

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
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Center for Contemporary Printmaking Presents

Text Messages

Sunday, September 11, 2022 – October 30, 2022
Grace Ross Shanley Gallery



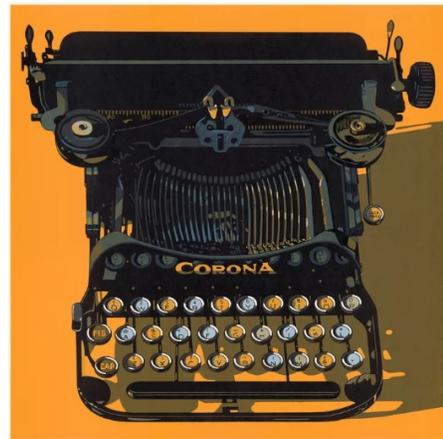
Images from left to right: Shepard Fairey, *Station to Station 4*, 2012; Ben Beres, *I'm....*, 2022; Mel Bochner, *Power*, 2010

NORWALK, CONN. – The Center for Contemporary Printmaking (CCP) presents *Text Messages* on view from **Sunday, September 11, 2022 through Sunday, October 30, 2022** in the Center's **Grace Ross Shanley Gallery** at our main studio building in Mathews Park in Norwalk. The exhibition includes prints that incorporate text and language as an integral part of the subject matter of their work, though in different presentation structures and for different purposes from artist to artist. Artists included in the exhibition are: Ben Beres, Mel Bochner, Robert Cottingham, Lesley Dill, Shepard Fairey, Glenn Ligon, Edie Overturf, and Lucas Samaras.

In these prints, text takes a prominent role as the subject itself or the most compelling element of the depicted object and may appear as individual characters, words, or partial phrases.

Viewers will encounter words and language in shifting presentations: as a bold design feature, a playful juxtaposition of syllables pushing and pulling definitions, full statements or messages, or as a conceptual thought experiment. Some artists introduce text through embedded signage or as a companion to the subject; some create their own, original text, while others quote from historic authors. And other artists lift their text completely off the printed page and transform it into something new on glass or fabric.

Text Messages brings together prints from both early career artists and more established artists, having them almost literally in dialogue with each other in the gallery. The exhibition opens with prints by two well-established figures in modern and contemporary art, Glenn Ligon and Robert Cottingham. Cottingham is known for his photorealist depictions of commercial signage from across the United States, storefronts, moviehouse marquees, street signs, and railroad cars. Ligon's work explores American history, literature, and society through his conceptual practice, frequently making use of texts by noted



Robert Cottingham, *Corona*, 2015, Woodcut and chine collé



Glenn Ligon, *Debris Field II*, 2015, Aquatint with sugarlift, drypoint, and scraper

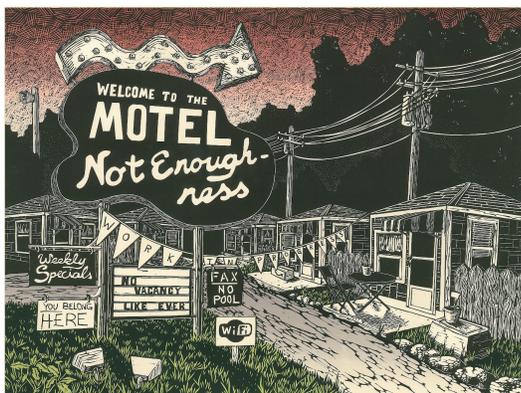
writers and cultural figures, including James Baldwin, Zora Neale Hurston, Gertrude Stein, Richard Pryor, and Sojourner Truth. As this is an exhibition focused on text and language, the story begins with a common character set and vocabulary. From Cottingham we have *Corona*, a larger-than-life representation of the original machine for writing in the modern age from which both facts and fiction have emerged. Flanking it are a pair of prints by Ligon titled

Debris Field I and *Debris Field II*. Ligon's two prints present the viewer with the detritus of language as evidenced by representative bits of typed letter shapes, the smeared and broken leavings of a final masterpiece, the remains discarded after the final edit. One can imagine the typewriter spitting these unwanted characters off to the side until the unnamed author decides on the final words.

