

Danica Phelps

ZACH FEUER GALLERY (LFL)

530 West 24th Street

June 12–July 18

Danica Phelps has been charting her activities and expenditures for over ten years. But now, she says in her open letter—*cum*—press release, she's done with the meticulous lists and color-coded financial system; she's done, in effect, with accounting for the past. "Material Recovery" is the result: a transitional exhibition that bids farewell to cataloguing and even, with her creation of a stripe-painting factory that allows buyers to purchase paintings created by a team of assistants at fifteen cents a stripe (minimum order: fifty thousand stripes), releases control of production. As an exhibition, it is disappointingly loose, but as a manifestation of a significant moment in an artist's career, it provides the exhilaration of standing at a threshold.

The critical departure is the "purging" (as Phelps puts it) of text from her work, for the interplay between words and graphic marks has been the very mechanism of her sophisticated blend of abstraction and narration. It would be difficult to see her forgo that complexity for her line drawings alone. But Phelps clearly isn't quite ready to abandon the word, and its would-be expulsion has resulted in a cacophony of individual letters constructed from the artist's own trash. The setup may be overdetermined (and what isn't in Phelps's work—from the decision to use only letters from her final list to the symbolic mixing of red and green, the colors of her accounting system, into the earth tones of her new "Stripe Paintings"?), but it is also sincere. *MAYBE IF I DON'T WRITE IT DOWN, MAYBE IT WILL CHANGE* reads one wall. It is as honest an explanation as one could expect.

— Rachel Churner

Churner, Rachel. "Critic Picks: Danica Phelps," *artforum.com*, July 2008.

ARTFORUM



Letters from the last list (January 24, 2007), 2008, trash. Installation view.

Art in Review

Danica Phelps

Zach Feuer
530 West 24th Street, Chelsea
Through July 18

For the last decade Danica Phelps has chronicled her personal and financial lives with an exhaustive system of lists and charts accompanied by diagrams of colored stripes. In this show, her fifth at the gallery, she clears the decks. "I would rather remember and record with a more selective memory," she writes in a statement.

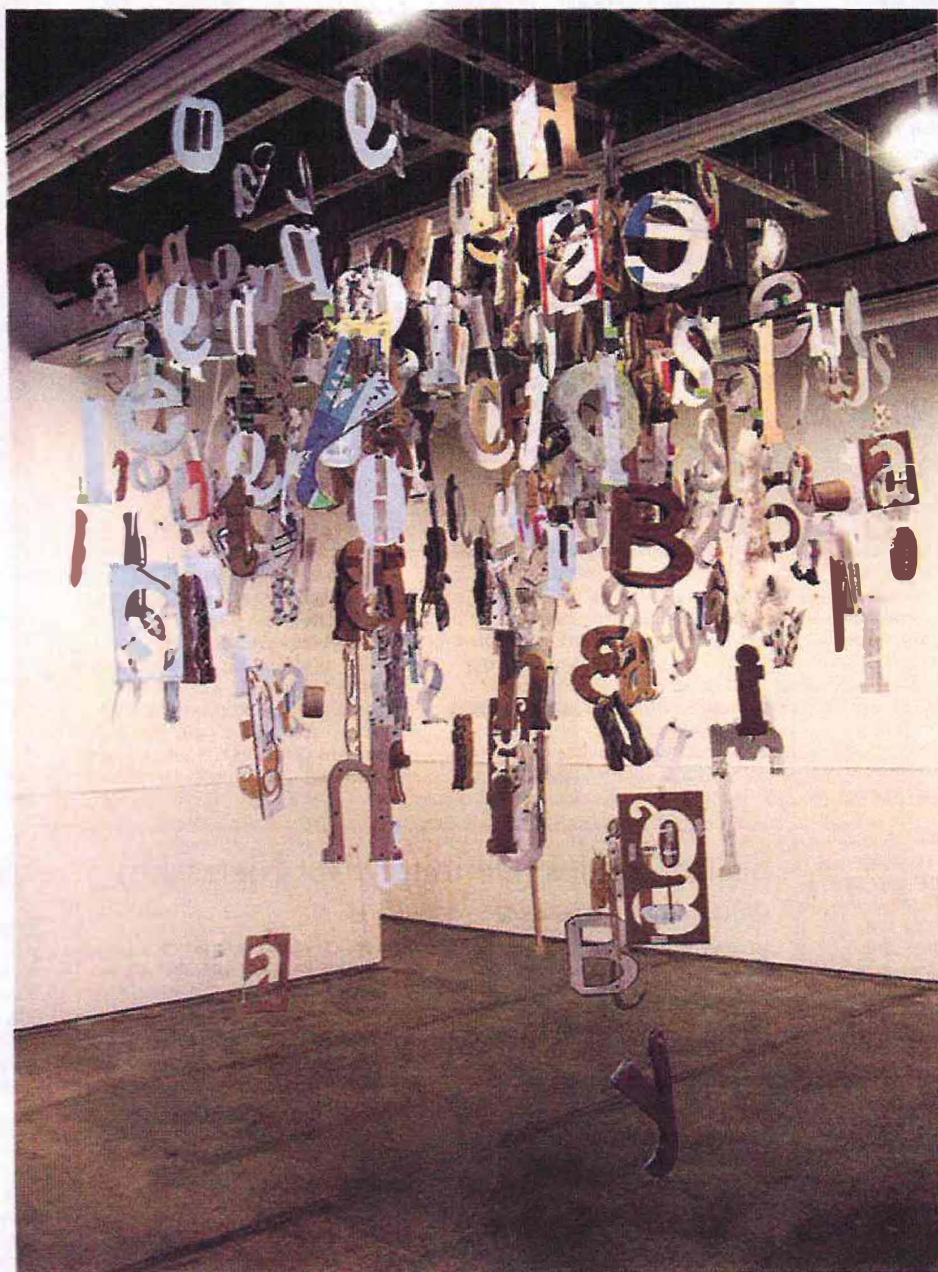
Only major life events — most recently a pregnancy achieved through in vitro fertilization in India — make the cut. Ms. Phelps describes her experience in India in a charming series of scroll-like drawings and prints. Self-portraits, hospital scenes, tourist landscapes and snippets of Mughal miniature painting are all entangled in a fine descriptive line.

In a kind of apology for abandoning writing, Ms. Phelps sculpts letters out of paper from her trash. She displays them as mobiles, floor sculptures and abstract wall texts. ("It made me too sad to write down every fight we had.") These works are eye-catching but juvenile.

Ms. Phelps may have purged the words from her paintings, but the stripes remain — with an interesting twist necessitated by her increasingly complex finances. While making a multi-panel painting representing her mortgage, Ms. Phelps hired other artists to help her paint 627,000 stripes (one for each dollar owed to the bank); she was then inspired to outsource all her painting to a "stripe factory." Related paintings and ephemera, in the back room, highlight this new practice.

With this two-part show Ms. Phelps makes a complete break between love and money, diaries and bank statements. She has earned it.

KAREN ROSENBERG



PHOTOGRAPHS FROM ZACH FEUER GALLERY

Danica Phelps's "Letters From the Last List (January 24, 2007)," a mobile made of paper from her trash, and a detail from the larger work "IVF in India," below, at Zach Feuer Gallery.

