

ARTFORUM

Roman Signer

SWISS INSTITUTE

495 Broadway, 3rd floor

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Fans of Roman Signer's "experiments" will not be disappointed by his new antics in "Four Rooms, One Artist," his latest exhibition, wherein inanimate objects are subjected to unpredictable natural forces. Presented as a three-channel video projection, *Shirt*, 2010; *Two Umbrellas, Iceland*, 2009; and *Office Chair*, 2010, are set in a forest, a meadow, and a stream, respectively. The results—a ghostlike collared shirt fluttering through tall trees; a pair of conjoined umbrellas dancing in gale-force winds; and a swivel chair spinning haplessly in a gentle current—are droll and poignant portraits of typically unremarkable objects. Signer's pointed recontextualization of these humdrum items effectively humanizes them, creating a cast of surprisingly charming characters.



View of "Four Rooms, One Artist," 2010. From left: *Shirt*, 2010; *Two Umbrellas, Iceland*, 2009.

Also on view are three amusingly enigmatic installations, all 2010, in which Signer challenges expectations of where his art begins and ends (both physically and conceptually). *Cinema*, presented in the gallery's main room, consists of a film projection in front of several tidy rows of chairs. One empty seat in the rear rocks back and forth, vying for attention and distracting from what initially appears to be the main attraction—the film. (Actually, it is what Signer calls a *restenfilm* [residual film], an edited composite of cuts from various failed projects.) By activating the chair and screening what is essentially a blooper reel, Signer recasts the venue (the chairs and by extension the gallery) and the artwork (the film) as equally important—or equally trivial—elements of the installation. Similarly, *Piano* (a player piano of sorts made with Ping-Pong balls rattling across piano strings set in motion by oscillating fans) and *Waiting for Harold Edgerton* (an apple dangling from the ceiling of a sealed-off annex, visible only through a small window) raise questions about the relationships between "art" and its immediate environment in Signer's work.

— Mara Hoberman