

BODYGUARD

HOHENTHAL UND BERGEN

As a group show, "Bodyguard" provides us with a run-down of certain interrelations that exist between the various pieces, and when it comes to evaluating the works, the temptation is to group the artist's individual discourses not in terms of any particular style they might share but in the specific emotional state they betray.

Well-ordered and fortuitously selected, the line-up includes small-scale, headless robots, deformed teddy bears, drawings made with eyelashes, and simple videos touting the erotic joys of tirelessly suctioning milk. This all goes to reflect a distinctly unhealthy pulsing and a heightened sense of dispassion on the part of a set of artists who, while they never cease to be, have certainly turned their backs on the other-subject when it comes to showing their works to outsiders.

"Bodyguard" transmits an overwhelming sense of sadness and childishness. Janine Antoni, Taro Chiezo, Devon Dikeou, Cheryl Donegan, and Charles LeDray all reflect, through their discrete and fragile images, the youthful and disillusioned face of a country and an artistic culture: the passing New Yorker and her little Japanese sister might well lapse into a process of regressive withdrawal on being faced with what this show has to offer. It is as if the more the bodyguards protecting mundane little myth figures such as Michael Jackson grow in size — often reaching mastodontic proportions — the more pressing the urge to get back to the warmth of the absent body among other artists of his same generation. In this respect, the show reveals a certain insight into pathology and the desire to stave off the pain caused by culture when it represses anything abnormal.

In their efforts to hold the sickness in check, protract the metaphor, and acknowledge themselves within it, these artists have proven capable of endowing the proceedings with what Foucault once referred to as "a sense of accidental and organic process." I would not, however, go so far as to call this "posthuman" art since what comes after humanity is death and, therefore, the death of art. Against the odds and despite the apparently scant resources left to them by their predecessors, the artists showing here manage to transform the traces of disaster into a finely-tuned if brief harmony with a contemporary feel.

José Lebrero Stals

(Translated from Spanish by Christopher Martin)