

Art

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Art review

Alix Pearlstein, “After the Fall”

The Kitchen, through Oct 18



It's hard to stomach the sneering characters in Alix Pearlstein's new videos, not the least because they direct their hostility at us. In the title piece, a racially diverse cast acts out a drama in which actors grope each other one moment and fight the next, then turn to give the camera the evil eye. Two more videos, featuring various run-ins between characters, illustrate the truism that all of us are fatally flawed—a point that's difficult to dispute when political brawling and financial irresponsibility dominate headlines.

Like a theatrical version of *Survivor*, the self-interested characters in *After the Fall* act out alliances and betrayals, creatively using a sheet of fiberboard as both barrier and weapon. Red and gold costumes evoke blood and money, while the four-screen projection—shot from different angles—not only suggests competing versions of the story, but keeps our eyes hopping around. When the actors break character and fix us with stony or disgusted looks, the ugliness of the story line and our voyeuristic interest hits home.

In the end, everyone's unhappy, which only underscores the postlapsarian state alluded to in the title while denying any possibility of redemption. An even deeper pessimism suffuses *Goldrush*, as actors brawl over scraps of the broken fiberboard. Humor emerges in *Two Women 2*, which riffs on Michael Snow's experimental film "Two Sides to Every Story," in which two huffy actors compete for the same role. But while the shorter videos allow viewers to see the actors as other people, the title piece compels us to change from viewer to actor. — *Merrily Kerr*