BIOLIOGRAPHY


CHECKLIST

Glenn Ligon, American, born 1960
White #1
1995
Etching and aquatint on wove paper
Purchased through the Phyllis and Bertram Geller 1937 Memorial Fund; PR.996.6

Elizabeth Murray, American, born 1940
Untitled, numbers 1, 3, 5, 7, 10, and 12 (of 13) from Her Story: A Book of Thirteen Original Graphics by Elizabeth Murray for Thirteen Poems by Anne Waldman
1988–90
Lithograph and etching
PR.2000.28.1,3,5,7,10,12

Ann Parker, American, born 1934
Lacy Chinese Lantern
October 26, 1995
Photogram on Ilfachrome paper
Purchased through a gift from Emilia Seibold, Class of 1982; PR.999.31.7

Ben Shahn, American, 1898–1969
Immortal Words
1958
Screenprint on wove paper
Bequest of Jay R. Wolf, Class of 1951; PR.976.223

A Space for Dialogue and this brochure are made possible by a generous gift from the Class of 1948.

HOOD MUSEUM OF ART

Designed by Christina Nadeau, DPMS
I love the language, words have temperatures... when they reach a certain point and become hot words, then they appeal to me.

—Ed Ruscha

Words alone can exist as art, visual art can respond to poems to create deeper meaning, paintings can inspire poetry. As an art student I have been told visual art is about creating something without words, and as a poet I have been taught to create visual settings using only words. As both a visual artist and a poet, I see my studies as a convergence of conflicting lessons that ultimately inform each other.

I have found that the interdisciplinary space in which these media converge is a place of heightened meaning and expression. The work chosen for this show includes Elizabeth Murray’s graphics accompanying Anne Waldman’s poems, Ben Shahn and Glenn Ligon’s art utilizing the written word as a visual medium, and a photograph by Ann Parker that is accompanied by a poem I wrote in response to it. I chose these works because of my own interest in the two art forms and also because these pieces convey their meanings both concisely and decisively. They have been visually edited, pared down to their most necessary elements. They are all poetic.

For me, art has always been about refining my command of visual language to bridge the gap between my intentions and the viewer’s understanding. Poetry has always presented me with the same challenge. The end result when both media are used is what fuels this Space for Dialogue installation. In my own art I work toward expressing my idea directly and clearly, with or without external symbols that distract from the concept. A particular image may be “cool looking,” but if it does not add to the concept, or if it even obscures the concept, it must be eliminated. My poetry is the same; I try to use words directly to convey meaning rather than flirt around the point with flowery language that in the end could mean nothing. I am constantly editing in hopes of eventually finding the true core of meaning in the center of the fluff I must begin with.

There is an extensive history of artists using words in combination with images to create a resonance between the media, one that encompasses the Assyrian reliefs in the Hood, dada art posters, and contemporary new media works, chopped up and distanced from meaning, even used for its formal qualities alone. In Claes Oldenburg’s 1975 piece Alphabet/Good Humor, 3-Foot Prototype, large, balloony, sculptural letters are adhered into one solid piece resembling a Good Humor popsicle. The letters do not spell out anything; they are merely references. The sculptural/visual shape of the letters is important in this piece much the way Jenny Holzer or Glenn Ligon design their lettering to best match the art work’s intent. The way a text is inscribed can carry tremendous weight, as Johanna Drucker explains in her essay “The Art of the Written Image”:

Writing embodies language in an unlimited variety of distinctive forms. History and culture reside in these material means: the chiseled line of the Roman majuscule, the worried hand of a remade will, the bureaucratic regularity of a cuneiform account, the sophisticated inventions of a Renaissance type designer, the least mark of a tentative witness, and the bold sweep of an authoritative pen.

Words, in whatever form they take in art, are reminiscent of speaking, writing, language, and communication. They can be a written form of the artist’s voice. They can give a voice to an otherwise marginalized person or experience. All of the works in this Space for Dialogue give a voice to a certain experience. For the Murray and Waldman book, it is the voice of a woman, “Her Story”; in Glenn Ligon’s piece, it is the voice of an African American experience; in Ben Shahn’s piece, it is the voice of Sacco and Venzetti before they were executed; in the Parker piece and accompanying poem, it is my voice.

These pieces use their voices to elevate us. They give us a new outlook in allowing us into the insane, beautiful, near incomprehensibility of another’s experience. If we are paying enough attention, we are made more aware and open. These artists do not shy away from that beautiful role of the artist—to change the world.

—Callie Helen Thompson ’05
Student Programming Intern

To The Seed

I.
Pointed, twisting tip top, you are
A jester’s hat. Red ball inside
Like a clown’s punchy nose. Skeletal
Bellows pregnant with seed, you

Remind us to stop laughing.

II.
I can tell by the way he looks at her,
He wants to hold her
Like I want to hold this seed pod, this
Veined balloon: Crush it just
To feel the fibers breaking.