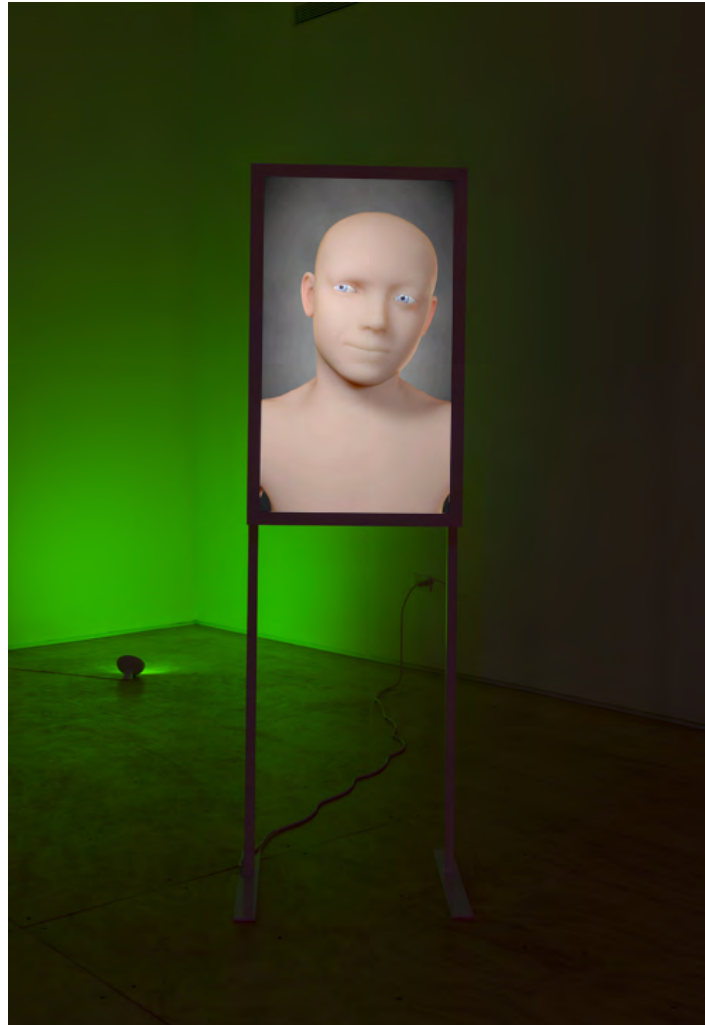


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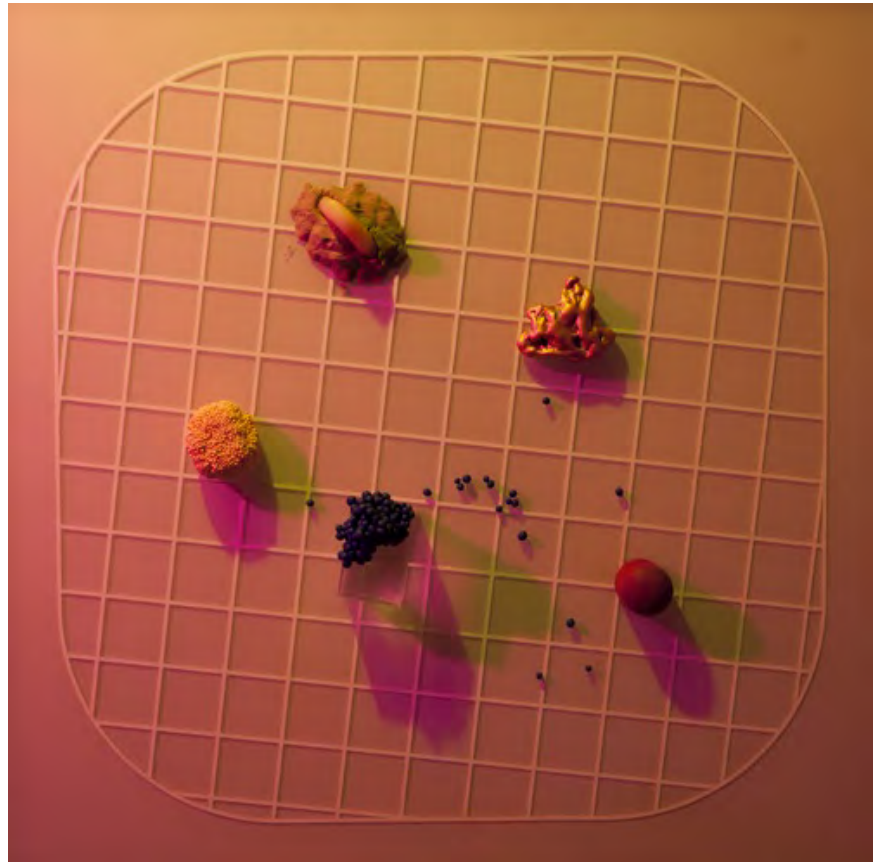
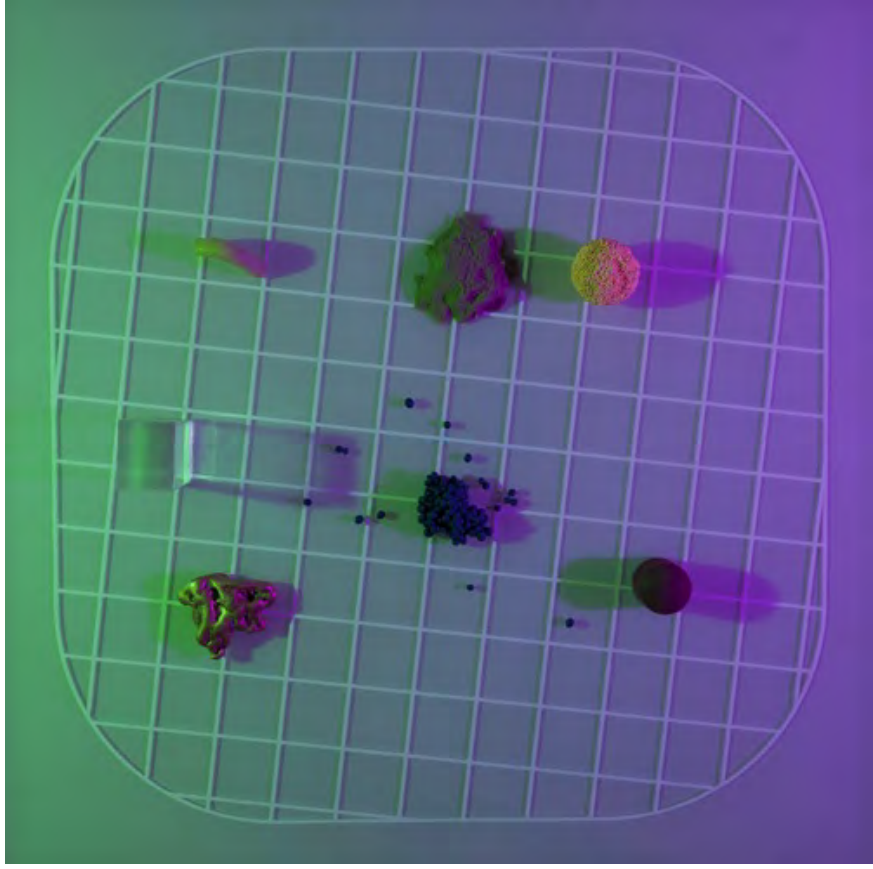
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## New Feelings. Antoine Catala



*New Feelings*, Antoine Catala's solo show at 47 Canal, explores the relationship between emotions and technology, feelings and machines. According to the artist, recent technological and scientific advances have contributed to create a new technotopian fantasy in which machines can read, measure and interact with human emotions. The centerpiece in the exhibition is *Emobot (teacher)* (all works 2014), a computer-animated video starring a bald, Caucasian child who changes expression and pronounce sentences such as: "I feel dead... I'm alive..." – so proving his capacity to feel. *Emobot (Student)* consists of a tripod surmounted by a balloon which regularly inflates and deflates; the flat screen *Le Petit Antoine (board 1)*, hung near the gallery's front desk, shows a series of comic-book panels featuring a digital version of the artist himself as a child. Finally, an inverted pyramid pedestal, *Feelings on the Table*, displays tiny, bizarre objects that visitors can handle (kinetic sand, frosted glass, small blue balls of hard clay etc.). Looking at these works, the viewer is naturally led to wonder: are the machines gaining the capacity to feel, or are our own emotions becoming mechanical?

New Feelings by Antoine Catala  
47 Canal, New York  
Through November 2



*Le Petit Antoine*



I WOULD SPEND HOURS  
REPLAYING CONVERSATIONS  
IN MY HEAD.





