



Alix Pearlstein

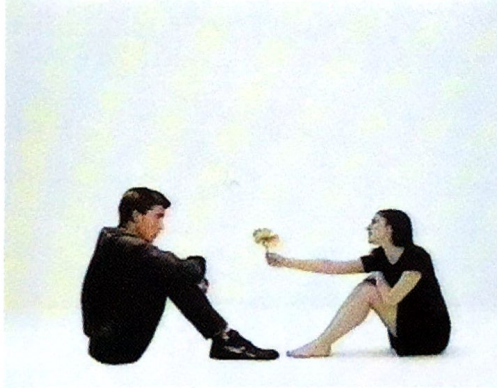
Partners/Parallel Play

With a comic's sense of timing and a dancer's command of space, Alix Pearlstein makes videos that are visceral, unsanctimonious, and wryly provocative. Playfully investigating the formal parameters of video and photography—with their inherent capacity to generate illusion in scale relationships through depth-of-field—she undermines our comfort with art and popular culture while treating us to a staccato succession of short-duration routines on an intimate scale. In contrast to the huge, dreamy, slow motion projections that have pervaded darkened galleries and museums over the past two years, Pearlstein's approach connects not only with the experimental work of first-generation video artists like Joan Jonas and Vito Acconci, but with the history of popular film and television, unarguably the key purveyors of the human condition in 20th century art.

What really brings *Partners/Parallel Play* home for me is Alix's exquisite exploitation of the kind of comedic gesture invented on screen by Chaplin, Keaton, Harold Lloyd and other silent film directors who starred in their own movies. As in many of their postmodern descendants, the roles of portrayer and portrayed get blurred, albeit unselfconsciously, in such classics as "The General" or "City Lights." Here, characters are mercilessly cast as types, striving hilariously to stay out of reach of the proverbial boot. There is also the matter of disjunctiveness between subtitles and what these characters were actually mouthing that informs Pearlstein's voice-overs. In the silent era, body language was all there was to get a point across. Whereas "the body" is a theme that has dominated the art world for at least a decade, Pearlstein is one of few artists who are working gesture in ways that call attention to the inevitability of stock situations, our pitifully narrow range of roles, and our proven inability to communicate meaningfully with one another.

Barry Blinderman, Director of University Galleries





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This brochure was published to document *Partners/Parallel Play*, an installation of video and photography in Gallery 3 from November 11-24, 1999. Programs at University Galleries are supported in part by the Illinois Arts Council, a state agency.

Left and right: 18 video stills from *Partners*, 1998. Color, 16 minutes 40 seconds.

Verso left leaf: *Parallel Play (dancing, looking, loving, sparring)*. Four color prints, each 45 x 50 inches, 1998.

Verso right leaf: *Parallel Play (reaching)*. Color print, 45 x 50 inches, 1998.

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