

Kerri Scharlin at Wooster Gardens

In this show, Kerri Scharlin's continuing obsession with her own persona was set in the context of television docudrama, yielding a wealth of entertaining new material. Scharlin's formula is simple: she solicits the cooperation of people whose practice involves image-making, asking them to use her as their subject. In the past, she has worked with art students, police and courtroom sketch artists, and teams composed of magazine writers, photographers and art directors. For this presentation, titled "Kerri Scharlin: Diary," she collaborated with television scriptwriters, storyboard artists and actresses. The scriptwriters, from such well-known shows as *The Simpsons*, *Law and Order* and *Beavis and Butthead*, among others, used Scharlin's diary as source material. Both the resulting storyboards and the actresses' video clips based on these scripts were on view in two separate rooms.

The most insightful and substantive component of the show was the storyboard segment, where distinct styles and plots emerged from six different five-minute episodes. Most of them involve a compulsively narcissistic artist whose work examines the nature of identity and the self as fiction. She struggles to make professional connections, she annoys the people around her, and she is desperate to make it in the contemporary art scene of L.A. and New York. The field of art takes a few swift kicks; it is depicted as an environment that is—take your pick—underhanded, greedy and fatuous, or glamorous and empty.

In the second room, six videotape projections showed professional actress-

es' auditions for the role of "Kerri." The room was set up in such a way that viewers could only stand in a narrow space behind the projectors, an area that was charged with the power of the director's position. The actresses' readings of the scripts varied quite a bit, resulting in widely divergent portrayals. Reminiscent of a video piece by Hirsch Perlman shown in MOMA's "Projects" series last year, these tapes foreground how malleable a script is, despite the scriptwriter's inclusion of detailed instructions.

Overall, "Kerri Scharlin: Diary" was a rich mix of materials. As for the artist's working formula, however, I wonder how many additional mediums she can successfully explore. It certainly worked this time, at a moment when video is all the rage, but Scharlin's method—and self-involvement—may eventually wear thin. —Susan Hapgood



Kerri Scharlin: 36 Actresses Auditioning to Play Kerri in "Diary," a *Made for Television Special*, 1997, 6 video projections; at Wooster Gardens.