

ArtReview

Mise en Scène

by Chris Sharp
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In his provocative and trenchant (if awkwardly titled) essay 'On the Curatorship' (2008), art theorist Boris Groys speaks about the sickness and helplessness of artworks and images in general: 'It is in fact no coincidence that the word "curator" is etymologically related to "cure". Curating is curing. The process of curating cures the image's powerlessness, its incapacity to present itself. The artwork needs external help, it needs an exhibition and curator to become visible. The medicine that makes the image appear healthy - makes the image literally appear, and do so in the best light - is the exhibition.' If initially this seems like a difficult or even disagreeable way to characterise the practice of curating (especially from the point of view of artists), it is nonetheless highly serviceable when considering the practice of a handful of emerging artists, and a couple of their immediate if tangential forebears. I'm thinking of the New York-based American Marlo Pascual; the Berlin-based German Kathrin Sonntag; and the Paris-based Frenchman Mark Geffriaud, as well as the London-based Englishman Ian Kiaer and the New York-based American Barbara Bloom. At the risk of egregiously simplifying their respective practices, perhaps all you have to do is definitively substitute the word 'image' for 'artwork', and 'mise en scène' for 'curating' to come up with a plausible description of these artists' modus operandi...