

# ARTFORUM

## Brody Condon

ON STELLAR RAYS

133 Orchard Street

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“You are you, and I am I,” Fritz Perls wrote in 1969, in what became known as the Gestalt prayer, “and if by chance we find each other, it’s beautiful. If not, it can’t be helped.” Brody Condon is less willing to leave things to chance, having recently built performances around historical group therapy techniques at the Hammer Museum and the Los Angeles County Museum of Art. In his current show, both works appear as videos. The first, *Future Gestalt*, 2012, makes use of Perls’s Gestalt therapy, as its exercises are inflicted on a group of five performers appearing to dwell under Tony Smith’s monumental 1967 sculpture *Smoke* at LACMA. Condon’s own voice is amplified, warped, and twisted as he addresses the performers, such that Smith’s sculpture appears to be part God, part therapist. (Also part artificial intelligence, and, well, part artist.) The scene recalls Condon’s *Twentyfivefold Manifestation*, 2008, wherein as many as eighty live-action role-players lived for three days at a time in the Sonsbeek sculpture park in the Netherlands, worshipping novel deities synthesized around the large public sculptures, often startling visitors in the process.

The second video documents *LevelFive*, 2010, an inspired piece of borderline madness that had thirty participants remain in character for two days in order to reenact a large-group awareness training seminar from the 1970s. Now infamous for their often deleterious effects on participants, these seminars are revisited here in pursuit of history, certainly, but Condon also asks after the limits of character, personality, and performance; can you actualize a constructed self? What happens when two people, performing as two other people, attempt to break each other down in the name of therapy? It’s never entirely clear what is going on when Condon’s performers encounter one another, but one thing is certain—it’s beautiful.



Brody Condon, *Future Gestalt*, 2012, still from a color video in HD, 38 minutes 30 seconds.

— Stephen Squibb