

KATE WERBLE GALLERY

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CRITICS' PICKS: BRENNAN GERARD AND RYAN KELLY, "KISS SOLO" AT KATE WERBLE GALLERY

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Brennan Gerard and Ryan Kelly, *Kiss Solo*, 2012, four-channel video installation, 45 minutes.

Standing before one of the four large screens in Brennan Gerard and Ryan Kelly's recent work *Kiss Solo*, 2012, one hears a voice describing what sounds like an extended and choreographed embrace. There is a "he" and a "she" in the narration that emanates clearly from a small speaker hanging just overhead. On the screen, a dancer in pedestrian clothes moves in a vast expanse of whiteness, describing with the body what the voice describes in words. What is immediately striking and subversive about this arrangement is that the figure on screen inhabits the movements of both the "he" and the "she" that the voice describes. When we are told, for example, that "his right hand caresses her breast, collarbone," a dancer whose gender presentation leaves the paltry "his" and "her" duality entirely behind drags the fingertips of their own right hand across their own breast, their own collarbone—embodying both toucher and touched, the "he" and the "she," at once.

One of eight different performers inhabits each of the four screens at any given time and although the sound tracks are roughly the same, each voice's inflection—each person's interpretation of the words—varies so that a polysemous echo continually reverberates throughout the space, reminding one always of other voices, other possibilities. Unraveling the terms of its own title in an endlessly productive loop, *Kiss Solo* asks us to reimagine what a kiss can be and to reconceive of what it means to be (a) solo. Here, single figures move within frames but are also always moving together in a mimetic ensemble. And if a kiss traditionally happens always between two, what we are given to see here is that queer desire defies normative strictures, and that a queer self is always already not one.

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