

Harry Dodge and Stanya Kahn

ELIZABETH DEE GALLERY

545 West 20th Street

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All Together Now, 2008, still from a color video, 26 minutes, 34 seconds.

“You’re not saying humans are bad, you’re saying things go wrong, right?” Stanya Kahn says to the cameraman (Harry Dodge) at one point during the Los Angeles–based duo’s video *I See You, Man*, 2008. Kahn draws out the sentence so one expects that it, too, will be punctuated with a *man*. The peripatetic camera, its path as winding as Kahn’s improvised monologue, follows her goofy jaunt along the beach and into and out of the ocean. Dodge and Kahn have wooed audiences since 2004 with this kind of idiosyncratic storytelling, which hinges on Kahn’s sharp comic timing. Here, the duo also stretch into new territory; two of the four new pieces on view completely eschew language.

All Together Now, 2008—titled after the Beatles song—is their most ambitious work to date. Apparently set in a postapocalyptic near future, it features several tribes wearing color-coded hoods, most of which bear comically crude faces delineated by tape or marker. They gather supplies, forage for food and water, make out, cook, and enthusiastically watch one another on surveillance cameras, while an unmasked contingent is staked out in a grubby modernist hotel room. The editing and sound track here are also fractured; funny bursts of pop songs are interspersed with ambient noise and backward-running audio loops. A touch of *Yellow Submarine*–style loopiness prevents this from being a bleak vision. The new society Dodge and Kahn envision offers the possibility of interdependence, resourcefulness, new family structures, and modes of emotional expression in the midst of dwindling resources. Human beings aren’t bad, they seem to suggest, but things have definitely gone wrong.

— Amoreen Armetta