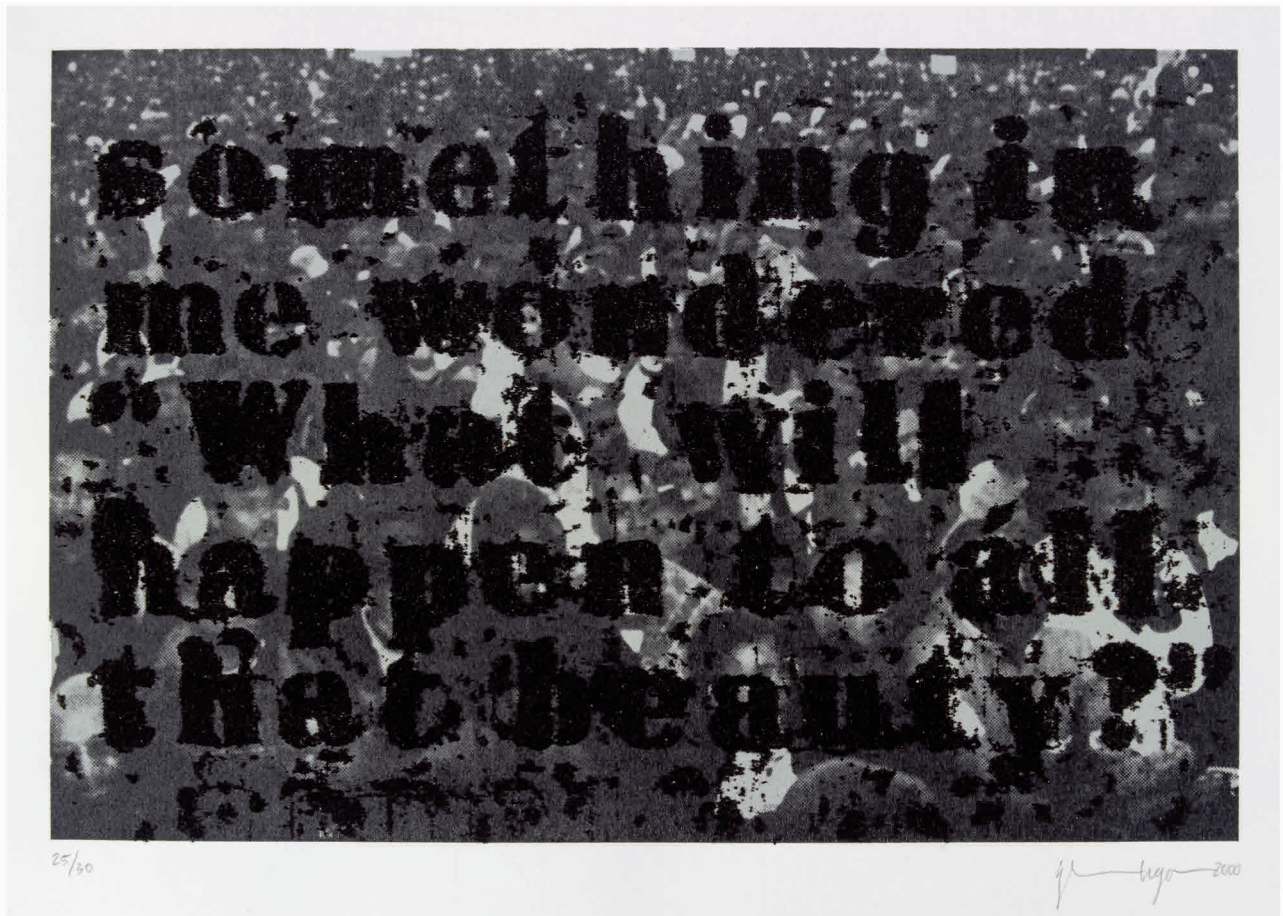




TURN *of* PHRASE

LANGUAGE AND TRANSLATION
IN GLOBAL CONTEMPORARY ART

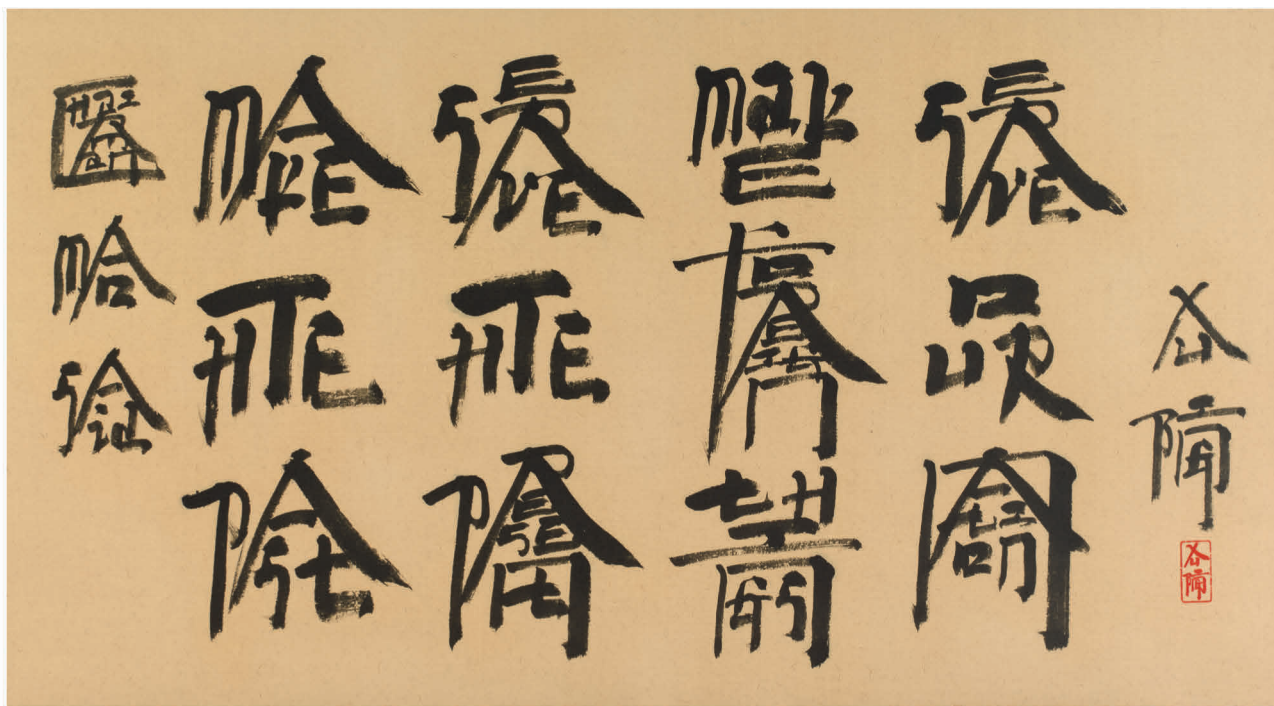
SABRINA XIYIN LIN



2 Glenn Ligon American, born 1960
Untitled (Crowd/The Fire Next Time), 2000
 Screenprint and coal dust
 19.5 x 27.75 inches (49.5 x 70.5 cm)
 Edition of 30, 6 APs
 Bowdoin College Museum of Art,
 Bequest of David P. Becker, Class of 1970,
 2011.69.262
 © Glenn Ligon; Courtesy of the artist,
 Hauser & Wirth, New York, Regen
 Projects, Los Angeles, Thomas Dane
 Gallery, London, and Galerie Chantal
 Crousel, Paris.

observes, the absence of Black women and queer individuals from the March complicates the notions of beauty and universal love put forward in Baldwin's original text: "The question is, can that healing [of Black men] happen with all the absences that were also structured into the event?"²⁰

Contrasted with Kruger's bold, direct address to the viewer, there is no readily available identification or straightforward audience referenced in Ligon's linguistic framework. Unlike Kruger, his citation creates the grammatical and affective difference of proposing a question rather than a declaration. While the work is specific in its reference to literature and history, Ligon simultaneously creates overt restrictions on the sources' legibility. The physical and conceptual obfuscation of language has become the artist's way of commenting on socio-racial issues while resisting reductive readings as purely "identity art."²¹ Ligon's screenprint encourages different contradictory readings, such as the inclusion of coal that might recall the noxious byproduct of environmental extraction or the coded language of color. In addition, art historian Ellen Tani argues that Ligon's use of



3 Xu Bing Chinese, born 1955. *Quotation from Chairman Mao*, 2001, Chinese ink calligraphy on paper, 18 ⁹/₁₆ x 33 ³/₄ in. (47.15 x 85.73 cm). Bowdoin College Museum of Art, Museum Purchase, with a grant from the Freeman Foundation Undergraduate Asian Studies Initiative, 2006.10.1. © Xu Bing Studio. Photography by Luc Demers.

