

ArtForum.com  
Critic's Pick  
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Kara Hearn  
06.01.06-07.01.06 small A projects, Elsewhere

Sometimes bad students turn in the best work. When Berkeley-based artist Kara Hearn responded to “Learning to Love You More” assignment #47—“Reenact a scene from a movie that made someone else cry”—she left out the part about “someone else” and focused instead on moments that made *her* cry. This minor infidelity kept LTYM’s proprietors from posting Hearn’s videos to their website, but when site cofounder Harrell Fletcher was offered the opportunity to curate a selection of videos at small A projects, he decided to give them a public viewing. Starring the young, blonde artist slipping in and out of multiple roles, the works on view—recreations of scenes ranging from Sonny and Leon’s phone conversation in *Dog Day Afternoon* to Commodus’s reticent mercy to Maximus in *Gladiator*—bear more than a passing resemblance to Cindy Sherman’s “Untitled Film Stills” and Sadie Benning’s intimate, DIY Pixelvision oeuvre. But where the success of Sherman’s early project was measured by how well her images could pass as iterations of the stockpile of filmic instances that they evoked, Hearn’s videos are copies whose humor and pathos are at least partially constituted by their formal and aesthetic distance from their originals. Narcissism, which Rosalind Krauss considered video’s defining characteristic, is also in evidence, as Hearn consolidates multiple characters into the self and mistranslates the LTYM assignment as a call to revisit her own cathexes. Yet for all the inflated ego, Hearn is a generous artist. Her performances give back more than they take.

