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Late Night Legal Formalities

Gareth James, David Joselit Elizabeth Dee Gallery is pleased to present a collaboration between art historian, David Joselit, and artist, Gareth James. Considering the tendency of commercial galleries to limit the engagement of art historians and critics to reviewing exhibitions or writing catalog essays, *Late Night Legal Formalities*, began as an attempt to deinstrumentalize this relationship. While it is commonplace that artists attend other artists' exhibitions, not just their own, in order to contribute to the intangibles that might make a gallery more than just a warehouse (whether for cynical motives of self-advancement or to contribute to a discursive environment) there does not exist the same informal social practice for writers to participate. Anxieties about objective distance tend, understandably, to rule such associations out.

This project began with James' request that the Elizabeth Dee Gallery commission a writer for a short text over which they would have no editorial control. The subject of the text would not be determined in advance, except in so far as the writer would attend every exhibition during 2005, and that this mode of attention would generate the writing of a text. This text would not be distributed in any conventional manner, where the criteria of publicity requires the maximum distribution of the text in order to garner the maximum return on the investment. Instead, it would be presented for a period of one week in the gallery at the beginning of the following season, in a manner bearing a greater similarity to the temporary public appearance of a work of art. But it is not a work of art. David Joselit was invited to take part, accepting the atypically reductive circumscription of his labor as a writer, but only with the proviso that the problem of a text bereft of its normal capacities for dissemination be returned to James, as the originator of the problem. *Late Night Legal Formalities* then, with a detour through Lars von Trier's film, *Manderlay*, is the result of this exchange of provocations. *David Joselit worked as a curator at The Institute of Contemporary Art in Boston from 1983-1989 and is currently Professor in the History of Art Department at Yale. Joselit is author of Infinite Regress: Marcel Duchamp 1910-1941 (MIT Press, 1998) and American Art Since 1945 (Thames and Hudson, World of Art Series, 2003), and he writes regularly on contemporary art and culture. His book Feedback: Television Against Democracy is forthcoming. A British artist and writer based in New York, Gareth James has exhibited widely throughout the United States and Europe. He is a co-founder of the artist run co-operative gallery, Orchard, and of Scorched Earth, a magazine examining the historical and contemporary status of drawing.*