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ARTFORUM

Alex Fleming
LISA COOLEY
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The gallery walls in Alex Fleming's first solo exhibition offer sheets of plain newsprint stuck with reflective silver letters arranged diagonally, in columns, and in rows. These arrays rarely form actual words—T H E K N B L M appears across one, P R C N U M descends vertically in another—and the generous white space that separates the letters allows the viewer's eyes some room to wander, as the tongue half-enunciates barely there syllables. Beneath the linguistic slipperiness, however, lie encrypted phrases. The works' titles are ciphers, so reading the checklist feels like cheating at a game: Of the multitude of syllabic possibilities, meaningful or otherwise, in A X S X N F C N S—Ask? Sex?—the title to the work, A Cross Section of Scenes, 2009, unlocks the code and stops the verbal play.

Letters go missing in the diminutive installation *The lace curtains of his apartment*, 2009, at the rear of the gallery. Projected onto the corner wall is a looped video of slowly turning blank pages—the opening titles of Alfred Hitchcock's *Marnie* (1964) with the text digitally removed. Overlapping the projection's lower-left-hand corner is a sequence of slides, including a woman's melancholic face, a nooselike coil of rope, an ivy-covered wall, and a cemetery. A suicide narrative is implied here, although with Fleming's penchant for coded communication in mind, one might find meaning less in the images than in the chaclitch-clock sound made each time the slide projector's carousal turns; to me, that intermittent repetition seemed to intone the staccato syllables of a certain name erased from the title sequence: Hitchcock.

— Lloyd Wise