

VISUAL LINGUISTICS

San Jose / Andy Brumer

Both Yong Soon Min's and Lionell Glaze's installations, currently at the San Jose Institute of Contemporary Art, are concerned with the union of visual art and language.

Min's *fox-trot/frame*, p. 521 *The American Heritage Dictionary Of The English Language, New College Edition* is an equally visual and linguistic work of vast complexity and scope. It consists of a long horizontal series, a "line," of small 2"x 2" squares installed at eye level which turn the corners of three gallery walls. The imaginative force of the piece quickly draws you into active participation with the ideas and feelings it conveys. The first square simply holds the typed word "fragments" which begins a journey along the piece as it shifts between what could be called language squares (words only) and picture squares (images only), and incorporates several squares that combine words and images. *fox-trot/frame*... comments on itself and grows in much the same manner as do dreams, lyric poetry and film.

Most of the visual images are xeroxed from the dictionary named in the title. These visual squares are placed at different positions along the "line" and act iconographically in relation to word squares or other dictionary excerpts, forming a visual-literary "text" that you "read" while walking through the work. At one point there is a picture of the

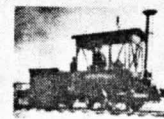


unicycle

Balancing life may be more than a circus trick.

For language to exist, you have to have two it people; a circus.

- Saussure



tender
Engine and tender of first train to be operated in Mississippi

"... use of language like a lover... not the language of but the love of language, not matter, but meaning, not what the tongue touches but what it forms, not lips and nipples but nouns and adverbs..."

Yong Soon Min, "fox-trot/frame, p. 521 *The American Heritage Dictionary Of The English Language, New College Edition*," mixed media, at the San Jose Institute of Contemporary Art.

"Great Rememberer," Marcel Proust, seriously engaged in the act of recollection, his hand on his bearded chin, and next to him a language square holds the phrases "past," "past imperfect," "past indefinite" and other grammatical tenses. Not only do these words refer to the tenses Proust used in his writing, but in a tongue-in-cheek manner, they suggest that the "past" or the "future" might in fact be "imperfect" and "indefinite." The work is full of such luxurious double-entendres.

The theme of *fox-trot/frame*... asserts itself as you finish "reading through" the main, central wall and turn to face the wall on the right. Here you encounter another "line," this time 2"x 2" mirrors also placed at eye level. As you walk along this wall, the silent reflections of cars and pedestrians, and of the activity in the gallery, flicker unevenly in the mirrors like a cubist motion picture. There is a sense of earned rest after having vigorously thought your way through the previous "line" of verbal and visual intellection. Within this flashing silence, the theme of the piece

becomes visually clear — that the nature of the process of perception is fragmented, shifting and at all times imaginatively active and alive.

Glaze's (*you are*) *Fat Ass Honkey* is an equally interesting work, though its *modus operandi* is radically different from *fox-trot/frame*... The artist has made 10,000 prints of the short phrase "(you ar) Fat Ass Honkey." The 24"x 32" prints (exhibited with seven working drawings of the phrase) are quite appealing in themselves; the words are expressively drawn and composed in a punk-graffitilike fashion. You might find such an image of public sentiment sprayed onto the side of a Manhattan subway train. However, the explorative ideas at work involve more than the phrase as a well-crafted object. Not the least interesting of these ideas is the way in which Glaze has dealt with (or, perhaps, ignored) the exhibition space. The artist writes on a "statement of intent" which should be read while at the gallery: "There are three areas of contact: phrase as matter; phrase as sculpture; and phrase in context of the

gallery."

The artist mailed 5,000 copies of the phrase, in the form of a flyer, to people in "diverse economic, political and social power positions." In the context of the gallery, the work is both "structure as sculpture" and "structure as informational delivery system" (Glaze's wording). The 10,000 removable copies of the phrase are stacked on wooden factory skids and act, within the gallery, as a kind of proletarian sculpture. By virtue of being able to remove the phrase from the gallery, the piece achieves its potential to deliver its message — speaking to as many people in as many places as the poster-phrase is taken.

The printing process itself, responsible for creating the mass reproduced image, becomes part of the content of the work, as does the shifting of the function of the gallery from a space in which work is installed or "deposited" to a place from which art can also be "removed." □

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