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Brian Bress

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09.12.09-10.24.09 *Cherry and Martin*

What is the logic of Sesame Street? The closest thing I've been able to come up with is that it just might be an educational commercial. Although there are no direct references to Sesame Street or advertising per se in Brian Bress's latest exhibition, his new work shares the discursive story lines, imaginative nonsense, and bright, snappy colors found in the show's poppy vignettes. The main video on view, a single-channel projection titled *Status Report, 2009*, involves six characters, including an "underminer" performing in front of a handmade backdrop of his "mine," an impressively schnozzed boxer dancing around a bedroom, and an astronaut in a tiny capsule going where no unshaven man has gone before. Breaking up the character sketches are various disorienting tableaux, one of which shows three people, all wearing costumes made from collaged thrift-store books and standing before a background made of the same pattern. This camouflage and the set, like many of the patterned backgrounds that Bress uses, are as visually stunning as they are diabolically bewildering.

The exhibition continues past *Status Report* into another gallery filled with photographs of the sets and sculptures from them, as well as a second video, *It's Been a Long Day, 2009*, that plays on a flat screen. (While much shorter than the first, this video is no less troubling.) Here a mop-topped man in his pajamas with a bullet hole in his head whimpers with a high, pathetic voice into a mirror as he paints his face with the blood from the wound. "Let's make a painting. It's been a long day," he says. As if to channel the perennial fluffy-cloud painter Bob Ross, Bress seems neither critical of nor fawning toward television, but instead rather happily uses its tactics for his own ambiguous, aesthetic ends. Though Bress doesn't vivisect mythologies in quite the same messy ways as Paul McCarthy, a similarly vibrant and disturbing spirit is at work, in an art filtered through a life informed by Jim Henson rather than Uncle Walt.