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ARTFORUM

"The Slick & The Sticky"

VARIOUS SMALL FIRES

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Poetry, said Robert Lowell in 1960, divides between the Raw and the Cooked. Today we might rephrase the split as the Relatable and the Pretentious—perennially popular emotive verse; and insular, academic gestures conceived as text. Cocurator Vanessa Place practices the latter. Included is her *Statement of Facts No. 28*, 2012, one of a series of silk screens of transcripts from appellate rape trials (Place is both a poet and a lawyer), "stripped," insofar as such a thing is possible, of everything but truth. What survives redaction are phrases such as simply "The man was naked." See also Lisa Jarrett's *How Many Licks? II (Conditioned #13,763)*, 2015—hundreds of suckers made of beer, sugar, and African American hair—a racially charged work whose punny title reads, in this context, as cynical wordplay. Indeed, "The Slick & The Sticky" doesn't state a new binary so much as inflect, somewhere in between, the word sick, as in feeble, sweaty, broken, possibly contagious. Thus Antoine Catala's motion-activated, plastic punctuation marks (>(///)< and </3, both 2014). Impaled on motorized rods, when triggered, the sculptures lurch across the floor.



View of "The Slick & The Sticky," 2015.

Against these viscerally cryptic works others are flat and cold. Jacob Kassay's brass-lined "conversation pits" invert Minimalist sculpture into a discursive framework—yet an unappealing one, set in an antisocial, unshaded gravel lot. But *Why Does Fred Sandback's Work Make Me Cry?*, a recording of a 2014 lecture by Andrea Fraser, otherwise casts Minimalism's "impossible" empty spaces (delineated by a bit of yarn, a few works of art) as heartrending absence. "Is there an identification," she asks, "of the washing away of excess of form and the washing away of an excess of feeling?" Fraser weeps as she reads—at last, melting the Relatable and the Pretentious into the tragedy of academic affect.

— Travis Diehl