

STREPHOSYMBOLIA



Elize de Beer

Fourth Year Exhibition
2015

THANK YOU
TO MY FAMILY FOR ALL
THEIR LOVE AND
SUPPORT

STREPHOSYMBOLIA :

A learning disorder in which symbols and especially phrases, words, or letters appear to be reversed or transposed in reading.

WRITTEN LANGUAGE
THAT UNDERLIES CONVENTIONAL
LANGUAGE OF CODED SIGNIFICATION

STREPHOSYMBOLIA

by Elize de Beer

Language sets the limits of our understanding, but what if those limits could be stretched to rather create a vastly alternative system of language than that of conventional written language structures. In Strephosymbolia- language is used to explore common dyslexic oddities and personal experience to explore the difficulties of reading, spelling and working through the inability to access written language. Strephosymbolia considers an alternative visual experience to conventional written language, emphasising a general dyslexic experience and how written language exists visually as an abstract form.

Dyslexia is definitively a neurological disorder that limits a person's ability to decode written language with the result being a defective phonological awareness. The term "strephosymbolia", meaning a twisted sign, accrues due to this defective awareness (Marley, 2007:2). Words function as unmotivated signs, where there is no connection between the word's form and the way it sounds causing the "twisted" decoding. Dyslexia can result in extreme visual distortion when reading; letters seem to blur, move around, bleed and drip into the line above or below and in some cases the white spaces within and between letters appear more prevalent than the letters themselves (Colgin, 2009:13). What this does is cause the viewer to be disorientated with regard to what they are reading, thus making it an even more difficult task to decipher the language in front of them.

Dyslexia is stereotypically understood to limit understanding, however, writers such as Ian Marley argue, it is rather

an ability to access a deeper layer of concepts and therefore expand the reader's interpretation of texts, as they are no longer limited by conventional language structures (Marley, 2007:2). Being spatial thinkers is what makes Dyslexics visual thinkers, letters are no longer read conventionally but are instead interpreted as images and abstract forms holding alternative concepts. These seeming "faults" cause the inability to decode written language and, as a result, allow for the visual experience of words rather than the analytical

Language is a visual medium that requires active engagement and letters need to be decoded in order to be understood as words. Conceptual Art's development of the dematerialized art-object resulted in an artwork existing in a minimal visual state. Lucy Lippard argues that the more time spent looking at a detail-less work, the more the viewer is forced to focus on the minimal visual elements provided in order to extract information from the work (Lippard & Chandler: 1967:46). Written language functions in the same way. During the conceptual turn, the thinking

process was emphasized exclusively as it was no longer satisfactory to just look at a work of art. Dematerialization caused physical art-objects to be more idea orientated (Lippard & Chandler: 1967:46). Language as a visual art-object is therefore an act of dematerialisation.

The use of language in Conceptual Art was emphasized in the art movement Art & Language in the 1960s. The movement created art works and ideas that exist outside of conventional language use. This acted as an enquiry into, not only visual art, but also as an enquiry into conventional language. The artist's idea is hereby expressed through the semantic qualities of the written language (Atkinson, T et al., 1969:99-103). Art & Language and Strophosymbolia- questions those presupposed understanding of how language is intended to function within visual art thus creating an alternative language experience throughout.

To interact with letters that should be recognizable, through hints of familiarity, the abstract forms presented remain enigmatic which echoes the dyslexic

experience. Due to a breakdown in the decoding process, the dyslexic mind doesn't take that familiarity any further. The difficulty in decoding causes a dyslexic to make common language "mistakes" (Marley, 2007:5). The challenge lies in representing these language "mistakes" as dyslexics see language from an imperfect perspective. Strephosymbolia represents this imperfect language by taking advantage of printing process "mistakes" and imperfections and aids in representing such mistakes within traditional letterpress printing, silkscreen printing and acid-etchings. Creating structural imperfections by shifting type placements, flooding screens, along with uncontrolled spit-biting and aquatints. Letters then get printed on different lines, different thicknesses and become inverted. Words that are made dense, blurred and smudged to the point of being illegible. These imperfections not only add to the visual dyslexic experience within the works but represent the manner in which these language imperfection reveal cognitive devices. The enhancing of the physical materiality of language though disorientating and dense mark-