Courtesy of 47 Canal, New York.  
Photo credit: Joerg Lohse

# THE NEW YORKER



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ART

## ANTOINE CATALA

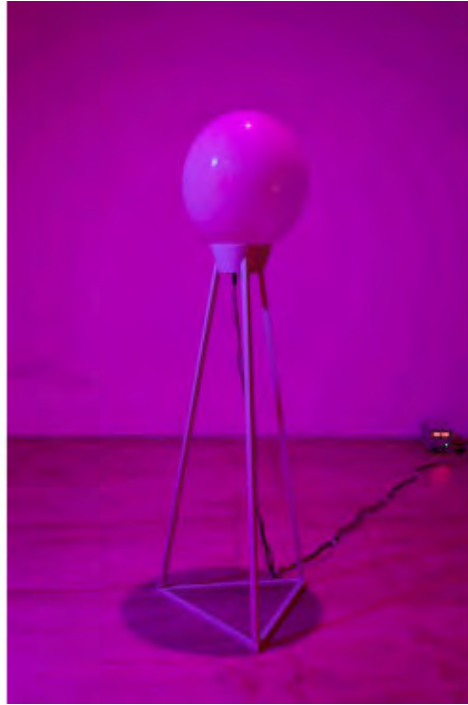
“I don’t feel the same anymore. I feel new,” says the bald-headed droid-child who stars in Catala’s spellbinding digital animation. The same could be said of the gallery, one of the most exciting on the Lower East Side, which inaugurates a new space with this show. In the thirteen-minute piece, Catala connects dystopic ideas of the post-human body to old-fashioned humanism. As teeth threaten to fall from its mouth, as if ill-manufactured, the androgyne talks about self-expression (never mind that the self in question seems factory-fresh). Nearby, a pedestal topped with tiny objects of various textures—gritty, furry, smooth—returns feeling to the realm of the haptic. Through Nov. 2.

September 28 - November 2

[47 Canal](#)



## Antoine Catala, "New Feelings"



Joerg Lohse. Antoine Catala, *Emobot (student)*, 2014

### Time Out says

Posted: Mon Oct 20 2014

It wouldn't be accurate to call Antoine Catala a millennial artist, exactly. For one thing, he's pushing 40. Judging by his latest show, however, it may be accurate to say that he shares the current generation's paradoxical mix of detached irony and cultivated sincerity.

The "feelings" of his exhibition title aren't new so much as threatened—by the faux intimacy of social media, perhaps, or by the possibility of a future in which artificial intelligence supplants human experience. In Catala's hands, these dystopian prospects appear to be sent up along with the efficacy of artistic expression, an idea which itself isn't new but which he engages here with élan.

The centerpiece, *Emobot (teacher)* is a computer-animated video starring an uncanny character resembling a young Mr. Clean. He, or she—the voice sounds female—plays on a vertically oriented flatscreen, mounted as a freestanding sculpture with the figure's face at eye level. Stylized yet hyperrealistic, the image changes expression while going on about, well, feelings ("I feel lost"). This piece is accompanied by another, *Emobot (student)*, a tripod surmounted by a balloon, roughly matching the size of the avatar's head, which regularly inflates and deflates. Another flatscreen, hung near the gallery's front desk, displays a still image, a series of comic-book panels featuring a digitally infantilized version of the artist himself, whose thought bubbles betray sentiments like, "I don't understand people."

It's all ridiculous, though intentionally so. Emotions are emptied of meaning, reduced to cybernetic ciphers. As a sign of things to come, that may suit the artist just fine.—*Howard Halle*

# Art in America

Antoine Catala

at 47 Canal,  
through Nov. 2  
291 Grand St.



You will find yourself laughing, uncomfortably to be sure, at the video in Antoine Catala's show "New Feelings." It's based on video footage of an 11-year-old boy whom Catala asked to mimic various emotions. In the video, his digital avatar's facial contortions suggest a cyborg striving to have feelings. Writing for *A.i.A.*, Federico Florian described a recent Catala show that featured drones and holograms as having a playfully space-age feel. This show maintains that atmosphere. A latex balloon inflates and deflates; inside are small parenthesis-shaped objects based on an emoticon that revolves to create different "expressions." On a low pedestal are bizarre objects that visitors can handle; their textures will surprise you. A computer voice occasionally calls out phrases that appear in the show's press release, such as "I don't feel the same anymore. I feel new. I don't know how to describe the sensation. Do you?" Are the machines gaining the capacity to feel, or are our own emotions becoming mechanical?

