

Sophie Fels, Time Out New York, March 9 2005

Norma Jeane, "Body Proxy"
Swiss Institute, though March 25

Norma Jeane is in her forties. Her single sentence bio tells us the artist "was born in Los Angeles on the night of August 4-5, 1962, at the same moment when Marilyn Monroe died." Missing from that pithy line is the fact that Norma Jeane is a group of collaborators working under a single name. As the exhibition title suggests, coy absenteeism is one theme that runs through "Body Proxy"; art's interaction with the body is another.

A minimalist, circular couch is drenched with invisible copulines (human pheromones) to attract viewers to its fleshy cushions, and then attract them to one another once their clothes has absorbed the scent. The more intense RPM (In the Absence of Her Mistress the Bitch Jerks Off Screaming) works, on the other hand, to repel. A Yamaha motorcycle, with its drive drain disengaged but its engine all too live, is hooked up to a camera that sets it gunning loudly when anyone approaches.

The last of the three works on view toys with notions of anonymity by offering up DNA evidence of the fictional artist: a white spool wound with Norma Jeane brown tresses, knotted end to end. An adjacent text begins, "In May 2003, after several years of uninterrupted growth Luca cuts his hair." Asked how visitors handled the ambiguity of who Luca might be in relation to Norma Jeane, the gallery attendant threw up his hands. "Some people ask about it searching for clarity, and there's just none to gain." Ain't that truth.



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