

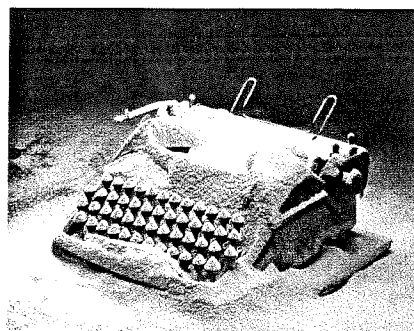
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Rodney Graham 303 Gallery, through Jun 19 (see Chelsea).

In David Cronenberg's film version of William Burroughs's 1959 book, *Naked Lunch*, the author's drug-addled alter ego snorts powdered insecticide, then suffers paranoid visions in which the keys on his typewriter mutate into grotesque bugs with talking sphincters. A more staid fantasy about writing—and writer's block—is now on view at 303 Gallery in Rodney Graham's film *Rheinmetall/Victoria 8* (2003), a literal depiction of Burroughs's "soft machine" (as another of his novels is titled).

Graham cast a 1930s German Rheinmetall as the star of his hallucinatory short film. The typewriter is pictured in pristine condition from several angles until a soft white powder begins to flutter down on the machine. Within minutes, the particles form miniature peaks on the keys and, as the flurries accelerate, the typewriter is completely hidden under a mound of white powder. When the blizzard subsides, the burial is complete. The 10-minute film loop runs on a massive Italian projector from the 1950s (the *Victoria 8* of the work's title), creat-



Rodney Graham, still from *Rheinmetall/Victoria 8*, 2003.

ing an installation in which two outmoded machines—one on film, the other in the gallery—are bound together in an endless, circular dialogue.

The "snow" in *Rheinmetall/Victoria 8*, less granular than sand and fluffier than confectioners' sugar, is undoubtedly meant to evoke drugs. (Mind-altering substances have figured in Graham's previous work; in 2001 he reenacted LSD inventor Dr. Albert Hoffman's 1943 bicycle "trip" home, after the scientist first dosed himself with the experimental drug.) The clattering projector and the silent typewriter keys are Graham's continuing homage to mid-20th-century counter-cultures—in this case, what Burroughs called the "metallic cocainebop" of *Naked Lunch*.—Eva Diaz