

BIBLIOGRAPHY

*Ben Shahn: Voices and Visions.* Exhib. cat. Sante Fe: Santa Fe East, 1981.

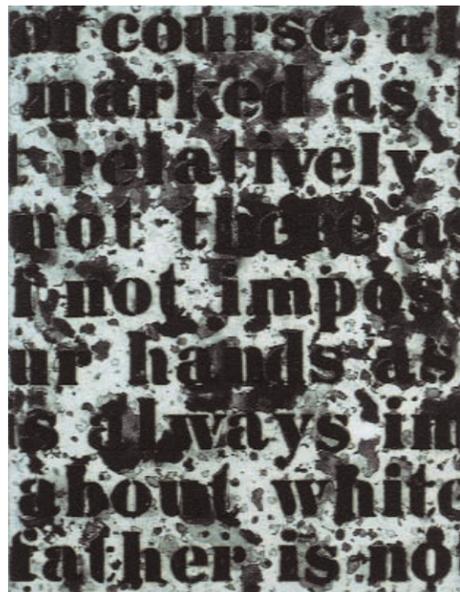
*Coloring: New Work by Glenn Ligon.* Exhib. cat. Minneapolis: Walker Art Museum, 2001.

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*Ed Ruscha: The Drawn Word.* Exhib. cat. Vero Beach: Windsor Gallery, 2003.

Prescott, Kenneth W. *Prints and Posters of Ben Shahn.* New York: Dover Publications, 1982.

*Word as Image: American Art, 1960–1990.* Exhib. cat. Milwaukee: Milwaukee Art Museum, 1990.



Glenn Ligon, *White #1*, 1995. Purchased through the Phyllis and Bertram Geller 1937 Memorial Fund; PR.996.6 © Glenn Ligon

CHECKLIST

Glenn Ligon, American, born 1960

*White #1*

1995

Etching and aquatint on wove paper  
*Purchased through the Phyllis and Bertram Geller  
1937 Memorial Fund; PR.996.6*

Elizabeth Murray, American, born 1940

Untitled, numbers 1, 3, 5, 7, 10, and 12 (of 13) from *Her Story:  
A Book of Thirteen Original Graphics by Elizabeth Murray  
for Thirteen Poems by Anne Waldman*

1988–90

Lithograph and etching  
PR.2000.28.1,3,5,7,10,12

Ann Parker, American, born 1934

*Lacy Chinese Lantern*

October 26, 1995

Photogram on Ilfchrome paper  
*Purchased through a gift from Emilia Seibold, Class of 1982;  
PH.999.31.7*

Ben Shahn, American, 1898–1969

*Immortal Words*

1958

Screenprint on wove paper  
*Bequest of Jay R. Wolf, Class of 1951; PR.976.223*

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HOOD MUSEUM OF ART

Designed by Christina Nadeau, DPMS



Elizabeth Murray, untitled, number 12 (of 13) from *Her Story: A Book of Thirteen Original Graphics by Elizabeth Murray for Thirteen Poems by Anne Waldman*, 1988–90. Hood Museum of Art, Dartmouth College; PR.2000.28.12 © Elizabeth Murray and ULAE

## SAY WORD.

I love the language, words have temperatures . . . when they reach a certain point and become hot words, then they appeal to me.

—Ed Ruscha

Words alone can exist as art, visual art can respond to poems to create deeper meaning, paintings can inspire poetry. As an art student I have been told visual art is about creating something *without* words, and as a poet I have been taught to create visual settings using *only* words. As both a visual artist and a poet, I see my studies as a convergence of conflicting lessons that ultimately inform each other.

I have found that the interdisciplinary space in which these media converge is a place of heightened meaning and expression. The work chosen for this show includes Elizabeth Murray's graphics accompanying Anne Waldman's poems, Ben Shahn and Glenn Ligon's art utilizing the written word as a visual medium, and a photogram by Ann Parker that is accompanied by a poem I wrote in response to it. I chose these works because of my own interest in the two art forms and also because these pieces convey their meanings both concisely and decisively. They have been visually edited, pared down to their most necessary elements. They are all poetic.

