

SAM LEWITT

Sam Lewitt stages the increasingly tenuous and disembodied nature of data and information by investigating the raw materials that comprise data-maintenance technologies, including instruments of data storage and transfer such as printing-press blocks, computers, touch-screen devices, and magnetized credit cards. Lewitt often uses the familiar but opaque components of computers and touch-screen devices that have been stripped of their function: disemboweled circuit boards, magnetized mechanical components, engraving acid, or the ferromagnetic fluid used to form liquid seals around drive shafts in hard disks. By pointing to the unstable nature of these materials, Lewitt's works also indicate the inherent instability of the global systems upheld by these components. He frequently uses digital techniques and synthetic materials to give objects and images an implicit historical provenance or a patina of nostalgia.

In his *Paper Citizens* series (2010–11), for example, Lewitt takes high-definition digital photographs of individual printing-press blocks, virtually collaging them so that the final images resemble assembled printing plates, even though the blocks were never assembled that way in tangible space. In the *Test Subjects* series (2010), Lewitt coats new, reflective consumer items such as an Ikea mirror and a helicopter pilot's helmet with artificially produced "Arizona test dust," used by auto manufacturers and the military to wear down machinery to the point of mechanical breakdown (a label indicating the dust grade is affixed to the plinth on which the object rests). In these works, both the items and their decay are ostensibly new, and the presentation is "dishonest"; yet the language of degeneration is deployed as an allegory that touches on the production of history and the instrumentalization of the authoritative image.



Sam Lewitt, *Debit Display*, 2012. Surplus hard drive magnets, read/write spindle component, demagnetized debit card, $3 \frac{5}{8} \times 7 \times 4$ in. ($9.2 \times 19 \times 10.2$ cm)



Sam Lewitt, *Fluid Employment*, 2012. Detail. Ferromagnetic liquid poured bi-weekly over plastic sheets and magnetic elements, fans; dimensions variable; each sheet, 48 × 48 in. (121.9 × 121.9 cm)



Park McArthur, *How to Get a Wheelchair over Sand*, 2009. With Ben Fain and David Prince. Temporary installation of wood, bamboo mats, concrete, sand; dimensions variable. Saugatuck, MI