Utilizing this new writing invention, Xu Bing's *Quotation* is, in essence, a work concerned with the labored processes of citation—the transfer and passage of different information, histories, ideologies. Read from left to right, the *Square Words* spell out a line from Mao Zedong's letter to students at China's Central Conservatory of Music in 1964: "Chairman Mao said, 'Make the past serve the present, make foreign things serve our nation (Xu Bing).'" Indeed, the quote mirrors Xu Bing's strategy behind the series, transforming a historic writing tradition for the purposes of contemporary art, and translating "foreign" things into a different national and global context.²⁵ Xu's allusion to Mao appropriates the "call to the masses" rhetoric under Cultural Revolution ideology, and simultaneously deconstructs and re-constructs an allegory of writing as both ubiquitous and opaque.²⁶ By evoking language as a mode of address, this quotation issues a direct, imperative voice that prompts viewers to react. However, this hybrid text also has a direct visual impact that troubles the original quotation's optimistic East-meets-West sentiment. One cannot help but think of the exoticizing, ethnic typefaces such as "wonton font" commonly featured on take-out boxes, or even the Western avant-garde's fascination with 'Zen' and Eastern aesthetic philosophy since the 1950s.²⁷

Yet who does this appropriated language serve? Is Xu Bing co-opting English for the benefit of the Chinese-speaking public, or perhaps the other way around?

Opposite the idea that one can see right back to a common origin, in order to establish the link between the two, in order to understand the process, in order to understand what we do ourselves.

Unidentified Female Figure, Seated Figure, Female 19th-early 20th century (collected before 1913)

Wood

The University of Pennsylvania Museum, Philadelphia (AF 5122)

Excavated by Joseph Brumfiel, Paris, before 1913; Charles Vignier, Paris, 1913; by Marius de Zayas, New York, 1919 (ethnographic collection)

The University of Pennsylvania Museum was the first American institution to purchase African art for its aesthetic qualities and not solely as ethnographic records. In 1919, its influential director, George B. Gordon, acquired through the De Zayas Gallery a group of eleven work forms Charles Vignier, including this 19 female figure. It originated in the former trading port of Brass in the Niger Delta, where a ubiquitous genre of sculpture emerged toward the end of the nineteenth century as a consequence of decades of European encounters.

Figures such as this one, characterized by a high degree of naturalism, diminutive legs, and articulated arms, were portraits of deceased members of the king's family.

There was nothing special about meeting Picasso. He was a man who was naturally, except meeting Picasso was a special occasion. I did like the idea of seeing a man who was not only a painter but also a sculptor. He was a man who was not only a painter but also a sculptor. He was a man who was not only a painter but also a sculptor.

Henri Matisse (French, 1869-1954) Female Torso 1906; cast ca. 1908 Bronze (no. 2 of 10)

The Metropolitan Museum of Art, Alfred Steiglitz Collection, 1949 (49.70.222)

Henri Matisse informally named this dynamic bronze of a female torso *Jeune Femme*, or *Life Interests*. Matisse specialists have often associated this sculpture with his early interest in African art, being in its projecting breasts and arched back references to carved female figures from Côte d'Ivoire and Mali. Shown in 1912 at 291, the sculpture dedicated entirely to Matisse's sculptures, it was purchased by Alfred Steiglitz shortly thereafter.

It is at least a substantial part of it that lies in another time and in another space. It is a work of art that is not only a work of art but also a work of art. It is a work of art that is not only a work of art but also a work of art.

Clara E. Siprell (American, born Canada, 1885-1973) Portrait of Max Weber (ca. 1916) Gelsatin silver print. In original exhibition Max Weber is shown in his art. The artist's portrait is a study of the artist's face. The artist's portrait is a study of the artist's face.

This portrait of the American artist Max Weber (1881-1960) gazing at a Yaka biki figure from the Democratic Republic of the Congo captures the artist in a moment of aesthetic contemplation. Taken by Weber's student Clara Siprell, this photograph captures not only a stereotypical image of the African art collector but also America's first encounter with African objects as art.

Between 1905 and 1908, while in Paris acquainting himself with the newest trends in art, Weber began collecting African art, which had just started to appear in Parisian studios. When he returned to America in the first days of 1909, the artist brought with him the small sculpture he holds in this picture, identified as the first African figure to reach America based primarily on its aesthetic appeal.

In doing so, he anticipated New York's discovery of African art throughout the following decade.

Modern Gallery Exhibition of Niger African Negro Sculpture, January 21st to February 9th, 1918

Exhibition leaflet

James J. Ross, New York

Most of De Zayas's exhibitions were accompanied by leaflets listing the works on display. Created for the 1918 "Exhibition of African Negro Sculpture," this example is unique for its inclusion of an essay signed by the otherwise unknown G. Dorlac, and for its illustrated cover featuring a portrait of the artist's head in profile.

