



SCARAMOUCHE
CURATED BY
DAVID EVERITT
HOWE

*Einat Amir, Ideal
Viewer, 2009.
Performance view.
Photo by Paula Court.*

IDEAL VIEWER EINAT AMIR

An obese young woman sat on the floor of Scaramouche gallery, sobbing. Before her lay a broken television, on top of which was a portable DVD player showing a recording of her in the same situation, crying. Whenever passersby entered the small Lower East Side storefront gallery, a man in a suit standing behind the crying woman began explaining her story. She had been left by her boyfriend, he said, hence the tears. An angry young man leaning against the gallery wall—the boyfriend, it turns out—then told his version of the breakup, while the first man turned to watch promotional videos of himself on a small screen hanging on the wall.

For this sad tale of indifference, Israeli artist Einat Amir used Craigslist to find three professional actors, and asked them to improvise a problematic love story at close quarters on two consecutive afternoons, and to interact directly with the audience. For Amir, this dissection of the roles people play applied to the art world. The Crying Woman embodied “the artist,” in a moment of crisis that was both cathartic and an ironic take on narcissism; the Ex-Boyfriend implied a critique of how female artists are often expected to include intimate biographical elements in their work, whether they influenced it or not; and the Interpreter, a recurrent character in Amir’s performances, was there to tell the truth. “A lot of my work is trying to include all the roles that are involved in the art experience—the artist, the object, the audience, the viewer, the critic,” explains Amir. As described on business cards available at the gallery, individuals could contact the artist to have one of the three characters perform “a one-hour service free of charge” in the privacy of their own homes, using their “special skills” (such as crying “believably and continuously for long periods of time”) for whatever use the individual desired.

—*Virginie Bobin*