

Acoustic Holographic Language

Rosa Aiello

Moyra Davey

David Grubbs

Susan Howe

Ghislaine Leung

Sara Magenheimer

curated by Lilou Vidal

OPENING WED 9 MAY 6 - 9PM

* Reading by Rosa Aiello 8pm "Calypso's Way" *

10 MAY - 1ST JULY 2018

Open Friday 2 - 6 pm
And by appointment
T +32 497 23 48 21

327 Chaussée de Neerstalle
1190 Brussels - Belgium
www.bureaudesrealites.org
info@bureaudesrealites.org

Acoustic Holographic Language

"A work of art is a world of signs, at least to the poet's nursery bookshelf sheltered behind the artist's ear."¹ Susan Howe

The question of language is at the heart of modern thought in the arts, literature, philosophy and linguistics among others. This project is devoted to one of the few ambiguous aspects of its emancipation: language in its tangible and acoustic form.

The exhibition brings together artists who practice writing, who explore and manipulate the perceptual possibilities of language in space, a liminal zone between the visual and literary arts where writing becomes an immersive physical experience generating new signifiers, sounds and images (however disembodied they may be).

Linguistic codes and narratives are short-circuited, defining a new zone of transfer between verbal and visual signs.

No linear or structured syntax, instead a constellation struck of fragmented, cut-up and chiseled-out words. Language becomes kaleidoscopic, the reading of it intertextual, but in its most vast conception, where voices interweave, like an echo. If there is a narrative, it is unpredictable, collected, assembled, made up of the fragmentary, the quotation, the notation, and remains ellipsoidal. "(...) [A] work of art is nourished and multiplied through subliminal abecedarian recollection."²

The title of the exhibition, *Acoustic Holographic Language*, derives from readings of Susan Howe's study of the poetic work of Emily Dickinson. It would be difficult to fully address Emily Dickinson's writing without taking a transversal approach, made possible from facsimiles of the poet's manuscripts.³ Beyond language, other factors come into play; the object, the support - the formal constraints of a paper envelope, errors and cross-outs - accord with the layout of words, textual structure and poetic content. The poem becomes visual; a holographic projection takes shape where linguistic and sound form appears in space.

"Every mark on a page is an acoustic mark."⁴

The word "holographic" comes from the Greek *holos* ("whole") and *graphein* ("to write"). Strictly speaking, acoustic holography belongs to the world of science - something I was unaware of when choosing the title for this project - yet the scientific definition may just coincide with the poetic intent: "The recording of sound waves in a two-dimensional pattern (the hologram) and the use of the hologram to reconstruct the entire sound field throughout a three-dimensional region of space. Acoustical holography involves reconstruction of the sound field that arises due to radiation of sound at a boundary, such as the vibrating body of a violin, the fuselage of an aircraft, or the surface of a submarine."⁵

Language is intrinsically linked to adoption, borrowing, embezzlement, even theft.

Renowned American poet and essayist Susan Howe (born in Boston in 1937) manipulates words and language like a physical, visual substance she's been collecting since the beginning of the seventies: "I've never really lost the sense that words, even single letters, are images. The look of a word is part of its meaning - the meaning that escapes dictionary definition, or rather doesn't escape but is bound up with it. Just as a sailboat needs wind and water."⁶

Susan Howe composes her collage poems using fragments of texts that are cut up, crossed out, truncated and spliced. Sentences, words are chopped up and chiseled out; then, with barely visible scotch tape, the splintered pieces are patched together in a delicate collage. The last phase involves photocopying the whole to give the text a new integrity. The page is as much a visual experience as it is something to read (if the words can be read at all).

"Indeed, poetic language is iconic,"⁷ and unlike signs, icons can be interpreted but not read.

Susan Howe's deconstructionist attitude towards literary convention is rooted in her training as a painter, and from her experience as an artist in the interdisciplinary environment of the New York avant-garde scene of the sixties. Inspired by the Minimalists and Marcel Duchamp, Susan Howe left the studio in the early seventies to fully devote herself to writing. The words she posted on the walls of her studio would fill the pages of a book 8.