The artist at the center of the exhibition is a man who is not only a man but also a man. He is a man who is not only a man but also a man. He is a man who is not only a man but also a man.

Alfred Steiglitz (American, 1864-1946). View of African Savages: The Root of Modern Art, 1914. De Zayas Archives, Seville

This frequently element was one of many works in "Statue in Wood by African Savages" to be placed before a patch of yellow or orange paper. Edward Steichen, an early collaborator of Steiglitz's, was responsible for the colorful galleries, which belied the usually stern look of the gallery. Decades later, he recollected how "the whole room came alive, the colored papers serving like a background of jungle drums." Such prizing comments highlighted the contradiction—already present in the exhibition's reference to "African savages"—at the core of the period's perceptions of African art: while the art itself was seen as vital to artistic modernity, Africa and Africans were not considered constitutive of the modernity.

Charles Sheeler (American, 1883-1965) African Negro Wood Sculpture 1918

Gelatin silver print; plate 5 from a portfolio of 20

In Charles Sheeler's reinterpretation of the Meyers' famous figure, strong interplay of light and shadow have a profound impact on the work's features. Sheeler collaborating with Marius de Zayas's Modern Gallery in 1916, taking photographs of works on display as gallery records. His interest in African sculpture is evident in this album, *African Negro Wood Sculpture*. Its twenty images are introduced by an essay by De Zayas expressing the foundation of the theory in modernism and African art: Negro sculpture has been the stepping stone for a found expression in our art. It brought to us a new form of expression and a new expression of form, finding a point of support in our sensibility.

4 Meleko Mokgosi Motswana, born 1981. *Modern Art: The Root of African Savages*, 2013, inkjet printing and charcoal on linen, six panels, 36 x 24 in. each (91.44 x 60.96 cm). Colby College Museum of Art, Gift of the Acorn Foundation, Barbara and Theodore Alford in honor of Sharon Corwin, 2013.538.A.F. © Meleko Mokgosi. Courtesy of the artist and Jack Shainman Gallery, New York.

Mokgosi employs the polyptych-like format to underscore the functionality of text. The association between an artwork and its description is disrupted to emphasize the *objecthood* of descriptive language, something manually created, intentionally produced, and belonging to a particular space and time. As a form of representation, the panels seemingly share an official, institutional “look” in their overall style, length, typefaces, and graphic design. The viewer, reading through the labels’ content, is either quickly taken aback by the presence of outdated, offensive terminologies, or prompted to reconsider words that might have initially appeared familiar and acceptable. The system’s insidious reach is made further apparent as Mokgosi calls attention to seemingly innocuous words that nonetheless betray cultural biases. According to Mokgosi, words such as “reliquary” are rooted in tendencies to see cultures as specimens, the insertion of a question mark after dates betrays an “ethnographic fallacy,” and references to “our artists” automatically assume a Western-centric collective. By contrast, Mokgosi’s own inserted text ranges from sharply analytical to vehemently personal, not shying away from foul language or satire and being explicitly emphatic in the artist’s subjective voice.

In selecting museum labels for works by Matisse, Stieglitz, historical objects by “unidentified” African artist, and exhibitions of African art, Mokgosi is not writing back at any one individual artist, but rather the overarching dominance of art circulation systems. The artist questions the didactics used by art institutions to neutralize cultures for perpetuating racial hegemony and colonial narratives. By targeting museum labels as a particular mode of superimposing and dispersing meaning, Mokgosi also challenges the limits of representing through text, “always [having] human history in the form of the linguistic wall label, thoroughly taking over the art object.”³² Rather than offering any solutions, however, Mokgosi insists on his individual voice to remind viewers that language has long been at the heart of power dynamics and ideological construction. In reading Mokgosi’s work, one pauses to wonder if artworks can ever fully upset the colonial power with which museums, galleries, and the art market are so inextricably tied.³³ That the artist, born in Botswana and an alumnus of some of the most elite institutions in the U.S., makes commentary using highly academic concepts and theories adds another layer to his critique of larger-than-life institutional language.³⁴ Ultimately, Mokgosi’s work helps launch an important discussion about how institutional histories and power are always at play.

