

Review

“The Dotted Line”

★★★★☆☆

[Rotunda Gallery](#), through Dec 21

Administrative drudgery might seem an unlikely focus for a show, yet curator Colby Chamberlain manages to fill an office-size exhibition space with paper trails generated by ten artists. Work in “The Dotted Line” engages aspects of social, political and institutional critique with humor, but the most powerful pieces also suggest a certain sadness.

Michael Rakowitz’s *Return* largely takes the form of correspondence and receipts generated by the artist’s efforts to rekindle his grandfather’s import-export business, now 40 years defunct. Rakowitz’s efforts to ship dates from Iraqi orchards prove futile with the majority of them being held up at customs and spoiling as a consequence. Noting the ridiculousness of delaying fruit for national security reasons, Rakowitz points out in a wall text that the dates become a metaphor for Iraqis being denied refuge in the United States.

Filip Noterdaeme’s *Membership Department of the Homeless Museum*—which he runs out of his Brooklyn Heights abode—challenges the notion that museums must have fixed locations or even collections. Here, a “department” comprising nothing but forms is transported to the Rotunda Gallery, where potential HoMu members are asked to pay their fees directly to the homeless.

In yet another take on administration, Jill Magid engages a forensic artist to create her likeness based on a short questionnaire and a CAT scan. We don’t know whether the creepy result looks like Magid, since she hasn’t provided a photo of herself, but such details matter little. Like the much of show, her piece achieves a certain poetry in its documentation of the absurd.

—Paddy Johnson



Michael Rakowitz, *Return*

Photograph: Courtesy Rotunda Gallery