Susan Howe's 67 collage-poems *TOM TIT TOT* draw from various sources: American and British literature, folklore, history, poetry, philosophy and art criticism. The texts include Robert Browning's poem *Childe Roland to the Dark Tower Came*, the *Collected Letters* of Samuel Taylor Coleridge and Ovid's *Metamorphoses*, as well as Spinoza's *Ethics*, *The Collected Poems* of W.B. Yeats, and texts by Elizabeth Sussman and Lynn Zelevansky from Paul Thek's exhibition catalogue *Diver: A Retrospective*. The title of the collection refers to the magic spell "Nimmy nimmy not / Your name's Tom Tit Tot" from the English variant of the German fairy tale *Rumpelstilzchen* by Joseph Jacobs (*English Fairy Tales*, 1890).

Susan Howe and the composer David Grubbs teamed up for the first time in 2003; the sound piece *WOODSLIPPERCOUNTERCLATTER*, taken from *TOM TIT TOT*, represents their fourth collaboration. David Grubbs overlaid a long tonal structure music lasting 42'35 onto the voice of Susan Howe, of whom he is a keen and diligent reader, accompanying the articulations and silences of the poet on the piano and computer. Their performative encounter is a complete poetic sound experience.

Moyra Davey (born in Toronto in 1958) is a video-artist, writer and photographer; she sees her practices as complementary to and inseparable from each other, all linked to another essential activity: reading. For Moyra Davey, the act of reading is akin to that of writing, "reading is writing." Her work is rooted in a relationship of reciprocity based on correspondence between her personal notes and her philosophical and literary references. This relationship to writing and reading evokes the complex relationship between producing and consuming, and the notion of the author.

Moyra Davey's writing practice is organized around the jotting down of personal observations, of quotations; it is fragmented and anachronistic, but weaves connections between her personal voice and that of others. The note-taking involves the collecting of details, and of what's missing since it can never convey a source in its entirety. It is about the extracting of essence.

In *Notes on Photography and Accident* from 2007, responding to Roland Barthes's passion for taking notes, Moyra Davey wrote, "Reading and thinking about note-taking

gives me a form of security, a thrill even. [...] I'm drawn to fragmentary forms, to lists, diaries, notebooks and letters. Even just reading the word 'diary' elicits a frisson, a touch of promise. It's the concreteness of these forms, the clarity of their address, that appeals and brings to mind Virginia Woolf's dictum about writing, that 'to know whom to write for is to know how to write.'"

Notes on Blue (2015) is a meditative, poetic work on blindness, color, and the life and work of British filmmaker Derek Jarman (1942-1994) and his last film, *Blue* (1994), made as he was going blind due to complications from AIDS. Moyra Davey's 28-minute video opens with an introductory monologue: "I began with a first note to myself: I made a list. But I'll start in the middle with "Blue Ruin", a one-minute movie shot on outdated film stock about a woman at the end of the day, threading her bra out from under her t-shirt, while pouring shots of gin from the freezer." An analogue film Moyra Davey created about ten years earlier, before she herself went blind in one eye. Analogue and digital techniques overlap, along with the content. The words of Derek Jarman, of Anne Sexton, J.L. Borges, Fassbinder and PJ Harvey enmesh with those of Moyra Davey, in a system of intersubjective equivalence.

As Moyra Davey walks back and forth in front of the camera, reciting the pre-recorded monologue streaming from her earphones that serve as a memory aid, the structural elements of Moyra Davey's films emerge, as the intimacy of the interior time of the apartment is made visible (snapshots on the fridge, a clock, dust, a dog on the sofa, paint peeling from the walls...).

Moyra Davey's photographs are rooted also in the fragment, and in domestic temporality, to which are added accidents of the present on an affective and unpredictable mode of relating. Photographs are folded, scotch-taped, stamped and sent by mail to their addressees.

Sara Magenheimer (born in Philadelphia in 1981) combines performance, collage, sound, video and sculpture, offering a defamiliarization of language in her engagement with image. She creates abstract narrations through bold juxtapositions of words with graphic elements, drawing attention to the vernacular and pictographic nature of writing.

In Sara Magenheimer's series of letter press prints, reading has lost its linearity, signs and letters cohabit. In one of them, words and shapes float in a scattered yet centrifugal composition. Hierarchies of meaning vanish, syntax becomes labyrinthic with the unravelling of possible paths of reading: "*Your name around the same objects stays around*" "*Your name stays the same objects around you change.*" The graphic elements seem recognizable, even as objects, yet their belonging remains uncertain (geometric signs, punctuation, decorative symbols).

