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Art in Review; Jason Simon

By KEN JOHNSON
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Vera
Orchard
47 Orchard Street, Lower East Side
Through Sunday

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The single work in Jason Simon's exhibition is a 25-minute video interview with a woman named Vera that explores her addiction to shopping. Vera, who looks about 30, is attractive, intelligent and articulate about how she shops, what she shops for and what shopping means to her. Mainly, she shops for expensive clothes and accessories, but she shops intensely for ordinary things like toiletries too.

She looks for bargains, but that has not prevented her from incurring huge debt and once going into bankruptcy. She notes at one point that she owns 150 bottles of nail polish. Unfortunately, the video doesn't show any of her acquisitions, because the camera never wavers from its up-close focus on Vera herself. Still, the interview is fascinating for what it reveals about this compulsive shopper's extreme yet strangely banal preoccupation.

Mr. Simon, one of Orchard's organizers, is not making fun of Vera. She is too smart and self-aware and has too much of a sense of humor for that. He treats her like a partner in a collaborative investigation into the effects of consumerism on people. He also does not add any didactic or ideological message of his own. The video allows viewers to reflect for themselves on the psychology and sociology of shopping and consumerism and more generally on how capitalism conditions the lives and desires of modern people. KEN JOHNSON