making, emphasizes the pictorial understanding of language and how dyslexic people interact with language. Strephosymbolia has been influenced by grounding theories within Conceptual Art, however, within Strephosymbolia the formal and the concept cannot exist in states of sovereignty. A gap exists in the intertextuality that creates a dyslexic language experience. Considering not only concepts within language, but also how text functions as an image: its values of tone, texture and how it functions as a compositional form; texts become a dense and over layered combination of words that breed frustration when being read. Once the reader gives into the inability to decode what's written, the abstraction of lines and forms that exist within words is all that remains. Marely argues that this is when words and texts can be freely interpreted without constraints (2007:6). There is a middle ground that exists within language, between the formal visual aspects of language and the idea that it conveys an empty space that isn't interrogated. This middle ground allows

for the perception of written language to be altered. Strephosymbolia creatively transforms that middle ground by the use of particular print processes, altering both the physical form and the concepts those words then carry. In the breakdown of words and letters, they start to fall within a visual art-object frame, where a word's formal qualities are initially disregarded. Letters are essentially abstract arbitrary forms; lines and marks that make up words and thus symbolically point to concepts. When broken down as such, do words start to resemble the essence of artworks and art objects? This is what Strephosymbolia- draws attention to.

The manner in which the structure of letters and words exist within a realm of drawn forms that represent ideas. This thought and the origin of written language has become disconnected from what language is, because of the hierarchy that exist within language as a purely perceived information holder. When re-examining language through a dyslexic perspective, it restores the integrity of the underlying essence of language as a visual form. The ability to see and create new concepts by reflexively disrupting convention. Such imperfections allow for the creating of an alternative language discourse.

References:

1. Atkinson, T., Bainbridge, D., Baldwin, M, & Hurrell, H. Ed. 1969. Introduction. In *Conceptual Art: A Critical Anthology*. Alberro A & Stimson, B, Eds. 1999. Cambridge, Massachusetts: MIT press. 98-105.
 2. Colgin, C. 2009. *Alternative Perceptions of Reality: Dyslexia*. Sydney College of the Arts. The University of Sydney.
 3. Lippard, L.R. & Chandler, J. 1967. The Dematerialization of Art. In *Conceptual Art: A Critical Anthology*. Alberro, A & Stimson, B, Eds. 1999. Cambridge, Massachusetts: MIT press. 46-50.
 4. Marley, I. 2007. *Dyslexia the hidden*.
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Phonological Awareness
Acrylic Paint, Powder Paint,
Oil Paint on Canvas
1m x 1.5m
2015





Following Page:

Fault Line Series

Woodcut on Zerkall Intaglio

760mm x 535mm

2015

Nam fro the stdy of sins and sin-sistims {semiotics is american use; semi-olig it s eropen nam}. The fonder of semiligi was the swis lingist scolar Ferdinand de Saussure, wose corse in genrl lingistiks – a book bast on a serie of lectres he gav at the univirsitiy of Geneva in 1911-12 - produst the conceptual fram work for the disiplin of structral lingistiks. Semioge, thow it s erlest explots workt in a number of difrent contres in euope and brout to ther investifations qit a wid vrieti of acadmic bak onds in cluding filosofy, antopolojy, and litrasy studis, initalt rotd its consrns and metods voth in respons to and reaction ajants thoreticl acounts of the natur of hyman spokn and ritten language. In this latr fas, semioloji atemptd to name and anilis all the kinds of sins that may be fond in the world, and comon to the work of virualy all semiolojoists has been the agreemnt that a sin is ény thin a person regrds as a sin': that is, sumthin givn meening. This woud includ, for exampl, the meening gvn to all knds of natral events – such as erthqaks sen as divin wraf –by pepl at piticlr times livin in partivlier plas. Gvn the hug nombr of thins, than, that hav ben, and mit, posibli be, construe as sin, its not suprising that sum of the leedin semiolojists –includin the Amrien filofisr –trand C.S. Peirce and the Czech linjist Roman Jakobson-set abot constretin 'taxonomis' or classificafions, of diffrnt tips of sins whih they clam operatd in a piticliar, observail, ways. Wil Jakobson was intrestd in sins, sistims, and cods with in langage propr (priclrly with what was cald 'linjistic performace' or 'setch acts:). Peirce, who claid to hav idntifd litaly thosnds of diffrnt kinds of sins, examnd visal and other fisicl sins –both thos actily manfactrd by pepl and thps natuly ocurng fnominin seen by themis 'sin-ficant'. Humanli mad sins that genrate meenins – the proses of semioies –via fisicl resemlans to the things they refr to he cald iconic sins _e.j.: potrit^paniting, fotografisy, and figrativ^ sculpturs). Thos bast simpli on ajred, or convenonal meenings, he cald 'sins propr; - such as the red and gren of traffic lits repret-ing, repecity, 'stop _or danjer, be alrt) and 'go'(saf, OK). The fact, howevr, that thes colrs aprentli are givn these same genral meens univrsily by al cultrs sugests the posiblity that at lest an aspect of their meenin is not convenonal but sumhow rotd in huon biologi natur or instinctial life. Wit in art histry, scolrs includin Meyer Schapiro atemptd in the 1960s to codfy the elents of vial meening in graphic representatons datin from the erlist exampls of cave pantings- threw Schapiro alwas under stod thes pictres to combin biological, sicological and social, as wel as formal, semi-ological, fetchrs (e.g: the Altamire and Lascaux cave panitings and analist Roland Barths, similiry, strest the cutral and historiel circimstances within which sins becum meenlil- emfasisin, for exampl, the politiel and ideolgal rol of foftograg and there accompanin tests prints in contemp-ry print journalism

System of words signs and simboles. Language as such plays a indispensable role in art history. A role that has been actively theorized radically rethought and argued over with in the discipline especially since the 1970s. After this new art history currents rated semiotics and structuralism began to propose and examine the claim that visual art itself was a language (or shared defining properties with language). And the disorienting counter argument that even if seeing visual art as if it was in any case, always too be understood throw other languages – meaning explanatory discourses in the form of words spoken and written down. Too ther- its have valuable attempt to categorise the relationship between actual words (those spoken or written language) and visual imagery. They made the following assertions. Pictures are the victims of the ways we have of talking about them and we do not explain pictures: we explain remarks about pictures. The first claim suggests that visual representations are in a critical sense mute and contain no inherent meanings of their own at all – they rather present visual forms of various kinds which are then somehow “filled up” with semantic; verbal, and cognitive meaning (commonly no as content or subject matter) when people begin to articulate their encounter with these forms. Threw this idea may seem plausible when considering, for example, some comparatively recent kinds of ‘fine art’ photographs and abstract paintings, it seems less satisfactory when one considers how many apparently visual forms actually have words all ready directly written on to or placed in close physical proximity to them. The notion, therefore, of a purely visual form is problematic in both historical and structural terms: visual representation under examination have often – perhaps even usually – been artifacts that themselves combine, orientate, visual and written linguistic elements.

In the second claim, Baxandall is suggesting that the discipline of art history is what structuralists call ‘a second order’ system of meaning. This amounts to the view that; yes, there is visual art (throw in as; its complex combination of visual and written elements)), yet what art historians really do is construct generalised explanations for the purpose and meaning of art which are far more dependent on the claims of this explanatory system itself – the specialisms of analysis with in the discipline – than on the visual art objects that are the ostensible origin, and focus, of the inquiry. Needless to say, this claim seems to marginalise art in a way that many art historians would find completely unacceptable. Surely, they would argue, there is a much more active relationship between visual materials and the languages used by scholars to describe, analyse, and evaluate them? They might add that the experience of art can not be reduced to its intellectual explanation: that aesthetics engagement is, by definition, a somatic (bodily and sense) experience as well as a cognitive process. Thow this is true, arguably the institutionalised study and teaching of art now relies heavily on the belief that its intelligibly – arts meaning and value – can be wholly articulated, and communicated, via the standard languages of the lecture and the books.



