



New York

Matt Sheridan Smith

Lisa Cooley

In his first solo show at Lisa Cooley, Matt Sheridan Smith displays work with a light footprint. The collection, aptly titled *Blanks, Templates, Undos, Redos*, includes works on paper sculpture and video that deliberately reveal little, celebrating instead that which is lacking, unfulfilled and unfinished. Smith's brand of conceptualism is cloaked in sadness- a visual repression and less-is-more approach that may be frustrating to those who desire the whole story. But seen as a group, this collection of work is lovely and personal- evidence of the struggle to give light to what is so often concealed from others, and to find meaning in emptiness.

In *Paper Sculpture (A1, A2, A3, A4)*, Smith lays MDF board in a hefty sandwich on the floor just inside the gallery's entrance. Unlike his paintings- meditations on the color contrast that hang on an adjacent wall- the sculpture seems out of sorts, perhaps because of its heft. Regardless, the viewer is left to figure out what's going on, both what is present and what is absent, in order to make the work complete. Smith harnesses ambiguity and absence to better effect in a video projected on the space's north wall. He cuts, edits, chops and reimagines *L'Argent*, a French feature-length film from the early eighties. His seven-minute version maintains precise moments, when fresh-faced actors open and close doors on their way in and out of rooms and scenes. The result is a lovely formal exercise- the shape of boyish faces, sounds of clicking and slamming, angles of passage-ways and washed-out colors. In this instance, what is missing-the film's narrative-is not missed at all.

Self-portrait (golden sections), the "heart of the show" according to the gallery's press materials, is a series of pedestals arranged in a sort of post-modern Stonehenge in the center of the room. Smith made each pedestal according to the "golden ratio," measuring the proportions of his own body and transferring them to plywood. Though he literally puts himself on display, the various shapes and sizes still seem to conceal something essential about the artist, his process and the works' import as stand-ins for the body. A series of drawings on the southern wall is far more revealing. Arranged in two rows of four, each print has multiple layers, again reflecting Smith's precise approach to measuring, parsing and concealing meaning. The first layer includes placeholder text in graphic design lingo-*lorem ipsum*- partially covered with another layer of scratched -off ink. Like the act of carving *L'Argent*, the language of the source is already "foreign" to many, so any repurposing makes meaning all the more intentionally opaque.

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Smith's interest in wobbly denotation and linguistic relativism is most evident in *Untitled (the omission of one or more words that are obviously understood but that must be supplied to make a construction grammatically complete)*, one of the strongest pieces in the show. Rekindling ideas found in other works- absence, illegibility, intangibility- *Untitled* features repeated ellipses autocorrected in Microsoft Word until they resemble a Braille-like trail. Here, Smith creates another language, one in which everything-and nothing- is left out. The ellipses signify silence, pauses, interruptions, and these breadcrumbs eventually lead to a sought-after key to this enigmatic body of work: more blank space.

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