

'Para-Real'

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Art in Review

By KEN JOHNSON



A dialogue: Maurizio Cattelan's "Mini Me," left, and Sally Smart's "Pedagogical Puppet (Self-Portrait)," at 601Artspace. Rafael Gamo/601Artspace, New York

601Artspace

601 West 26th Street, Chelsea

Through Jan. 25

Reality impinges in so many ways these days that it's enough to push you into an epistemological meltdown. This philosophically catchy 14-artist show reflects a few forms. It was organized by Magdalena Sawon, a co-owner of Postmasters Gallery in Manhattan.

Piled on the floor in one corner is a collection of scrub brushes assembled by the sculptor Robert Therrien. They look like the real store-bought variety, but it's hard to say for sure; they could be fabrications. Like all the works in the show, Mr. Therrien's is paired with something by another artist: in this case, a spider web made of fine, silvery jewelry chains by Jim Hodges, hanging directly above the scrub brushes. It's a dialogue between the transcendental and the terrestrial.

Eva and Franco Mattes's big photographic print portrays, according to its title, "Honeywell's Lollipop," a sexy, digitally produced female character from a series called "13 Most Beautiful Avatars." It's paired with a print by Shamus Clisset picturing a monstrous computer-generated soldier called "Builder Destroy 2." Pick your virtual poison.

"Mini Me," a self-portrait in the form of a puppet by Maurizio Cattelan, joins Sally Smart's "Pedagogical Puppet (Self-Portrait)," a photograph of the artist herself holding the strings of her own puppet doppelgänger. Is one's self a real thing or an illusory mental construct?

Some pieces not directly paired also connect: for example, Hiroshi Sugimoto's photograph of stuffed golden eagles in a museum diorama and Thomas Demand's "Ghost," a photograph of a colored paper and cardboard construction of a kitchen, wherein some culinary objects hover above the stove, as if tossed up by a poltergeist. These images cover much existential territory, including the natural, the unnatural and the supernatural.