

Curatorial Statement for Proposed Exhibition at Root Division: Word to the Eyes (Follow Up Submission)

Statement: The proposed exhibition will explore intersections between the form, mechanisms and meaning of language. Separated from metaphor and storytelling, the aesthetic content of letters, words and phrases are investigated through works of art that are physically constructed from words (to be distinguished from Root Division's upcoming "Retold" show). Selected works may consider the material quality of language, using words as a medium like charcoal or paint to create patterns, sounds, and familiar objects. Other projects may provoke expanded meanings and alternative associations between words, in some cases inviting visitors to construct their own art from words. Additional areas of consideration could include visual forms of wordplay and free-association. The intent is to assemble a collection of conceptually rigorous work that identifies words as their own reward.

The goal of Word to the Eyes is to create a visitor experience that is interactive, fun, and accessible to a diverse group of guests, including children. We envision initiating a call for work targeting cross disciplinary Bay Area projects, with a rough final target of a 50/50 balance between studio artists and outsiders. An exciting aspect of the show is the exploration of what accomplished outsiders bring to bear on visual art, since we interact with words in many different ways and words aren't always visual. Three primary considerations will drive the show and guide its curation process:

1. A dedication to the spirit of play.
2. A focus on developing projects from a wide range of artists, writers, and makers.
3. An emphasis on versatile and interactive works.

The show is:

- A focus on the material qualities of written and spoken language.
- An attempt to find intersections between form and content of language (especially wordplay).
- An investigation of language/words as a medium (like paint).

The show is not:

- A Graphic Design/Typography show.
- A investigation of metaphorical or narrative functions of language.
- A book arts show.

Cross Programming: The cross disciplinary and interactive goals of the exhibition naturally lend themselves to concurrent hands-on workshops. Several of the collaborators have extensive experience designing and leading arts workshops and could develop classes in conjunction with the exhibition opening or possibly with Root Division's Summer Youth Studio.

For example, a multi-week workshop leading up to the opening could be designed and led by artists involved in the show, with student projects being completed in time to be displayed in the exhibition. The workshop could pose questions similar to those investigated in the exhibition and encourage students to draw upon their own experiences with diverse modes of communication and English as a second language.

Proposed Artists and Projects:

I have assembled a preliminary group of five core collaborators. Several of these individuals currently cultivate a practice within the visual art world and others are drawn from collaborative teams working outside the realm of studio art, such as museum exhibits, TV, and film.

- To baseball writer **Ben Hill**, the minor leagues are quite possibly the most wordplay obsessed industry in America. As the nation's pre-eminent chronicler of such (milb.com, Ben's Biz Blog), writing about racing mascots such as Jim "Flea"land and "Kitty" Holmes is all in a day's work. Ben plans a linear installation that traverses along unexpected corners of the gallery, assembled from fragments of the thousands of puns, headlines, and false starts he's written and collected over the years.
- Longtime collaborators, film artist **Nowell Valeri** ("The Tree of Life," "Super 8," "The Matrix Reloaded") and television editor **Joe Pisch** (Senior Editor, Spike TV) are inspired by the Hoffman & Mercadante video¹. Interested in fabricating an interactive multimedia installation that reassembles the raw sounds and images of their respective mass media, they aim to incorporate an interface that invites visitors to play.
- **Interactive exhibits:**

- **Bumper sticker area**, in which visitors are encouraged to assemble their own sticker from a prompt (for example: verb-preposition-noun) and fix it to a car installed in the gallery.
- Part of the gallery floor will be transformed into a **large scale word search**, inviting visitors to seek out and circle letter combinations with removable magnetic filament.
- **Kristin Roeder** (MoMA, Exploratorium) tinkered with conceptually sculpting words on the page during a residency at Hedgebrook Writers' Colony, which beckoned her to construct 3-dimensional words. Each word chooses its material to deliver a visual joke (a self-suspended, steel "(d)angle"²), and physical words perform themselves (a slowly vanishing M-E-L-T formed from ice³) to explore both the functional and whimsical nature of words.
- **My work** utilizes screen prints on unconventional materials, surveying interactions between substrate and image. In this study for a more expansive work, twenty-eight free-associative phrases have been printed on hanging wood tiles^{4,5}.
- **Meryl Pataky** is a San Francisco based artist whose neon installations are capable of acting out the very phrases they form⁶. Gratifying at face value, these pieces also invoke conversations about inherent meaning vs. intended meaning.⁷

Example Work: (slide numbers are continued from Image Inventory Sheet. Also available at <http://www.feather2pixels.com/submission/july2012/>)

Local Works

9. Joshua Pieper *You Break It You Buy It*. 2009 Gouache, archival tape on paper, matted and framed. Sheet 14 1/2 x 9 1/2".
10. Lee Cody <http://www.flickr.com>, 2011 Acrylic on Canvas, HTML, Javascript 36 in x 36 in.
11. Rigo 23 *One Tree* Street Mural.
12. Christopher Simmons *Collector Plate* 2010 white ceramic plate is edged in metallic gold foil, 8" diameter.
13. Lauren DiCioccio *Thank You*, 2009 Hand-embroidered bag on satin lining.
14. Leo Estevez *Wall Text* 2006 Interactive climbing wall made of cast plastic letters.

Historical Works

15. Marcel Duchamp. *Mosquitoes domestics [half-stock] requested for a nitrogen cure on the Côte d'Azur*. 1926 Disk Inscribed with pun for use in the film *Anémic Cinéma*, produced by Duchamp with Man Ray and Marc Allégret, 1925–26:
16. Luis Camnitzer *Horizon*. 1968. Etching plate: 14 x 17 7/8" (35.6 x 45.4cm); sheet: 24 15/16 x 24 1/8" (63.4 x 61.2 cm).
17. Ferdinand Kriwet *Walk Talk*. 1969. Silkscreen on PVC, 39 3/8 x 425 13/16".
18. Kay Rosen *Shaped Words*. 2001. Enamel sign paint on canvas, 21 1/8 x 25 1/2" (53.7 x 64.8 cm); 21 3/8 x 24".
19. Kay Rosen *Blurred* 2005. Wall painting.
20. Shannon Ebner *RAW WAR*. 2004. Chromogenic color print, 20 1/2 x 23 9/16" (52.1 x 59.8 cm).
21. Tauba Auerbach *How to Spell the Alphabet*. 2005. Ink and pencil on paper, 30 x 22".
22. Shannon Ebner *Landscape Incarceration*. 2003. Chromogenic color print, 32 x 40 1/2".