On another page, quotation marks, a drawn-out space and exclamation marks (probably the title of this abstract poem) in black and white are followed by rows of dots, zeroes, the letter O, circles, ovals, the sound "OOO"-an imaginary lexical constellation of signs all seeming to belong to the same family. A kind of maximalizing of the "degree zero", or the point.

.
I have made my point
I make it again
It
*Now you get the point.*⁹

In Sara Magenheimer's work, literary echoes infuse her oblique narratives created from the interlacing of text, sound and image. From montages of photographic impressions evoked by the texts of Blaise Cendrars, to the reciting of Michael McClure's poems in front of a lion's cage, the question of the embodiment of language, and the experience of its physicality, is determining: "In my work, words are always the shape of the letters that comprise them, the sound of their articulation, as well as what they mean. Sound is always a vibration of molecules, as well as a catalyst for emotion when organized into a melody. The physical embodiment of linguistic utterance as performed by material is at play."¹⁰

The work of Rosa Aiello (born in Canada in 1987) draws from cinema, literature, slapstick and online databases to form the basics of her visual, sound and imaginary repertoire. Member of the collective Pure Fyction and a graduate in literature, she recently completed a series of films and installations alluding to her novel in progress *Calypso's Way*. Rosa Aiello builds her narratives by exploring the conflicting ambiguity of social and familial structures, both reassuring and

oppressive. Rituals apply in domestic and emotional cycles and habits, as well as in the constraints of work, but also in the rhythm of nature, the repetition of seasons, the succession of days. Elements such as the alphabet, chronologies, syntaxes and refrains all overlap within her narratives that reveal the absurdity of the mechanisms behind these very structures.

The random combinations that stem from the rules and restrictions of word games are at play in the work of Rosa Aiello, like in the ceramic works *Born* and *Fate*, influenced as much by domestic tradition as by the rituals of magic.

Inspired by the Mediterranean-style "*Liberty*" ceramics typical of inscriptions on the façades of southern European houses and symbolizing a code of social belonging, the letter squares form word puzzles that can be read from top to bottom and left to right. The acrostics *Fate*, *Aged*, *Tend*, *Eddy*, make up one; *Born*, *Oboe*, *Rose*, *Need* a second. The origins of the first acrostics date back to the palindromic *SATOR* Square, found buried in the ruins of Pompeii. The various interpretations of the uses of the *SATOR* Square include its being a secret tool for persecuted early Christians to recognize each other, and an object with magical properties whose words when repeated were said to ward off evil forces.

The work addresses one aspect of Rosa Aiello's writing, where the poetic opacity of language, its construction and unpredictability, coexists with an intelligent, amused approach to play and the manipulation of the affective.

The artist and writer Ghislaine Leung (born in 1980 in Sweden) uses space and writing in a non-hierarchical relationship of form and content. The space becomes a material with which she manipulates language like an object. The narrative evades any definite meaning, and questions the conceptual entity of language and its relationship to the tangible world.

Ghislaine Leung's spare, clinical esthetic contrasts with the familiar, vernacular environments she works in. Objects seem frozen in an idle, dormant state while language in its textual and sound form circulates and acts as incarnating registers.

*In Extrinsic*s, the installation Ghislaine Leung chose to display in one of the most domestic rooms of the space, the kitchen, draws from

texts in a collection written by the artist entitled *Partners* (2018).

The taxonomic descriptions of Ghislaine Leung's installations, based on a material list of their various components, are an intrinsic part of the development of the work, and emphasize the interdependence of form with statement. For this project, the artist wrote: "Three white large format poster prints on 80 gsm paper with black type text titled *In Extrinsic* in serif font set underneath plexiglass. Densely written text that moves registers from the theoretical, emotional and descriptive through exhibition contexts to ways to lay out assorted meats. Set onto the exterior facing windows light gels of Medium Bastard Amber filter standardly used in industry stage and theatre lighting to warm and enhances skin tones. Four small white kitchen or bathroom built-in speakers output a sound of rain, a doubled voice reading the above text and the isolated vocal chorus from *Don't Worry Baby*. Atop the plexiglass Apartment Life two sets of empty aspirational glasses of differing, incompatible, volumes by Riedel, each comprising of an Aquavit spirit glass and a wheat beer glass."¹¹

Ghislaine Leung's writing and visual language reflect an attitude both precise and detached, and create atmospheres that are familiar, melancholic and disturbing. The overlapping voices in the sound installation make the reading of the text fragmentary, even obsolete; the narrative dissolves into its own structure and spreads through the space; a refrain insists we should not worry, the rain, the storm continue in a loop, a distant rumble. The author is continuing her story elsewhere, *In Extrinsic*.

