

## LOUCHE OPS

Sam Cottington  
*Ef*

31 January - 16 March

Louche Ops is proud to present Sam Cottington's *Ef*.

*Ef* is an arrangement of art objects and architectural alterations that situate and will be situated by a series of four plays. The plays will be performed in the space during and surpassing the exhibition's duration.

In Cottington's most recently published collection of writings, *Phone Plays*, the characters perform into their phones or, at least, perform while holding phones up to their heads. The scripts represent what are ostensibly half-conversations, even though each monologue includes the entirety of what is written on the page. Time feels distended, partially because the experience of listening to a stranger speak on the phone is a shrinking feature of the experience of public space. The ubiquity of telephones, within reach at almost every moment of waking life, is countered by the paradoxical obsolescence of their initial use as devices meant to enable one to audibly speak and listen to others in the present tense. That contradiction points to the tension of what has been bartered for in the legislating of contemporary definitions of technological proximity; self representational communication having undergone a transformation from an oral and aural activity into visual, transmissible data. *Phone Plays* evoke a theater of humanity squirming against its own objectification while simultaneously stepping into it.

Cottington's plays avoid territorial contradistinction from performance art. They're frequently written as monologues, in a manner that refuses to suggest a disavowal of the audience's presence, comprehending that this places the possibility of the soliloquy into the category of illusionism, if not rendering it altogether moot. And while his sculptures, paintings and architectural interventions inevitably operate as theatrical props, to some degree, from having been performed *around*, they also act as sources and cues for behavioral tendencies from which the scripts emerge. The writing and the plastic objects mirror each other's operations through fragmentary imbuelement and from leaning into the reflexivity of noun and verb regarding stage, paint, play. The relative exception of theater in the space of visual art might initially produce more language than the artworks, but for Cottington the object of the theater and the theater of the object are necessarily indistinguishable. It's a work that's descriptively generative rather than explanatory or completionist.

The plays written for this exhibit consider the language of ghosts. In so much of the literature where they are present, the voices of ghosts function as a device to move the plot, under an assumption that their primary compulsion is to communicate with the living. Cottington imagines their motivation to language differently, as an echoic loop of displaced interiorities. These voices converge as something other than a will to return or to communicate with the living. Instead it's more like necromantic futurity, the erotic friction of non-being, continuity without reproduction. The sculptural interventions in the space, likewise, abstain from the anthropocentric fantasy that all objects yearn to be accessed.

When one attempts to consider the immeasurable bodies of time that precede birth and follow death, it becomes apparent that life is only a brief spasm of activity, a cameo on a wave. The living are but tourists in a universe of latent passage.

As the inception of this exhibit arose from a conversation about haunted materials it made sense that the plays would unfold without exact regard to the temporal structure of the exhibition. The first play *On* will be performed during the opening, *Monika* in early March, while *James* and *Alex* at other times later in the year.

James Krone