



A scary American family: Anni Albers, *Black-White-Grey* (1927), left; Cady Noland, *Untitled* (1997); Joan Semmel, *Touch* (1977)

But leave it to an artist to come up with the most incisive, peculiar, and art-friendly group show of the moment—or, for that matter, in a long time. At Matthew Marks, Robert Gober has brought together five artists of wildly divergent styles and generations—playing them off each other brilliantly, on levels both formal and symbolic—to make what is, in essence, a Gober by other means.

Initially perplexing, this unlikely congregation mutates into a disturbing pictograph, a sociopathic rebus that spells Scary American Family. In the front gallery, in a cruciform installation, we first encounter the father in the form of Robert Beck's mesmerizingly gruesome video of a hunter sawing the horns off a slain buck (the incessant sounds of sawing provide a frightening soundtrack to the show). On the opposite wall, a beautiful little weaving, from 1927, by Anni Albers (wife of Josef, and a Bauhaus artist in her own right), stands in for the maternal: home, hearth, and handiwork. Facing each other on the intervening walls is hidden parental sex, in the form of two large nude couples by Joan Semmel (an overlooked figurative painter of the erotic kind). Cady Noland's silver-painted cardboard

stock in the middle of the room radiates discipline and violence. The missing children are insinuated in the next gallery by Nancy Shaver's 16 black-and-white photographs of prettily decorated kids' garments.

Gober opens the door to these mysteries a little further in the exhibition's final gallery. Hanging alone is a startling painting by Semmel. A woman gently bathes a young boy, who stands naked in a bathtub of shallow water. He has an erection. Since it's painted from the woman's point of view, we can't see her head, or his, but imagine what they might be thinking. It'll be hard to look at these artists' work the same after this exhibition. ▣