

Last spring it was one man's choice that piloted Germanwings Flight 9525 into the French Alps—in an area known as Ravin du Rosé—and this ended human life onboard. 2015 is also the year that Richard Hoeck and John Miller made "Mannequin Death," a high-definition video (shot in 4K) in which an anonymous mannequin arm pushes other mannequins (dressed as ordinary people) over a cliff and into disintegration. Beyond the almost automatic destruction lies a challenge to optimism and the question of whether one can maintain it, knowing that the disfigurement of bodies (and ideas) is an ever-present possibility. If we consider technology as the product of a nexus of gestures or choices, it may as well begin with a simple push (of a button or body). In this sense, the slightest gesture is capable of breaking a body to its advantage. Such is the dissolution of authority by a gesture that only a single individual needs to make, that it overshadows the promise of any collaborative effort, which necessarily entails negotiation and compromise. Here, two people may produce something less absolute than one. Beyond the brutality of breaking humanoid figures, lies a soteriological opportunity, a hint of salvation. An empty promise, maybe. Now it's over, some would claim, but an ending may be read as either a period or a colon. What comes next after a disaster or a happy ending? Three days after Flight 9525 crashed, the European Aviation Safety Agency issued a temporary recommendation to require that at least two people remain in the cockpit at all times whenever an aircraft is airborne. In 1990 John Miller made "My Friend" a mannequin dressed in all-brown attire. It was his first work like this; and at the time he believed it to be his last.

– Tenzing Barshee

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