Lilou Vidal

1 Susan Howe, "Titian Air Vent," in *Debths* (New Directions, 2017), 25.

2 Susan Howe, "Titian Air Vent," in *Debths* (New Directions, 2017), 38.

3 On this subject, see Susan Howe's indispensable *My Emily Dickinson*, (New Directions, 2007), the works devoted to the manuscripts of Emily Dickinson: *Emily Dickinson, The Gorgeous Nothings*, (Marta Werner, Jen Bervin, Susan Howe, 2013), and *Emily Dickinson, Envelope Poems*, (Christine Burgin and New Directions, 2016).

4 Susan Howe, *Woodslippercounterclatter*, 2013.

5 Earl G. Williams, "Acoustical Holography," *Access Science* (2014).

6 Susan Howe, interview led by Lynn Keller, 2013, Yale Union.

7 Émile Benveniste, *Baudelaire*. (Limoges: Lambert-Lucas, 2011).

8 Her first poetry collection *Hinge Picture* would appear in 1974.

9 *Poems* by Vito Acconci, 1967, Vito Hannibal Acconci Studio, catalogue from the Musée des Beaux Arts de Nantes, MACBA, Barcelona, 47.

10 Sara Magenheimer, *Soap Opera Pop Music*. (Document: Chicago, 2014).

11 Description sent by Ghislaine Leung.

Thanks to all the artists, Simon Asencio, Galerie Buchholz, Essex Street, NY, Grenfell Press, NY and Leslile Miller, G U I M A R Ä E S, Vienna, Rob Halverson, Issue Project Room, NY, Federico, Vavassori Gallery, Milan, Micheline Szwajcer, Woodberry Poetry Room - Harvard Library, Cambridge

Rosa Aiello was born in 1987 in Hamilton, Canada. She currently studies at Städelschule and lives in Frankfurt. Always related to language, her practice takes many forms, most often fiction writing, word games, CG animation, live action films, and sculpture. Recent solo exhibitions include *Builder and Demon*, *Eclair*, Berlin; *Fate Presto*, Casa Masaccio, San Giovanni Valdarno; *27 seasons*, Galleria Frederico Vavassori, Milano; *The Demagog*, Bureau des Réalités, Brussels. Her writing has been published in various publications including *Triple Canopy*, *Art Papers*, *CanadianArt*, and *Utne Reader*. Her video works are part of the public collection of the Whitney Museum of American Art (New York), and of the Centre George Pompidou (Paris).

Moyra Davey was born in 1958 in Toronto, Canada. She is an artist based in New York, and whose work comprises the fields of photography, film, and writing. She has produced several works of film, most recently *Wedding Loop* (2017) as part of her contribution to *documenta 14* in Athens. She is the author of numerous publications including *Burn the Diaries* and *The Problem of Reading*, and is the editor of *Mother Reader: Essential Writings on Motherhood*. Davey has been the subject of major solo exhibitions at institutions including *Portikus*, Frankfurt/Main (2017); *Bergen Kunsthall*, Norway (2016); *Camden Arts Centre*, London (2014); *Kunsthalle Basel* (2010); and *Fogg Art Museum at Harvard University*, Cambridge, MA (2008). Her work is found in major public collections, including the Museum of Modern Art and the Metropolitan Museum of Art in New York, and Tate Modern in London. She was awarded the *Anonymous was a Woman Award* in 2004.

David Grubbs was born in 1967 in Louisville (KY). David Grubbs is Professor of Music at Brooklyn College and The Graduate Center, CUNY. At Brooklyn College he also teaches in the MFA programs in Performance and Interactive Media Arts (PIMA) and Creative Writing. He is the author of *Now that the audience is assembled* and *Records Ruin the Landscape: John Cage, the Sixties, and Sound Recording* (both published by Duke University Press).