In contrast to Mokgosi’s analytical commentary, Jeffrey Gibson engages with systems of representations through cementing an idiosyncratic vocabulary that reimagines historic and contemporary traditions. In *The Anthropophagic Effect, Garment no.3* (2019) (Figure 5), the artist proposes a productive vision of self-determination as a way of breaking out of existing categories. The work’s silhouette most visibly calls to mind the Ghost Dance shirts worn by members of the Plains tribes during the late 1880s. The artistry and craftsmanship of these garments contributed to their spiritual power, believed to protect the wearer against colonizers’ bullets. However, this historic form is reinterpreted with a distinctly contemporary twist: the bold, graphic deployment of text, the dazzling neon-iridescent colors, the



6 Hung Liu Chinese American, 1948–2021.
Western Pass, 1990, oil with silverleaf on wood,
ceramics on canvas, 60 x 60 x 10 in. (152.4 x
152.4 x 25.4 cm). Bowdoin College Museum of
Art, Museum Purchase, Lloyd O. and Marjorie
Strong Coulter Fund, 2021.53. Courtesy Nancy
Hoffman Gallery.

Notes

- 1 The French poet Joachim du Bellay is commonly credited as the originator of the comparison between a translator and a traitor in his 1549 text *Déffense et illustration de la langue française* (Defense and Enrichment of the French Language).
- 2 See Roman Jakobson, "On Linguistic Aspects of Translation," in *Theories of Translation: An Anthology of Essays from Dryden to Derrida*, ed. Rainer Schulte and John Biguenet (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1992), 151.
- 3 George Steiner says, "Any model of communication is at the same time a model of translation, of a vertical or horizontal transfer of significance. No two historical epochs, no two social classes, no two localities use words and syntax to signify exactly the same things, to send identical signals of valuation and inference. Neither do two human beings." Steiner, "Understanding as Translation," *After Babel*, (Oxford: Oxford University Press: 1998), 46-47.
- 4 "The focus is on making the linkages between the unstable elements of literature and life—the dangerous tryst with the 'untranslatable'—rather than arriving at ready-made names." See Homi K. Bhabha, "How Newness Enters the World: Postmodern space, postcolonial times, and the trials of cultural translation," 1994.
- 5 Hans Belting, Introduction in *The Global Contemporary and the Rise of New Art Worlds*, (Cambridge: MIT Press, 2013), 184.
- 6 Scholars have variously taken up the issue of the "global." Peggy Wang writes about contemporary Chinese art that "the impulse to map leads to the positioning of contemporary Chinese art as passive objects waiting to be made global ... this emphasis on geographical space 'conflates the world with the globe and reduces the world to a spatial object produced by the material processes of global circulation as exemplified by globalization,'" in *The Future History of Contemporary Chinese Art*, (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2020), 7-8.
- 7 Gerardo Mosquera, "Against Latin America Art," in *Contemporary Art in Latin America*, eds. Phoebe Adler, Tom Howells and Nikolaos Kotsopoulos (London: Black Dog, 2010), 16-17.
- 8 See Stephan Bann "Introduction" in Luis Camnitzer, Jane Farver, and Rachel Weiss, *Global Conceptualism: Points of Origin, 1950s-1980s*, (New York: Queens Museum of Art, 1999), VII-VIII. See also Jane Farver, "Global Conceptualism: Reflections," *MoMA—post: notes on art in a global context*, April 29, 2015.
- 9 Examples include: *Tarjama/Translation* (Queens Museum, 2009), *Found in Translation* (Guggenheim Museum, 2012), *Traduttore, Traditore* (Gallery 400, University of Illinois at Chicago, 2017), *Words/Matter: Latin American Art and Language at the Blanton* (Blanton Museum of Art, 2019), *Kissling Through a Curtain* (Mass MoCA, 2020).
- 10 "Rather than imagining that women automatically have something identifiable in common, why not say, humbly and practically, my first obligation in understanding solidarity is to learn her mother-tongue," Gayatri Spivak, "The Politics of Translation," in *Outside in the Teaching Machine* (New York: Routledge, 1993), 191-192.
- 11 Griselda Pollock, "Whither Art History?" *The Art Bulletin* 96, no. 1 (March 2014), 14-15.
- 12 See Mari Carmen Ramirez, "Blueprint Circuits: Conceptual Art and Politics in Latin America," in *Conceptual Art: A Critical Anthology*, eds. Alexander Alberro and Blake Stimson, 551. For contemporary response to Ramirez's original analysis, see for example Miguel A. López, "How Do We Know What Latin American Conceptualism Looks Like?" 2010, excerpted in Lucy Steeds ed. *Exhibitions*, 213-215.
