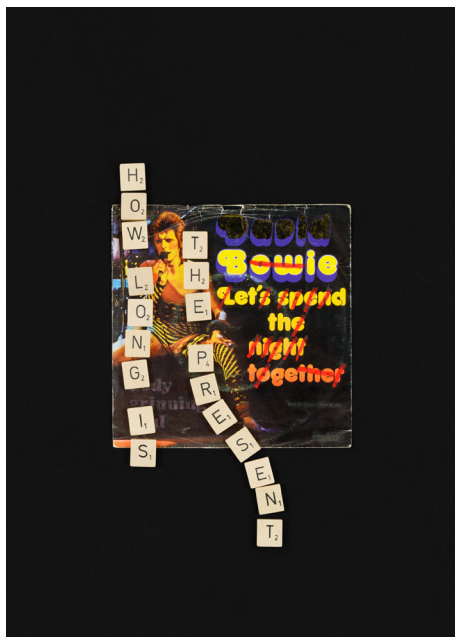


Natalie Czech

7.9.–27.10.18

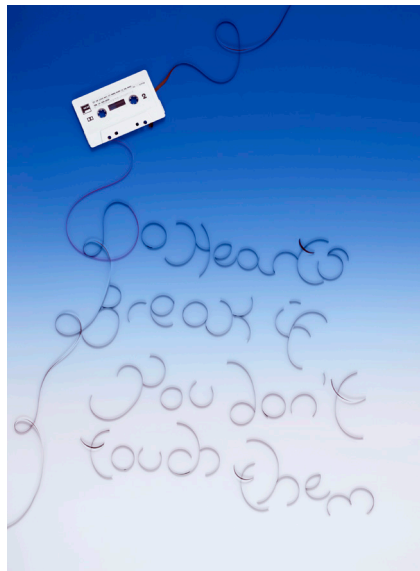
if someone came up and started talking a poem at you how would you know it was a poem?

Natalie Czech's (DE 1976) conceptual photography brings together existing images and texts and places them in a new dialogue with each other. By subtly adapting aspects of Pop and Conceptual Art, she engages in a tongue-in-cheek play with the "power of images" and the "meaning between the lines." Natalie Czech's new series, Poet's Questions and Negative Calligrammes, gauge the potentiality of pictorial and linguistic signs. Through markings in the text and image, a hidden, mundane poetry is "literally" and "pictorially" made visible and readable.



A poet's question by David Antin (Bowie), 2018  
(How long is the present? eeeghilnnooprsttw)

Archival Pigment Print  
unframed: 121,6 × 86,2 cm, framed: 123,7 × 88,4 cm



A poet's question by Charles Bernstein  
(Cassette / Loved Ones), 2018  
(Do hearts break if you don't touch them  
aabcdeefh h h i k m n o o o r r s t t t t u y)

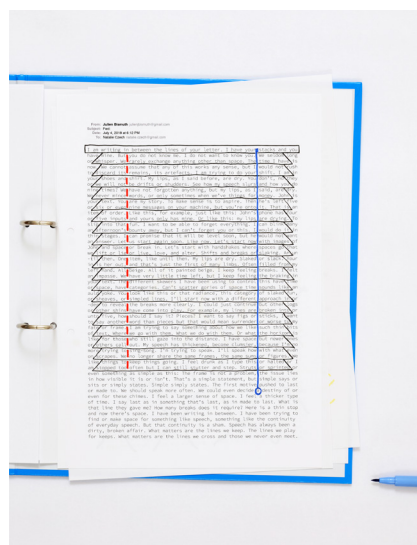
Archival Pigment Print  
unframed: 131 × 96,7 cm, framed: 133,1 × 98,8 cm

Natalie Czech's work has become well-known through international solo shows at, among others, the CRAC d'Alsace (2016), Palais de Tokyo Paris (2014), Kunstverein Hamburg (2013) or Ludlow 38 New York (2012). Her pieces have been on view in numerous exhibitions including "Art and Alphabet", Kunsthalle Hamburg (2017), "New Photography", Museum of Modern Art in New York (2015/16) and "No Man's Land", Rubell Family Collection (2015), and are included in museum collections such as those of the Pinakothek der Moderne Munich, the Fotomuseum Winterthur, the Museum of Modern Art New York or the Bundeskunstsammlung.