Grubbs has released fourteen solo albums and appeared on more than 190 releases, the most recent of which is *Creep Mission* (Blue

Chopsticks, 2017). In 2000, his *The Spectrum Between* (Drag City) was named “Album of the Year” in the *London Sunday Times*. He is known for his cross-disciplinary collaborations with poet Susan Howe, visual artists Anthony McCall and Angela Bulloch, and choreographer Jonah Bokaer, and his work has been presented at, among other venues, the Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum, MoMA, the Tate Modern, and the Centre Pompidou. Grubbs was a member of the groups *Gastr del Sol*, *Bastro*, and *Squirrel Bait*, and has performed with the *Red Krayola*, *Will Oldham*, *Tony Conrad*, *Pauline Oliveros*, and *Loren Connors*, and many others. He is a grant recipient from the Foundation for Contemporary Arts, a contributing editor in music for *BOMB Magazine*, a member of the *Blank Forms* board of directors, and director of the *Blue Chopsticks* record label.

Susan Howe was born in 1937, in Boston, Massachusetts, she lives and works in Guilford, Connecticut. She is the author of several poetry collections, including *Debths* (New Directions, 2017), *That This* (New Directions, 2010), *The Midnight* (2003), *Kidnapped* (2002), *The Europe of Trusts* (2002), *Pierce-Arrow* (1999), *Frame Structures: Early Poems 1974-1979* (1996), *The Nonconformist’s Memorial* (1993), *The Europe of Trusts: Selected Poems* (1990), and *Singularities* (1990).

She is also the author of two books of criticism: *The Birth-Mark: Unsettling the Wilderness in American Literary History* (1993), which was named an “International Book of the Year” by the *Times Literary Supplement*, and *My Emily Dickinson* (New Directions, 1985).

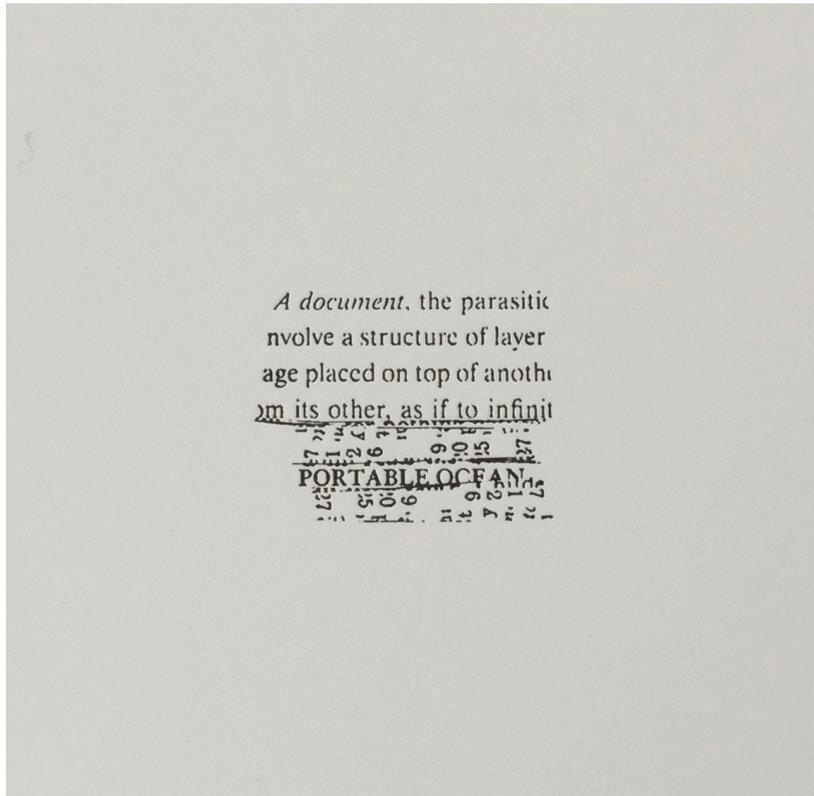
Her work also has appeared in *Anthology of American Poetry*, edited by Cary Nelson (Oxford University Press, 1999); *The Norton Anthology of Contemporary American Poetry* (2003); and *Poems for the Millennium, Volume 2*, edited by Pierre Joris and Jerome Rotherberg (1998).

