

## New York

## “Avant-Guide to NYC: Discovering Absence”

## APEXART

291 Church Street (between Walker and White)

November 4–December 19

The artists in “Avant-Guide to NYC: Discovering Absence” at once excavate art history embedded in city space and map themselves onto it. [Xaviera Simmons](#) locates all of [Vito Acconci's](#) early street works, recording the sites that correspond to his movements during these actions and performances, thereby adding geographic specificity and her own gloss to the piece. In *BOOM CRASH!*, 2009, [Pia Lindman](#) also reinvents a predecessor by acting out words culled from comic strips that imply sound or movement, referencing [Allan Kaprow's](#) *Words*, 1961. These remade cartographies allow artists to situate themselves, whether in the city or in a reinvented canon.

Other artists, such as [caraballo-farman](#), recover a site to trace its changing use. Revisiting the Gracie Mansion Gallery, now a restaurant and store, they produce a video and juxtapose a current menu with a 1983 checklist from the former gallery, thus slyly collapsing commercialization and gentrification. [Pablo Helguera's](#) multimedia work *The Conditions of Halcyon*, 2009, tells the story of the Sullivan Institute—a group of artists and writers involved in a radical psychotherapy experiment that merged sexual and totalitarian politics—complete with a play to be staged on the site of the group's former theater.

Because they tell partial stories, many of the works on view require the spectator to mine for information but also encourage a self-reflexive approach to our collective construction of history. While [Ward Shelley's](#) *Specific Sites*, 2009, diagrams the history of New York arts from the late 1800s to the 1980s onto a map of Manhattan, [Andrea Geyer](#) plots the visual circulation of one female model depicted in bronze and stone throughout New York on a poster distributed for free in the gallery. With a text by the curator [Sandra Skurvida](#), compiled and embellished by the publishing collective [Dexter Sinister](#), even the exhibition's brochure reconfigures art's relationship to site, suggesting new ways of archiving and disseminating suppressed histories.



View of “Avant-Guide to NYC: Discovering Absence,” 2009.