

## Castles in the Sky: Cécile B. Evans Builds Brutalist Screening Area in Basel Booth



BY **ANDREW RUSSETH** June 13, 2017 10:25am



View of the booth of Galerie Emanuel Layr, of Vienna, which is filled with a structure showing Cécile B. Evans's video *Amos' World*, 2017.

PHOTOS: ARTNEWS

At Skulptur Projekte Münster, one of the hardest artworks to see was an architectural installation by Gregor Schneider that only two people were allowed to visit at a time. Even **the likes of Germano Celant** had to queue up to wait their turn in line, and some waited longer than an hour.

Cécile B. Evans's witty video installation at Art Basel, *Amos' World* (2017), isn't quite as exclusive a ticket, but it is close: it can be viewed only via six private cubby holes located in a Brutalist-style three-story structure that fills the booth of Vienna's Galerie Emanuel Layr. If there is any justice at Basel, lines will form here too.

The video concerns an egomaniacal and slightly clueless architect named Amos, who played by an awkward puppet, and his plans to construct a utopian apartment building. Takes the form of a semi-surreal television program, the piece

begins with a kind of riff on Woody Allen's opening monologue in *Manhattan*, as Amos tries to state his intentions. "I want to build something important," he says, before deciding that doesn't sound right. "I want to change the world." That's not quite appropriate either.

Amos has a few moments of genuine self awareness—"I could be asking people to live in a way that is stupid," he admits at one point—but with a slight shift in tense in the video, it becomes clear that the building got built . . . and things did not go well. A machine crushed someone, an off-screen voice intones, and the solar panels fried a bunch of birds. The gym got shut down after an unnamed incident.



Still of Cécile B. Evans's video *Amos' World*, 2017.



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As Amos's story transpires, the video visits two different women who seem to live in the building, or at least once did. One is an actress cooking some greens; she is a bit disassociated from reality. It's possible she hasn't left the building in quite some time. The other is somehow involved with three digitally animated flowers who are on the run, and at one point look out at the audience from the seats of an airplane. Also, an old childhood friend is looking for this woman.

Pretty quickly it becomes clear that we are sitting in a portion of the building itself, watching

the work. The space is fairly comfortable—a pod of darkness amid the frenetic fair—but also a little isolating. The video is so beautifully shot, and so oddly funny, that I didn't want to leave. I wanted to stay there and decipher the whole abstracted story. But there were people waiting. I left pleasantly confused, and so I'll end by quoting Amos: "I want to express myself, but I can't find the words."