She has received two American Book Awards from the Before Columbus Foundation and was elected to the American Academy of Arts and Sciences in 1999. In 1996 she was awarded a Guggenheim Fellowship and in the winter of 1998 she was a distinguished fellow at the Stanford Institute of the Humanities. In 2011, Howe received Yale University’s Bollingen Prize in American Poetry. In 2017 she received the Robert Frost award for dis-

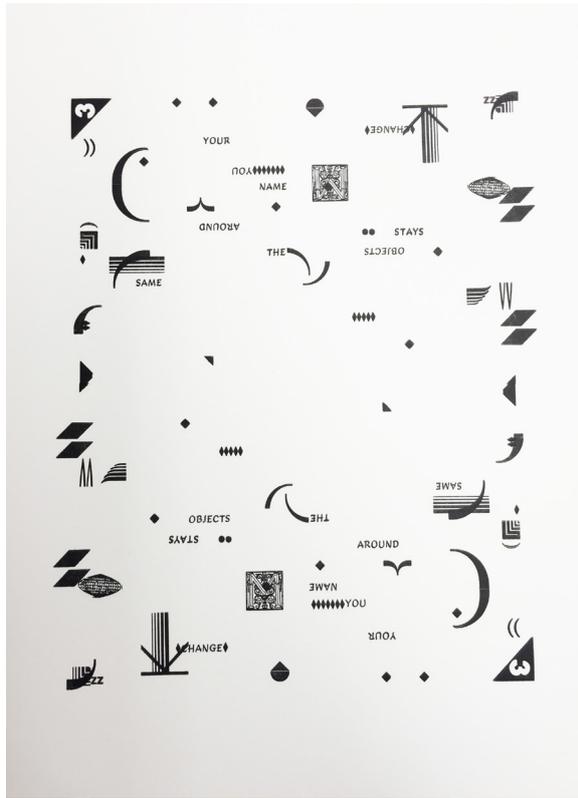
tinguished lifetime achievement in American poetry from The American Poetry Society.

Ghislaine Leung was born in 1980 in Stockholm, Sweden. Artist and writer, Ghislaine Leung lives and works in London and Brussels. Her recent solo projects include Local Studies at Reading International, The Moves at Cell Project Space, London, 078746844 at WIELS, Brussels and group projects YOUR WORDS IN MY MOUTH | MY VOICE ON YOUR TONGUE at Künstlerhaus Stuttgart, Hollis & Money at ICA, London. From 2017-2019 she will be in long term collaboration with Netwerk, Aalst on her project VIOLETS. Leung's collection of writings Partners launched with Cell Project Space in 2018 and she will be in residence at Triangle Marseille in August 2018. Her solo commission for Chisenhale Gallery, London is forthcoming in 2019.

Sara Magenheimer was born in 1981 in Philadelphia, PA, and lives and works in New York. Recent solo exhibitions include New Museum New York (2018), Portland Institute for Contemporary Art, Portland, OR (2017); the Kitchen, New York (2017); Art in General in partnership with kim?, Riga, Latvia (2016); the Center for Ongoing Research & Projects (COR&P), Columbus, OH (2016); JOAN, Los Angeles (2015); and Recess, New York (2015). Her works have also been included in the group exhibitions "Body Language," the High Line, New York (2017); "CCCC (Ceramics Club Cash and Carry)," White Columns, New York (2015); and "Amy Sillman: One Lump or Two," Institute of Contemporary Art, Boston, and Aspen Art Museum (2013–14). Her videos have been screened at the Brooklyn Academy of Music (2017); the New York Film Festival (2017, 2015, 2014); Images Festival, Toronto (2017); Anthology Film Archives, New York (2016); EMPAC, Troy, NY (2016); and the Museum of Contemporary Art Chicago (2015).



III: Susan Howe, *Tom Tit Tot*
Rosa Aiello, *Born square (1)* 2017, painted ceramic tiles



III: Sara Magenheimer, *Your name stays the same objects around you change*, 2018-2014, letter press print
Susan Howe and David Grubbs, *WOODSLIPPERCOUNTERCLATTER*, Performance at the Issue Project Room, 2013