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ARTFORUM

Sadie Benning

CALLICOON FINE ARTS

124 Forsyth Street

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A pair of black-and-white videos of videos constitute the core of this taut and principled exhibition by Sadie Benning. The twenty-eight-minute *In Parts*, 2012, strings together long takes of motion within narrow parameters: A leopard paces tensely in a zoo, penned between rocks and the glass front of its cage; tall grass blows in an empty lot; a 45 rpm record spins on a turntable, scratching out an old soul song. To make *War Credits*, 2007–13, Benning aimed her camera at the closing credits of three Hollywood war movies, then played back the resulting tapes and reshot them until the names became shimmering blocks of illegible white, like redacted intelligence, flaring at intervals into cruise-missile spasms of light. The Pixelvision videos that launched Benning's career in the 1990s worked with visual imprecision too, but there it spoke to intimacy and immediacy, while the present works deal—just as affectingly—in muddles and loops. The unceasing finale that is *War Credits* accentuates the temporal wrinkle between “Mission Accomplished” and *No End in Sight*.



View of “Sadie Benning: *War Credits*,” 2013.

Two smooth-surfaced plaster-on-fiberboard “paintings” subtly echo the videos. The truncated bull’s-eye of *Red and White Painting*, 2013, with sizable gaps between the cells of its four-by-four grid, rhymes not just with a bomber’s sights but also with *War Credits*’ sense of a closed cycle that isn’t graspable in full. The repeated right angles of *Blue and White Painting*, 2013, reprise the constrained motion of *In Parts*, with its lines of varying widths seeming almost to vibrate in place.

Nearby, the fragmentary cuneiform-like carvings of *Jangled Nerves*, 2013, suggest both an ancient code not yet cracked (an untranslated war epic?) and something only partly inscribed. And *untitled (newspaper painting)*, 2010, layers gouache over pages from the *New York Times*. Beneath the blocks of pigment, the newspaper’s record of events is visible only in scraps; yet the events themselves, and their effects, persist.

— *Sara Marcus*