

Donald Morgan
Artist's Statement
May 2018

The Complete Works is based on the corpus of an imaginary author, and arose in part from considering fundamental differences between writing and visual art, specifically the relative amount of time and space they take up. An author's life work, taking up little shelf space but requiring months or years of reading, is represented by a relatively large scale installation of fifteen stand-alone, yet interrelated diptychs, the viewing duration of which is highly variable. Furthermore, I arrived at the number of diptychs based on R. K. Narayan's lifetime output of fifteen novels, which seems like an ideal number of books to have written.

The diptychs consist of colorful, hard edge panels based on book jacket design, and corresponding black panels with holes that sequentially increase in number, suggesting a visual scorecard or checklist. The titles are read from top to bottom and then from left to right, which creates a sort of lexical dissonance and also emphasizes the aesthetic of the letters themselves. The titles are all invented, though several reference works of literary fiction I admire: *Fool's Guide to the Afternoon* is a take on *An Amateur's Guide to the Night*, by Mary Robison; *Sugar and Sweet* refers to characters in Lewis Nordan's *Music of the Swamp*.

Overall, my work deals with the process of adapting source material, usually literary fiction, into sculptures and paintings. There is always a grab bag of influences, concerns, and impulses that goes into one's work, but the books I read have come to figure more and more prominently in my process. I am increasingly interested in connection and disconnection between literary source material and artistic output. The bodies of work I make function as idiosyncratic, partial, or loose adaptations of books. They are the result of an ongoing methodology based in part on looking towards the process of adapting books into film. I am influenced by films, specifically loose adaptations that depart radically from the books upon which they are based—such as *Beau Travail*, directed by Claire Denis. Her film echoes the basic framework of Herman Melville's *Billy Budd*, but thoroughly departs from it in surprising and inventive ways. I am interested in how the works I create based on written and visual source material function to trigger unexpected yet specific associative readings and sensory responses. It is my intent to refashion aspects of what I read and see into unique sculptural and pictorial configurations that not only point crookedly back to their source material but also stake out new territory, creating novel, complex experiences for the viewer.

*The Complete Works titles are:

Fools Guide to the Afternoon, Revenge of the Alphabet, Train Crossing Landscape, African Wizard, Death Comes for Felix, Dog's Breakfast, Tiny Sunlit Girl, Sugar and Sweet, The Daffodil and the Vortex, The Widow and the Kangaroo, That Was That, The Professor's Trampoline, Party Party, Cold Coffee, Master of Negative Space

each diptych is:

2105

Enamel on acrylic laminate, wood

27 ¾" x 40"