

## Art in Review

### Bernadette Corporation

'2000 Wasted Years'

*Artists Space*  
38 Greene Street,  
SoHo  
Through Dec. 16

I often think that museums and nonprofit institutions like Artists Space should adopt more independently critical stances toward what they offer the public. This show devoted to the Bernadette Corporation could have been a good opportunity to do so. It is billed as a retrospective of this collaborative group, which has exerted a remarkable influence as a tastemaker within the New York art world, most visibly through Reena Spaulings Fine Art, the Lower East Side gallery it founded in 2004.

What you find here resembles an ultrahip design and fashion firm's showroom presenting things Bernadette has actually produced over the years. It includes mannequins in avant-garde clothes; flat screens playing videos of runway shows; light boxes illuminating reams of verbiage extolling Bernadette; scarves and other accessories; and a Hollywood-style trailer for a documentary about the riots during the 2001 G-8 summit meeting in Genoa with commentary by the actress Chloë Sevigny. A series of large panels hanging from the ceiling, one for every year since 1993, narrates the history of the group in images and breathless promotional language.

As a Warholian spoof of branding, publicity and media underwritten by Marxist and semiotic theory, it is all wearingly clever and depressingly obvious. Maybe there is no escape from the prepackaged life to which consumer society consigns us; maybe a stylish, wised-up cynicism is the only relief. Still, an exhibition that sees the Bernadette Corporation from a broader historical and philosophical perspective — a view not blinded by group's own carefully constructed mystique — would be nice gift for inquiring minds. **KEN JOHNSON**