Moveable Type

Ply Wood

Size Variable

2015



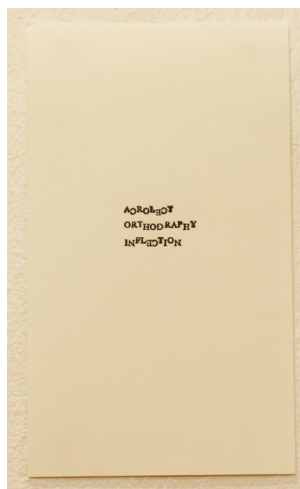


ALPHABETICAL
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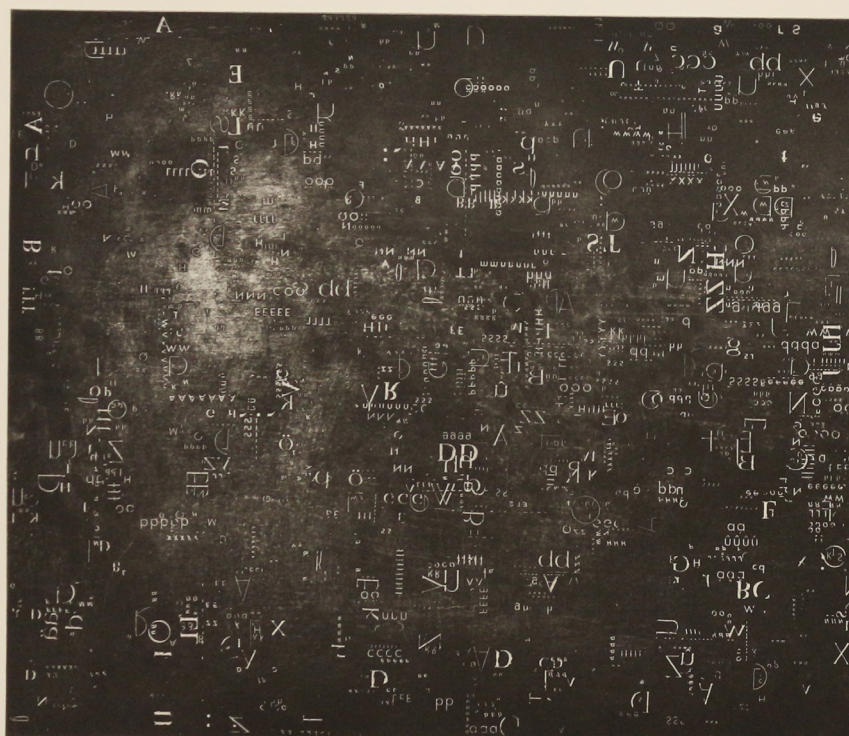
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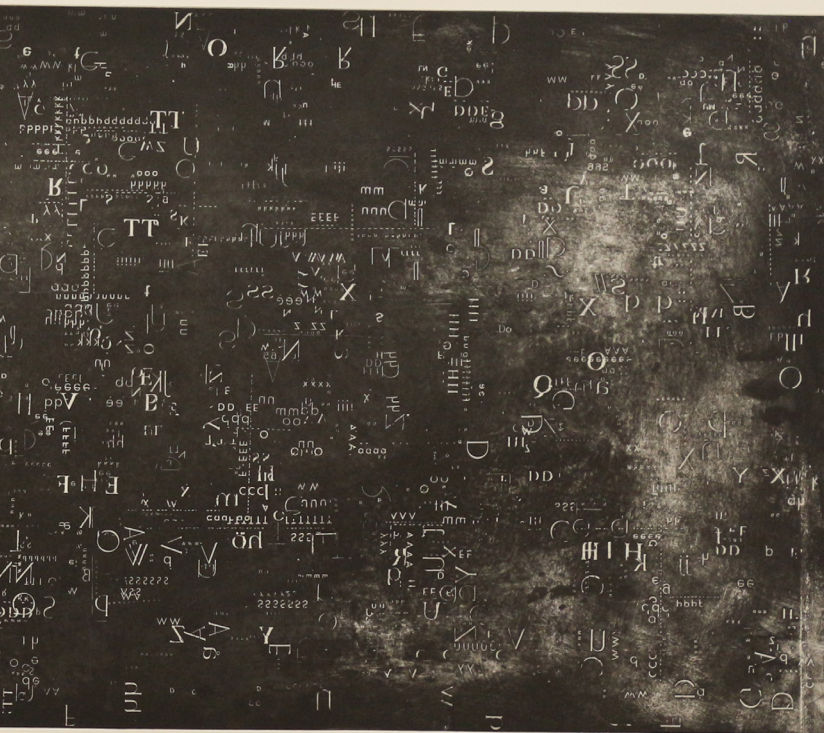
Letterpress

