

Jonathan Berger, *An Introduction to Nameless Love*

In collaboration with Mady Schutzman, Emily Anderson, Tina Beebe, Julian Bittiner, Matthew Brannon, Barbara Fahs Charles, Brother Arnold Hadd, Erica Heilman, Esther Kaplan, Margaret Morton, Richard Ogust, Maria A. Prado, Robert Staples, Michael Stipe, Mark Utter, Michael Wiener, and Sara Workneh

February 23 - April 5, 2020
Opening Sunday, February 23, noon-7pm

From February 23 - April 5, 2020, PARTICIPANT INC is pleased to present **Jonathan Berger, *An Introduction to Nameless Love***, co-commissioned and co-organized with the Carpenter Center for the Visual Arts at Harvard University. Taking the form of a large-scale sculptural installation that includes over 533,000 tin, nickel, and charcoal parts, Berger's exhibition chronicles a series of remarkable relationships, creating a platform for complex stories about love to be told. The exhibition draws from Berger's expansive practice, which comprises a spectrum of activity - brought together here for the first time - including experimental approaches to non-fiction, sculpture and installation, oral history and biography-based narratives, and exhibition-making practices.

Inspired by a close friendship with fellow artist Ellen Cantor (1961-2013), *An Introduction to Nameless Love* charts a series of six extraordinary relationships, each built on a connection that lies outside the bounds of conventional romance. The exhibition is an examination of the profound intensity and depth of meaning most often associated with "true love," but found instead through bonds based in work, friendship, religion, service, mentorship, community, and family - as well as between people and themselves, places, objects, and animals. Even as they are persistently unacknowledged by contemporary society at large, these instances of what Berger puts forth as "nameless love" nonetheless enable people to live wholly fulfilling lives steeped in tenderness, ardor, empathy, care, vulnerability, salvation, redemption, and pleasure.*

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Over the past five years, Berger has conducted a series of dialogues with diverse subjects about these types of relationships. Drawing on conversations and correspondences, the ongoing outcome of this process is a series of autonomous texts, each of which is generated collaboratively between Berger, the subject(s), and a guest editor of specific significance to each story. In this regard, every text becomes its own idiosyncratic, collectively produced work with Berger and the invited editor (none of whom are editors by profession) in some way supporting the subject's authorship of their own narrative. The relationships in *An Introduction to Nameless Love* are embodied by these hybrid texts, which incorporate song lyrics, testimonials, poetry, and scripts as well as excerpts from books, transcribed conversations and interviews, email and letter correspondence, historical documents, reportage, and journal entries.

The exhibition presents a selection of these stories in the form of six differently configured and elaborately constructed large-scale text-based sculptures, evoking historical and cultural forms ranging from illuminated manuscripts to narrative tapestries and vernacular typography. Comprised of some 33,000 one-inch tin letters, meticulously fashioned by Berger and a team of associates, each letter was soldered by hand to nickel wire and affixed in various configurations ranging from scaffold-like panels to spheres, ribbons, diagonal planes, architectural dividers, and topographical surfaces. Imbued with a reverence for their subject, evidenced in the detail, effort, and labor of the human hand, the sculptures create unique embodiments of the stories they tell. Like the narratives they are based on, each sculpture is distinct; and when taken as a whole, the custom-designed font in which all are type set, the exclusive use of tin and nickel material, and Berger's transformation of the floor into a setting of over 500,000 charcoal cubes serve to unify the texts' eclectic contents. Through this lens, the exhibition can also be considered as a total work, much like a book with seemingly disparate chapters.

The figures chronicled in this presentation of *An Introduction to Nameless Love* are designers Charles and Ray Eames, turtle conservationist Richard Ogust, Shaker Brother Arnold Hadd, Autistic writer/philosopher Mark Utter with his communication supporter and collaborator Emily Anderson, and Maria A. Prado, former resident of the New York City underground homeless community known as The Tunnel. Concurrent to Berger's exhibition, Mady Schutzman published *Behold the Elusive Night Parrot*, a separate yet parallel work, both of which were informed by a two-year correspondence with each other. Schutzman's book occupies its own section of the installation.

An Introduction to Nameless Love is an ongoing endeavor, which will continue to evolve alongside Berger's consistent practice of working to chronicle love in the lives of others. Future iterations will present new text sculptures and different stories that change the exhibition's form, content, and considerations of what love can be, where it can be found, who and what can possess it, and its potential to shape experience.

Lighting for *An Introduction To Nameless Love* is designed by the artist Glen Fogel.

Jonathan Berger (b. 1980, New York) lives and works in New York City. Over the past fifteen years, his practice has encompassed a spectrum of activity, pursuing a rigorous investigation of the many ways in which the exhibition site can be repurposed. He maintains an interest in abstract and experimental forms of non-fiction, including embodied biography and portraiture, as rendered through the creation of large-scale, narrative-based exhibitions made from both constructed and found objects. He has presented solo installation projects at the Busan Biennial, South Korea; Vox Populi, Philadelphia; Maccarone, Karma, and Grimm-Rosenfeld Gallery, New York; Frieze Projects, London; Adams and Ollman, Portland; and VEDA, Florence. His collaborative and curatorial projects have been presented at venues including MOCA, Los Angeles; The Hebbel Theater, Berlin; and The Queens Museum of Art, Participant Inc, and Performance Space 122, New York, among others. From 2013-2016, Berger served as Director of 80WSE Gallery at NYU, where he mounted a wide range of major exhibitions and collaborative projects presenting the work of Ellen Cantor, Bob Mizer, Printed Matter, James Son Ford Thomas, Michael Stipe, Vaginal Davis, Susanne Sachsse, and xiu xiu, among others. He is a Clinical Associate Professor in the Department of Art and Art Professions at New York University.

