



## Aspect Ratio debuts with a Gilad Ratman video | Art Review

An Israeli artist presents *The Days of the Family of the Bell*.

By Philip Hartigan

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[Aspect Ratio](#), a new West Loop gallery devoted to video art, debuted last month with [Gilad Ratman's](#) first solo show in the U.S. The artist, who will represent his native Israel at the Venice Biennale in 2013, presents *The Days of the Family of the Bell* (2012), a video in which people appear to perform gymnastic feats that would make Cirque du Soleil acrobats contort with jealousy. Against a black wall, first one person, then groups of two to ten seem to defy gravity, lifting their feet off the wooden floor despite the impossible weight of bodies stacked above them. Their limbs strain under the effort as they balance and support each other. Hands and feet wriggling, these men and women look as though they could collapse at any second, but somehow they maintain a tottering control. Their scant clothing draws attention to the shapes they form in the air; the tension of their contorted bodies is strangely reminiscent of the muscular figures in Caravaggio's paintings.

Though Ratman makes viewers believe they're watching the acrobatics head-on, he filmed his performers from above; they maneuvered around as they lay on the floor. But discovering that these people didn't really do spontaneous upward backflips onto a column of human flesh doesn't dispel viewers' sense of wonder. The looped video is more than four minutes long, but I had to watch it several times: It's a spellbinding, refreshing combination of ingenuity and humor, a poetic vertical ballet of pointless struggle and endless aspiration.