

bitforms gallery

Language Pit

Gary Hill

February 1–March 23, 2024

Opening reception: Thursday, February 1, 6–8 PM

Gallery hours: Tuesday–Saturday: 11 AM–6 PM

Language Pit is Gary Hill's second solo exhibition with bitforms gallery. Through an ongoing investigation of language, Hill offers works that explore the physicality of language in a multiplicity of ways through silkscreens, watercolors, sculpture, and video installation. Exhibited works probe both the visual and auditory components of the spoken word.

The *Engender Series* is a project that conjoins personal pronouns using logic. Boolean logic is a binary system that produces either a true or a false output, and is the foundation of computer programming. Hill applies this process to personal pronouns, which he interprets as a kind of analog element of identity. After each function (XOR, AND, OR, A-B and B-A) has been applied, the pronouns cease to be pronounceable but can be read, or visually decoded. Sculptural works from this series show all five logical functions, highlighting the similarities and differences of implemented gates. For example, a XOR function of she/he produces forms where only the parts of either "she" or "he" exist unto themselves, whereas an OR gate merges both into one form. Hill's visualization of pronouns explodes the binary conundrum, mirroring the complexity and depth of inquiry concerning gender identity as well as linguistics.

None of the Above continues Hill's obsessive parsing of language and its myriad of possibilities. A large video projection installed in portrait orientation depicts the artist performing a bricolage of words and syntax. Uncannily, the work parallels a similar terrain to the pronoun landscape for its runaway of complexity. Hill enunciates each word while moving his hands in tandem with his discourse. The poetics playfully feeds back on itself, enveloping and unraveling with each line like an ouroboros that builds upon itself in an evolving loop. The artist's hand gestures continue alongside his monologue in an allusion to the idiomatic triad—see no evil, hear no evil, speak no evil. Hill's longtime engagement with language confronts the limits of speech, writing, and gesture, situating language as a physical form with an integral relationship to the body.

Language Pit is a two-channel video installation with a set of raw speaker cones presented on a plinth. A loud acerbic voice delivers a dialogue that alternates between the speakers, utilizing short phrases derived from political sound bites and idiomatic expressions. Micro-cameras wired to small circuit boards lay upon the speaker skins in sinusoidal positions like a pair of undisturbed snakes. Each happenstantial burst of speech awakens the "eyes" and live video feeds become momentarily dynamic. As percussive elements of the dialogue occur, pinging back and forth between speakers, the onscreen imagery makes radical abrupt shifts that reveal slivers of the site, familiar details, and glimpses of viewers present.

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b. 1951, Santa Monica, CA

Lives and works in Mallorca, Spain and Seattle, WA

Gary Hill has worked with a broad range of media – including sculpture, sound, video, installation and performance – since the early 1970's. His longtime work with intermedia continues to explore an array of issues ranging from the physicality of language, synesthesia and perceptual conundrums to ontological space and viewer interactivity.

Exhibitions of his work have been presented at museums and institutions worldwide, including solo exhibitions at the Fondation Cartier pour l'art contemporain, Paris; San Francisco Museum of Modern Art; Centre Georges Pompidou, Paris; Guggenheim Museum SoHo, New York; Museum für Gegenwartskunst, Basel; Museu d'Art Contemporani, Barcelona; and Kunstmuseum Wolfsburg, among others. Commissioned projects include works for the Science Museum in London and the Seattle Central Public Library in Seattle, Washington, and an installation and performance work for the Coliseum and Temple of Venus and Rome in Italy. Hill has received fellowships from the National Endowment for the Arts and the Rockefeller and Guggenheim Foundations, and has been the recipient of numerous awards and honors, most notably the Leone d'Oro Prize for Sculpture at the Venice Biennale (1995), a John D. and Catherine T. MacArthur Foundation Fellowship Award (1998), the Kurt-Schwitters-Preis (2000), and honorary doctorates from The Academy of Fine Arts Poznan, Poland (2005) and Cornish College of the Arts, Seattle, WA (2011).