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When the Word Becomes Flesh

Henry Belden, Covey Gong, Doris Guo

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Rolling tongues like loose lashes, babbling to find a catch, we crawl into being in search of an articulable form... a name to call our home. Flower, momma, dog -- as these first encounters smooth into continuum, innocence manicured into refrains of mature cadence, we find an ache insolvent. Language presents the promise of safety, an accommodating architecture of collective reference that might cradle us in harmonious relation, suspend upon armatures woven of truth. Yet, the more we inscribe experience, exactly rendered in ever-narrowing and specialized fashions, why does it feel we grow further apart? To name a thing is to possess it, to own its concept, fix it upon our existential registry. And yet what a hollow echo such scriptures cast against the interminable face of the night sky? Name the constellation or lose balance through the lens of a telescope, falling ever upward, floating downward(?), in a sea of perceptual disintegration.

The artists gathered all work in a manner which destabilizes our sense of perspectival positioning; taking the latent body and its residual faculties as grounds for play and subterfuge. Doris Guo's speckled 7-inch records use a familiar object and formal architecture as plane for the invocation of an intoxicating optic collapse. Lacquer paint applied to generate a field of affective resonance, these small cosmoses appear to float from the wall and then recede in a quietly infinite, cyclonic frenzy. Covey Gong provides a compliment to Guo's circular rifts, presenting a single work, a woven cage. The untitled sculpture's minimalist frame is clothed in a beguiling woven mesh: bronze, brass, tin and polyester. At turns both architectural and corporeal, Gong threads the interstices of a manifold spatial experience. Like a Klein bottle, bearing the illusion of a fixed interior/exterior, the sculpture conjures an evasive, osmotic quality -- in a constant state of being dis/robed. With delicate clasps serving the scantest modicum of closure, we are left to contemplate the slippage of spirit as it seems to seep in and out of frame.

While Gong is giving featherlight permeability and eternal indeterminacy, Henry Belden pours resin and rubs gravestones to manifest speculative artifacts of sneering subjectivity. In two framed collages, *Couturier* and *Dramaturge*, Belden creates mysterious material fictions that read as obituaries for a probable suspect. Ensnared in layer upon layer of resin, the objects within assume a unique spatial world, appearing to float out of their frame or weave between planes, despite being trapped by their glassy tombs. All too often, collage seems to embody, or at least imply, the historical and autobiographic. Yet these works appear hell-bent on creating the illusion of an authentic time-space, patinated and rust-worn, in an effort to question their true nature, their nature of being true. Erstwhile a grave rubbing, a pithy bit of prose from the other side. Belden's work *Charles* comes from a series entitled "Ransom Notes from the Dead," wherein rubbings are made using grave headstones, crafting poetic utterances of varied tonality. This one feels romantic, in an unrequited manner: "Charles NATIVE OF MY VACANT heart COME BACK." Words seem achingly powerless to resuscitate love, ever incapable of fully manifesting one's soul.

And so language dissolves, sound objects turned syrup in our throat, emojis on our deathbed, and we grope for a latch. Finding none to bear our yoke, we look to articulate through mediums unmoored by character and syntax. Sometimes this is art, sometimes it goes nameless, *without title*. Sometimes the silence swallows, but, if we are blessed, sometimes this shallow cup will hold us whole and we may drink 'til we are full.

Henry Belden (b. 1993) lives and works in New York, NY. Recent exhibitions include *Under the Volcano II*, LOMEX, New York, NY; *Foul Perfection*, Neue Alte Brücke, Frankfurt, 2019 and *When I was a child...*, MX Gallery, New York, NY, 2018. He will present his first solo exhibition with Baader-Meinhof in September 2022.

Covey Gong (b. 1994) lives and works in New York, NY. His solo exhibitions include *And Now*, Dallas, TX, 2019; *Mayfly*, Bodega, New York, NY, 2019 and *Cherry*, Salt Projects, Beijing, China, 2018. Recent group exhibitions include *This Is My Bodys*, Bodega, New York, NY, 2021; *From the Xmas Tree of Lucy Bull 2*, organized by Naoki Sutter-Shudo, Los Angeles, CA, 2021; *An Artist's Age Mess*, Bodega, New York, NY, 2021; *Soul is a Four-Letter Word*, Museum Gallery, New York, NY, 2018 and *LoopStar—She Walks in With Chrysalis Pendant on Her Necklace*, Mother Culture, Los Angeles, CA, 2018.

Doris Guo (b. 1992) is an artist currently living in Oslo, where she is a candidate for a Masters in Fine Art At the Oslo National Academy of the Arts. Her solo exhibitions include *Inge*, Plainview, NY, 2022; *9PM Til I*, Éclair, Berlin, Germany, 2019; *XO*, Derosia, NY, 2019; *Coffee and Tea*, Princess, New York, 2018; *Joss*, Real Fine Arts, New York, 2017; and *G.I.S.S.*, New York, 2017. Recent group exhibitions include *Postbox.group*, Copenhagen, 2022; *Welding in Space*, LEMME, Scion, 2021; *Remnant, Artifact, Flow*, Thierry Goldberg Gallery, NY, 2021; *Misunderstandings (A Theory of Photography)*, Plymouth Rock, Zurich, 2020; *01102020* curated by Y2K Group, Fisher Parrish Gallery, NY, 2020. She has a forthcoming solo exhibition at Veronica, Seattle, WA in December 2022.