

Antoine Catala, "New Feelings"



Joerg Lohse. Antoine Catala, *Emobot (student)*, 2014

Time Out says

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It wouldn't be accurate to call Antoine Catala a millennial artist, exactly. For one thing, he's pushing 40. Judging by his latest show, however, it may be accurate to say that he shares the current generation's paradoxical mix of detached irony and cultivated sincerity.

The "feelings" of his exhibition title aren't new so much as threatened—by the faux intimacy of social media, perhaps, or by the possibility of a future in which artificial intelligence supplants human experience. In Catala's hands, these dystopian prospects appear to be sent up along with the efficacy of artistic expression, an idea which itself isn't new but which he engages here with *élan*.

The centerpiece, *Emobot (teacher)* is a computer-animated video starring an uncanny character resembling a young Mr. Clean. He, or she—the voice sounds female—plays on a vertically oriented flatscreen, mounted as a freestanding sculpture with the figure's face at eye level. Stylized yet hyperrealistic, the image changes expression while going on about, well, feelings ("I feel lost"). This piece is accompanied by another, *Emobot (student)*, a tripod surmounted by a balloon, roughly matching the size of the avatar's head, which regularly inflates and deflates. Another flatscreen, hung near the gallery's front desk, displays a still image, a series of comic-book panels featuring a digitally infantilized version of the artist himself, whose thought bubbles betray sentiments like, "I don't understand people."

It's all ridiculous, though intentionally so. Emotions are emptied of meaning, reduced to cybernetic ciphers. As a sign of things to come, that may suit the artist just fine.—*Howard Halle*