
ART IN REVIEW

'Multiplex'

Smack Mellon
56 Water Street
Dumbo, Brooklyn
Through March 7

Of the city's many oversize galleries, few make better use of their space than Smack Mellon. For "Multiplex," the full height of the double-story interior has been filled with three levels of wooden platforms and enclosures, connected by ramps and stairs to form screening rooms for videos by a dozen artists.

At least one of these mini-theaters takes the form of an installation: Chris Sollars's video "Bjorn Again" — in which the artist has inserted himself as Bjorn Borg's opponent and feminine alter ego in the final match of the 1980 United States Open — plays on a television set in a simulated basement rec room, with a ready supply of beer and vintage Playboys at hand.

Much of the rest of the show, organized by Kathleen Gilrain and Eve Sussman, with Chris Doyle as design consultant, is made up of work that directly or indirectly refers to traditional movie genres. Julian Stark does his own hapless stunts in his takeoff on the "Hercules" movies starring Steve Reeves; Shannon Plumb contributes a Chaplinesque "Diary of a Mad Housewife." Sadie Benning offers an intensely unromantic version of coming-of-age romance incorporating masks and animation.

War-related dramas fill much of the bill: an impressionist piece by Mathieu Borysevicz is set in Kosovo, one by Ayreen Anastas in Bethlehem. Katarzyna Kozyra's "Punishment and Crime" is a kind of "Apocalypse Now" cast with amateur weapons fanatics, while Johan Grimonprez's well-known "Dial HISTORY" is an amazing study in pre-Sept. 11 terrorism.

The Grimonprez video is one of only two in this group that I'd actually stand in a ticket line to see. The other is Harrell Fletcher's "Problem of Possible Redemption," a video version of James Joyce's "Ulysses," with residents of a Connecticut home for the elderly speaking the lines. Words, camera, action are all there, and the words are wonderful.

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