

# ARTFORUM



View of “Passive Collect”

## “Passive Collect”

CHIN’S PUSH

4917 York Boulevard

July 11–August 10, 2014

Spot-welded above the roll-down shutters at Chin’s Push, like an old-timey emblem, is a sheet-steel replica of the Markets Data section of the *Financial Times* by artist Morgan Canavan. The illegibility of its raw figures is rendered as a sculptural pun—ticking digits accrete into heavy, creased matter. The work advertises the problem of data—how to display it, how to draw meaning from its abstractions—and flags the anxiety underwriting “Passive Collect,”

a group show curated by artist Jesse Stecklow. Moving into the gallery, for example, one finds (*CAS Registrations: Siladroxylal and Plus Hydroxycitronellal*) . . ., 2013–, for which Sean Raspet submitted new molecules to the Chemical Abstracts Service database. He then bound the CAS readout in a portfolio and fixed it to the wall on a retractable leash. This awkward workplace presentation is a brutally physical concession for molecules that, if produced, would be perfumes.

With the exception of Raspet’s, the works in this exhibition are simple combines, dimming the notion of passivity by accumulating without intent. Carlos Reyes’s *Not Yet Titled*, 2014, features pink oyster mushrooms sprouting from bags of substrate. A few ambient items—a crusty plate, a roll of flypaper—decorate the gallery, “passively collecting” dirt, spores, and flies. Like the artworks, these objects paraphrase the exhibition’s subtitle: “A Group Exhibition Organized Around Contemporary Notions of Data Collection.” “Data” almost means “stuff” here, yet the subtitle ends pitched on NSA-induced paranoia. Is calling mushrooms “data” the kind of semiotic creep that might conceal a darker purpose—like extending “drones” to cover RC helicopters? Who takes responsibility for all this data? Is data neutral now?