

AMY GREENAN

ERIC MAGNUSON

BRAD PHILLIPS

BETTY TOMPKINS

I GOT 99
PROBLEMS
AND EACH
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IS A BITCH

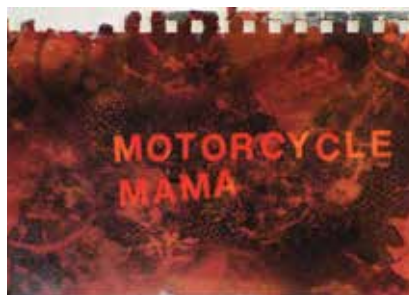
BRAD PHILLIPS
*I Got 99 Problems And Each
And Every Last One Is A
Bitch*, 2016,
watercolor on paper,
11 x 15 in



AMY GREENAN
It's Not Worth Answering, 2016, acrylic on board, 11 x 14 in
Hustle and Flow, 2016, acrylic on board, 11 x 14 in
An Unexpected Jolt, 2016, acrylic on board, 11 x 14 in



ERIC MAGNUSON • *Flipping The Script*, 2015, acrylic on raw linen, 38 x 38 in



BETTY TOMPKINS

Wanton, Motorcycle Mama, Yo Yo Knickers, Pizda, Man-Eater, Peste, Surfer Slut, A Vision, Une Cochone, Porn Queen, Dollface, Fairest Of Them All, 2016, acrylic on paper, 5.5 x 8 in

Text has a long history in art and has played a dynamic part of modern and contemporary art movements, where language has been frequently deconstructed, broken into its formal/visual elements, and treated alternately as painterly, sculptural, conceptual, or poetic. Its various treatments underscore language and its representation as fluid mechanisms, within which meanings change, evaporate, or re-emerge in new and unanticipated ways.

The four artists exploring painted text in this exhibition share territory at times, but each is dealing with text, language and meaning in their own specific and iconoclastic ways. Language is expressed here in formal and vernacular ways and text is rendered emphatically, gently, cursively, or in ways that move it further from meaning and representation and closer to abstraction.

Amy Greenan is the most formalist in her treatment of text and her inclination to meld the line of a font intimately with the line of her brushstrokes. She often obscures easy recognition of the words used in favor of painterly gestures. Like her concurrent painting work centered around the forms of houses, Greenan treats the limbs of fonts as structural elements within the painting, forms that both enhance and blend her color choices. Those color choices tend to the painterly over the conceptual, as Greenan layers text upon itself, with the entire painting is often painted atop another less successful work whose layers sometimes remain visible.

Meaning or legibility in Greenan's text treatments are secondary to their formal properties and the manner in which the text forms and their negative spaces create fields of abstraction. What it may mean for Greenan often gives way to how it looks—whether she is using house forms or text forms (both of which are literal and legible), her paintings tend to read as abstract. She does not obliterate the house or the text, but is purposefully engaging that ambiguous space where representation melds into abstraction.

Eric Magnuson also relies on text in a specific painterly fashion, but in a tighter presentation that evokes the commercial signage to which he is often alluding. Magnuson sometimes plays with optical tricks or simple gestures like reversed or double-layered text to obscure easy recognition of meaning. Of late, Magnuson has been painting more freehand what he used to more often achieve with tape. The works remain precisely-rendered, but exhibit more looseness, which seems

more apt to the vernacular language he is using.

Magnuson's paintings intentionally disrupt the efficacy suggested by signage and create a delirious confusion through direct gestures—the layering of like words, such as “circus” and “surface;” the dissection and double-layering of words; or the mirroring/double-mirroring of text. They are formal gestures that are readily decoded but provide just enough dissembling to activate the painting in interesting ways. Magnuson has gone so far as to attach a painting of ambiguous signage—a single, golden comma—to a galvanized steel pole, suggesting a purpose beyond the art, but it is the droll gesture of a prop comedian. It manages to make the work more serious and less serious at the same time, a functional image of dubious function.

Brad Phillips evokes the sensibility of an experienced sign painter who has done this a thousand times and looks toward a deviation of content to lend the works their distinction. Their simple rendering in a loose and languid hand suggests they are aware of their overt and obvious (albeit, always clever) puns on familiar phrases. But their delicate lines and spare notational appearance also lend a fragility and tenderness to the message, even when its content may be more aggressive and even confrontational.