- 13 Ramirez, *ibid.*, 551-553. I recognize that the "center-periphery" model is subject to further unpacking, as it risks placing the "peripheries" as automatically excluded from privileged, Western-centric canons and reinforcing assumptions about non-Western cultures being by default marginalized and alienated. For more, see Larissa Buchholz, "Rethinking the Center-Periphery Model: Dimensions and Temporalities of Macro-Structure in a Global Field of Cultural Production", *Poetics: Journal of Research on Culture, the Media and the Arts* 71, (December 2018), 18-32.
- 14 Ramirez, "The politics of this art requires 'unfolding': deconstructing linguistic and visual codes, subverting meanings, and activating space in order to impress on the viewer the effects of the mechanisms of power and ideology. ... In these circumstances, the viewer, as a socially constituted recipient, becomes an integral part of the conceptual proposition of the artist," in *Critical Anthology*, 556-557.
- 15 For more, see Craig Owens, "The Medusa Effect, or, The Specular Ruse" (1984) in *Beyond Recognition: Representation, Power, and Culture* (University of California Press, 1992). Alexander Alberro, "Picturing Relations: Images, Text, and Social Engagement," in *Barbara Kruger*, Alberro et al., (Rizzoli: 2010). Liz Linden, "Reframing Pictures: Reading the Art of Appropriation," *Art Journal* 75, no. 4 (2016): 51-52.
- 16 The two points of address is a tactic Kruger frequently employs, such as her *Untitled (Your Gaze Hits the Side of My Face)* (1981) and *Untitled (We Will Not Become What We Mean to You)* (1983).
- 17 In 2019, when Kruger's "Forever" exhibition was displayed in South Korea's AmorePacific Museum of Art, this veneer of universality is called into question. A female visitor said: "so much of [the exhibition] is in English ... I only got about half of it." See Andrew Salmon, "Feminist Kruger dissects art and Seoul of beauty," *Asia Times*, December 20, 2019, <https://asiatimes.com/2019/12/korean-beauty-powerhouse-smacks-gobs-with-feminist-art-blast-by-barbara-kruger/>.
- 18 Kruger has said that "the cool hum of power [resides] not in hot expulsions of verbiage, but in the elegantly mute thrall of sign language." Kruger quoted in Kate Linker, *Love for Sale: The Words and Pictures of Barbara Kruger* (New York: Henry N. Abrams, 1990), 29.
- 19 Baldwin in *The Fire Next Time*, originally published 1963, (Random House, 1995), 83.
- 20 Ligon quoted in Greg Tate, "Bring the Word," *Village Voice*, September 17, 1996: 30.
- 21 Ligon has said, "All one supposedly needed to say was that work is about 'identity,' as if that were the only thing the work could or should be about. It was also as if artists of color had some kind of pipeline to their identities—straightforward, unproblematic." Glenn Ligon quoted in Hilarie M. Sheets, "The Writing on the Wall," *ARTnews*, April 2011.
- 22 Ellen Y. Tani, "The Vocabulary Won't Hold It," in *Second Sight: The Paradox of Vision in American Art*, (Bowdoin College Museum of Art & Scala, 2008), 2.
- 23 Okwui Enwezor, "Text, Subtext, Intertext: Painting, Language, and Signifying in the World of Glenn Ligon," in *Glenn Ligon America*, ed. Scott Rothkopf (New York: Whitney Museum of American Art, 2011), 51-8, excerpted in *Translations*, ed. Sophie Williamson (Cambridge: MIT Press, 2019), 64.
- 24 Britta Erickson, "The Art of Xu Bing," *Beijing Beat*, issue 9, Jan 15, 1999.
- 25 Xu Bing's Square Words are designed to emulate the appearance of traditional "standard script (*kai ti*)" cemented by Tang-dynasty masters such as Yan Zhenqing. See Hsingyuan Tsao, "Reading and Misreading: Double Entendre in Locally Oriented Logos," in *Xu Bing and Contemporary Chinese Art*, eds. Hsingyuan Tsao and Roger T. Ames, (SUNY Press, 2011), 25-27.
- 26 See David Joselit, *Heritage and Debt: Art and Globalization*, (Cambridge: MIT Press, 2020), 65-67.
- 27 For the connection between American Zen studies and Conceptual Art, see Ellen Pearlman, *Nothing and Everything—The Influence of Buddhism on the American Avant Garde: 1942-1962*, (Berkeley: Evolver Editions, 2012).
- 28 In this vein, Xu's work can be compared to that of such as Gu Wenda's *United Nations* series (1993-present) who erected contemporary towers of Babel.
