

Teenage Wasteland

Two artists ask how boys
become men in a videocracy

BY SCOTT FAINGOLD

With mainstream masculine role models seemingly limited to hypermacho athletes, wisecracking/ass-kicking action heroes and proudly sociopathic hip-hop stars, it's clear that in 2004, boys still don't cry. But what do boys do? In PG-13: Male Adolescent Identity in the Age of Video Culture, a new multimedia exhibit opening this week at DiverseWorks, New York City-based artists Janet Biggs and Barbara Pollack examine the predicament of being young and male in today's society. The results are both humorous and harrowing.

Janet Biggs's works are deliberately jarring. Two installations, entitled Ritalin and Haldol, simulate the internal states of hyperactivity and Tourette's syndrome, respectively, through



Janet Biggs's *Haldol* (2001)

the sometimes brutal juxtaposition of jerky video, music and voice-over. Another piece, Chamblee, stares down a high school wrestling team, focusing on the sexual ambiguity of this socially acceptable outlet for aggression. It also looks at the ways Hollywood sports dramas can influence real-life sporting events.

Barbara Pollack is the mother of an adolescent boy. Essentially real-time documentaries, Pollack's pieces record the minute facial reactions of her son Max as he assumes and/or

mocks both the murderous lead role in a violent video game (Perfect Dark) and the heavily sexualized male gaze" foisted on him by the mere act of watching a Britney Spears music video (Stronger).

Perhaps most telling with regard our current societal climate is another work of Pollack's. American Army captures young Max's face as he is "killed" playing the titular video game, a fun recruitment tool downloadable from the official Web site of the U.S. Army.

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