

# ARTFORUM

## Bea Schlingelhoff

### Critic's Picks

#### ESSEX STREET

114 Eldridge Street

February 11 – March 13

You may think, standing in the empty, bleached space of Bea Schlingelhoff's latest solo show, that it's 1984 instead of 2016. From four small black speakers installed in each corner comes: "They made it clear from the start that the slightest deviation from the norm would be punished. They turned everything into prisons, even our own bodies." This rhetoric, reminiscent of George Orwell's dystopic book, is read from Abigail Bray's more recent novel *Misogyny Re-loaded*.

Winston Smith, Orwell's central character, is referred to in Bray's text, as is his torture in the infamous Room 101. The aim: Destroy your captive's resistance by subjecting him or her to their worst fears. The method: Gaslighting, or using information to manipulate the victim by inciting doubt and, ultimately, insanity. The critique: Feminism has failed. Misogyny is alive and well, its insidiousness facilitated by capitalism and the patriarchy it supports.

It took Essex Street's proprietors Maxwell Graham and Neal Curley a long time to record Bray's book, which runs on a 270-minute loop. Schlingelhoff paid for Curley's and Graham's hours in an attempt to subvert the relationship between dealer and artist, institution and individual, male and female. Your body is the only thing on display in the starkness of this space as you listen to a woman's fatalistic words, read by two men. It seems that what's broken down is not feminism but a kind of humanism, the remains of which we experience in Schlingelhoff's barren box and, of course, Orwell's Room 101. "Now repeat after me," Bray/Graham/Curley implores. "I am free."



-Heidi Harrington-Johnson