- 29 Xu Bing, "On Words," 1999-2000, translated by Phillip Bloom, excerpted in *Contemporary Chinese Art: Primary Documents*, (MoMA, 2010), 256-257.
- 30 Gao Minglu, "Meaninglessness and Confrontation in Xu Bing's Art," *Fragmented Memory: The Chinese Avant-Garde in Exile*, (Columbus: Wexner Center for the Arts, Ohio State University, 1993), 29.
- 31 As Hsingyuan Tsao writes, "it is not an artwork of overlapping subjects possessing two different forms of knowledge and experience of the West and the 'Other'; rather it 'involves a repositioning of the self both intellectually and at the level of 'felt' reality, the apprehension of relationships and material reality and their impact on us thinking, feeling beings." See Tsao, 26-27.
- 32 Meleko Mokgosi interview, by Juliet Helmke, "Q&A: Meleko Mokgosi on His Dual Presentation at Jack Shainman Gallery," in *Blouin ARTINFO*, September 7, 2016.
- 33 As one reviewer wrote, "As a set of objects framed off, commodified, and ready to be packed, sold and placed in storage in some collector's vault, the work becomes just another example of work that succeeded better as an idea." See Faheem Haider, "Paintings that Get (Kind of) Close to South Africa's Colonial Aftermath," *Hyperallergic*, April 10, 2015.
- 34 Mokgosi was born in Francistown, Botswana in 1981, and attended Williams College and the Independent Study Program at the Whitney Museum of Art (2007). He holds a MFA from University of California, Los Angeles (2011), and has been on the faculty of the Yale School of Art since 2019.
- 35 Other garments from the series often include jingles, which Gibson explains are traditionally considered female in the powwow context. "For me to use [the jingle] as an artist is not to decontextualize it so much as to expand the context of it. It's also to acknowledge that they are now commercially made specifically for the powwow dancers... It complicates the idea of what is perceived of as being traditional." Jeffrey Gibson interview with Emily Zimmerman, "Innovation and Tradition," *BOMB* magazine, May 6, 2019.
- 36 Gibson says: "Understanding of the Native aesthetic is so limited ... It creates a fetishism for me to perform to and for people to respond to." The human figures on the garments, Gibson explained, relate as much to the aesthetic of ancient Chinese terracotta warriors as that of Pueblo kachinas." Gibson quoted in Phillip Barcio, "Jeffrey Gibson Designs Vibrant Garments to Confound Cultural Assumptions," *Hyperallergic*, March 6, 2018.
- 37 See Michael A. Elliott, "Ethnography, Reform, and the Problem of the Real: James Mooney's Ghost-Dance Religion," *American Quarterly* 50, no. 2 (1998): 201-33.
- 38 L. Carrington Goodrich and Nigel Cameron, *The Face of China as Seen by Photographers & Travelers, 1860-1912*, (Millerton, NY: Aperture, 1978).
- 39 Hung Liu quoted in Holland Cotter, "Hung Liu, Artist Who Blended East and West, Is Dead at 73," *New York Times*, August 22, 2021.
- 40 For a discussion on "intertemporality," see Wu Hung, "Four Moments in Hung Liu's Art," in *Summoning Ghost: The Art of Hung Liu*, (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 2013), 24.
- 41 From Wang Wei's poem "Weicheng Qu" (A Song of Weicheng).
- 42 Wu Hung, "Four moments in Hung Liu's Art," 32.
- 43 Lydia H. Liu, "Introduction" in *Translingual Practice: Literature, National Culture, and Translated Modernity—China, 1900-1937*, (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1995), 19-20.
- 44 Steiner ties this to the essential function of translation: "Each living person draws, deliberately or in immediate habit, on two sources of linguistic supply: the current vulgate corresponding to his level of literacy, and a private thesaurus. ... Obviously, we speak to communicate. But also to conceal, to leave unspoken," in *After Babel*, 47.
- 45 This work was performed under the community-based program *Keepers of the Water*, organized by the American eco-artist and activist Betsy Damon.
- 46 Gao Ling, "A Survey of Contemporary Chinese Performance Art," 1999, translated by Yinxiu Liu, excerpted in *Contemporary Chinese Art: Primary Documents*, 182.
- 47 See Nancy P. Lin, "Song Dong: Water," in Wu Hung and Orianna Cacchione, *The Allure of Mater: Material Art from China*, (Chicago: Smart Museum of Art, 2019) 187-189.
- 48 Song Dong cites the Dao De Jing (Tao Te Ching) as an early inspiration: "the greatest image is formless, the greatest sound is noiseless, the greatest skill seems crude." In Song Dong interview with Cici Wu and Jane DeBoise, *Asia Art Archive*, Nov 4, 2017.
