

ARTFORUM

Sam Lipp

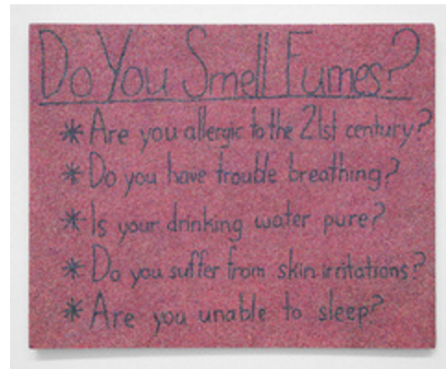
BODEGA

167 Rivington Street, Lower Level East
September 10–October 16

At Yany's Beauty Salon on Rivington Street, a handful of mostly Hispanic workers can be seen spraying hair products and administering heating regimens over casual chatter, while a distinct trace of aerosol and burnt keratin wafts outside. Next door, beside Yany's magenta street signage, a work by Sam Lipp, *Do You Smell Fumes?* (all works 2016), displays its inquisitive title in electric green neon. Inside the gallery, the same thought becomes an aesthetic motif, interrogating notions of purity as they extend to common understandings of wellness, security, and normalized social relations. But, in doing so, the project seems to gloss over another important consideration: How are these ideas socially positioned?

Most of the other works on view, foamcore surfaces painted many times over in acrylic with brushes and steel wool, resemble, in equal parts, bokeh and pixelated grain. One composition echoes its probing question along with some scrawled text reading, "Are you allergic to the 21st century? Do you have trouble breathing?" These lines nod to Todd Haynes's 1995 drama *Safe*, in which the life of an affluent San Fernando Valley housewife, played by Julianne Moore, unravels as she develops MCS—multiple chemical sensitivity—a debilitating psychosomatic aversion to many everyday chemicals distributed through global capitalism.

In another acrylic work, *Paris Is Paris*, a male with his torso, cock, and balls exposed rests in bed next to another body—a moment of serene, banal affection. While Lipp importantly investigates the tenuousness of social binaries and their regulatory functions, the project would benefit from acknowledging how these forces serve class relations. An external menace, the cry of fumes, and the formation of conventional partnerships all conjure up ruling-class attitudes toward the working class—after all, doesn't hegemony's very conception suggest power is always under threat?



Sam Lipp, *Do You Smell Fumes?*, 2016,
acrylic on foamcore, 20 x 16".

— Nicolas Linnert