

# ***Inter-text-uality:***

## ***Selections from the University at Albany Fine Art Collections***

***Inter-text-uality*** highlights work from the University at Albany Fine Art Collections, showcasing the various ways artists have used text as a visual element in their work. Presented together with the inaugural exhibition on Tim Rollins and K.O.S. (Kids of Survival), the Collections Study Space includes works by Nava Atlas, Sanford Biggers, Xu Bing, Mel Bochner, Andrew Brischler, John Held Jr., Gayle Johnson, Michael Kidner, Christian Marclay, Joel Meyerowitz, Justin Nelson, Eduardo Paolozzi, Calvin Reid, Tim Rollins and K.O.S., Dieter Roth, Lorna Simpson, Stella Waitzkin, and Kara Walker.

Organized and written by Max Seiler, Fine Art Collections Intern

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Nava Atlas (b. 1955)

*Love and Marriage*, 2008

Laser printed, altered romance comics, saddle stitched binding

10 x 7 ½ inches

*Love and Marriage* is a collection of altered comic book stories from the 1950s, in which the original dialogue has been removed and replaced by deadpan banter. Exchanged between male and female characters, the narrative explores the mythologies of modern marriage, motherhood, and monogamy. The interspersed ads from the era reveal an absurdity that's left intact in an original and unaltered state. Atlas' work speaks to the experience and the constraint of women's traditional roles.



Sanford Biggers (b. 1970)  
*Cheshire Smile*, 2008  
 Mixed media  
 4 x 4 x 1 ¾ inches

In this work, Sanford Biggers is referencing the famous Cheshire cat from Lewis Carroll's *Alice in Wonderland*, who disappears after sharing riddles, leaving behind only his bodiless, floating grin, here highlighted by the void of the black background. Beyond the literary representation, Biggers uses the image as a reference to racist minstrel-show performances done by white and also black actors in painted blackface. Drawing on this history, the artist highlights the complexity of today's black entertainment culture as a form of social and financial ascension.



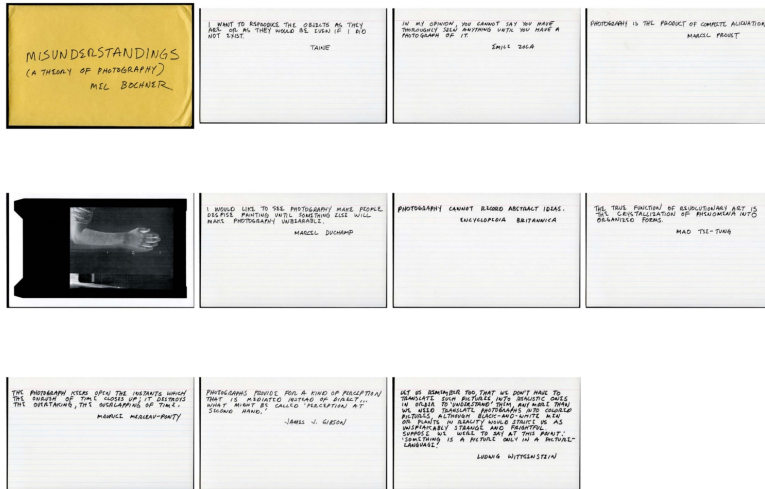
Xu Bing (b. 1955)

*A Book from the Sky*, 1987-91

Woodblock on handmade paper

37 ½ x 19 ½ inches

This artist's print comes out of a larger installation of four books that was first displayed in 1988 in Beijing, China. As in many of Bing's works, the Chinese characters in this block print are invented by the artist. As a result, the language of these books and prints cannot be decoded and hold no obvious meaning. The act of creating meaningless writing, however, raises questions about the relationship between identity and the written word as well as about the artist's claim that writing is the "essence of culture." By fictionalizing and subverting language, the work speaks to the need to communicate by altering or removing accepted meaning or truths.