- 49 See Norman Bryson "The Post-ideological Avant-Garde" in Gao Minglu, *Inside/out*, 55-56.
- 50 Wu Hung, "'Vernacular' Post-Modern: The Art of Song Dong and Yin Xiuzhen," in Song Dong and Yin Xiuzhen, *Chopsticks*, (New York: Chambers Fine Art), 9-23.
- 51 Leng Lin, "Catching Moonbeams in Water," for *Song Dong in Beijing Commune*, April 28 - June 8, 2007, *Artnet news*.
- 52 Song says: "if we accept the notion that all people are Buddhas, we could also say 'I am a man, but I also have a Buddha-like presence.'" Song Dong in conversation with Maxwell Hearn and Malcolm Daniel at the Met. See *Ink Art: Past and Present in Contemporary China*, (Metropolitan Museum of Art, 2013) 184, n.62.
- 53 Song performed the piece twice; first for twenty minutes before a large audience, then in front of a camera operated by his wife (Yin Xiuzhen) for an hour.
- 54 Song Dong interview, *Asia Art Archive*.
- 55 Simpson's photograph is accompanied by the text: "She saw him disappear by the river/ They asked her to tell what happened/Only to discount her memory." See Joan Simon, "Easy to Remember, Hard to Forget: Lorna Simpson's Gestures and Renactments," in *Lorna Simpson* by Joan Simon et al., (Munich: Prestel, 2013), 10-11. See also bell hooks, "Lorna Simpson: Waterbearer," *Artforum*, September 1993.
- 56 Curator Thelma Golden, in response to the burden of representation, termed the now controversial notion "Post-Black" in the 1990s. See Golden lecture at Tate Britain, "The Status of Difference: Thelma Golden—Post-Black Art Now," <https://www.tate.org.uk/audio/status-difference-thelma-golden-post-black-art-now>
- 57 Okwui Enwezor, "Repetition and Differentiation—Lorna Simpson's Iconography of the Racial Sublime," in *Lorna Simpson* (New York: Abrams, in association with the American Federation of Arts, 2006), 121-122.
- 58 "With an emphasis on the body as subject and multiplicity as a formal mode, Simpson's work makes a visual and physical demand on the viewer to apprehend multiple fragments simultaneously as the entire artwork yet also as an incomplete representation." Naomi Beckwith, "Solo March: Role Play, Time Play, and Spatial Play in Lorna Simpson's *Cheal*," in *Lorna Simpson* by Joan Simon et al., 57-58.
- 59 Lorna Simpson quoted in Joan Simon, "Easy to Remember," in *Lorna Simpson*, 12-13.
- 60 Here, the phrases are only given in partial fragments, such that the gender, subject, and tense of speech remain largely undefined. For more, see Vyjayanthi Selinger, "Loves Me, Loves Me Not," *Art Purposes: Object Lessons for the Liberal Arts*, ed. Joachim Homann, (Bowdoin College Museum of Art & Delmonico Books: 2019), 200.
- 61 The carpet is originally designed to be freely walked on/off by viewers. As documented in a review by Margaret Scott in 1994, "While we were there, young museum-goers, many clad in black-on-black attire, slipped off their shoes before stepping on Yanagi's altered symbol of nationality. His art is putting questions of nationality and identity literally underfoot ..." Scott, "The Godzilla Tour of Japan: A Writer, a Politician, a Diplomat and an Artist Wrestle with the Fantasy-vs.-Reality Questions of their Country's Shifting Identity," *Los Angeles Times*, Nov 13, 1994.
- 62 Alexandra Munroe, "Japanese Art After 1945—Scream Against the Sky," 1994, excerpted in Yanagi Yukinori, *Wandering Positions*, (BankART 1929, 2016), 102-103.
- 63 "For Japan's erstwhile colonies, the trope of love is doubly significant. ... Such sentimental bonds created a fantasy of a paternalistic Japan "guiding" the Chinese, and the obedient Chinese loving them in return." See Selinger, *ibid.*
- 64 See Mika Yoshitake in conversation with Kris Kuramitsu, "Borders & Identity," video published by Blum & Poe gallery, July 31, 2021, <https://vimeo.com/583977365>.
- 65 I'm grateful to Jayanthi Selinger for sharing her insights on the work with me.
- 66 The film's full title, *La Chinoise, ou plutôt à la Chinoise: un film en train de se faire* translates to "The Chinese, or, rather, in the Chinese manner: a film in the making." Set in Paris, the film focuses on the lives and interactions of five French university students, belonging to a radical Maoist group.
- 67 Dan Graham writes about his work: "On video the difference between intention and actual behavior is fed back on the monitor and immediately influences the observer's future intentions and behavior." See Peter Plagens, "Dan Graham and Mowry Baden," *Artforum*, December 1975.



THIS IS A POETIC STATEMENT.
IDENTIFY THE ELEMENTS
THAT CONSTRUCT
THE POEM.