

## SIREN BEHIND GLASS: ON PILSON'S *INTERREGNA*

Jeffrey Anderson

When we think of photographs of the modern office and its workers, Lee Friedlander comes to mind— the commissioned projects at Cray Computer and The Dreyfus Corporation collected in the book "At Work": a series of formalist exercises, the clean lines of the modern office lingered over, while the workers stare vacantly. . . . With John Pilson's *Interregna*, we are dealing with something different. Like many in New York at the time of the internet bubble, Pilson found himself behind a desk at a large investment bank in the financial district. His shift was the weekend, which meant round-the-clock stints in a powered-down building— a mostly deserted space, half light in the hallways, only one elevator active. What we first see when we look at his photographs from that time are the moments of bleary looking-away— the subjective gaze hovering, dazed, over what happens to be nearby, then expanding out into the trek down the hall to the bathroom, the coffee break, the approach of night, rubbing the eyeballs clean. . . . The title of the work, *Interregna*, means "between the kings" or "between the reigns"— the period where authority is suspended, the few moments before it is reestablished.

As the mention of Friedlander might suggest, we've seen this before, in films even more than photographs— corporate America, the office, the alienation. What is different this time around? First, what we might initially call a *noir* element: not the jagged shafts of light against a living black that is the hallmark of German Expressionism, but a neutral, abstract palette of grays that blurs the usual signposts and captures the vertigo of a place that, like the larger world outside the windows, is very far from anything comfortable or homelike.