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Pavel Büchler, *Sound Installation, Loudspeakers, Table and Computer*, Courtesy the artist and Max Wigram Gallery, London.

## The Visual Art of Language

POSTSCRIPT: WRITING AFTER CONCEPTUAL ART  
THE POWER PLANT, TORONTO, 21 JUNE - 2 SEPTEMBER

Combining painting, sculpture, installation, video and works on paper from the 1960s to the present day, *Postscript: Writing After Conceptual Art* takes an in-depth look at the relationship between language and artistic practice. The exhibition features pieces from over 50 influential artists and writers, including Sol LeWitt, Dan Graham, Andy Warhol, Christian Bök and Kenneth Goldsmith. Expanding the possibilities of discourse, the incorporation of the spoken word within visual art reflects upon the nature of communication.

Concerned with how humanity reads, sees, hears and processes language, the show picks up on the body of works known as "conceptual writing", and contrasts this directly with contemporary visuals. As such, *Postscript: Writing After Conceptual Art* opens up new insights, and questions how art and literature are defined and distinguished. Starting with conceptual writing's beginnings back in the 1960s, the installation traces the continued development of text-based art practices and their continued relevance today.

The spotlight is cast upon a variety of practitioners, and among those chosen is Tim Etchells. Primarily a performance artist, Etchells founded theatrical group Forced Entertainment in 1984 and has remained preoccupied with the connection between art and communication. His language works are predominantly large LED installations, but they also feature the presentation of language in ordinary settings, such as in text messages and on sheets of paper. His words announce a range of human desires, thoughts and fears.

Another artist involved is Fiona Banner, whose piece *1066* (2010-2012) covers multiple walls in the gallery space. Shortlisted for the Turner Prize in 2002, she produces what are known as "wordscapes" or "still films" in which she recounts

entire feature films in great detail. Her controversial use of language has also raised issues around porn and advertising. The significant work included in the exhibition examines the process of reading, and challenges the usual approach to the comprehension of the written word.

Pavel Büchler takes on the investigation of sound in his sculpture *Studio Schwitters* (2010). The artist affixes horn speakers to the wall and, led by one lone speaker, the objects emit an unintelligible computerised noise. Produced in response to Dada artist Kurt Schwitters' sound poem *The Ursonate* (1922–32), Büchler's new work and the original both explore what audio looked like before the invention of language. Using a digital German speech programme, Büchler transformed the original poem by forcing a machine to read the entire text. The final piece is a 21 minute sung version of the sonata that demonstrates the intrinsic link between language and voice.

Co-curated by Nora Burnett Abrams and Andrea Andersson, the exhibition displays works which all incorporate text and language in some way. For some artists, the text is merely a starting point from which to examine the different elements and layers of communication prevalent in society, whereas for others, like Banner, it is the solid structure of the final artwork. There is also a mixture of sources; Glenn Ligon's *Mirror Drawing #9* (2006), for example, uses a direct quotation while James Hoff's *Stuxnet* (2012) relies on found text translated from the code of the stuxnet computer virus that is transformed into a musical score. *Postscript: Writing After Conceptual Art* covers a range of history, practices, artists and varied approaches, making it a true retrospective of the spoken, written and communicated word. [www.thepowerplant.org](http://www.thepowerplant.org).