/exo-emo/press-release1](http://www.greenenaftaligallery.com/exhibitions/exo-emo/press-release1).

<sup>2</sup> Daniel Pflumm began this series in the late 1990s and continued it into the early 2000s. The featured works in this exhibition, *Untitled (Oetker)* and *Untitled (Rite Aid)*, were created in 1999 and 2005, respectively. [www.greenenaftaligallery.com/exhibitions/exo-emo/selected-works](http://www.greenenaftaligallery.com/exhibitions/exo-emo/selected-works).

sculpture *Renaissance Man* (2001/2017) of a bucking figure on all fours and Carissa Rodriguez's two near-monochromatic inkjet prints of donated sperm.<sup>3</sup>

These varied works, among others exhibited, all offered glimpses into the range of emotions heralded by contemporary consumer society. The sense of horror captured by Carolee Schneemann's featured *Terminal Velocity* (2001) (Figure 2), however, eclipsed the rest of the exhibition. The work arranges a series of snapshots, originally reproduced and circulated in national newspapers, of victims on September 11<sup>th</sup> falling from the World Trade Center. The plummeting figures enlarge when scanned vertically, an eerie visual parallel to their bodies reaching terminal velocity and hitting the asphalt soon thereafter.

While consumerism and the like deserve scrutiny and nuance, as many of the artists working post-9/11 demonstrate, Schneemann's work nonetheless jolts us; in the face of true terror, these abstract threats seem rather benign.

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Installation view,  
*EXO EMO*, curated  
by Antoine Catala  
and Vera Alemani,  
Greene Naftali,  
New York, 2017.  
Courtesy Greene  
Naftali, New York.

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<sup>3</sup> Carissa Rodriguez's two prints are titled *Yesterday I tried to paint you (Untitled I)* (2012) and *Yesterday I tried to paint you (Untitled VI)* (2012).



Figure 1. Art Club 2000, *Untitled (Conran's 2)*, 1992-3.  
Courtesy the artists and Greene Naftali, New York.

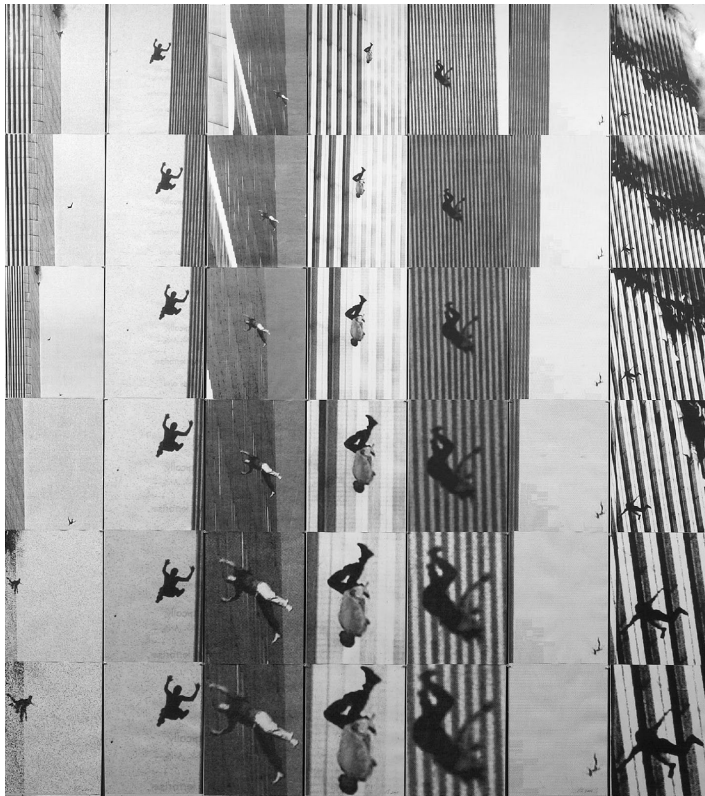


Figure 2. Carolee Schneemann, *Terminal Velocity*, 2001. Courtesy of  
©Carolee Schneemann, Galerie Lelong, and P•P•O•W, New York.