Ink on Zerkall Intaglio

210mm x130mm

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Letraset Rhetoric

Etching on Zerkall Intaglio

1030mm x 540mm

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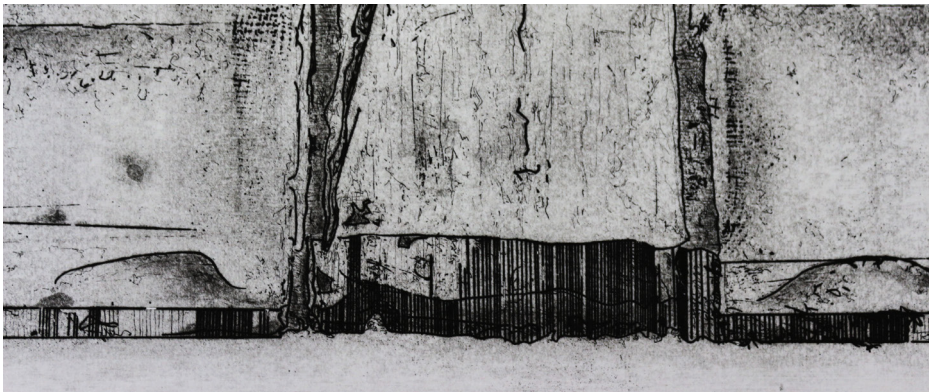
Letraset

Monotype with Letraset on

Zerkall Intaglio

1070mm x 760mm

2015



Conventional Language Structures

Etching on Zerkall Intaglio

630mm x 535mm

2015

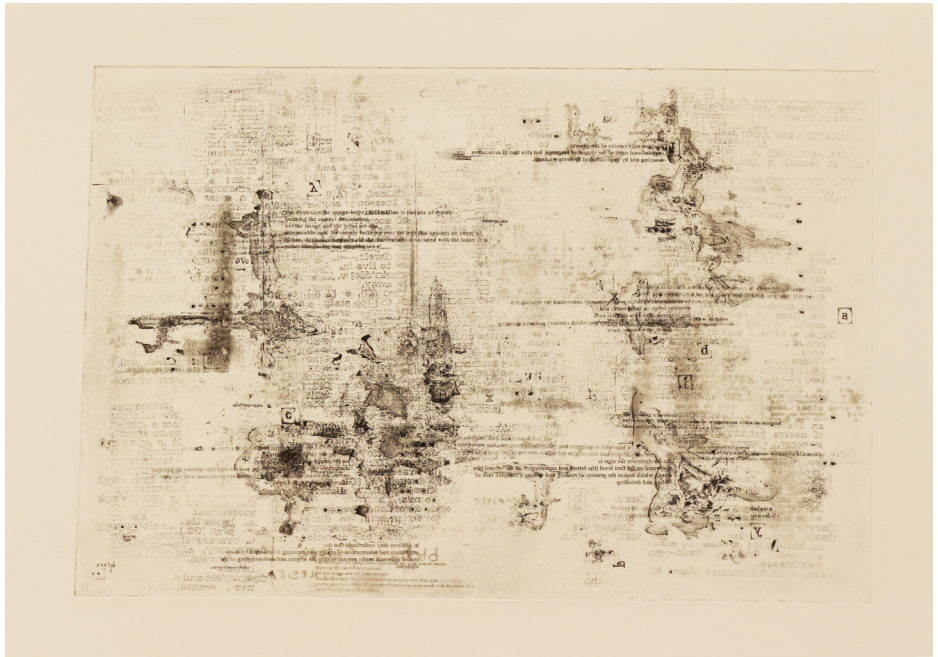
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Anacoluthon

