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Carol Szymanski: Pissin' Against the Wind, or, Sketches of the Mental Drain on the Dead Banker

Guided By Invoices

558 W 21st St, New York City, 10011



is, 2012, blue fluorescent light, 8 x 4 inches

The idea of quitting a job as an investment banker to devote more time to making art is infused with a familiar romance, but now more than ever, it seems a rather unlikely move. Yet this was the route taken by Carol Szymanski, and her experience among the 1 percent provides intriguing fodder for her current (presumably less profitable) work. Back in 2004, Szymanski began sampling from e-mails concerned with big-money deals for her ongoing text-based series, “cockshut dummy,” and here presents a new set of prints that focus on the midcrisis years of 2008 and '09. Words and phrases are scattered across backlit sheets of plastic film, their various sizes and positions generating a poetics of disruption that reflects the chaotic unraveling of the global market.

Other works also employ language, though not to such pointedly topical effect. *Ceci n'est pas un Kosuth* is a neon sign that apes the senior Conceptualist's devotion to linguistic philosophy by quoting Wittgenstein. Another neon, *Pissin' Against the Wind*, presents the titular idiom as if the letters were being carried off by a breeze. Both are neat productions but feel—a perennial risk with this

medium—rather generic. *Untitled (Torso)* and *HIM* are more idiosyncratic. In the former, a blown-glass vessel with a stylized feminine profile dangles from a canvas strap; in the latter, three wind instruments have been reshaped to spell out the title. Spicing her economics lesson with sexual politics, Szymanski is clearly not your typical Wall Street burnout.

—*Michael Wilson*