Amid the world-weary styling, Phillips hybridizes clever bad-boy language with a sense of eternal aphorism. SEX DRUGS AND THEN PLEASE LEAVE...DO THE RIGHT THING... LIVE FREE AND DIE OR SOMETHING... SHAME ON YOUTH...BED BATH AND BORED...DON'T MIND IF I DON'T... IMAGINE NO MORE QUINOA.

They are all one-liners—in itself, a great art world sub-genre—but like most gags, emanations of truth are often rise from their weirdness. Phillips' delicate renderings belie the often less-than-delicate sentiments, but it is that juncture that creates a humorous and gentle tension in the works. Their eloquence cuts against their own internal jocularity and opens up an ambiguous space—are they smarmy or deep? They feel like both simultaneously.

The 215 small works included by Betty Tompkins are part of her ongoing *Woman Words* series, in which an email request from the artist helped build a vocabulary stockpile, from which she proceeded to paint images of women comprised of words. The vast quantity of words and phrases such a project elicited—what's here is only a portion of the total—is impressive and almost preposterous. From sublime to poetic to profane to exalted, there is an overflowing gamut of expression here.

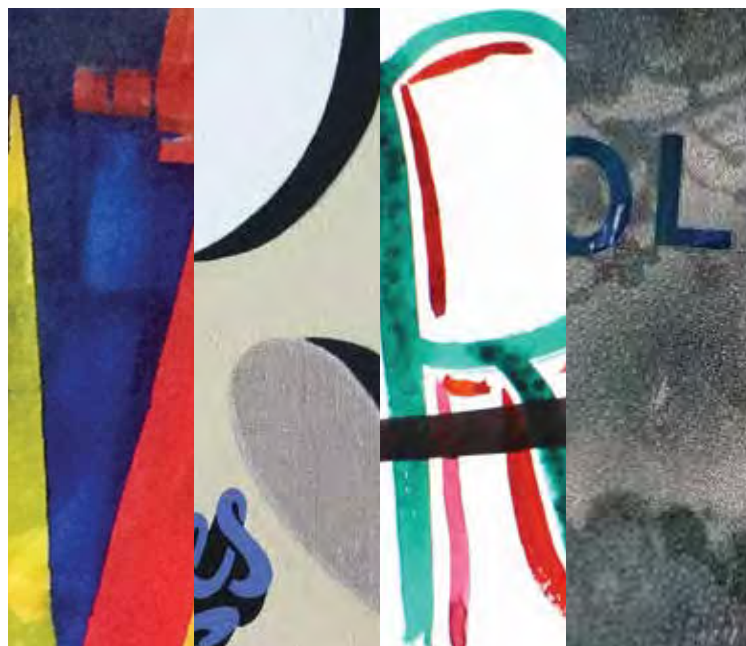
As apparent as the volume is the wide array of problematic language used in reference to women. There are certainly cheeky phrases that straddle an affable fence—CHICK, SULTRY, GIRLY GIRL—but there are a disturbingly high proportion of words that are condescending, belittling, or objectionable by any reasonable standard. Even if one is acutely aware of the prevalence of systemic sexism, Tompkins' array is an intoxicating tableau with a depressing aftertaste.

It's a sly gesture that these works are all rendered in an intimate and welcoming scale. Some starkly minimal, some colorful and lively, Tompkins is luring the viewer with visual splendor into a bleak landscape. It speaks to the eternal appeal of painted images that

the aggregate visual appearance of Tompkins paintings is so alluring, gridded slabs of small, tasty concoctions. But upon closer inspection, its desultory aspects are each a slap of awakening as the negatives pile upon each other—LESBO...FAT BITCH...LITTLE LADY...LOVE SOCK-ET...COW...PORN QUEEN...LAP DANCER...RUINED...What happens in Tompkins piece is a palpable arc of emotions—from hilarity and bemusement to regretful awareness to depressing realization. It's an astounding minefield of emotions from what at first seems an innocuous gesture.

Appropriately, text as treated by four painters is a combination of visual and conceptual aspects—Greenan's fields of abstraction, Magnuson's pseudo-descriptive signage, Phillips' skewed aphorism, Tompkins' taxonomy. Unsurprisingly, text within the paintings in this exhibition exists as language does within life—shallow, profound, revealing, obscuring, confusing, declarative, evasive. It has both functionality and meaninglessness. It has immense superficiality, ambiguous spaces, and profound depths.