Mild Steel

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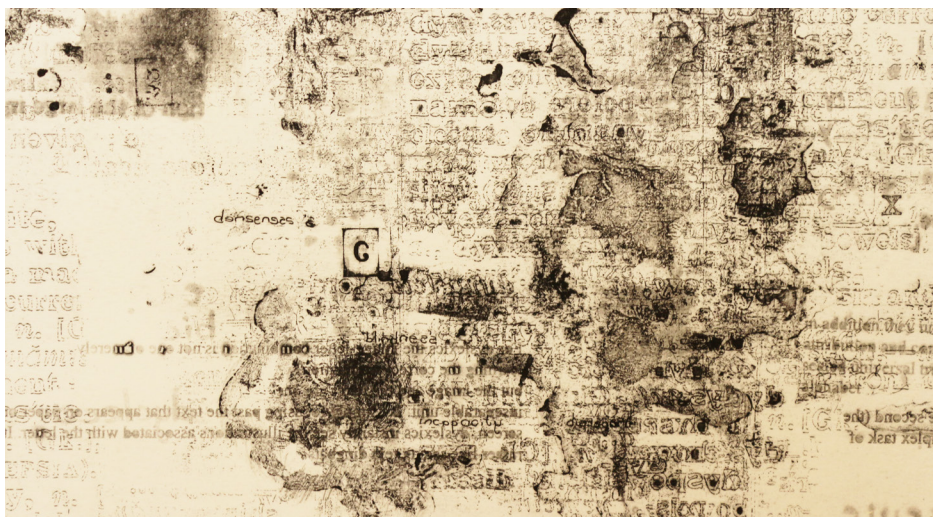


Spatial Thinking Series

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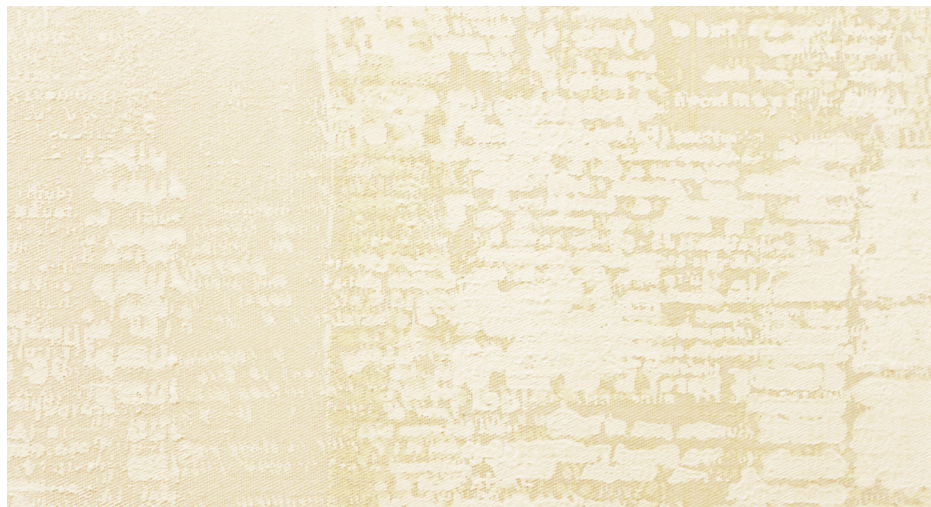
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Word Blindness