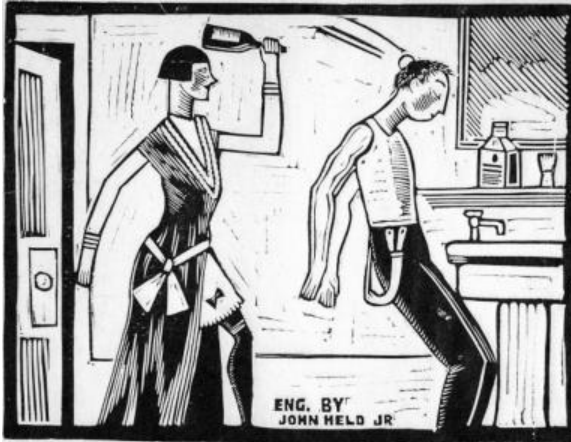
Mel Bochner (b. 1940)  
*Misunderstandings (A Theory of Photography)*, 1967  
 Offset lithographs on paper  
 6 x 9 inches

*Misunderstandings (A Theory of Photography)* questions the framework and rules that artists, critics, and historians have placed on the medium of photography. Here, Mel Bochner dissects the subjective “rules” that have governed the medium. Six of the quotations on the cards are sourced from literature, and three are invented by Bochner himself. By creating the forged quotes, he is questioning the validity of and need to follow the sourced language. Bochner made this piece in the late 1960s, when photography was being questioned as a valid medium in art. This is one of a series of “Theory of ...” works Bochner produced.



Andrew Brischler (b. 1987)  
*Fake Fuck With No Fangs*, 2013  
Oil, colored pencil, and pencil on linen  
20 x 17 inches

Andrew Brischler melds text and abstraction within his work to create paintings, which pose a relationship among form, language, and color. In Brischler's paintings, each word, phrase, or letter has a corresponding color and an abstracted form relationship. Drawing connections among font styles, color palette, and composition, Brischler creates a cohesive painting in which all the elements speak to each other. While the text is a minor element in this work, his paintings often feature text that dominates the canvas, as is also seen in the work of another conceptual artist, Ed Ruscha.



John Held Jr. (b. 1889—d. 1958)  
*Untitled (Woman Hits Man with Bottle)*, n.d.

Block print on paper  
 Printed from original block in 1978 by daughter, Judy Held Miller  
 9 ¼ x 12 ¼ inches

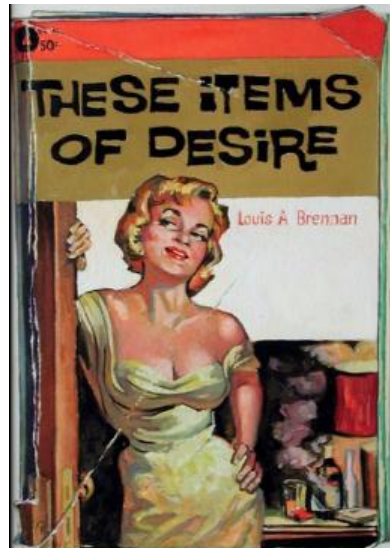
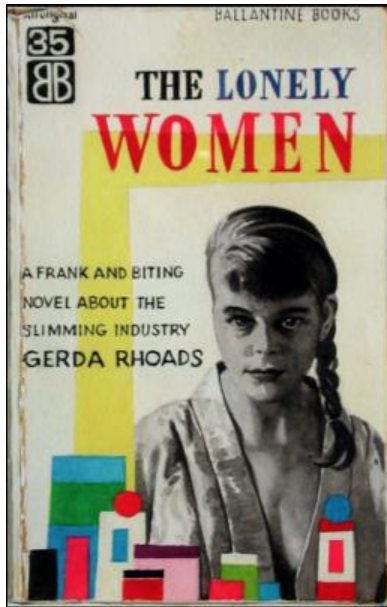
*Home is Where the Heart Is*, n.d.

