

PRESS RELEASE

Jason Loeb
A Cigarette End
October 30 – December 18, 2011
Opening Reception Sunday, October 30th, 7 – 9pm

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Open Thursday to Sunday, 12 – 6pm



"How do you recognize a ghost? By the fact that it does not recognize itself in a mirror... These ghosts that are commodities transform human producers into ghosts." [2]

"I remember a disturbed friend, obsessed with self-loathing, telling me he thought the electric shaver was man's greatest invention: it had saved him, he said, from the necessity of looking into a mirror for the past eleven years." [3]

Essex Street is pleased to announce *A Cigarette End*, Jason Loeb's first solo exhibition at the gallery. This exhibition extends Loeb's ongoing interest in the politics of the image, the disruption of the mediums employed for artistic production and the legality of the artist.

Loeb writes of this work:

The group of sculptures individually titled *Autophantography* (1–6) came about by looking at the crude shipping boxes in which industrial photographic emulsion paper is delivered. For *A Cigarette End*, I opened six standard-size, 30-inch rolls of photosensitive paper and exposed them to light, effectively destroying the possibility of their proper use. No longer able to operate as a vehicle for image production, the paper returns as phantom. Its unexposed layers suspend the act of inscription, while those exposed are inscribed with the surrounding light but display no image, opening a ghostly gap at the center of a process that leaves the material close to dead—a kind of undead artifact. At what point does the non-appearance of an image, or the suspension of an artwork, produce the absence of the artist?

A commodity prevented from realizing its use-value bemoans its suspension in limbo like poor M. Valdemar hypnotized on his deathbed, marooned between waking life and arrested death: *"For God's sake! — quick! — quick! — put me to sleep — or, quick! — waken me! — quick! — I say to you that I am dead."* [4]

If *Autophantography* is an indefinite extension of temporality exploring the preconditions of the image, then the film *The Smoking Observer* inverts this schema through the use of two materials with well-defined temporal beginnings and ends: a cigarette and a roll of color cinema film. *The Smoking Observer* departs from the discovery that the synthetic fiber cellulose acetate is used in the manufacturing of both cigarette filters and film base. In the film a cigarette is painted with black-and-white photographic emulsion, left to dry, then is smoked in the red light of the darkroom. As it burns, the flame exposes the light-sensitive chemicals on the cigarette paper just moments before consuming it, along with the tobacco inside. Here the cigarette measures filmic time as a horometrical device that refracts the filmic process. Its burning commemorates the process of self-consumption, a steganographic joss paper producing an image that will forever exist as phantasm. An additional filmic concern is the difference between two types of emulsion technology: that of black-and-white still photography and color cinema film. The image of the red safety bulb (typically used to develop black and white film) is captured here in color motion-picture, yet its light leaves no trace on the emulsion-treated cigarette, folding the discontinuity between disparate photosensitive processes. Mourning film's potential obsolescence is not a sentiment I wish to express; rather, I employ a series of techniques that make visible the asymmetrical relation between advanced reproduction technologies and the precedent technologies they attempt to pronounce dead without remainder.

The final component of the exhibition is a medical bone screw titled (^), the sort used in surgical procedures I underwent last year for femoral neck fractures. Restricted by prescription, these screws exist in a realm between inanimate controlled substance and animated utility within a body. Here it acts as placeholder for the artist, holding the artist's bones together and suturing the exhibition through spin.



[1.] Ungaikyō (the mirror demon) by Japanese master Toriyama Sekien, *The Illustrated Bag of One Hundred Random Demons* (画图百器徒然袋). Gazu Hyakki Yakō series, published ca. 1781.

[2.] Jacques Derrida, *The Specters of Marx* (New York: Routledge, 2006), p. 195.

[3.] Edmund Carpenter, *Oh, What a Blow that Phantom Gave me!* (New York: Bantam, 1974), p. 124.

[4.] Edgar Allan Poe, *The Works of Edgar Allan Poe, Vol. II* (Armstrong & Son, New York, 1884), http://www.sff.net/people/doylemacdonald/l_valdem.htm

Jason Loeb lives and works in New York. He recently completed the Whitney Independent Study Program, received an MFA from the School of the Art Institute of Chicago, a BFA from the Pennsylvania Academy of the Fine Arts, and attended the Yale Norfolk School of Art. This past summer he attended the Eastern European Residency Exchange with Pavilion Unicredit in Bucharest, Romania. He has had a solo project at Audio Visual Arts, New York, and been in group exhibitions at Galerie Perrotin, Paris; Bortolami Gallery, New York; Norton Museum of Art, West Palm Beach; NJMOCA, New Jersey; Harris Lieberman, New York; loop-raum für aktuelle kunst, Berlin; Artists Space, New York; Milwaukee International, Milwaukee; CUNY Graduate Center, New York and elsewhere.