

# ARTFORUM



David Kennedy Cutler, *Off Season, 2018*, performance-produced installation, drywall, wood, paint, Plexiglas, inkjet printer, inkjet on fabric and PETG, tools, clothes, food, cooking supplies, moving blankets, artist's body, dimensions variable.

EAST HAMPTON

## David Kennedy Cutler

HALSEY MCKAY GALLERY | EAST HAMPTON  
79 Newtown Lane  
January 13 - March 24

Just one week into David Kennedy Cutler's durational performance here—the artist is living in the empty gallery for ten weeks this winter, improvising makeshift shelter from materials on hand—*Off Season, 2018*, already feels like an eerie tableau of cabin-fever madness. An enormous white cube constructed on the show's first day stood by

week's end with gaping holes in its tattered drywall after the artist, wielding two long vitrines, smashed through its walls à la Jack Nicholson in *The Shining*. Cutler's clever internet-era reboot of the familiar trope of the artist facing down existential harm in the gallery owes as much to Joseph Beuys as it does to Philip K. Dick. The space is populated with life-size dummies of himself, clad in identical thin, zip-up jumpsuits. One fake Cutler, interred faceup in a vitrine, recalls Paul Thek's *The Tomb—Death of a Hippie, 1967*.

Like his clones, Cutler wears the suit at all times, along with a plastic mask of his own face—when motionless, the artist and copies are virtually indistinguishable. The artist's performance as his digital self is broadcast via live stream and updated on social media, but his true existential threat exists outside of the frame: With little financial support for his work, Cutler must interrupt his endurance feat in the unaffordable Hamptons each week in order to be present at his adjunct-teaching gig back in Manhattan. When he leaves the gallery, his skin-suited avatars remain. Juxtaposing the fetishized authenticity of his “real” presence with his uncanny virtual ubiquity, *Off Season* thus evokes dangers more acute than Beuys's coyote roommate, such as economic precariousness. As the performance gradually becomes, in real time, indistinguishable from its digital representation, the various Cutlers on hand conjure a melancholic sense of immersion within a totality of digitized toil.

—Erica Dawn Lyle