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All in the Family



Five hundred galleries in New York is a lot of galleries. So it's inevitable—if maddening—that excellent shows can open and close before there's a chance to review them. One case in point is “The Human Face Is a Monument,” at SoHo's Guild & Greyskul, which closes on Saturday, May 3. The exhibition was organized by Sara VanDerBeek, who runs the space with her brother, Johannes, and her fellow Cooper-Union alumna Anya Kielar. (All three of the gallerists are also artists, represented by young dealers in Chelsea.)

As a photographer, Ms. VanDerBeek, whose work has generated much interest over the past year, has an indexical eye and a taste for collage. The same is true of the seven artists in her curatorial debut. They range from the established (Sarah Charlesworth, with a wall of framed silhouettes that suggest a vogueing update of Steichen's famous “Family of Man”) to the up-and-coming (Sara Greenberg Rafferty, ubiquitous on the group-show circuit, with witty works on paper) and the all but forgotten (May Wilson, the Maryland housewife and grandmother who became an artist in the New York underground at the age of sixty-one.) But the heart of the exhibition is the gallery's back room: a program of films by the curator's father, the experimental filmmaker Stan VanDerBeek, who died in 1984. (The show takes its title from one of these shorts.) Terry Gilliam has credited the elder VanDerBeek—notably, his 1964 collage-animation of Richard Nixon trying to talk with his foot in his mouth—for inspiring his own signature style, and one can also see the influence of father on daughter. It's a moving coda to an exceptionally engaged and engaging show.

—Andrea K. Scott

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