



**Art Review** *Time Out New York* / Issue 763: May 13-19

## Alix Pearlstein, “Talent”

The artist unpacks the dynamics of performing.

By Michael Wilson

On [Stellar Rays](#), through May 23



Alix Pearlstein’s twinned videos *Talent* and *Finale* present a kind of oblique before-and-after scenario, choreographed around the ritualized actions of ten actors in a downtown dance studio. An unhurried meditation on the dynamics of performance, on the implications of its filmed documentation, and on our own shifting perceptions of its direction and detail, the two works are also surprisingly pleasurable.

While both maintain the unembellished look and serious feel of an academic exercise, to watch either for more than a few minutes is to find oneself drawn into a deeply human (albeit scripted) sequence of moves and poses, actions and reactions. New York–based Pearlstein is a veteran of performance as well as of video, so it makes absolute sense that she’s adept at combining them.

In *Talent*, the actors go through a variety of motions suggestive of a stylized audition or rehearsal. As they mill about, pass around a loaf of bread, hold up headshots and adopt “sexy” postures, they are tracked by a moving camera and reflected in a mirrored wall. In *Finale*, shown in the gallery’s basement space, the participants’ hitherto separated actions are strung together into an unbroken sequence. Here, the camera rotates continuously, and the rigid patterns of *Talent* loosen and begin to fall apart. Inheriting Dan Graham’s interest in the systems and structures of acting out and taking in (read: perceiving), Pearlstein never forgets that she’s dealing first and foremost with people as personalities, not merely as placeholders for ideas.

