

ARTFORUM

New York

CRITICS' PICKS



"Busted", 2002

Alix Pearlstein

Artemis Greenberg Van Doren Gallery
730 Fifth Avenue
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Alix Pearlstein's new ten-minute video *Episode* enacts the classic family dynamic of mom, dad, brother, and sister. Its two parts are projected simultaneously on two facing walls of the gallery, and keeping up with this fast-moving minidrama defines the viewing experience. The players communicate only through look, touch, and gesture—no speech—and Pearlstein punctuates their actions with neatly inserted *plonk!*s and *ping!*s. The opposing projections visually and conceptually reiterate shifts in characters' movements and roles, as they mimic one another, tease, avoid, circle around, and assume argumentative or defiant postures. Barefoot, like modern dancers, the players wear simple but signifying clothing—the "mother" wears a plain dress, the males are in shorts, and the "daughter" and "son" sport hip-looking T-shirts, suggesting fashion-conscious youth. Visitors to the gallery get a preview with four theatrically posed photographs with titles like *Daddy's Girl* and *Busted*, which evoke a familial dynamic that veers from humorous to creepy to melancholic. Body language can speak louder than words, and in *Episode*, it expresses an entire narrative arc.

- Meghan Dailey