

ART PAPERS



STRIKING IDEAS + MOVING IMAGES + SMART TEXTS

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SEAN RASPET
NEW YORK

The sculptures, installations, and contractual works featured in Sean Raspet's exhibition *As If Written In* reflect the ways in which consumer society produces "free" time in the service of consumption, thereby folding leisure back into labor [The Kitchen; September 10—October 23, 2010]. This suggests the infinite temporality at play in the closed and recursive systems of production and labor. Raspet articulates this production of surplus time by taking up recognizable tropes of labor such as a commercial mop, factory clocks, and manila folders. He also enlists signifiers of leisure such as storefronts and window displays and institutional communication systems such as an institutional phone system, a gallery floor space, and a contractual agreement. In this, he points to the operational ubiquity of self-reflexive systems.

This varied material is fractured and repeated into iterative works that come together to shape the exhibition narrative. (*3 inflections*), 2009-2010, revolves around three clocks. (*Inflection*), 2010, enlists a mop. In both works, shards of mirror face the object with enough distance to both reflect and distort it. The mirrors reflect the object back towards itself, expanding the clock or mop through repetition while also distorting and fracturing it visually. Similarly, *Folder (a Novel)*, 2010, stages two chairs and an office, on which three packets of instructions are laid out for review. These are based on Raspet's work for the census bureau, where specifics such as names, places, and things are abstracted or written out, an experience of statistical objectivity that also shapes didactic texts. Raspet similarly unsettles our sense of place in *Background Processes*, 2010, where fourteen semi-transparent vinyl banners are arrayed as a maze for us to navigate. The banners juxtapose various desaturated images of reflections in storefronts and display windows taken from the artist's daily life in consumer culture. This juxtaposition flattens out the experience referentially while illustrating the idea that producing more of the same is a false expansion.

Beyond the physical space of the gallery, Raspet also enlists the exhibition checklist to point to more conceptual works by divulging his manipulation of The Kitchen's infrastructure. For *Untitled (Hold)*, 2010, a telephone call placed on hold is automatically forwarded through three of The Kitchen's telephone lines for the duration of the exhibition, thus simultaneously denying these lines the capacity to circulate content and casting them as excess within the institution. Similarly, *Untitled (Sublet)*, 2010, exceeds the spatio-temporal limits of the exhibition. For this piece, Raspet has sublet a standard casket-sized rectangle of gallery floor space from The Kitchen for as long as he will continue to make rent payments, thus addressing the illusion of control through purchasing power. The last work on the checklist, *, 2008-ongoing, requires the visitor to sign a confidentiality agreement before its viewing. The agreement prevents the signatory from discussing the work, thereby denying the possibility of any social and collective meaning-making for the piece. By taking up the fragmented, repetitious, and extraneous character of recursive systems, *As If Written In* opens up a space for thinking their preemption of agency, knowledge production, and communication in commodity culture.

—Amanda Parmer