

ARTPULSE



Jorgen Leth's *The Perfect Human* (1967/8). Installation view in "A Perfect Human" curated by Milena Hoegsberg & Megha Ralapati, Dorsch Gallery, Miami. February 12, 2009. Photograph by Mariano C. Peuser. Courtesy Dorsch Gallery

The Perfect Human

Curated by Milena Hoegsberg and Megha Ralapati

Dorsch Gallery

Wynwood Art District - Miami

By Claire Breukel

Nowadays it is refreshing to find a theme-curated exhibition at a Miami gallery. Compiled of six works by both national and international artists, "The Perfect Human" discusses social and personal systems of ideals and how we go about defining what is, and is not perfect. Inspiring the

exhibition title, Juergen Leth's short film *The Perfect Human* (*Det Perfekte Menneske*) analyzes a middle class Danish couple performing everyday rituals. The only dated work in the exhibition (1968), the good-looking couple is possibly movie actors, pushed forward on the viewer's picture plane in an unreal seamless space. They are at our disposal and we are invited to interrogate their motions of dressing, drinking, sleeping. We hear the director's narration in Danish, sharing his thoughts on the actions and lifestyle of these perfect characters. But they are obviously not perfect and it is clear that beauty, or in this case perfection, is in the eye of the beholder (the director). The work's maturity, continuous questioning and language barrier (which amplifies the feeling of these characters being alien and unknown) make it unnerving and confrontational- and anchor the exhibition giving it a deep sense of human behavioral analysis. This film is juxtaposed with a series of witty and satirical one-liners.

Martin Basher's *The Hard Work of Simple Living* (2009) is a totem pole of self-help books made to the height of an average American, which is apparently 5_7_. Gazing up at them -feeling less than perfect- the pile is topped with an overflowing ashtray and a balloon wishing "Congratulations." The book titles range from *Ulcers*, *Quit Whining*, *Start Living* to the last book on the pile, *How to Quit Smoking*. The work quite obviously plays on insecurity and self-doubt as humans aim to improve and aspire to meet societal expectations. It's a good chuckle and a cheap trick and I found myself narcissistically reading each title, wondering "which could apply?"

Thankfully we are rescued by Pat Mcelnea. As a stand-alone spark of spontaneity, *The Living Room* is a video collage of paintings, magazine clippings and photographs overlaid with bizarre inserts of self-made clips. Exploring various identities, the central character is staged in a series of eccentric, surreal and psychedelic backdrops. These are juxtaposed against scenes of suburban sophisticates (we assume the character's parents) interacting in pristine *Home and Garden*-style living spaces (the character's upbringing). One is left with a glimpse of an unstable child breaking out of the mundane of the perfect life. The non-linear narrative and ungraspable rationale are as much confusing as amusing, leaving us with a refreshing necessity to compare and question.

The curators have adopted a formulaic approach, strategically placing work to individually speak about human aspiration and perfection - to its detriment allowing the obvious to take away from a more complex and complete discussion. However, moments of delicious innuendo and sparks of playfulness allow "The Perfect Human" to be compelling.

Claire Breukel: Curator and art critic. Since 2006, she has been the Director of Locust Projects, a renowned Miami-based non-profit specializing in alternative contemporary exhibitions.