Details

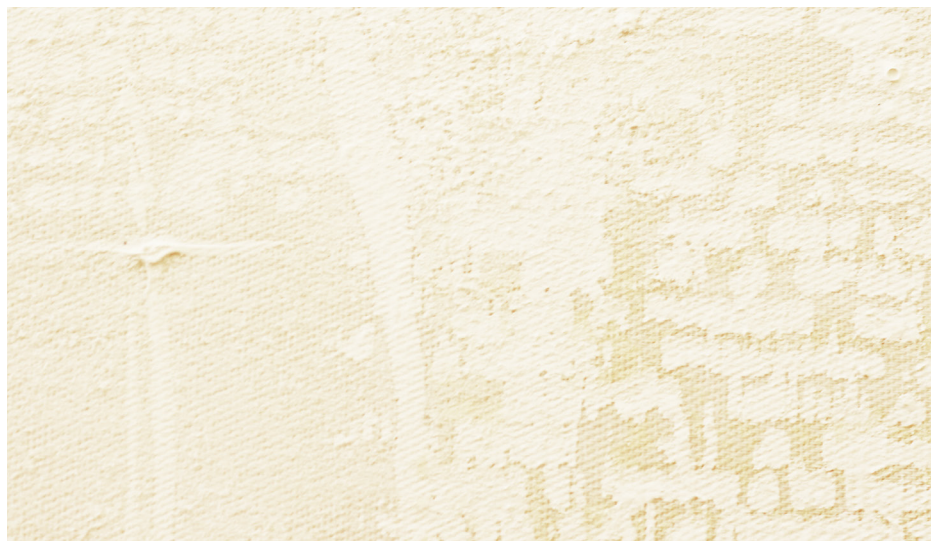
Acrylic Paint, Powder Chalk, Oil

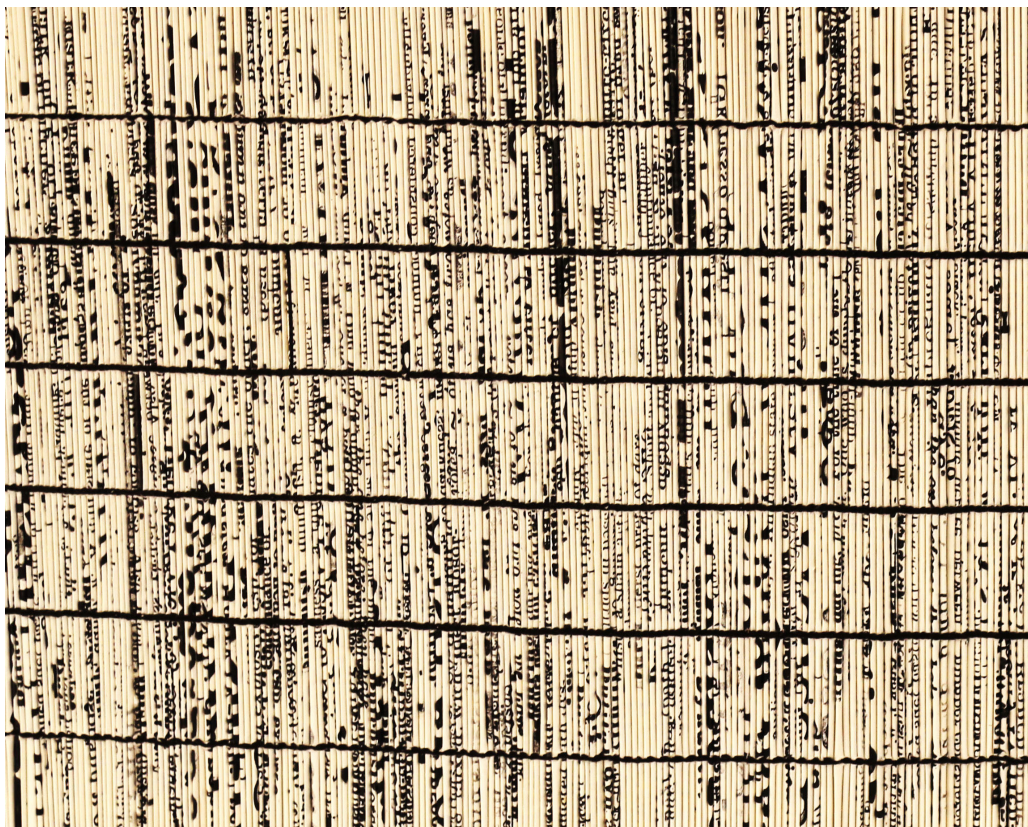
Paint Newsprint, Dictionary Pages

on Canvas

3m x 1.5m

2015





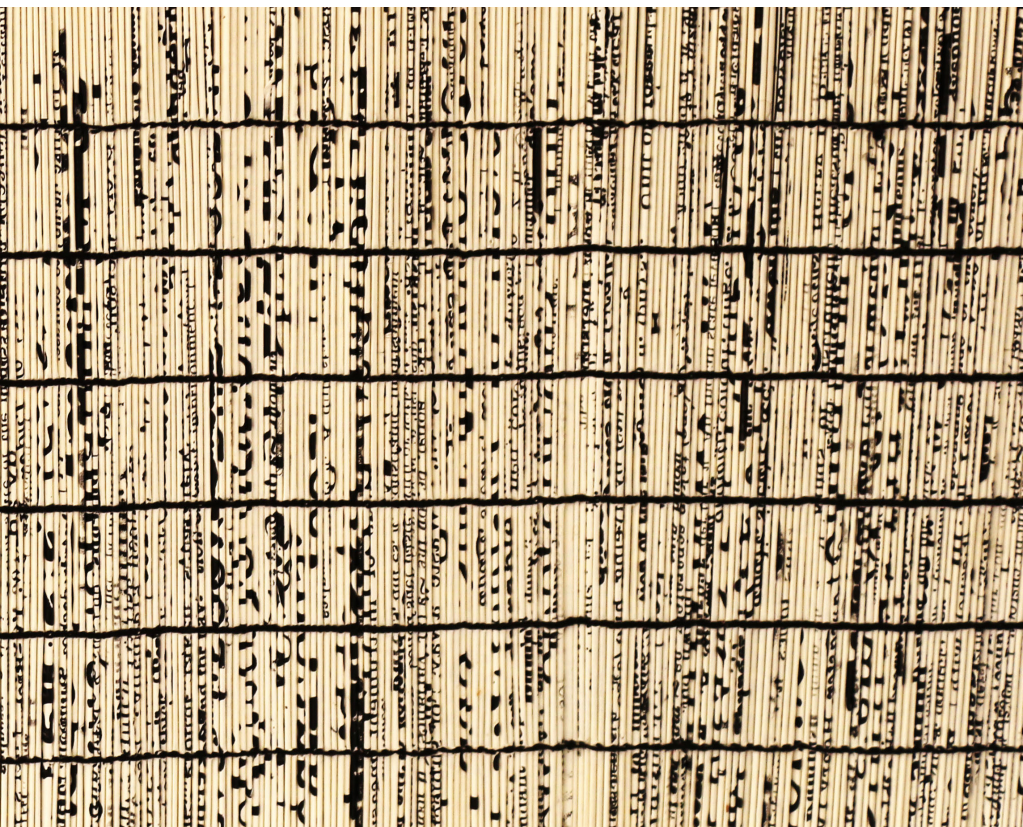
Words I Don't Understand

Silkscreen on Munken Pure

Plywood, Cotton Thread

148mm x 210mm x 1000mm

2015





Glossary

Anacoluthon:

A sentence or construction that lacks grammatical sequence, such as while in the garden, the door banged shut.

Phonological awareness :

A broad term, referring to the ability to focus on the sounds of speech as distinct from its meaning: on its intonation or rhythm, on the fact that certain words rhyme, and on the separate sounds.

Rhetoric:

The art of effective or persuasive speaking or writing, especially the use of figures of speech and other compositional techniques.

Spatial thinking:

Visual thinking, also called visual/spatial learning or picture thinking is the phenomenon of thinking through visual processing. Visual thinking has been described as seeing words as a series of pictures.

IPSA
LTX
STX
