

WHITE FLAG LIBRARY

Cooper Jacoby

March 22 – May 17, 2014

Faces and Columns, 2014

Copper-plated steel, pennies, tempered glass, and x-ray film

Each 27.5 x 9 x 4 inches

Courtesy of the artist

Notes on Cooper Jacoby

At 27.5 x 9 x 4 inches and comprised of copper-plated steel, off-register pennies, tempered glass, and x-ray film, Cooper Jacoby's diptych *Faces and Columns* (2014) is unmistakably a pair of door handles. Each handle is tall and narrow, attached with two short stanchions to the glass as though they belong on the doors of a generic corporate skyscraper or bank building. Their bright polish and slick, reflective surfaces meld seamlessly with the gallery's furniture and décor. Despite being hung on the wall, rather than on the door, they can easily be mistaken for an element of the building's design, suggesting a false wall or a sliding door that would otherwise remain hidden.

Jacoby has made other door handles. In Brussels, he removed a gallery's original doorknobs and installed *Untitled* (2013), a taller, nickel-plated version of *Faces and Columns* over the hole left by the previous hardware. *Untitled* was unmarked except in the list of works, which was only available after visitors had pushed or pulled on the handles to enter the gallery. *Untitled* dresses up the subdivisions of architectural spaces, marking a second entrance. It is at this point between spaces that a choice is made, and design programs visitors to accept this shift with a minimal amount of aesthetic recognition. Regardless of how aware of it they may be visitors abide the passivity of architectural authority where all it takes is to use a door handle to be insinuated in the process of subjugation.

Collectively titled *Accents*, hydrocal casts of markers and plaques from historic sites represent Jacoby's parallel interest in language. As a proxy for the scale of the marker, Jacoby substitutes scrap wood of approximately the same size, casting the weathered wood instead of the original sign. The brief historical narratives typically found on these markers are redacted except for the prepositions. The typeface changes, too, with those cast in New York State set in a slim, sans-serif font and those from Southern California set in a classical serif font. Creating a schism between the vintage wood and its casting, each relief is colored in monochromatic pastels such as gray, beige, and aquamarine. Doubtful of how these stories are told, Jacoby has removed the majority of information to show the latent affects of design and language on history and site. What is left is expressly formal. Material language and graphic type, words – “until,” “or,” “in,” “with,” “since,” “amid,” “of,” etc. – that position a subject in space or time. *Accents* have lost the persuasiveness of fact.

On all of the door handles, coins are inlaid at irregular intervals over the metallic surface. They match a handle's glossy finish: nickels for nickel-plating and pennies for copper-plating. Jacoby describes his process as “setting up finish options” so he can “shop my own work.” The coins are outmoded, out of date, or misprinted. Each handle seems to contain a fragment of a larger collection, rather than a thorough taxonomy typical of coin collecting (based on a combination of mint, year, geography, etc.). There is something melancholic about the coins. At one time they were ubiquitous and moved quickly and freely, but now they rest in a state of disillusionment, and are suspended in a half-life between value systems. Is this so different from the mood swings of the market around art's odd commodity? In a similar material purgatory, the x-rays behind the glass freeze images of bodies in place at the moment they would otherwise transgress a door's threshold. The x-rays, the handles, the coins, have all been taken out of financial and historical circulation. Their spectacle is muted and perhaps replaced by another more ubiquitous one. They let human capital circulate.

Appendix

The backside of the New Hampshire state quarter depicts the Old Man of the Mountain, a granite rock formation in the state's White Mountains. From a certain angle a series of five cliffs resemble the profile of a stoic man with a strong chin and brow. The image of the Old Man is ubiquitous in New Hampshire. It appears on highway markers, street signs, license plates, and stamps and in 2000 it was minted onto over 1.1 billion quarters. On the night of May 3, 2003, the Old Man unexpectedly collapsed. New Hampshire continues to use it as a state emblem and the coins are still in circulation. On the quarter, and to the left of the image, the New Hampshire state motto reads, “LIVE FREE OR DIE”. With the loss of the Old Man, there's now more than a billion opportunities to read that statement differently.

-Sam Korman

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