

than it is a sense of absence, silence, and loss. Such melancholic motifs are largely the byproduct of an interest in the erosion of the self in an increasingly administrative, template-based culture, in which identity is increasingly organized according to social-networking models such as Facebook and LinkedIn. These concerns are played out in a practice that comes to resemble kits, which are conceptually and formally predicated on the ready-made. Here, however, the ready-made functions not as an end in itself, but rather as a hypothetical point of departure, which, like all kits, comes replete with a set of (implicit) instructions.

Consider, for example, *Neon Sculpture (unbent)*, 2009. Aggressively banal, the work consists of a collection of unbent neon tubes, partially sticking out of a box lying on the ground. The fact that one of them is illuminated signals their general anxiety to get bent—to be relieved of their muteness and conform to language, any language, regardless of content. A similarly stark and risible sense of surrogacy is foregrounded elsewhere, including Smith's ongoing collaboration with Nikolas Gambaroff. Titled *Nowhere for Nothing (New York Stoop)*, 2007–2010, the duo has recreated a makeshift,

portable wooden stoop that speaks to the disappearance of urban spaces ungoverned by protocols of consumption. Its facsimile presence outside an exhibition space is always complemented by a sculptural element inside the exhibition and a photocopied booklet that documents the history of the interstitial project and each of the stoop's iterations.

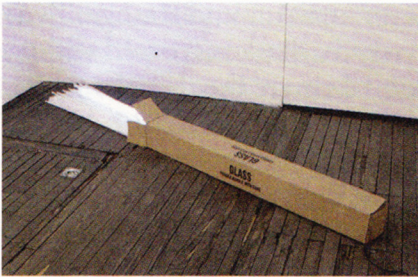
Referencing materials (no more incandescent friends), 2009, fulfills a more discreet elegiac function. Composed of a neatly organized collection of packaged 75-watt incandescent light bulbs placed on a rectangular sheet of black velvet, the work refers to the European ban on incandescent light bulbs (fully effective as of 2012), and the threat this poses to exhibiting specific artworks, including the light-bulb pieces by Felix Gonzales-Torres, for instance. Here, in an administrative twist of logic, national legislation quite literally and indiscriminately proscribes artistic expression. And yet this piece is deeply affecting. Packaged and unused, the indifference posed by these bulbs to the art they will soon be forbidden to represent becomes incontestable, and a whole human drama seems to be unceremoniously trivialized, thus encapsulating a pathos and

harried sense of agency lodged deep within Smith's practice.

—Chris Sharp

MATT SHERIDAN SMITH

Born Red Bank, New Jersey, 1980



Neon Sculpture (unbent), 2009
Neon tubing, transformer, cardboard,
ink, metal, plastic, string
6" x 12" x 96"

The work of Matt Sheridan Smith is no less full of language