

CARRIE SECRIST GALLERY

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GALLERIES

## An Exhibition About Dogs that Barks but Doesn't Bite

by [Kate Sierzputowski](#) on January 20, 2015 0 

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*Installation view, 'DOGS CHASE BALLS' at Carrie Secrist Gallery (photo by Sarah Condo)*

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CHICAGO — Although cats seem to be the current animal darlings of the art world, *DOGS CHASE BALLS* at Carrie Secrist Gallery focuses on the less-cooed-about creature. The exhibition, curated by Mexico City duo NO Space, features pretty much what its name lays out: tennis balls bouncing on the floor and painted on the walls in gallery one, plus a video projection of dogs chasing the same bouncing balls in gallery two. The show is stupid, yet it works in its blatant simplicity. Many of the works pique the viewer's interest as dog traits become sexualized through human imitation.

Kat Schneider's dirt-stained traces on the carpet of "Wipe Yr Paws" is one example. The purposeful hand prints and muddy traces of the artist's knees allow the audience to envision Schneider's crouched body slowly massaging herself against the plush floor while leaving her dirty canine impression. The carpet is topped by the artist's "TOYS," a picture book comparing the surprisingly similar designs of playful dog toys and sex toys. Shown as untouched images on white backgrounds, the opposing toys have uncanny similarities in their shapes and colors, differing only by their marketing schemes or sets of instructions.

Just as Schneider's installation exchanges normal domesticated dog habits for those of human sexuality, Bradford Kessler's suspended leather dog harness screams BDSM. Installed on a leash-like chain mounted to the ceiling, it looks like an image out of a dungeon rather than one you'd see right before walking a dog. The harness bears a poetic message comprised of stick-on letters tracing the leather straps: "BORN BORED IN THE PRISON LAWN, MORE LIKE A BODY WITHOUT ORIFICE, ECHO OF LONELINESS NEVER COMES, ATE MY FRIENDS AMYTAL AND DORAL." Kessler also bequeaths a sexuality to his understated casts on a nearby wall, collectively titled "smells like friends." In addition to plastic, the casts are made from the artist's own mucus and topical analgesic rub, materials that poke fun at the sculptures' forms: dogs noses.

Two videos play loudly in the exhibition, "DOGS CHASE BALLS," produced by the show's curators, and "Aesthetic Contemplation," another work by Schneider. The first is a view of dogs shot from a human perspective, showing the animals playing in the gallery with the tennis balls that are scattered on the floor. The second is a view of humans from a dog's perspective, as a hyper toy dog runs around several New York galleries with a camera strapped to its back. Schneider has set this video behind a doggie door, making viewers kneel in order to see it and adding a layer of hilarity to the piece beyond the manic jostling of the camera. Instead of exiting the doggie door to go take a shit in the backyard, the dog has chosen to galavant around the New York City art scene.

Another obvious nod to the exhibition's title is the inclusion of the artist Puppies Puppies, whose work seems the least connected to the show thematically. "One Can't Be A Puppy Forever (Green)," a sculpture of yellow flowers submerged in a vase filled with blue water, blends in with the gallery's reception desk but doesn't add much to the show at large. Puppies Puppies' other piece, "A Stapled Document For A Show About Dogs," is a discarded paper in one of the barre corners of the gallery. The underwhelming work is a

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poem by the artist on cat adoption paperwork, a mocking nod to Darren Bader's cat adoption piece shown at MoMA PS1.

The exhibition's minimal hanging and simplicity relate perfectly to its equally simple doggy-obsessed subject matter. Many of the artists, in their attempts to tackle this canine concept, ended up tapping into the most basic of human tendencies: sex. In this context, the title of the show changes from innocent to a crude and funny innuendo. After all, that's one thing many humans and dogs have in common: their love of chasing balls.



*Installation view of Kat Schneider's "Aesthetic Contemplation" (2013), Freedom™ brand aluminum pet door, single-channel video, 15.75 x 10.13 in, "Wipe Yr Paws" (2013), dirt on carpet, dimensions variable, and "TOYS" (2013), hardcover book, 8.5 x 8.5 in (photo by Andrew Birk)*