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Matt Sheridan Smith at Lisa Cooley

By Peter J. Russo | Features, Reviews | May 15, 2009

Blanks, Templates, Undos, Redos, Matt Sheridan Smith's debut solo exhibition at Lisa Cooley, is comprised of opaque sculptures and drawings which occupy a vague, transitional territory despite their resemblance to several ubiquitous forms in present day work-life.

The show's sole video, Untitled (open/shut), 2008 (all other works 2009) is a seven-minute montage cut from footage of actors opening and closing doors in Robert Bresson's film, L'Argent (1983). In Smith's edit, the characters endlessly pass into and out of boutiques, cafés, homes, offices, and other spaces. Departing prompts removed, we're given the momentary silence of a door swinging ajar, over and over again. Smith's projection is a figural representation of his blanks, templates, undos, and redos; transitions that never lead anywhere but serve to personalize the concepts of banality operating within the other works on view.

Smith offers two templates in three-dimensions: Paper Sculpture (A1, A2, A3, A4) and Self-portrait (golden sections). Paper Sculpture is a set of MDF planks cut to the standard international paper sizes cited. Upon first glance, they appear reconfigurable, like a game of Jenga. Yet the pieces are necessarily arranged according to their congruent dimensions. For Self-portrait, Smith applied the Golden Ratio to his own bodily measurements, generating the dimensions for four pristine, white blocks; enforcing a perfect mathematical rule on an imperfect form. The Golden Ratio's history of use in art and architecture—from Stonehenge to the Parthenon, Chartres Cathedral to Corbusier, and Mondrian to Dorthea Rockburne—ensures the viewer can't help but trip over numerous reference points. Luckily, no sculpture sits atop these pedestal-like forms. Smith's application of the Golden Ratio yields no divine order.

Hanging nearby are four Blanks, unique prints made with scratch-off ink and housed, unscratched, in steel frames. A strange reciprocity exists between the actual dimensions of each work, as noted in their captions, and the dimensions suggested by crop marks surrounding (and part of) the blank rectangle in each.

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Smith's undos are eight screenprints partially obscured by a layer of scratch-off ink subjected to varying degrees of abuse and frustration. The language revealed beneath, set in Times New Roman, is Lorem Ipsum: the ancient Roman work by Cicero, commonly used by graphic designers as dummy text while patiently waiting for editors to add meaning to their mockups.

Opposite the undos are, appropriately, the redos. Untitled (the omission of one or more words...) is a screenprint on canvas of ellipses autocorrected into proper form by Microsoft Word. The work, its title is symptomatic of its meaning, is an office worker's meditation of perfectly plotted points repeated ad infinitum—or, to the page's default margins at least. Neon Sculpture is a somewhat ironic rendition of contemporary art's recent favorite material, white neon. Smith chooses to light a single rod within the bunch, splayed from their original cardboard box and facing into a corner of the gallery. Unbent, nothing is written or illuminated—another substitution of pure form for language.

Time wasted, paper pushed, procedure after bureaucratic procedure—Smith's works conjure an administrative purgatory. They act as mile markers for the downtime during translation and resonate with the negative spaces of contemporary labor by quietly running out the clock.