

ARTFORUM

Vittorio Santoro

LES COMPLICES

Anwandstraße 9

June 6–June 28

The bright light from two fluorescent strips in the street-facing vitrines of Les Complices activates the silver nitrate foil installed by artist Vittorio Santoro, transforming the curved display windows into two-way mirrors. The gaze of the curious insider looking out is reflected; for the outsider looking in, the venue's interior is veiled in a grayish tint that emphasizes his being at a remove. Two telescopic standing fans in the display windows are pointed toward the exhibition space, but the breeze they blow, blocked by another glass panel, is doomed to forever circulate the no-man's-land demarcated by the vitrines. "You're still here. You're still here," a man's voice affirms dispassionately. Part of Santoro's exhibition "Three Attempts to Avoid the Inevitable," the installation *You Are Still Here, Assisted Version* (all works 2008) is emblematic of the artist's interest in exploring what he calls the "breaks, splits, asymmetrical polarities," "interferences," and "filters"—in essence, the sites of innovation—in linguistic practice. In a nearby drawing, *To Be Eloquent at the Use of Silence, January–May 2008*, the work's title appears in block letters on an expansive white page. The time-based text, traced over and over for a period of five months, transfixes the viewer: Its letters seem to take tangible form, emerging from behind the clouds of smudged graphite billowing around them. The reiterative "You're still here," meanwhile, is instead an impatient nudge toward the exit. Thus the viewer is caught in perpetual hesitation: "Should I stay or should I go?"

In an adjacent room, the two-channel video installation *Discrepancy II* is projected on wooden panels covered in chain link. Two sheets of wax paper drift aimlessly, one carrying the phrase NOWHERE IS BETTER THAN HERE and the other, ANYWHERE IS BETTER THAN HERE. The videos end with newspaper front pages dated October 6, 2000, that report the Belgrade uprising and Slobodan Milosevic's surrender. Santoro's practice sifts through the acquired normality of the seemingly unremarkable—fences, mirrors, windows, fans, pop songs, Hollywood films, fluorescent lights, newspaper headlines—to draw attention to "the inevitable": the multitude of contradictory and ambiguous meanings superimposed, layered, and interwoven in our everyday use of language.

— Emily Verla Bovino



To Be Eloquent at the Use of Silence, January–May 2008, graphite on paper, 68 1/2 x 49".