Block print on paper  
 Printed from original block in 1978 by daughter, Judy Held Miller  
 9 x 11 ½ inches



John Held Jr. was an extremely accomplished cartoonist and illustrator whose work appeared in major newspapers, magazines, and other important publications. His work captured the essence of the Roaring Twenties, by illustrating figures in various activities while inserting humor to depict the mood he was trying to achieve. In this work, he uses linoleum cut printing, which helped him achieve the stark black outlines of figures and objects—a style that directly references cartoons he was producing at this time. Held Jr. had very little art training, spending some time learning from sculptor Mahonri Young and working on painting camouflage on Army warships; by age fifteen he had already published his first piece, a testament to his skill at this craft.





Gayle Johnson (b. 1953—d. 1995)

*The Lonely Women: from the Facts and Fictions Series, 1992-93, 1993*

Gouache on paper

8 x 5 ½ inches

*These Items of Desire: from the Facts and Fiction Series, 1992-93, 1993*

Gouache on Masonite

8 x 5 ½ inches

Gayle Johnson's paintings operate in the language of smallness—both in terms of scale and in her overlooked subject matter: tattered paperback books, knickknacks, B-movie couples, and 1950s-style interiors. Her exacting way of recording history is acute as she tries to find a deeper truth in her mundane and ignored subjects. By transforming the everyday in her work, her awareness of these items draws us in with their sublime nature, while also leaving us a bit queasy. Her realist approach leaves nothing off-limits as she makes us reflect deeply about our gaze and representation of others.



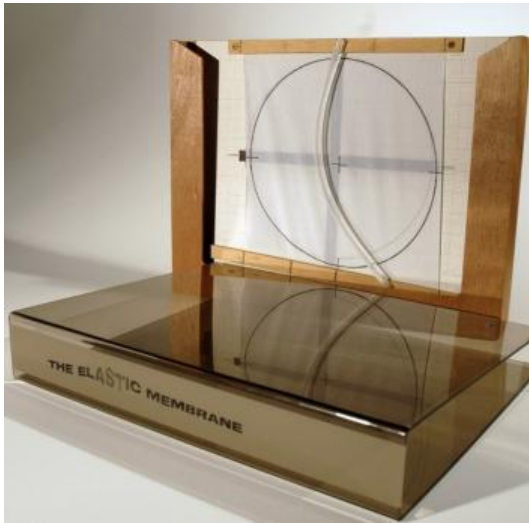


Michael Kidner (b. 1917—d. 2009)

*Elastic Membrane*, 1979

Mixed media

17  $\frac{3}{4}$  x 14 x 2  $\frac{1}{2}$  inches



Printed by Circle Press in 1979, *Elastic Membrane* reveals the logic of the artistic process. The work is broken up into three parts: a homemade wooden mechanism, photo and lithographic prints, and two of Kidner's notebooks. Through a hands-on-approach rather than a computer algorithm, Kidner created a limitless potential for drawing by utilizing an elastic cloth that abstracted and distorted various geometric forms and lines. Producing an unlimited combination of marks, the artist's "computer" was made in response to Kidner's growing indifference to the digital process. The artist's notebooks, exhibited together with the physical object and prints, are the culmination of his thoughts and ideas related to the evolution of drawing.



Christian Marclay (b. 1955)

*Untitled (Music Box)*, 2005

Mixed media

2 ¾ x 5 x 3 ½ inches

Manufactured by the last remaining music box company in Switzerland, Reuge, *Untitled (Music Box)* is a work that plays a seamless melodic loop without the gradual slowing of the unwinding mechanism. The box construction plays with our expectations of the music box. Marclay composed the song, "Tinsel", using a brilliant triple word play with "Tinsel," "Listen," and "Silent," as they are all anagrams of each other.



Joel Meyerowitz (b. 1938)

*New Year's Eve, NYC (Kiss Me, Stupid)*, 1965

Gelatin silver print on paper

11 x 14 inches

Part of Meyerowitz's early photographs, *New Year's Eve, NYC (Kiss Me, Stupid)*, continues in tradition of Robert Frank and Garry Winogrand's black-and-white street photography. The couple in the photograph embraces on a cold New Year's Eve night below a theater marquee of the romantic comedy *Kiss Me, Stupid*, revealing Meyerowitz's interest in the spontaneous human events of street photography. The movie's title also implies an unseen, omnipresent speaker who is hinting at the romantic notion that these words were for this couple, motivating their kiss.



