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## Art in Review

### Ryan Trecartin

#### I-Be Area

Elizabeth Dee Gallery  
545 West 20th Street, Chelsea  
Through Oct. 13

The debut of Ryan Trecartin's new video, "I-Be Area," is the best thing that could have happened to the New York fall art season. Almost any slice of its 100-minute running time radiates more new-feeling energy than a dozen shows in the surrounding blocks. Painting, sculpture, installation, performance — "I-Be Area" has it all, as well as language: a fictional but real language of murderous non sequiturs buried in sitcom teenage prattle.

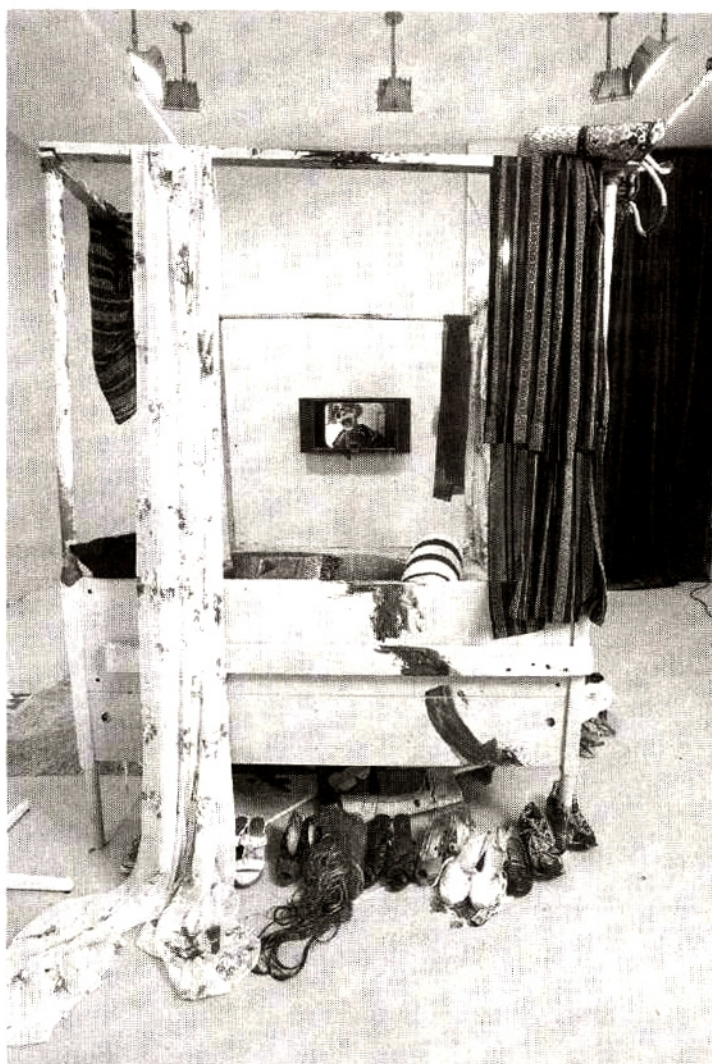
The video has at least one and probably many very complicated plots. They center on a group of four or five male-ish and female-ish characters, all played by Mr. Trecartin, who also wrote, directed, designed and edited the piece. (Most of the other actors in the large cast are family, friends and artists, with some hired professionals thrown in.)

Locations are multiple too. One minute you are in a classroom, then on YouTube, then in a suburban living room, then at band rehearsal, then at a slumber party, in an overall set that could be a single house or a labyrinthine bunker or cyberspace or some contracting and expanding psychic space, all interior, no exterior.

Characters walk through walls, spill out of gym lockers, communicate telepathically. They also change identities, which entails changing outfits and makeup. (Some of the more interesting painting I've seen in New York recently is in the film, most of it on faces.) To trace which character is where, when, and why would probably require repeat viewings. But even when "I-Be Area" looks like a chaotic snarl, it doesn't feel like one. You can't exactly see the logic, but you know it's there, which is a big deal in so complex a piece.

Style, of course, helps, and Mr. Trecartin has lots of it, in the design, in the flickery editing, in the way the voices are recorded with weird switches of pitch and amplification. Some effects are laugh-out-loud funny the first time around; then they become just part of the mix, part of this world in which Mr. Trecartin has placed you deeply.

An hour and 40 minutes is a



TOM POWEL IMAGING

A set from Ryan Trecartin's "I-Be Area," at Elizabeth Dee.

long stretch to sustain interest and at certain points the momentum sags. But then, as if catching your stifled yawn, the piece makes up for the lapse with a burst of faster action and louder noise. (Elizabeth Dee also has, in the front gallery, a group of sculptures consisting of pieces of the original "I-Be Area" sets, but the video is the main event.)

When I call Mr. Trecartin's energy new-feeling, I use new in the current sense, meaning, basically, old but pumped up or down, or tweaked or twisted in some way. Mr. Trecartin, in his 20s, grew up in Ohio and now lives in Philadelphia, and owes a lavish debt to Kenneth Anger, Jack Smith, John Waters and a rich tradition of queer film and theater, as well as to artists, queer and not, like George and Mike Kuchar, Peggy Ahwesh, Sadie Benning, Paul McCarthy, John Bock, Kalup Linzy, K8 Hardy, Sue de Beer and the collective Paper Rad.

Oh, and he definitely owes a debt to the Internet, where everything is allowed because you allow it, and where many people, including several of those in "I-Be Area," live full time these days. Mr. Trecartin takes something from all of this and adds something to it, something yet to be described or defined, but new-ish, and this is great.

HOLLAND COTTER