

GLADSTONE GALLERY

Blake Gopnik, "Ed Atkins," *New York Times*, December 22, 2023

The New York Times

Goodman has broadened its roster to include artists from the larger African diaspora, though South Africa's contribution to the global scene continues to be the heart of its program. New York will now be able to follow it all.
HOLLAND COTTER

Ed Atkins

Through Jan. 6. Gladstone Gallery, 530 West 21st Street, Manhattan; 212-206-7606, gladstonegallery.com.

The British artist Ed Atkins is screening a double feature of recent video projections in Gladstone's Chelsea space.

Atkins's 16-minute "Pianowork 2" plunges deep into the so-called uncanny valley, where digital simulations come close to perfect realism and seem the weirder for it. Using motion-capture technology, Atkins recorded himself playing a modernist piece for piano; the collected data was then turned into a nearly perfect digital animation of the same scene — "nearly" being the operative word. Atkins's avatar emotes at the keyboard, just as any human pianist might — as we assume Atkins did, playing — but tiny glitches tell us that we are watching a digital creature that could never feel real emotions.

With traditional animation, we'd know that everything on-screen came from someone's imagination; with a traditional video recording, we'd assume the scene had some real-world analogue. But "Pianowork 2" suggests the real, while making sure we don't trust it.

Its companion at Gladstone, an 80-minute projection called "Sorcerer," is a collaboration with the writer Steven Zultanski. It seems like the straightforward record of a theatrical piece: Two women and a man recite lines on a set that more or less recreates someone's living room; their dialogue sounds like the almost-random chatter of friends, transcribed direct from life. Without going digital, this results in some of the same tensions as "Pianowork 2": The transcribed chatter evokes the real, but putting it onstage is all about artifice.

Maybe the uncanny valley has always been a place where human culture likes to hang out.

BLAKE GOPNIK



ED ATKINS, VIA DÉPENDANCE, BRUSSELS; GALERIE ISABELLA BORTOLOZZI, BERLIN; CABINET, LONDON; AND GLADSTONE GALLERY

"Pianowork 2," 2023, a 16-minute video projection using motion-capture technology, with sound, by the British artist Ed Atkins, at Gladstone Gallery.

Kayode Ojo

Through Jan. 6. 52 Walker, 52 Walker Street, Manhattan. 212-727-1961; 52Walker.com.

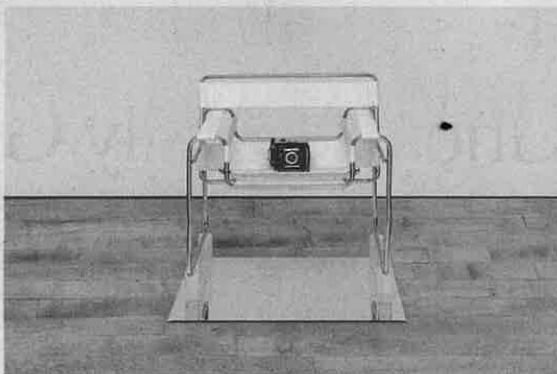
"Basic Instinct" is one of 17 separate arrangements of ready-made objects in Kayode Ojo's "Eden," the latest brilliant show programmed at 52 Walker by the senior gallery director, Ebony L. Haynes. It comprises a Baxton Studio Jericho Leather Accent Chair in white and chrome; a three-foot-square beveled mirror; four clear plastic boxes, each about six inches high; and a medium-format Graflex camera from the 1970s.

Sitting on the chair at exactly crotch height, its lens pointing out, the camera evokes Sharon Stone's most famous moment in the movie "Basic Instinct." The camera also highlights the ambiguous line between exhibitionism and voyeurism, and how wrapped

up they both are in status, culture and consumerism. It evokes the strange nostalgia, with its after-taste of mortality, inherent in any technology that "captures a moment," especially photography; and it offers an incisive metaphor, if a cold one, for what it means to be human. What are we, after all, but empty boxes looking for ourselves in the mirror?

Elsewhere in the show, Ojo reflects on religion, sexuality and performance. He uses chandeliers, cocktail dresses, an enormous bird cage, dozens of flutes and a family Bible embossed with his name; a pocket watch the size of a wall clock sways gently above the floor. But I kept coming back to the four plastic boxes that hold the Baxton chair above its mirrored base. Offering a slight remove, but a transparent one, at once showy and discreet, they seemed like the key to Ojo's method.

WILL HEINRICH



KAYODE OJO, VIA 52 WALKER, NEW YORK

Kayode Ojo's "Basic Instinct," 2023, at 52 Walker. The camera on the chair evokes Sharon Stone's most famous moment in the movie "Basic Instinct."