

ARTCAT

Rape New York at Invisible-Exports

By S.C.Squibb | Events, Upcoming | June 23, 2009



Jana Leo, *tablebook* via invisible-exports.com

The relationship between art and trauma has a long and difficult history. There has rarely been a higher goal articulated for artistic practice than to serve the guardian of traumatic memory. Art possess, so the thinking goes, the only appropriate vocabulary for attempting to approach, articulate and reckon with the lasting legacy of trauma. This is thought particularly true with regards large-scale atrocities affecting millions of people, as in the case of genocide or displacement. Personal or singular trauma, however, presents a different set of circumstances, and it is precisely these that Jana Leo puts under the microscope with her show *Rape New York* opening June 26 at **Invisible-Exports**.

Soon after arriving in New York, Leo was held captive in her apartment and raped. Here she presents the archive of all documentation relating to her experience and the resulting legal cases that followed. They include, "photographs from her emergency visit to the hospital, police reports, crime scene photographs, [and] notes from her therapist," among other items. By law, none of these documents can be reproduced or even seen without Leo's consent, thus, anyone attending the show has to present photo ID and request specific materials. The significance of this is clear, though it promises to be quite difficult in practice. Leo is placing the question of responsibility front and center, responsibility to the work, to the artist, and to her own experience. What is the appropriate role of the public, the artist, or the work itself in these circumstances?

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