For me, art has always been about refining my command of visual language to bridge the gap between my intentions and the viewer's understanding. Poetry has always presented me with the same challenge. The end result when both media are used is what fuels this *Space for Dialogue* installation. In my own art I work toward expressing my idea directly and clearly, without external symbols that distract from the concept. A particular image may be "cool looking," but if it does not add to the concept, or if it even obscures the concept, it must be eliminated. My poetry is the same; I try to use words directly to convey meaning rather than flirt around the point with flowery language that in the end could mean nothing. I am constantly editing in hopes of eventually finding the true core of meaning in the center of the fluff I must begin with.

There is an extensive history of artists using words in combination with images to create a resonance between the media, one that encompasses the Assyrian reliefs in the Hood, dada art posters, and contemporary new media and "net art" works. Word and image can be used in many ways: words can reinforce or contradict the visual meaning, or they can become the visual image themselves. For example, William Blake's poems and accompanying illustrations exist in a symbiotic and equal relationship. Rene Magritte's *Ceci n'est pas une pipe* uses written language to contradict its apparent visual language. Magritte's piece, a picture that is clearly a pipe, states "This is not a

pipe," raising questions of portrayal, expectation, honesty, and reality. Artists like Jenny Holzer or Glenn Ligon use the written word as an image in and of itself. Ben Shahn presents only text in this piece as well. In these examples their work is sociopolitical, but this is not the case for all word-as-image artists. For example, Ed Ruscha creates esoteric works consisting solely of words floating on canvas. In this way the words lead us toward some meaning but do not give us anything concrete.

In a similar vein, the written word can be a decorative element in art works, chopped up and distanced from meaning, even used for its formalist qualities alone. In Claes Oldenburg's 1975 piece *Alphabet/Good Humor, 3-Foot Prototype*, large, balloony, sculptural letters are adhered into one solid piece resembling a Good Humor popsicle. The letters do not spell out anything; they are merely references. The sculptural/visual shape of the letters is important in this piece much the way Jenny Holzer or Glenn Ligon design their lettering to best match the art work's intent. The way text is inscribed can carry tremendous weight, as Johanna Drucker explains in her essay "The Art of the Written Image":

Writing embodies language in an unlimited variety of distinctive forms. History and culture reside in these material means: the chiseled line of the Roman majuscules, the worried hand of a remade will, the bureaucratic regularity of a cuneiform account, the sophisticated inventions of a Renaissance type designer, the least mark of a tentative witness, and the bold sweep of an authoritative pen.

Words, in whatever form they take in art, are reminiscent of speaking, writing, language, and communication. They can be a written form of the artist's voice. They can give a voice to an otherwise marginalized person or experience. All of the works in this *Space for Dialogue* give a voice to a certain experience. For the Murray and Waldman book, it is the voice of a woman, "Her Story"; in Glenn Ligon's piece, it is the voice of an African American experience; in Ben Shahn's piece, it is the voice of Sacco and Venzetti before they were executed; in the Parker piece and accompanying poem, it is my voice.

These pieces use their voices to elevate us. They give us a new outlook in allowing us into the insane, beautiful, near incomprehensibility of another's experience. If we are paying enough attention, we are made more aware and open. These artists do not shy away from that beautiful role of the artist—to change the world.

—Callie Helen Thompson '05  
Student Programming Intern



Ann Parker, *Lacy Chinese Lantern*, October 26, 1995.  
Purchased through a gift from Emilia Seibold, Class of 1982; PH.999.31.7

### To The Seed

I.  
Pointed, twisting tip top, you are  
A jester's hat. Red ball inside  
Like a clown's punchy nose. Skeletal  
Bellows pregnant with seed, you  
Remind us to stop laughing.

II.  
I can tell by the way he looks at her,  
He wants to hold her  
Like I want to hold this seed pod, this  
Veined balloon: Crush it just  
To feel the fibers breaking.