

The New York Times

FRIDAY, MAY 12, 2006

Art in Review

Harry Dodge And Stanya Kahn

Elizabeth Dee

*545 West 20th Street, Chelsea
Through tomorrow*

As with the videos of William Wegman, it is hard to say why those of the Los Angeles team Harry Dodge and Stanya Kahn are funny. But funny they are, if also strangely wistful. Most of the credit goes to the comedic sense of Ms. Kahn, who spends all her time in front of the camera, and her rapport with Ms. Dodge, who is behind it.

The three-screened “Ugly Truth” centers on the artists’ hapless attempts to use a chroma-key green room to make, perhaps, a music video; at least Ms. Kahn, hair flying, does a good imitation of Gene Simmons of Kiss. In “Whacker,” Ms. Kahn calmly applies a weed cutter to an abandoned lot while wearing a sundress, slides and sunglasses, and looks as if she’s in a Robert Altman movie.

The best work is the 25-minute “Can’t Swallow It, Can’t Spit It Out,” in which Ms. Kahn is seen with a bloodied nose, a viking helmet and a large wedge of rubber Swiss cheese, rambling around Los Angeles, talking to the camera, Ms. Dodge and us. The one-sided conversation turns variously competitive (“You should have been there for that”), testy (“This was mostly your idea”) and weird, as in a bit that begins, “When I was in hell” This is the pair’s first solo show anywhere, and it is good.

ROBERTA SMITH