Justin Nelson, (b. 20<sup>th</sup> century)  
*Holos Xerox Series I, No. 6*, 1974  
Xerox on paper  
12 x 9 inches

"the" is the word and Justin Nelson makes us focus intensely on it. Although not much is known about this former University at Albany student, his work fits perfectly into this text-based exhibition, as it forces us to meditate deeply on the word. While a very simple word and used modestly in this work, "the" has great power in language to classify other words and phrases. However, when viewing it on its own in Nelson's work, we are forced to see the word "the" not only as language, but also as the visual space it takes up and creates as a form.



Eduardo Paolozzi (b. 1924—d. 2005)

*General Dynamic F.U.N.*, 1965-70

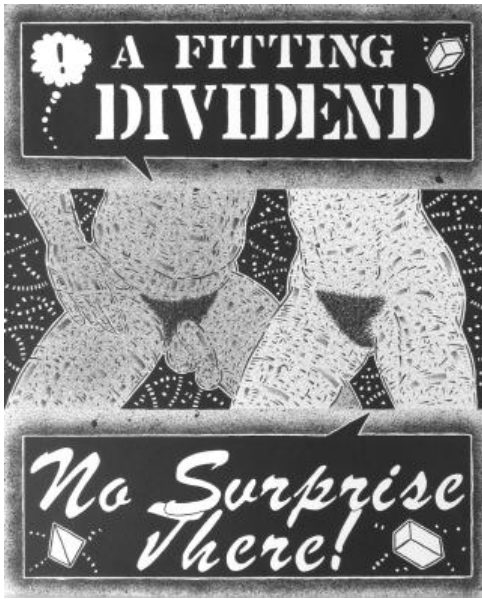
Photolithograph on paper

14 ½ x 10 ½ inches

*General Dynamic F.U.N.* includes fifty screenprints and photolithographs, which feature images from advertising and photojournalism as well as patterns, slogans, and other ephemera. The owner of the prints has the power to rearrange, reconfigure, and curate the way that he, she or they want the sheets to be sequenced—empowering them through an artistic process that the artist went through as well.

Paolozzi's work is a celebration of printed, cinematic, and televisual culture of the late 20th century. Due to the lack of a beginning or end in the piece, the use of arranging bestowed by the artist forces the viewer to find their own meaning throughout the piece. It creates a conversation between the imagery and various color relationships that occur when prints are placed next to one another.





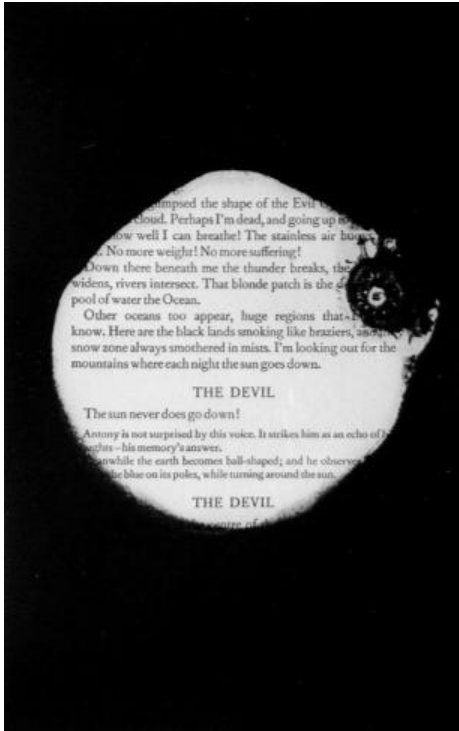
Calvin Reid (b. 20<sup>th</sup> century)

*A Fitting Dividend, No Surprise There*, 1991

Lithograph on paper

27 x 22 inches

Calvin Reid's life has been a mix of art and the written word. Moving to New York City's East Village in the early 1980s, Reid found a vibrant and bustling downtown arts community. While continuing to make lithographs and etchings at Robert Blackburn's *Printmaking Workshop*, he was motivated to write about what he was doing and seeing in the East Village. Trying to push forward non-white voices including his own, Reid found an avenue as a critic, writing for various publications including *BOMB*, *Artnet*, *Art in America* and other artist-run publications. His passion for the written word spilled over into his prints, as many included the melding of text and image, which challenged and advanced established views of art.



