

GAGOSIAN GALLERY

VULTURE

Douglas Gordon's Not-So-Jolly Holiday Windows Feature Rufus Wainwright's Staring Eyeball

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Douglas Gordon, Phantom, 2011. Video installation with sound; Stage, screen, a black Steinway piano, a burned Steinway piano, one monitor; Dimensions variable. © Studio lost but found / VG Bild-Kunst, Bonn 2014 Courtesy Studio lost but found and Rufus Wainwright ALL DAYS ARE NIGHTS: SONGS FOR LULU used courtesy of Decca Label Group.

Crowds gathering for Christmas-window displays are a New York holiday standard, but the audience at the storefront on the corner of 75th and Park on a wintry evening weren't looking at a traditional merry Yuletide spectacle. In the space behind the darkened windows, a large-scale art installation by Douglas Gordon was in full swing, although given the lugubrious piano chords accompanying the slow-motion film of a blackened, blinking eye, the word *swing* hardly applies.

Phantom, currently running through January 17 at Gagolian's latest outpost — an atypically compact space that opened in April, features a continuously looped, high-contrast shot of Rufus Wainwright's heavily made-up eye, sometimes large, sometimes small, sometimes multiplied, and several times shedding a tear. (*Phantom* refers not only to the piece's ghostly spirit, but to the high-speed digital camera used to make it.)

The mournful songs from his 2010 album, *All Days Are Nights: Songs for Lulu*, about his mother's death, provide the dirgelike soundtrack. A baby grand piano stands in front of the video screen with its bench overturned, while just beneath it and strewn on the gallery floor are the charred remains and ashes of a burnt baby grand. In one corner of the space, a smaller, floor-

mounted screen intermittently glows with the image of the piano being burnt, which more than one chilled art lover pretended to use for warmth.

The Turner Prize–winning Gordon seems to have something of a piano fetish: His collaboration with pianist Hélène Grimaud is at the Park Avenue Armory, although there the piano is paired with a real pool of water rather than digital flames, and the musician is live. (The artist also burnt a piano in his 2012 film *The End of Civilization*.)

Gordon himself was on hand for part of Thursday night’s opening of *Phantom*, as were a number of his film students from the Städelschule in Frankfurt who had made the trip with him to New York to see his two piano pieces, along with Gordon's assistant at the school, Bernhard Schreiner, who mentioned that the artist loved music and that there was a piano in the school’s kitchen. (Gordon has three in his studio.)

Others in the audience included Timothy Hunt, who recently left the Andy Warhol Foundation to start his own business, Hunt Fine Arts, two blocks away; Eve Sussman, an artist and filmmaker known for her innovative art videos; and Lauren Roberts, the wife of Bob Roberts (co-founder with his late wife Lucille of the eponymous fitness chain), who thought the image of the eye was “seductive.” But what really brought her out on such a cold night? “I’m a fan of Gagosian,” she said.