Image: Jonathan Berger, *An Introduction to Nameless Love*, installation view at Carpenter Center for the Visual Arts. Courtesy of Adams and Ollman, Portland Oregon, VEDA, Florence Italy, and the Artist. Photo: Julia Featheringill / Stewart Clements.

* The term "nameless love" was used by Allen Ginsberg in a 1974 Gay Sunshine Interview with Allen Young (Grey Fox Press).

Jonathan Berger, *An Introduction to Nameless Love* is co-organized by PARTICIPANT INC, New York and Carpenter Center for the Visual Arts at Harvard University and is curated by Lia Gangitano, Founder/Director, PARTICIPANT INC and Dan Byers, John R. and Barbara Robinson Family Director of the Carpenter Center. It is presented in its entirety across a two-part exhibition, on view at The Carpenter Center (October 16-December 29, 2019), and at Participant Inc (February 23-April 5, 2020).

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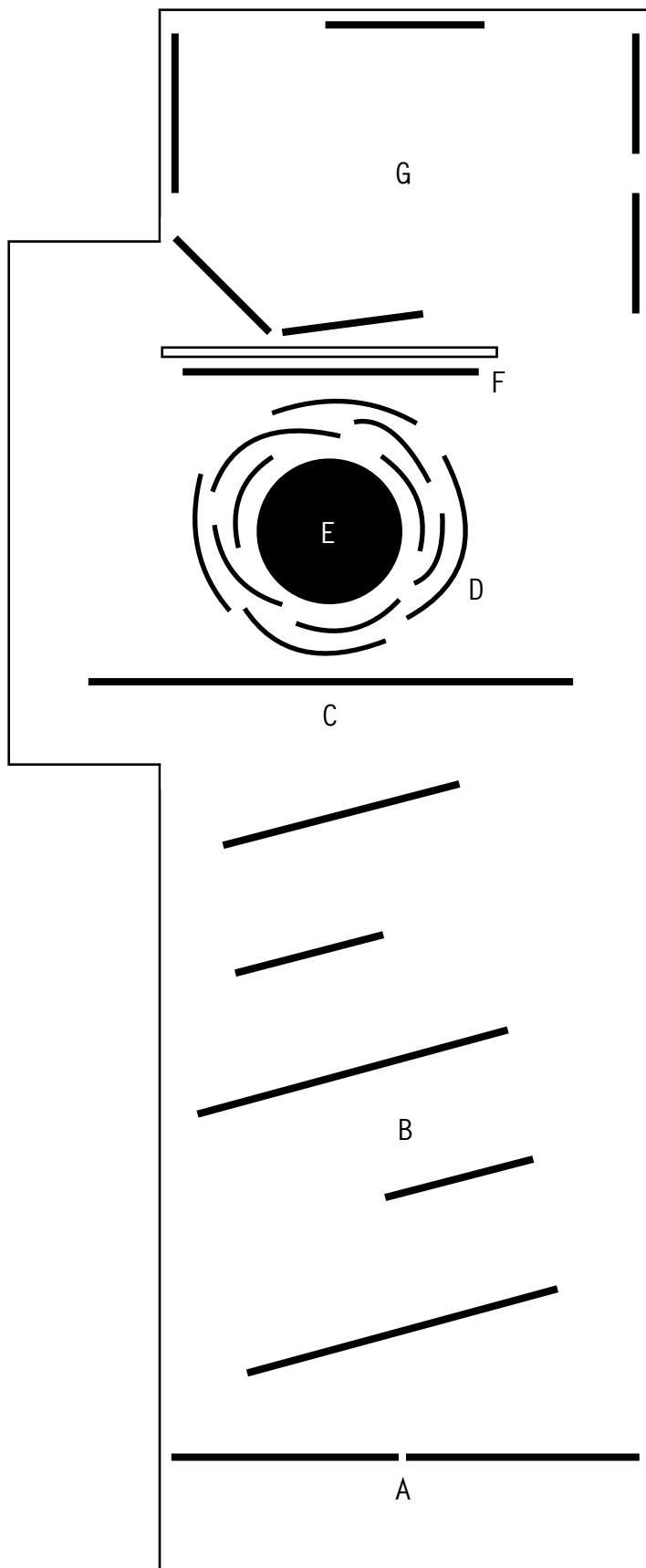
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PARTICIPANT INC is located at 253 East Houston Street between Norfolk and Suffolk Streets. The closest trains are the F (2nd Ave) and the J/M/Z (Essex/Delancey); the closest wheelchair accessible stop is the 4/6 (Bleecker/Lafayette). The entry is on grade and the gallery is barrier free throughout with an all gender, wheelchair accessible bathroom. Service animals are welcome.

Gallery hours: Weds-Sun, noon-7pm.



Jonathan Berger
An Introduction to Nameless Love

- A.
Untitled (Maria A. Prado and Margaret Morton, with Esther Kaplan), 2019
 Tin, nickel
- B.
Untitled (from Behold the Elusive Night Parrot, by Mady Schutzman), 2019
 Tin, nickel
- C.
Untitled (Brother Arnold Hadd, with Sarah Workneh), 2019
 Tin, nickel
- D.
Untitled (Tina Beebe, Barbara Fahs Charles, Robert Staples, and Michael Wiener, with Matthew Brannon), 2019
 Tin, nickel
- E.
Untitled (My Name is Ray, by Michael Stipe), 2019
 Tin, nickel
- F.
Untitled (Richard Ogust), 2019
 Tin, nickel
- G.
Untitled (Emily Anderson and Mark Utter, with Erica Heilman), 2019
 Tin, nickel