John Massier
Visual Arts Curator



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BRAD PHILLIPS
*There's No Business Like No
Business, Do The Right Thing,
Diamonds Are A Girls Most Tiresome
Occupation, Live Free And Die Or
Something, 2016,
watercolor on paper
11 x 15 in*



AMY GREENAN • *Stupid Girls Are Always Trying to Disappear for Revenge*, 2016, acrylic on canvas, 48 x 60 in



ERIC MAGNUSON

Special Flowers, 2016

house paint and acrylic on raw linen, 48 x 23.5 x 3 in

Cut Out Piece (Gold Comma), 2016

gold leaf, acrylic, hardware, linen,

plywood, post, 48 x 23.5 x 3 in

Apperception (Story Telling/Telling Story), 2015,

housepaint, acrylic, flashe on raw linen, 30 x 38 in

To be continued, 2015

house paint, chalkboard paint, wooden supports

18.5 x 14 in each





BETTY TOMPKINS • *She Wolf*, 2016, acrylic on paper, 5.5 x 8 in

AMY GREENAN ERIC MAGNUSON BRAD PHILLIPS BETTY TOMPKINS

SEPTEMBER 16 TO OCTOBER 28, 2016

AMY GREENAN was born in 1970, and raised in the exburbs of Buffalo, NY. She studied at SUNY Purchase (BFA, 1993), and the University at Buffalo (MFA, 2007). Her first post-graduate solo show in 2009, part of the TopSpin Series introducing emerging artists at Niagara University's Castellani Art Museum, brought her to the attention of serious collectors and institutions. Her work has since been shown internationally, and has been accessioned into the permanent collections of the Burchfield Penney Art Center in Buffalo, NY, the Gibson Art Gallery at SUNY Potsdam, the Spencer Museum of Art in Lawrence, KS, First Niagara Bank, and Roswell Park Cancer Institute. Greenan is a recipient of the John Hartigan Memorial Painting Scholarship for the Ox-Bow artist residency, Saugatuck, MI. She lives and keeps a studio in Niagara Falls, NY. She is represented by Uprise Art and Susan Eley Fine Art in New York City, and Exhibit A in Corning, NY. www.amygreenan.com

ERIC MAGNUSON has been consistently showing his paintings bicoastally since the mid 1980s including solo exhibitions at Thomas Solomon's Garage, Los Angeles; Thomas Nordanstad Gallery, New York, Silverstein Gallery, New York; and 4F Gallery, Los Angeles. Magnuson has also been included in group shows at White Columns, New York; Museum of Contemporary Art, London, England; Museum of Contemporary Art, Los Angeles; Orange County Museum of Art, Newport Beach; Ford Gallery, Eastern Michigan University; Center for Curatorial Studies Museum, Bard College, New York; Bass Museum of Art, Miami Beach; and The Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum, New York, among many other venues. Magnuson's work is represented in numerous public and private collections including the Museum of Contemporary Art, Los Angeles; Orange County Museum of Art, Newport Beach; Bass Museum of Art, Miami Beach; Williams College of Art Museum, Williamstown, MA; Center for Curatorial Studies Museum, Bard College, New York; RISD Museum, Providence, RI; and The Norton Collection. From 2011- 2016, Magnuson was involved in a collaborative artistic venture with Lisa Z. Morgan in a project titled, "The Lavender Hinge."

BRAD PHILLIPS is an artist and writer based in Toronto, Canada. Recent solo exhibitions include First Last Chance at Division Gallery in Toronto and Honeymoon Rehearsal at Rod Bianco Gallery, Oslo. He is a regular contributor to Modern Painters, Adult Magazine, Editorial Magazine and The Art Book Review. In September he will be publishing his first hardcover photography book, *Lazara*, with Paperwork NYC. www.bradphillips.ca

BETTY TOMPKINS is an American painter living and working in New York City and Wayne County, PA. She is represented by Galerie Rodolphe Janssen, Brussels and Gavlak Gallery, Los Angeles and Palm Beach. Recent solo exhibitions include 2014 Art Basel with Galerie Rodolphe Janssen. Group exhibitions include Eic Troncy's curated exhibition at Almine Rech in Paris, Gea Politi's curated exhibition in Milan and Kendell Geers curated exhibition in Istanbul. As well as *A Drawing Show* at Matthew Marks in NYC. Her work is in the permanent collection of Centre Pompidou. www.bettytompkins.com



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