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Liam Gillick and Louise Lawler

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What's most surprising about Liam Gillick and Louise Lawler's first collaboration—for which both artists created separate installations dealing with modernist ideals—is how distinct their work is from the other. Lawler has taken over the walls with a narrow photographic relief that spans the perimeter of the gallery while Gillick has engaged the ceiling, hanging aluminum cutouts of texts abstracted from his hypothetical account of labor relations after the shutdown of a factory. Lawler's friezes are photographs she took of works by Edgar Degas, Gerhard Richter, and Carl Andre at various institutions and then stretched into pure abstractions, printing a narrow band that bisects the center of the gallery's walls.

An awkward but exhilarating spatial parallelism emerges between Gillick's chunks of text and Lawler's rush of colors. With their alternating elements of technical introversion, revision, and crisis, both works trace a spectral history of modernism, from themes of industrial revolution to high modernism, institutional critique, and portents of postmodernism. Where Gillick points to the material and organizational conditions of labor, Lawler looks at the way surplus value extends from the rarified art objects she depicts. Her photographs, removed of representational function, shift the focus from the objects' material existence to their symbolic significance. Formally and conceptually, Lawler's relief demonstrates plasticity and reflexivity, while Gillick's subjects are self-actualized in manifestly readable objects by text itself. The sense of compression created by the heavy narrative and dizzying walls provokes the impulse to draw relational readings between the two. At the same time, their incisive dislocation from each other represses this inclination and suggests that the exhibition—or, what appears as two discrete installations sharing the same space—creates equal opportunity to consider the meaning of production, as it does the production of meaning.