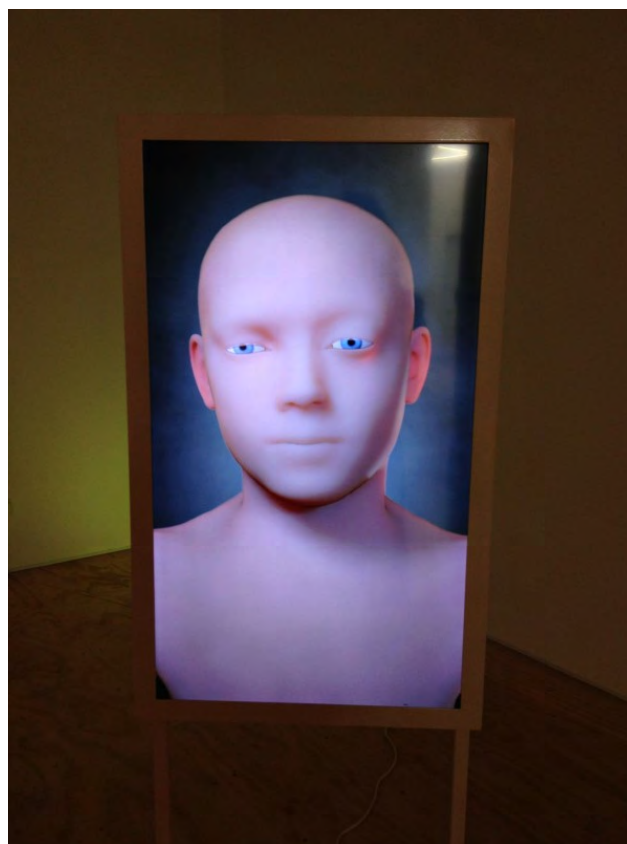
## Antoine Catala: New Feelings at 47 Canal

October 15, 2014 Written by Elspeth Walker

The 2004 hit show *Battlestar Galactica* chronicles a future in which artificially intelligent robots called Cylons seek to destroy the human race as they advance and meld with technology in an almost mystical way. Constructed out of biological material, a bisected Cylon fighter plane actually bleeds—sinews, guts, and all. Other Cylons evolve to look exactly like human copies, and are so intelligent that they experience the complexities of human emotion, including the nuances of love. Antoine Catala's current solo project at 47 Canal, *New Feelings*, is synchronized with this fantasy. Catala delves into the gray area where technology intersects with emotion, and presents a series of experiments in sculpture and video that incite us to feel, both figuratively and literally, through machines.

Catala's sculpture creates abstracted prototypes of human-robot blends, searching for unlikely pockets of emotion within the rigid boundaries of the technological. He uses technology as a tool for the production and replication of emotion. The most captivating issue in *Battlestar Galactica* and in Catala's work can be found in the difficulties humans have in deciphering how to treat these technological models. Should the Cylons be treated like any other malfunctioning, dangerous machine? Are they simulacra of humans? Should they be considered an improvement on the human prototype, or rather as a treacherous blend of straightforward mechanical logic and emotionally manipulative tactics?

The labor of such a dilemma is written across the visage of Catala's *Emobot (Teacher)* (2014), a CGI video of a bald, Caucasian child whose rubbery flesh only barely contains hyper-realistic round eyeballs and aggressive dentures that threaten to escape its face. The avatar vacillates between different declarations, including: "I feel dead... I'm alive..." In Catala's fantasy, which *is* the avatar? If viewers use Catala's prototypes to descend into the imaginative realm his pieces suggest, they can't be sure either. The artist was present when I visited the gallery. Off in the corner, he tinkered with a MacBook and a pile of wrenches, cords, and expensive equipment, performing some adjustments on *Emobot (Student)* (2014). This robotic structure has a balloon-like membrane that inflates like a lung; a hard pink crescent inside performs a series of flips on a pivot, and then the membrane deflates, sucking itself around the crescent like a shiny cassock of skin.



Antoine Catala. *Emobot (Teacher)*, 2014; powder-coated aluminum and steel, computer, sound system, TV; video, color sound, 13:00; 71 x 21 x 18 in.; edition of 3.





Antoine Catala. *Feelings on the Table*, 2014; powder-coated steel, wood, polycarbonate, copper, fur, sand, polystyrene, resin; 37 x 29 x 29 in.

As the artist worked, I walked over to an inverted pyramid pedestal with a seafoam-and-white grid atop it. "You can touch those," the artist pointed out. "Do what you want with them." I found a series of small, textured objects on the pedestal: kinetic sand, a hard, thick piece of frosted glass, and a cluster of small blue balls of hard clay. As I fingered the clay, I flashed back to a childhood memory of rolling orbs out of Fimo clay. I was provoked into remembrance by the distinct *feel* of each of these objects: their weight, their smoothness, the way the sand bounced back when I poked it—as if it were alive. Sensation triggered memory, which triggered emotion. The most successful point of Catala's new experiments is in this invitation to interact with that most basic technology of sensation. Catala acknowledges the treacherous and fascinating ground of the cyborg: when machines can feel, they fundamentally undermine our category of the "natural." As we come into physical contact with technology, it becomes us and we it. In the quest to come to grips with such "new feelings," there is nothing quite as real, nothing as disorienting, and nothing as affective as touch.

Antoine Catala: *New Feelings is on view at 47 Canal through November 2, 2014.*