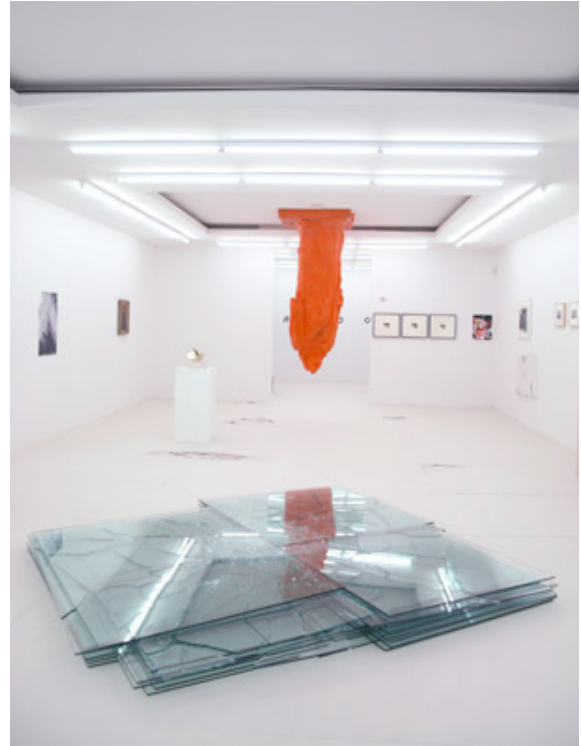


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New York
"Beneath the Underdog"
GAGOSIAN GALLERY
980 Madison Avenue
April 27–June 16



View of "Beneath the Underdog," 2007

Right down to the treacherous, Monica Bonvicini—demolished drywall floors, everything about “Beneath the Underdog”—a massive, ambitious group show curated by artists Nate Lowman and Adam McEwen—is uneven. Oddly, this choppiness is also the linchpin to the show’s success. (That is, if success is a good thing for an exhibition protesting mastery and maturity.) The show willfully flaunts its crush on playful, masturbatory juvenilia, and as such the phallus abounds, from Lee Lozano’s fantastic drawing *No title*, 1963, to Michael Joaquin Grey’s *Orange Gravity (California)*, 1992, a brilliant, fluorescent inversion of Rodin’s *Monument to Balzac*. But there are a few quiet classics on view, too, including Douglas Huebler’s *Conceptual Variable Piece #70 (in Progress)*, 1976, and one of Gwen John’s paintings of *The Convalescent*, 1918. (It’s probably no curatorial accident that John’s painting faces Grey’s twisted sculpture, as Rodin was once John’s lover.) There’s also plain pastiche, such as George Gach’s bronze bust *Robert Moses*, 1975—distinguished, perhaps, in a statehouse lobby, but purely parody here. Other heroes on view include Richard Prince, Bas Jan Ader, and Lygia Clark, who share rooms with younger artists such as Aaron Young, Claire Fontaine, and Dan Colen. A sprawling syllabus of influences past and present, the show never surrenders to a particular artistic movement, instead preferring to trace a path through art history’s outlaws, contrarians, losers, and wannabes. While there’s certainly some aggressive—perhaps even cynical—irony in holding a show with such a down-and-out theme at Gagosian’s uptown gallery, of all places, this exhibition is a mess that shouldn’t be missed.

—David Velasco