

**NEW YORK
FAX**

OCT 2 '95 09:16AM FROM DAVID HUMPHREY

Alix Pearlstein at LAUREN WITTELS, 7 September–7 October
Toland Grinnell at BASILICO FINE ARTS, 9 September–14 October
Mary Heilmann & Elizabeth Cannon at CRISTINEROSE, 7 September–15 October
Tanya Marcuse at YOSHII, 14 September–21 October

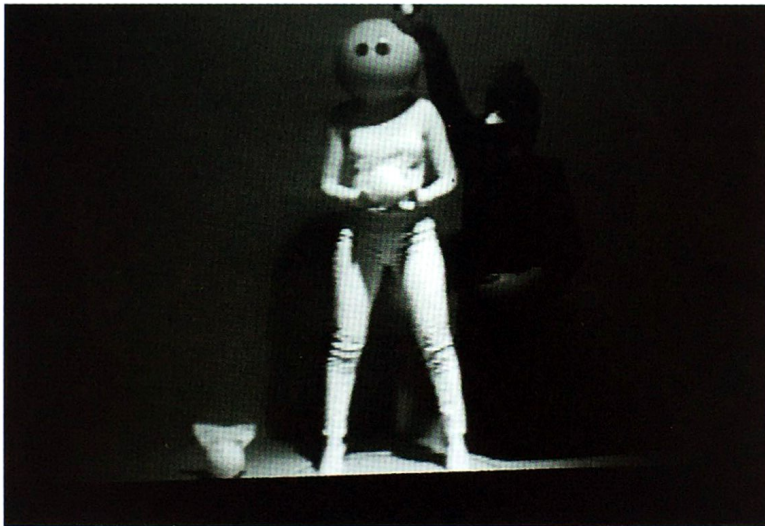
Our skin fails to protect us. Modesty and comfort require that we dress up most of the time. When Alix Pearlstein dresses up in her video *Egg Yang* (1995), we wonder how modest or protected she really is. Pearlstein drifts between a child's understanding of the magical potential of dressing up and an adult's awareness of clothing's ability to produce meaning. Costumed as a barely recognizable egg, Pearlstein acts out a ritual of origins, a comically stylized dance of fertility, hygiene, courtship, and domesticity. *Egg Yang* has a repetitive, barnyard nursery-rhyme structure, and tells of egg-laying and egg-frying in concert with another character in the video—a black-robed rooster.

Pearlstein the egg-girl sways to luau lounge music as she languorously raises the yellow Hoola-Hoop that marks her spot on the floor, spinning it around her waist until it falls. She then sways her way down to a squatting position, with her back to us, revealing her lower ass-crack squeezed through a circular hole cut into tight-fitting white pants. Her butt-flesh, the only exposed skin, is shaped into a faux vagina which lays one, two, then three eggs. The slit in a yellow, spherical tissue dispenser, which lies on the floor nearby, is a morphological cousin of this birthing image, especially after the egg-girl wipes herself after the laying. Each formal element is simplified and stylized with multiple echoes, vari-

ations, and visual puns throughout the video. Pearlstein stretches analogies into narrative.

Later, a pointed division of labor occurs: The egg-girl lays the eggs while the red-gloved rooster cooks them. At one point, he performs a humiliating egg-on-face slapstick insemination, while a large crowd is heard on the video's soundtrack. The yolk-headed egg-girl, however, has no mouth, making it impossible for her to eat the rooster's fried masterpieces. Her "Have a nice day!" happy-face has had its sunny smile wiped off. One geometrical yin/yang fried egg with a split yolk is an ironic emblem of non-hierarchical harmony. But the relationship between the genders here exists entirely in a language of ritual, display, disguise, service, and obedience. Pearlstein's final solo dance concludes with her stomping

on two eggs hidden under tissues: a solitary wedding ritual.



Alix Pearlstein
Egg Yang, 1995
Video still

David Humphrey is a painter who shows at McKee Gallery. His New York Fax appears regularly in *Art issues*.