

KATE WERBLE GALLERY

83 VANDAM STREET NEW YORK, NY 10013

Art Review:

BRock ENRIGHT
PERRY RUBENSTEIN GALLERY, NEW YORK
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The opening of the Brock Enright show at Perry Rubenstein Gallery was a weird, intense affair with Enright performing, on a trash-strewn makeshift plywood stage in filthy clothes, holding himself up against a broomstick and sobbing for the duration of the event. At one point an unseen performer on the opposite side of the wall next to him started forcing first boards and then logs, plastic toys and trash, including a jar of Skippy peanut butter, through the drywall partition, smashing holes in the thin plywood veneer and leaving some object half-emerged and wedged into the wall as others flew across the room. The whole thing was strangely affecting, pathetic, mesmerizing and manipulative.

Odder still was the audience's reaction; blithe indifferent, opening night/cocktail-party chit-chat on autopilot. The objects crashing and flying across the room – y virtue of their visceral proximity and air of potential danger – effectively heightened awareness of this context (both social and physical), turning the whole thing, perhaps accidentally, into an overloaded metaphor: a dichotomy of object tableaux and well-coiffed audience, an archetypal 'haves and have-nots' opposition, audience as prop. Poverty, abjection, danger and despair are all too obvious as signifiers of authenticity, but they didn't entirely miss their mark. Enright world may be juvenile or reprobate but at least it seems *real*.

Still, as with the videos and objects displayed elsewhere here, it was also deeply flawed. Revisiting the scene after the event is disappointing: the spilled, broken, splattered ephemera of the performance look more like a big mess (the anti-aesthetic as style) than the residue of some real psychic catharsis or voodoo.

The film here, *Blackgoat* (2007) – too long at 68 minutes – follows, according to the press release's brief and incoherent explanation, 'the myth of the black goat'. At any rate, the casually connected fragments feature recurring character and motifs without having much narrative coherence. Stylistically it's *The Blair Witch Project* (1999) meets the Brothers Grimm, with generous overtones of David Lynch and Paul McCarthy, and allusions to *Apocalypse Now* (1979), *The Evil Dead* (1981), and *The Shining* (1980). The repeated effects – from portentously gruesome drones – are so familiar as clichés and used so repeatedly that they became monotonously anodyne, almost comforting. An ironic effect for techniques invented to induce fear or apprehension.

Blackgoat was at its worst when it seemed at its most narrative, and downright hokey when the actors spoke their lines or seemed to be acting. At its best, it approached a sort of abstraction and provoked consideration of the light sources and complementary darkness as *characters*. Though an improvement upon last year's *Forest*, a better film was hiding inside this one; one that has inspired, unpleasant things to say about horror movies and how we look at them, and what it is about the grotesque, abject and debased that we find so irresistible.

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