

ARTFORUM

Kara Hearn

NEW ORLEANS MUSEUM OF ART

1 Collins Diboll Circle

March 4–May 24

Pathos—the ever-relevant Aristotelian mode of rhetorical persuasion. In her video *One Thing After Another*, 2007, the only work on view in this solo exhibition, Kara Hearn employs the pathetic in universal and personal ways. The artist performs as the entire cast of characters from popular films and moments from everyday life, focusing on climatic moments of personal trauma for each character. The successive clips form an engaging montage that highlights the ways in which audiences become both the initiator and the receptor of pathos. While navigating the nature of sympathy and empathy through various emotional events—a breakup, an earthquake, a car accident, a fire, and even death—Hearn seems to become everyone (and thereby no one). She is sympathizer and empathizer, artist and audience.

Despite the juxtaposition of her reenactments from films like *Star Wars* and *King Kong*, the recurrent imagery in this work provides a thoughtful connectivity. Various lenses, taking the form of holes, tunnels, viewfinders, and screens, often appear just before the travesty; these eyes indirectly remind us of the nature of personal experience and the accompanying levels of mediation. Hearn enacts an inescapable principle Descartes illustrated long ago—one can only see and experience in terms of oneself. Among the most refreshing elements of *One Thing After Another* is the shift from the clear themes in Cindy Sherman's work and the heavy orchestration of Candice Breitz. Hearn asserts her own aesthetic, which focuses on highly personal interpretations of pop-cultural moments. Intentionally clad in everyday clothes with limited props and ready-made sets, Hearn deepens this connection to the pathetic and persuades her viewers to do the same.

— Natalie Sciortino-Rinehart



Kara Hearn, *One Thing After Another*, 2007, still from a color video, 24 minutes 44 seconds.