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ARTFORUM



Jason Dodge, *Electric*, n.d. Installation view.

Jason Dodge
CASEY KAPLAN

Critics of Jason Dodge's sparse exhibitions over the past decade have frequently cited and relied upon the "narratives" and "poetry" bodied forth by his unassuming, enigmatically undated objects. Yet these oft-repeated terms have seemed increasingly facile in the face of his expansive output, with its sometimes radical testing of belief, fictions, and facts. Of the works in his recent New York show, take, for example, *The mayor is sleeping*. *The mayor of Nuremberg is sleeping*, a pillow the artist asserts has been slept on only by the mayor of Nuremberg. This backstory is fanciful, yes, but serves as more than just a ploy to pique the viewer's attention.

This show "We are the meeting," partially coincided with "What we have done.," the artist's first comprehensive exhibition in North America at the Henry Art Gallery in Seattle. There, visitors could have gleaned from the accompanying checklist or catalogue that the random bits of hay and grass and the lingering barnyard smell in a spacious gallery were left over from several animals that had briefly occupied the space without an audience (*The living*), or that the plastic-wrapped bed sheets on the floor in another room were rotated weekly by a hotel linen service (*Anyone*). For this sister show in New York, Dodge revised a work from the Henry, *Two doors, two doors.*, a long wall with a duo of doorways, each of which holds two doors (one opening in, one opening out). At Casey Kaplan, under the title *Passages*, the piece was pared back to a single, double-doored entry. A different sculpture, *Poison hemlock through three rooms.*, a version of which debuted at New York's Marianne Boesky Gallery in January 2013, features a brass pipe running across the floor that was (ostensibly) filled with the infamous Socrates-killing substance. The pipe-exceedingly thin, almost like a line-echoed *Electric*, an electrical wire that hugged the walls of the first gallery, wrapped around the second room, and terminated there abruptly, as if it had been cut. A bit of stripped copper wire was exposed at the break-it seemed to augur danger. Around the corner in the third and final gallery, the wire's plug was pushed through a hole in the wall and submerged in an aquarium full of water.

On the afternoon of January 11, Dodge invited six poets (Michael Dickman, Caroline Knox, Dorothea Lasky, Anna McDonald, M. A. Vizsolyi, and Susan Wheeler) to read their works in his show. The artist's respect for these individuals—he referred to them as being like "childhood heroes"—has led him to establish Fivehundred Places, a small press that seeks to encourage the appreciation of poetry within the art world. As the poets recited their pieces, the material, temporal, and spatial disparities between the two arts were emphasized.

Fivehundred Places has already printed several chapbooks. Dodge writes, "[W]ith a single printing of 500 copies, each book will find itself in one of 500 places." This concentration on place was reinforced throughout the Kaplan show as well—particularly in the brass tubes and electric wiring in the galleries that were so typical and yet so unnoticed; the woody smell, emanating from an unspecified place or object, that permeated the galleries; the pillow as the alleged site of a famed figure's sleep; and the portal-like doors. Particularly with the last, Dodge focused the viewer's attention on distinct yet adjacent places, on what may seem related but are actually unlike, in ways that recall how his work negotiates the kinship and discrepancies between stanza and sculpture.

-Lauren O'Neill-Butler