



Sarah Hulsey, *Source Material*, detail, Screenprint, 48" wide x 24' long, 2022

**Suffolk University Gallery**  
**Sawyer Building, Sixth floor**  
**MAP: [8 Ashburton Place](#)**  
**Boston, MA 02108**  
**Closed on university holidays and weekends**

**Gallery Hours 2022:**  
**Weekdays 11-3, and by appointment**  
**To make an appointment contact:**  
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**or text 617-816-1974**

**For immediate release:**

**Artists and Language**  
**September 8 – October 3, 2022**  
**Thursday September 15, Gathering at 4:00pm and Gallery talk with the artists at 4:30pm**

The Suffolk University Gallery is very pleased to present **Artists and Language**, from September 8 – October 3, 2022.

*Put simply, one cannot understand the human brain without understanding the contributions of language, both in the moment of thinking and as a formative force during earlier learning and experience. When we study language, we are getting a peek at the very essence of human nature. Languages—these deeply structured cultural objects that we inherit from prior generations—work alongside our biological inheritance to make human brains what they are.*

Lera Boroditsky, Science, October 2019

The persistence of language is a human experience. Both art and language act as a door to that experience. The structure of language is the structure of the brain, as linguist Noam Chomsky says, “language is not just a bunch of words statistically strung together. Structures governing words come from the mind.” The artists in this exhibition produce very different kinds of work and are wedded to language and also to text, also in different ways. Additionally, each of their bodies of work has an internal grammar that we recognize as visual language.

The participating artists in the exhibition include Sarah Hulse, Ben Denzer, Deborah Dancy, Leslie Schomp, and Jocelyn Shu. These five artists each have a particular agenda and express it with particular forms and materials, and therefore each have a different way of expressing language, directly or indirectly. Underlying the intent of all the work is the importance of the form and the content, as well as the artists’ respective interest in uncovering and elucidating what words themselves mean and how meaning is conveyed.

[Sarah Hulse](#)’s work is concerned with the hidden, structural beauty of language. Language is a deeply human trait that we use in every aspect of our lives, though its workings are largely mysterious to us as speakers. She says “My work draws attention to those patterns deep in our minds and the rich, varied beauty they contain. I explore the systems of language that we use so effortlessly—phonetics, syntax, semantics, etc.—through prints, drawings, and artist books. Each piece isolates an aspect of a language or a text and creates a visual correlate of its structure, generating imagery from the linguistics of the text itself.”

[Ben Denzer](#) is an artist, designer, and publisher interested in how information is cataloged and preserved. Ben designs and publishes [Catalog Press](#) (a small edition artist press) and runs the Instagram [@ice cream books](#) (praised by Bella Hadid as “the most important Instagram out there today”). He is fascinated by how books are both dense containers for content and also singular sculptural objects. He has made books with found objects such as dollar bills, lottery tickets, mortadella, and American cheese.

In [Deborah Dancy](#)’s series *Domestic Resistance*, traditional objects reference historical, domestic and gendered histories of servitude. Imbued with her written text narrative, they highlight and give voice to the ignored and marginalized history of African Americans and their covert and overt acts of resistance. She says that “Resistance declares itself in many forms, through revolution and as survival. Within that, objects or commodities are not neutral. Their

presence implicates the account of its production, which consequently suggests how we consider and perhaps appreciate it. Thus, the gleaming highly polished elegance of silver objects offers such a lesson. Its status and rarified place in richly endowed homes and estates in America and abroad serves to remind us that its beauty arrived at considerable cost, the trading and trafficking of humans and the forced labor of mining to extract the elements and the final rendered objects which require the continuous task of polishing to eliminate any presence of tarnish. In this presented work, I have used silver-plate, a poor facsimile for sterling silver. Because the history of many was bound to a life shackled to field or domestic labor, I envision their stories through the lens of my enslaved ancestors.”

[Leslie Schomp](#) says that the text pieces shown in this exhibit, mostly a series of densely sewn samplers or works on cloth, are largely inspired quotes from the diaries of Louisa May Alcott during her period of living at Fruitlands in 1843 as a child, as part of a Utopian society founded by her father Bronson Alcott and Charles Lane. “I am interested in the idea that diary entries are the intersection between thoughts and spoken expression. I used a variety of stitching methods, color palettes and sizes/shapes for each quote. The slow and devotional history of stitching allows me to really ruminate on the words and their meanings. I enjoy how the history of samplers turns thoughts and text into objects. I also included two pieces that explored my own experiences for self-awareness or thoughts I use in my own journal experiences.”

In her ongoing series *81 Chapters*, [Jocelyn Shu](#) transforms chapters of the Dao De Jing — a Chinese philosophical text — into sculptures made of cut text and wire. She creates these pieces by hand-cutting the letters from a translated chapter and attaching the letters to wire. Then she sculpts the wire into forms that hang from the ceiling and on the wall, as well as sit on the ground. The artist views the process of creating these pieces as a slow “translation” of the text. This process forms the basis from which to consider potential relationships between humans and nature, change and impermanence, and the imprecision of translating from one language, medium, and culture to another. Together, the pieces interact with each other and the space they are installed in.

Additional Resources and Links:

<https://sites.suffolk.edu/artgallery/>