

Christine Hill at Ronald Feldman

Just inside the entrance to *Home Office*, a recent performance/exhibition by Christine Hill, a time clock was affixed to the gallery wall. Used to stamp invitations to the show's opening reception, this device was also a fitting emblem for Hill's creative enterprise. Known for her deliberate confusions of art and commerce, Hill founded *Volksboutique* in Berlin in 1996. This is an ongoing one-woman cottage industry that presents productive labor as a form of art. *Home Office* offered a glimpse into the day-to-day operation of this business, as well as several prototypes for Hill's entrepreneurial ventures.

Tucked into a corner of the main gallery, Hill's temporary office was defined by a red linoleum floor, a large wooden desk and other props, including a few potted plants. Here the artist presided over the exhibition, assuming the tasks of reception, accounting, public relations, production and management, depending on the day of the week. For each of these roles Hill wore a different costume and utilized specific office supplies that were stored nearby in five custom-made steamer trunks. Though a cold kept Hill bundled in a nondescript sweater on the day I visited, the objects in the trunks provided detailed inventories of her various corporate identities. *Reception Portable Office* (all works 2003), for example, contained a floral print dress, a candy dish, nail polish and a desk placard that read "Ms. Hill." When performing managerial tasks, the artist preferred the name "Christine E. Hill," wore a matching corduroy skirt and vest

and carried a black briefcase.

The precise nature of Hill's daily exertions was clarified in a second gallery, where individual displays promoted her products and services. These included *The Volksboutique Reception Piece*, whereby Hill proposes to "enhance the environmental quality in neglected reception areas around the city through artistic intervention." Another venture, *The Volksboutique Professional Organizer*, offers to transform the clutter of one's work or living space into a highly organized, esthetically pleasing "Home Museum." Each of these services may be purchased or underwritten by interested parties.

Throughout the show, hand-painted posters encouraged productivity with phrases like, "Make the Most of What You've Got!" When coupled with Hill's deadpan performance of ordinary clerical tasks, these enthusiastic slogans could be read as ironic critiques of cubicle culture. But Hill, who chatted with curious visitors at her desk, claims a scrappy sincerity for her work, which mines her potential to make art (and money) through everyday labors.

—Matthew Guy Nichols



View of Christine Hill performing in *The Volksboutique Home Office* (*Workspace Prototype*), 2003; at Ronald Feldman.