Tim Rollins and K.O.S. (Kids of Survival) (b. 1955—d. 2017)

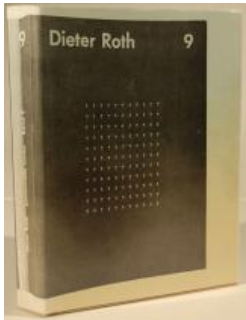
*The Temptation of St. Anthony, Plate X, 1989*

Aquatints on xerograph with chine-collé

8 ¼ x 5 ¼ inches

Printed in 1989 at Crown Point Press, *The Temptation of St. Anthony* is a series of prints that Tim Rollins and K.O.S. (Kids of Survival) printed collaboratively on pages of Gustave Flaubert's book by the same title. Mixing text and various printmaking techniques, this work balances the negative and positive space of the text with abstract forms. Much of the work in this series resemble dead human cells that resonated deeply during the AIDS crisis of the 1980s and 90s. Tim Rollins and K.O.S. look to the power of art and the way it operates in the space of social activism. Rollins's career is defined by collaboration with various students, often focusing on single motifs from famous works of literature.





Dieter Roth (b. 1930—d. 1998)  
*Gesammelte Werke (Collected Work)*,  
 Band 9, 17, 18, 20, 40, 1947-1979  
 Offset prints on paper  
 9 ½ x 7 x 1 ¼ inches



*Gesammelte Werke (Collected Work)*,  
 125 Trophies, n.d.  
 Offset prints on paper  
 9 ½ x 7 x 1 ¼ inches



Published over an eighteen-year period, from 1969 to 1987, Dieter Roth's *Collected Work* series is a quasi-catalogue raisonné of reconstructions of his artist books. Roth's work is characterized by a duality between chaos and organization, and, fittingly, the books weren't printed in sequence; number 15 was the first issued. *Collected Works* is an organization, collection, and documentation and Roth's re-envisioning of previous projects. Each book shows off the various ways Roth used visual language to create complex layered pieces.



Lorna Simpson (b. 1960)

*III (Three Wishbones in a Wood Box)*, 1994

Mixed media

13 5/8 x 5 1/2 x 2 1/8 inches

Much of Lorna Simpson's work focuses on representation of black women, exploring relationships among race, sex, and culture. It involves confronting the viewer with the underlying racism still found in American culture. Within this piece, the wishbone tackles these issues, drawing on the metaphorical meanings of the project's materials. The work is both an examination of and meditation on wishing. The set includes a wooden box filled with three contrasting wishbones, or "wishes," made from bronze, ceramic, and rubber. The bronze and rubber wishbones are unbreakably rigid. The ceramic wishbone was designed to allude to its fragile nature.



Stella Waitzkin (b. 1920—d. 2003)

*Untitled (27 Books)*, n.d.

Resin and found objects

10 ½ x 34 x 5 inches

*Untitled (27 Books)* consists of 27 individual books that Waitzkin cast from their original leather-bound versions using polyester resin. The artist had an apartment at the Chelsea Hotel in New York where her cast books and other found objects lined and filled floor-to-ceiling bookshelves, consuming the space. This emphasis on the physical space was part of Waitzkin's nearly magical notion that casting books cements the objects as repositories of knowledge. The idea of the cast book as an object of wisdom and communication would become satisfyingly tangible for the artist. Looking to the volume of these objects, she saw her sculpture as essentially illuminating in the books' reflection of light and surface something that is as equally important as the sculpture for which she is better known.

