

SED TANTUM DIC VERBO (JUST SAY THE WORD)

Curated by Glenn O'Brien

Blain|Southern
Potsdamer Strasse 77-87
10785 Berlin
20th September – 20th December 2014

Private View: 19th September 2014, 6-10pm
Press Preview: Wednesday, 19th September 2014, 1-3pm



John Giorno, *Space Forgets You*, 2014, Silkscreen on canvas, 121.9 x 121.9 cm / (48 x 48 in)

The Directors of Blain|Southern are delighted to announce the group exhibition *SED TANTUM DIC VERBO (JUST SAY THE WORD)*, conceived and curated by the American writer and editor Glenn O'Brien. The exhibition examines the use of words in art and brings together artists from the 1960s to the present day who all have/had a strong relationship to the curator. In the following paragraphs Glenn O'Brien describes his personal selection:

"The transformation of the media landscape over the last half-century created a revolution in communication, not merely mass communications, but how individuals perceive the world and express themselves in return. Visual collage fields and holistic perception replaced literary linearity and its logical bases. The immutability of the written word was overshadowed by the instant mutations of oral speech. As an unexpected consequence words began to appear in formerly pictorial frames, as if language itself had become an unfamiliar landscape requiring reappraisal and transformation.

Jean-Michel Basquiat (1960-1988) lifted words from cheap signage in Alphabet City, from Hitchcock movies, from hobo camps and jazz songs and he made poetry that spoke from his pictures, word chains repeated like scientific formulas or magic spells.

Stefan Brüggemann (b.1975) creates mirrors scrawled with the first and last lines of movies, reflecting the memes in our memories, and his latest verbal matrixes meld definitions in the manner of Joseph Kosuth with jokes in the manner of Richard Prince.

Dan Colen (b.1979) was inspired early on by Ed Ruscha, with whom he shares an eye (and perhaps ear) for the mantra like qualities of words and he collaborated with Dash Snow on exploring the memes of trash media. He riffs on the invisible spells language casts, spotlighting the power of seemingly modest, silly or throw-away words.

Jonah Freeman & Justin Lowe (b.1975 & b.1976) create elaborate fictions, often in installation form. Here they present covers from their fictitious cult-published magazine *Artichoke Underground* and a rack of paperback titles that reflect their concern with the haunted mythology of what is perhaps euphemistically called popular culture.

Charles Gaines' (b.1944) career has been an upstream journey through structures of illusion in pursuit of meaning—investigating such evidence as political manifestos, the collisions of descriptive systems and song lyrics and inevitably illuminating zones where more than meets the eye can be apprehended.

John Giorno (b.1936) is an eminent poet who, like his friend William S. Burroughs, saw the word as a transcendent image, penetrating the boundaries of light and sound. His paintings morph slogans or bon mots into imperatives with the stylistic command of official signage.

Wayne Gonzales (b.1957) is a painter concerned with history who finds relevant clues in the jetsam and ephemera of official mythology, giving alternative and subversive readings to the handwriting on the wall.

Douglas Gordon (b.1966) plays with time and memory, perceptions of good and evil, beauty and monstrosity. His words, whether on walls or paper, whether commentary, imperative or memorial, tend to appear outside of time, immune to the temporal structures of life, yet accentuating their demands.

Brion Gysin (1916-1986) is perhaps best known for pioneering the "cut up" method made famous by the writer William S. Burroughs. He researched the recombinant possibilities of the letter and the calligraphic roots of writing. He famously stated that writing is 50 years behind painting and the motive informing his oeuvre is bringing culture up to the speed of control.

Ray Johnson (1927-1995), who relished a path between obscurity and notoriety, made headlines of footnotes and footnotes of headlines. An enormously influential founder of pop art, Johnson practiced an aggressive modesty, exploring the shadows behind the spotlight and reading between the headlines.

Atsushi Kaga (b.1978), a young Japanese Dubliner, created his own cast of mythological cartoon characters who re-enact with charm the opaque enigmas and obloquies of contemporary life.

Joseph Kosuth (b.1945) was instrumental in redefining artistic practice through the lens of language with the body of work *Art as Idea as Idea*. He continues to illuminate the now nearly invisible realm of philosophy with provocative propositions that demand participation.

McDermott & McGough (b.1952 & b.1958) make contemporary art from other times. Anachronists, they provide striking contrasts to contemporary modes by resurrecting proven formulas and antedated styles. Evoking more literate eras, their use of text illuminates historical transitions and is perhaps a devolution of individual consciousness.

Jack Pierson's (b.1960) words and phrases are reconstructed signage, casually examining the composition of the written word, the psychology and aesthetics of type, and the power of word as sign.

Richard Prince (b.1949) is one of the most prolific and profound writers best known as an artist. Jokes have been a principal element in his schtick since there was a Borscht Belt. His abstracted jokes seem to elaborate on a Freud book title: "The Joke and Its Relation to the Unconscious."

Rob Pruitt (b.1964) made all of his e-mails into wallpaper. He made a neon sign that read "when life gives you lemonade, add vodka." He has collected autographs and had them analyzed; he has formulated *101 Art Ideas You Can Do Yourself*, and he has created *God Says Nothing*, an empty comic's voice bubble for God.

Ed Ruscha (b.1937), living in the language littered landscape of L.A., brought resonant words into the realm of serious painting. In the urban pop art continuum we live in, Ruscha gave that language its proper place in landscape painting, essaying the psychology of the city as a story.

Tom Sachs (b.1966) is the master of advanced bricolage, creating post-cargo cult simulacra of culture's dominant fetishes, often complete with detailed instructions. His words take the form of logos, lyrics, evidence, quotes and letters which are often appropriated with a sense of the metacritically apropos, suggesting certain critical debates.

Dash Snow (1981-2009) mimicked the sensationalism of the tabloid world, collecting the clichés and buzz words of the pop media, the sore points of the collective unconscious, and spun them into new and contradictory trajectories.

Lawrence Weiner (b.1942) began his career with actions, and actions led him to words: proposing gestures that might or might not be carried out. His words, whether published or installed, indoors or out, create a philosophical poetry that begins with an idea and ends as a sculpture.

Christopher Wool (b.1955) began painting words in 1987, with what might be seen as a perfect strategy for painting after the death of painting: in the beginning was the word. Here the words were stenciled, broken into letters, syllables, fields of fractured or looted meaning.

Aaron Young's (b.1972) art exists as artifacts of the aftermath of action—often invoking risk, danger, marginalization and finding a harmony between destruction and creation. His work with words often adopts the language of the rebel, or the arbitrary augury of the found object and detritus."

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About Glenn O'Brien:

Curator Glenn O'Brien was the editor of Andy Warhol's *Interview*. He is a longtime contributor to *Artforum* and served as editorial director of *Art in America*. He has written essays and monographs on many artists including Jean-Michel Basquiat, Freeman & Lowe, Mark Grotjahn, Richard Prince, Tom Sachs, Keith Sonnier, Dash Snow, Andy Warhol and Christopher Wool.

Blain|Southern is a contemporary art gallery representing some of the world's leading contemporary artists. Established in September 2010, Blain|Southern is currently located at 4 Hanover Square, London. The gallery in Berlin resides in the former printing hall of the daily newspaper *Tagesspiegel*. Blain|Southern's affiliated gallery, Blain|Di Donna is situated in New York.