

Meliksetian MB Briggs

# ARTFORUM



John Miller, *Dress Rehearsal for the Revolution*, 2019, mannequins, clothes, wigs, instruments, dimensions variable.

## CRITICS' PICKS

### John Miller

MEYER RIEGGER | BERLIN

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The images that produce the public self (and the private) most often lie beyond our awareness, locked into an overarching normative system of

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hyperreal signs we rarely comprehend. The wig-sporting mannequins that populate John Miller's "Other Subjectivities," produced in cooperation with Galerie Barbara Weiss, make for interfaces through which such habitual identifications surface and sediment.

For *Dress Rehearsal for the Revolution*, 2019, Miller configured a mannequin school of rock, deadpan and frozen in a state of detached contemplation. Read together with the pathetic tableau of *Poverty*, 2018—which places a child dummy in a white three-piece suit beside a German copy of the Situationist pamphlet *On the Poverty of Student Life: Considered in Its Economic, Political, Psychological, Sexual and Particularly Intellectual Aspects, and a Modest Proposal for Its Remedy* (1966)—the ensemble prompts questions about youth culture as a projection screen for hopes of societal renewal. How might one reconcile this optimism with the realities of nine-to-five conformism and corporate ownership of labor?

Close by, untitled large-format inkjet prints depict more coiffed and besuited mannequins in bafflingly vague and opaquely evocative scenarios. The backdrops, bought from Amazon, conjure the ersatz luxury of a suburban mansion or the romantic patina of an abandoned palazzo, calling up narrative and affect from the clearly fake. Here, mass advertising's pictorial codification of signs to create the effect of subjectivity and its mechanics of desire are reduced to absurdity and broken down to reveal the generic program running underneath. If mediocrity is one of the worst nightmares today, the intrinsic *angst* of looking and being looked at finds a moment in the video *A Place Called Hope*, 2019. Here, Miller lets the

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neoliberal homily of self-perfection collapse into the humiliation of being exposed as being, in the end, “nothing but a nothing burger.”

— *Kathrin Bentele*