At one end of the gallery, a larger-than-life-sized baseball player winds up and delivers a pitch. At the other, glossy ceramic tchotchkes sit poised against a background of velvety darkness. Sometimes they remain unmoved as a ball thuds harmlessly behind them. Other times they topple over or shatter loudly upon impact, shards tinkling as they fall and skitter away.

In The Opening Day, 2009, a room-scaled video installation by Antonio Rovaldi (Italian, b. Parma, 1975; lives and works in Milan and New York), the viewer becomes a part of whatever destructive game is being played, imagining the arc of a fastball crossing the gallery from pitcher’s hand to imperiled knickknack.

Through a body of work ranging from video and performance to drawing and sculpture, Rovaldi often explores how distance is represented in art. Here, the intangible journey of the ball appears to have emphatically physical consequences. And there seem to be other metaphors at play, too. Is the piece a discourse about what is precious (talent, objects)? Could Rovaldi be commenting on the pressures athletes and artists—or, indeed, any of us—feel when struggling to perform consistently and achieve our aims?

The Opening Day certainly incorporates art-world preoccupations with the differences and connections between popular culture and fine art, as well as with art history itself. It is, after all, a series of moving images in which static objects get smashed. Once marginal, media works are today central to artistic practice.