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Harry Dodge and Stanya Kahn

Elizabeth Dee is pleased to present the debut solo show by Los Angeles based video collaborative Harry Dodge and Stanya Kahn. The exhibition will open on Saturday April 8th with a reception for the artists from 6-8PM.

For the past five years, Harry Dodge and Stanya Kahn have been working collaboratively making performances and videos which defy easy classification. Giving a nod to comedy and farce, their work reroutes expectations of spectacle and storytelling by subverting the devices of television and film. Influenced as much by Richard Pryor as by Artaud, the humor in their work is rooted in pathos. Their performative impulse toward camaraderie is awkwardly borne out through alienation and a dry wit situated dangerously close to fury. In the face of what appears to be national catatonia and depression, Dodge/Kahn respond by driving us away from literal representation while bringing us uncomfortably close to their subjects.

The exhibition is divided into three parts. The first gallery houses a 3-channel work titled *The Ugly Truth*. In a chroma-key green room, a director (Dodge) and actress (Kahn) work through a series of difficult actions. Journey's *Greatest Hits* and Van Halen's *Little Dreamer* persist from a transistor radio. Poor lighting and shoddy set-dressing suggest a failure which is quickly eclipsed by the oddity of the attempts themselves.

Whacker in contrast serves as the ambient piece in the exhibition. Here, a foxy lady wields a weed whacker and trims a vast field of golden city wheat on an abandoned plot of urban Los Angeles land. She is relaxed, languid, pausing only to pull a stray hair from her lip gloss and stare occasionally into the setting sun. She looks down at her work, surveys the rotten ground and the amputated grass stares back, temporarily contained. Performing her task with strength and determination, she is unhurried and without the concern of someone who's been hired to do the job. The camera watches her, but she escapes capture as "babe." She's not working for the man. He's sitting in his car and drives away empty handed.

At the show's core is the 25 minute *Can't Swallow It, Can't Spit It Out*. An intrepid videographer sets out to catch some "action": police brutality, abuse of authority, a glitch in the system. Instead he encounters a modern day Valkyrie with a bloody nose outside the ER at dawn. Is he really dead and she's arriving to carry his "warrior" spirit to the land of slain heroes? Or does she just work at a local theme park and got in a brawl with the St. Pauli Girl?

She accompanies him through a day of voyeuristic spectacle-hunting, traveling to seventeen different locations and long into the night. Her ruminations, recollections and tales of personal gore pull his focus and she becomes the action. Meanwhile the videographer's failure as a citizen witness to "pick a likely spot" raises proverbial questions of liberal concern and indicts us all in our inability to respond to an increasingly oppressive and abusive state. The Valkyrie becomes double-entendre Anglo-descendant and underpaid fair-worker there to remind us to ask, "what the fuck is going on, anyway?"

This is the first solo show for Dodge/Kahn. A profile of their work appeared recently in *Artforum* (January 2006). They have participated in screenings at the J. Paul Getty Center, Los Angeles, LACE, Los Angeles and exhibited in *Sugartown* at Elizabeth Dee in 2005.