

**TimeOut**  
**New York**

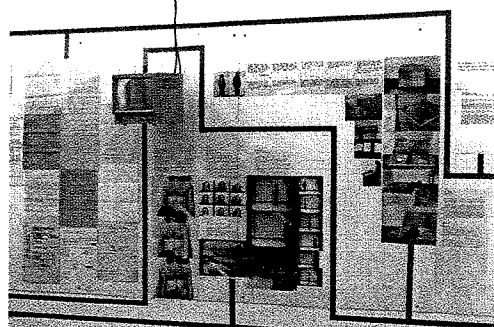
**April 29–May 6, 2004**  
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**Vito Acconci**  
**Barbara Gladstone Gallery**  
**through May 1 (see Chelsea).**

In Samuel Beckett's play *Happy Days*, a woman buried to the waist seizes her parasol, hoists it open and proclaims, "I am weary holding it up and I cannot put it down." Vito Acconci's 1970 video *Digging Piece* finds the artist at the beach, incongruously attired in a black turtleneck and black jeans, doggedly kicking sand out of a hole. His fatigue is quickly evident; his body buckles with successive jerks under the weight of the wet sand while the dry slides in around him. In minutes, Acconci is knee deep in a cavity whose entropic collapse frustrates each exhausting attempt to boot sand out. And yet the compulsion remains. Like Beckett's woman with the parasol, he will not put it down.

Testing the endurance of the body in the execution of quotidian tasks is a central idea of Acconci's work, as seen in his current exhibition at Barbara Gladstone Gallery. Hundreds of notes and photographs from the artist's archives document performances and

installations during the period from 1969 to 1973. And what labor it was to record them. During *Following Piece* (1969), and dozens of related episodes, Acconci trailed randomly selected strangers through city streets, activities that generated pages of typed transcripts and photographs. The proliferation of paperwork—more than 90 sheets and accompanying photos affixed to a wall—suggests a parody of detective work and legal evidence; its near-bureaucratic appearance belies



**Vito Acconci, installation view.**

the impulse to embark on such a project at all. Experimenting with self-imposed limitations that often border on the absurd, Acconci demonstrates how relentless discipline can transform the seemingly prosaic into art.—*Eva Diaz*