



Art

★★★★ *Time Out* Critic

Art Review



John Bock

An artist suggests how to deal with what life throws at you. By Merrily Kerr

The remnants of John Bock's current performance at Anton Kern Gallery—a floor littered with Plexiglas sheets covered in marker drawings, smiley-face stickers and sausage slices; a suitcase full of handmade, low-tech mechanisms—speak to the artist's willingness to mine the ridiculous, grotesque and nonsensical in order to build fantastical, alternative realities. The new work, including two videos shot in Korea and a series of wall sculptures, offsets confusion with absurdity, striking an appealing balance between eccentricity and humor.

Bock's videos feature an assortment of antiheroes who use a revolving lineup of devices to navigate unfamiliar terrain. The live performance distills this same sort of activity, via a hired dancer who tests a series of contraptions cobbled together from wood, stuffing and masking tape, as Bock diagrams his actions in rapid-fire sketches on Plexi. Like an artistic MacGyver, Bock's resourcefulness in crafting, say, a sandbag-like weapon out of a pair of tights enables his characters to meet the challenges of an illogical world.

Just as performance partially decodes Bock's frenetic, abstract diagrams, a mini horror movie, *Büsche* (Box), pokes fun at the psychological drama of a longer video titled *Para-Schizo*, ensnarled, in which two muttering loners employ totems and devices to walk, eat and engage in a destructive love affair. Their tools don't fix anything: One character meets an abject death, the other finds a secluded peace, suggesting that while life may present us with obstacles, our efforts to overcome them—reasonably or not—are still valiant.