

ARTFORUM

Adrian Piper

ELIZABETH DEE GALLERY

545 West 20th Street

March 1–April 16



View of "Adrian Piper: Everything." From left: *Everything #18*, 2007; *Everything #5*, 2004.

Adrian Piper's inaugural solo exhibition at Elizabeth Dee—her first in New York in nearly a decade—meditates on the phrase (printed on most pieces) EVERYTHING WILL BE TAKEN AWAY, which is the linchpin of her series "Everything," 2003—. A limited-edition mailer for this exhibition contains Alexander Solzhenitsyn's proclamation, from his 1968 novel *The First Circle*, "Once you have taken everything away from a man, he is no longer in your power. He is free." Piper holds a doctoral degree in philosophy and is a lifelong student of yoga; Solzhenitsyn's paradoxical assertion resonates.

At the entrance to the exhibition, viewers encounter a mirror engraved with the phrase. By looking, one is positioned within its realm of possibility: What will emerge once everything is gone? Who is taking from whom? Is this a threat or a promise of yogic detachment?

Piper makes judicious use of the personally and politically infused Minimalist and Conceptual strategies she has been honing since the early 1960s. A wallpaper installation, *Everything #19.1*, 2007, is printed with an AP account of the weeklong, racially charged torture of Megan Williams last year in rural West Virginia. This is flanked by two others, one featuring images of six assassinated political leaders and the other the Bill of Rights and the US Constitution, both in grays so muted they appear partially erased. In the latter, an engraved Plexiglas panel has been inserted into a cutaway section of the gallery wall, revealing the bricks and rubble beyond. Shaped like a door or a tombstone, it perfectly matches the pitch of Piper's enigmatic mantra, simultaneously evoking elegy and hope, anticipation and fear of the unknown.

—Amoreen Armetta