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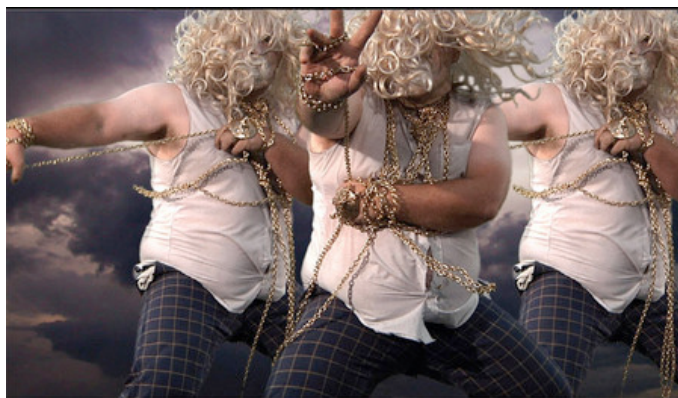
The Boston Globe

Ritual and exultation at Anthony Greaney

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By Cate McQuaid

There are stages to go through before you view Josh Mannis's video "Zeal for the Law," now at Anthony Greaney. First, visit the gallery to see drawings and a wall sculpture by the artist. The video is in a room in the basement. The work upstairs relates to the video but can't truly prepare you for it.

The white-cube gallery is a pristine anteroom to the dark unknown below. Mannis and Greaney walk the viewer through a ritual with this setup, and Mannis's work is all about ritual. The ink drawings, "Nadia Comaneci Generations," are loose and repetitive. These are not so much portraits of the Romanian gymnast, famous for garnering perfect 10s and gold medals in the 1976 Olympics, as expressions about her. Feathery strokes describe muscular calves and a tight trunk, but the works are all movement, and all versions of the same movement, a conceptual nod to the repetition of routine.



A still from Josh Mannis's video *Zeal for the Law*

The wall sculpture, "The Law," features gold-plated brass nipples hanging over blue cotton. The brass nipples mimic gold medals and comment on the struggles of young gymnasts, for whom the terrain between girlhood and womanhood is particularly fraught.

Pass through a narrow hallway and proceed down to the basement, where "Zeal for the Law" is projected onto a wall. It shows Mannis himself, a portly man in his 30s, wearing a blond mane of a wig and a white mask, dancing violently to a ferocious drumbeat. Clouds cascade through a dusky sky behind him. Mannis is there by himself. Then there are two, three, or four of him, each grabbing at the gold chain around his neck, each pounding his legs and arms. It is comical, weird, and utterly captivating.

Mannis is like a trickster figure in certain cultures: He's masked. He combines masculine and feminine elements. He makes himself into someone you would not want to run into on the street - the embodiment of otherness - and exulting in that, he seems to hold magic in his hands. Like a gymnast, he is also conjuring something near perfect out of repetition.

JOSH MANNIS: *Zeal for the Law*

At: Anthony Greaney, 450 Harrison Ave.

through March 24. 617-482-0055