Transitioning through the exhibition into more direct uses of language, Robert Cottingham and Edie Overturf make use of signs as their vehicle for incorporating text within their subject matter. But while Cottingham renders signs as symbols of Americana with uncanny verisimilitude, most pronounced in *Frankfurters-Hamburgers* and *Women-Girls*, Overturf's signs appear within a



Robert Cottingham, *Frankfurters-Hamburgers*, 1980, Color lithograph



Edie Overturf, *Yes But Also No*, 2022, linocut and screenprint, image courtesy of the artist

vaguely familiar American landscape straddling reality and fantasy by combining familiar signage with original text by the artist, providing biting commentary on the scene as seen in prints such as *Yes But Also No*, and *Cracks*.

Other included artists such as Mel Bochner and Ben Beres focus on the words themselves as the focus of their prints. Beres makes the word or words the entire subject of the print through beautiful, textural handling of the letters. In works such as *Pleasure* and *Tender*, he breaks a word into pieces, wrapping the text to begin another line at an unexpected point in the word. The resulting segmented presentation of that word may form two or more unrelated words, making the viewer read and reread the text, sometimes resulting in different or contradictory meanings between the

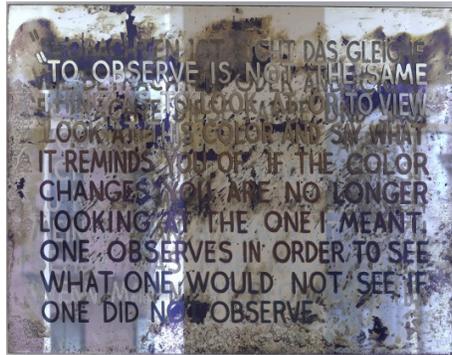
word segments and the completed word. It takes work to read even the simplest texts that Beres presents, but it's an enjoyable exercise playing with language in this way.

While Beres builds in wordplay by breaking down a single word or phrase across multiple lines, in his prints *Power* and *Silence*, Bochner carries the viewer vertically down a column of

common words and phrases ever-increasing in their potency until the final phrases become peppered with offensive or hurtful language. While all of Beres's text is entirely his own,



Ben Beres, *Pleasure*, 2017, Sugarlift, aquatint, softground, and chine-collé, image courtesy of the artist

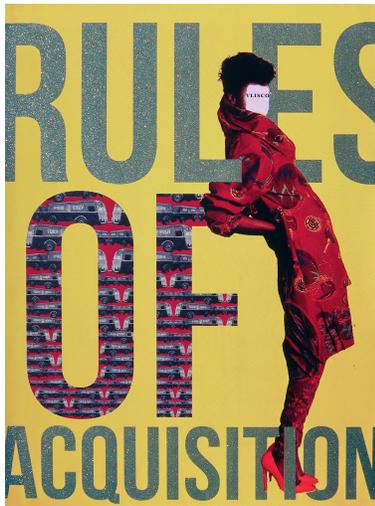


Mel Bochner, *If the Color Changes*, 2018, Etched and silvered glass, image courtesy of Two Palms

Bochner also uses phrases from pop culture, as seen in *That's All Folks*, or historic text in *If the Color Changes...*, creating a complex conceptual experience using a mirror to represent a German text by Wittgenstein, a treatise on color, in an English translation on one side with the German on the other.

Humanity's importance as the originator of words as a primary communication device has not been ignored among the works presented. Artists such as April Bey and Lesley Dill remind us that language is a primary means of communicating ideas between people for information, persuasion, and creative expression, among other uses. Anonymous figures or isolated garments give hints to the speakers or representatives of these messages for which they serve as interlocutors or suggest themselves as a mouthpiece for the author/artist.

April Bey announces in glitter-filled all caps the titles of mandates for the rule of law in her Afro-Futurist world inviting viewers to follow the lead of beautiful, yet faceless, Vlisco advertising models. The sci-fi references in *Colonial Swag in Space (Ferengi Feminism)* and



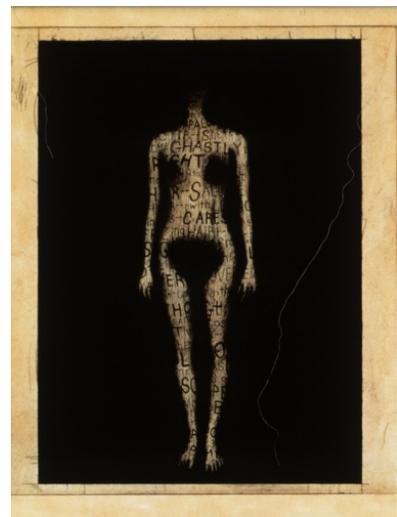
April Bey, *Colonial Swag in Space (Rules of Acquisition)*, 2019, Screenprint with glitter

Colonial Swag in Space (Rules of Acquisition) confidently take on a new association with Bey’s vision of the future with hope for an informed, independent society recognizing the value of female empowerment and commercial labor contributions.

