

ARTFORUM

Cécile B. Evans

SEVENTEEN

270-276 Kingsland Road, Entrance on Acton Mews to rear
October 15, 2014–December 6, 2014

In the Dantesque world of Cécile B. Evans's video *Hyperlinks or it didn't happen* (all works 2014), a digitally rendered likeness of Philip Seymour Hoffman is our Virgil, among a number of other virtual actors, including a spam bot, an agoraphobic YouTube celebrity, and a holographic pop star crooning "Forever Young." As if speaking from the beyond, PHIL implores, "And please, don't call me uncanny." A fair warning that the old critical models need not apply here.

Identity is not obsolete, though. Race and gender are loaded issues throughout Evans's exhibition, which is rounded out by photomontages and assemblages. For instance, *Hyperlinks or it didn't happen* incorporates archival evidence of a time when computer programming was considered women's work. The video's associative logic also conjures a bodiless character reading Ralph Ellison's famous novel as she concedes that older women "become invisible," connecting back to the former historical elision. Evans is attentive to the ways in which the digital realm compels new relationships between physical reality and mediated images, one effect of which is figuration itself being redefined. Death and mortality are frequently evoked in mass media and throughout this show, as in the inclusion of a widely circulated video of an airline Ebola scare or in the virtual resurrection of Phil. The potency of such a digital figure complicates traditional distinctions between the living and nonliving, not least because of the character's ability to circulate as a commodity. As the video's meme-quoting title suggests, questions of belief and proof are at stake in these new forms. PHIL shares our uncertainty regarding how to feel about it all, asking, "Is this a tender moment, or does it make you want to laugh?" Both.



Cécile B. Evans, *Hyperlinks or it didn't happen*, 2014, Single channel HD video, color, sound, 22 minutes.

— Phil Taylor

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