The Poet's Questions are based on questions that Natalie Czech isolated as individual lines from existing poems by writers such as Lev Rubinstein, Robert Grenier or Charles Bernstein. In her photographs, Czech sets these questions in a dialogue with everyday objects such as paper packages or records. The respective original text on the objects functions as a "stock" of the letters required to write the Poet's Questions. Each motif of the Poet's Questions is preceded by meticulous and time-consuming research work, since each original text, based on the concept of an anagram, must contain all the letters needed. The used letters are crossed out as markings, "superfluous" words on the objects are overpainted or erased. Czech represents the renewed "writing" of the questions as an image by employing a variety of means such as Scrabble stones, the tape of a cassette, or handwriting. The object staged in the photo appears to give an answer in the dialogue with the respective question, but it also allows the viewer to associate a cascade of new questions. The Poet's Questions open up an infinite poetic space where the potentially utter-

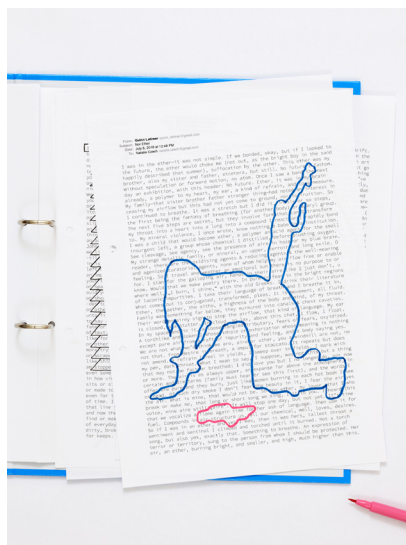
able continuously appears and disappears in the coding of the literal and pictorial signs. The work A poet's question by Charles Bernstein (Cassette / Loved Ones), (Do hearts break if you don't touch them aabcdeefhkhikmnoooorrstttuy), for instance, combines Charles Bernstein's question "Do hearts break if you don't touch them?" with the motif of the music cassette "IbMePdErRoloAmL (Imperial Bedroom)" by the band Elvis Costello & The Attractions from 1982. Natalie Czech "writes" Bernstein's question anew with the tape actually pulled out of the cassette. All the words that are not required for the question are erased, with the exception of the three words: Loved Ones. Beat, which become the pictorial counterpart of the question.

In Natalie Czech's second new series, Negative Calligrammes, the empty spaces between the words and lines literally draw the respective picture. Alluding to the figurative poems of Concrete Poetry and Mail Art, it is not the letters or recurring groups of words that construct the image, but the negative space between the individual words as independent texts. These texts are the result of Natalie Czech's collaboration with international writers including Julien Bismuth, Robert Fitterman, Lucy Ives, Shiv Kotecha, Quinn Latimer, and John Holten. They all received a document from Natalie Czech in advance that served as a "template" for their individually written texts. It indicated which positions were to remain empty, but without influencing the spelling. All texts are written in the first person, giving the impression of very personal or autobiographical narrations and simultaneously reflecting the peculiarities of language, writing and reading in a poetic way. The authors sent the texts to Czech via e-mail, which she then printed out. She visualized each of the predetermined silhouettes as an image with color drawings. One can see spatial boundaries such as a wall, Venetian blinds and a fence, or collaborative actions such as cooking and cleaning. The perspec-



### A negative calligramme by Julien Bismuth (Jalousie), 2018

Archival Pigment Print  
unframed: 99 × 75,8 cm, framed: 101,1 × 77,9 cm



### A negative calligramme by Quinn Latimer (Cleaning), 2018

Archival Pigment Print  
unframed: 99 × 75,8 cm, framed: 101,1 × 77,9 cm

tive and weighting between text and image constantly vary. With the playful lightness of a flip book, the photographic staging of the series reflects upon its own creation process: a sheet is placed on the previous one, a new picture is painted and photographed, a new sheet is placed on this one, on which a further silhouette is painted and then photographed. A poetic meta-narration on picture-making and seeing simultaneously unfolds, in which the final motifs emerge as precise compositions. The Negative Calligrammes combine a directness reminiscent of Pop Art with the seriality characteristic of Conceptual Art, thus rendering the poetry of the everyday visible and readable.

Or, as Natalie Czech asks: When do we encounter poetry or a poem? When is something poetry or when does something become poetry? Can an intervention or an action already evoke poetry? Is a sentence or a question from a poem already poetry? Can an image be poetry, and if so, when are we sure about this? Do we know when we encounter poetry or a poem if we are not told so or don't read it in a volume of poems?

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