Lesley Dill also connects words with a speaker or audience through figural references, but she reveals the words of poet Emily Dickinson in a more obscured manner, undulating among the folds of a dress in *Hummingbird Dress*, illegibly transcribed in black across a shadowed female figure on a

Word Made Flesh (FRONT), or through direct quotation while surrounding a shape suggesting a figure as in *Poet*. In these prints, Dill’s deliberate and subtle choices for how to represent the words of Dickinson complement the well-known reclusive personality of the poet, sometimes visible and at other times hidden away.

While most of the artists’ work in the exhibition is of two-dimensional, ink on paper prints, some of the artists explore three dimensional objects or artist books. Edie Overturf and Lucas Samaras are represented by book projects. Overturf has two handmade books in the exhibition, one a “Do-si-do” book which opens in one direction, then reads differently when opened on the reverse side. Overturf’s second book is a butterfly accordion book which, when closed, begins as an origami-like small square, unfolding outwards into a wide, more rectangular print. Lucas Samaras’s *Book* is akin to a board book, but within the pages are removable printed



Lesley Dill, *A Word Made Flesh (FRONT)*, 1994, Photo-lithograph, color etching and aquatint on tea-stained mulberry paper, hand-sewn on buff wove paper

smaller pages, flaps, and other narrative inconsistencies giving the work a dimension more consistent with a combination of



Ben Beres, *Another Day*, 2021, Sand carved, hand blown glass

individual masterpieces contained within a



Edie Overturf, *Peaks and Valleys*, 2021, Butterfly accordion book, Linocut, woodcut and letterpress, image courtesy of the artist

book-like package. Ben Beres also works in three-dimensions, having trained and taught at the Pilchuk Glass School in addition to his printmaking. Beres uses the process of vitreography for some of his more recent prints, using a glass plate for etching the text, which is then inked and used as the printing matrix. he artist also etches words onto the exterior of glass vessels, appearing to be in reverse from the outside, as one would expect for pulling a paper print, but instead of using ink

and paper to reveal the etched image, when lighted from inside the glass vessel projects the words outwards onto another surface, thereby “printing” the text in shadow on a wall.

CCP is pleased to share these works with our community in Norwalk and will hold an **opening reception**, free and open to the public, on **Sunday, September 11, 2022 from 2:00 – 4:00 PM** in the Grace Ross Shanley Gallery. Visitors are welcome to wear a mask if preferred, but they are not required.

The **Grace Ross Shanley Gallery** is located in the Center for Contemporary Printmaking situated in Mathews Park at 299 West Avenue, Norwalk, Connecticut. It is open to the public Monday through Saturday, 9-5 PM, and Sundays 12 – 5 PM. Admission is free. Please consult the website for details (<http://www.contemprints.org>).

ABOUT THE CENTER FOR CONTEMPORARY PRINTMAKING:

The Center for Contemporary Printmaking (CCP) is a nonprofit 501(c)(3) organization founded in 1995 and is dedicated to the art of the print: intaglio, lithography, monotype, silkscreen, woodblock printing, paperworks, book arts, and digital arts. Housed in a 19th-century stone carriage house, this 5,000-square-foot historical landmark is located at 299 West Avenue in the Mathews Park cultural complex in Norwalk, Connecticut. The Center is dedicated to increasing awareness, knowledge and appreciation for prints and the process of printmaking through exhibitions, publications, educational programs and artist workshops.

The space is an architectural gem that has been transformed into an important and dynamic printmaking facility and gallery space fully equipped to accommodate all printmaking techniques. Artists who participate in the Artist-in-Residence Program have the opportunity to live and work in the Helen Frankenthaler Printmaking Cottage, adjacent to the main building. The Center's Grace Ross Shanley Gallery hosts numerous exhibitions throughout the year and is open to the public Tuesday through Saturday, 9 – 5 PM, and Sundays from 12 – 5 PM. Admission is free. The CCP Master Printer and assistant printers on staff offer edition printing. For more information, please call 203-899- 7999 or visit www.contemprints.org. The Center for Contemporary Printmaking is a member of the statewide Connecticut Art Trail, a partnership of 18 world-class museums and historic sites, www.arttrail.org and is also a member of the Cultural Alliance of Fairfield County, www.fcbuzz.org and the Greater Norwalk Chamber of Commerce.