

White Columns

Ama Birch

November 8 – December 20, 2025

Reception: Saturday, November 8, 2025, 6-8pm

White Columns is pleased to present an exhibition by Ama Birch (b. 1977, New York.) Working across writing, drawing, painting, digital media and much more besides, Birch has created a labyrinthine body of work that investigates daily life, the vastness of experience and the limits of language itself, all with the same searching vigor. As in many of Birch's projects, the series presented in this exhibition are based on theories of phenomenology that are present in free improvisational jazz.

Born during a blizzard on the Lower East Side, Ama Birch is a poet and an artist of the new millennium. Her work serves to raise the question posed by the Anthropocene of who we are as humanity and how did we get here as a society? Raised in Bushwick and Williamsburg in the 1980s and 1990s, Birch draws equally from their early experiences in the downtown art scene (Birch's father is also an artist) as from references such as Walt Whitman's transcendentalism. Venturing up to Harlem flea markets as a child and working in a kitchen on St. Mark's Place in 1995, along with a formative mentorship under the author and legendary downtown fixture Steve Cannon, shaped Birch's understanding of the rhythm of the streets.

The series *Adinkra Dreams* features concrete poems that are acts of survival in Adinkra, the phonetic glyph-based language of the Akan people, who live in Ghana and parts of the Côte d'Ivoire. Steeped in symbols like wooden combs (or *Duafe*) and ideas like Sankofa, these African language-inspired concrete L=A=N=G=U=A=G=E poems are watercolors that are meant to challenge the mind, the eye, and the ear. How do you preserve a culture? How do you preserve a language?

How(I) You Like Me Now is a series of laser jet prints of digital drawings on rice paper. Manufactured on a tablet computer, they are anecdotal, diaristic, and aphoristic in nature. Harkening back to William Blake's illuminated manuscripts and N. H. Pritchard's magnificent concrete poetry, the poems trouble the boundary between poetry and visual art. Lyrical, topical, abstract and humorous, Birch's poems stretch across art historical and oral histories and traditions.

Ama Birch is the author of six books, an animation, and a video game. Birch has a Bachelor of Arts in Theatre Performance from the State University of New York at New Paltz and a Master of Fine Arts in Creative Writing from the California Institute of the Arts. Birch has been published by Grove Atlantic, Hanging Loose Press, great weather for MEDIA, Autonomedia, Lonesome Press, Fordham University, A Gathering of the Tribes, Vail/Vale, Vitrine, Insert Blanc Press, Live Mag!, May Revue, Pioneer Works, Fell Swoop, Apricity, Belladonna* Collaborative, CUNY Graduate Center, Spiral Editions, Columbia University, Luigi Ten Co., Copenhagen, The Poetry Project, and The Brooklyn Rail. She is an adjunct lecturer in the Department of English at Hunter College.

For further information about this exhibition contact: violet@whitecolumns.org
Gallery hours: Tuesday - Saturday, 11am to 6pm.