

Ruminations on Language, Truth, and Gesture in Response to Sam Jablon

We have a strange relationship with truth in 2018. The tenet has become a benchmark of relativity, not fact. Words are easily manipulated. Presented in typeface on paper and screen, what once rang of canonized veracity, now exists as truth adjacent, if that. Used as tools of distraction and the bait and switch. We have come to expect false and misleading claims regularly within the rhetoric of our leaders in the highest positions of power. Perhaps, we are not capable of handling the truth.

Language is a seducer, particularly in the control of the sweet and sharp tongued. We are accustomed to a digitally generated poetry comprise of twitter feeds, headlines, and daily affirmations, equal parts poison and chicken soup for the soul. Like triggers for sleeper agents, phrases read as simultaneously loaded and void. It is a collective semantic schizophrenia, where code switching is not accepted, but expected.

In the hands of Jablon, language becomes gesture and brush stroke. We are brought into the form of each letter through its angles and curves first, their meaning second. Laid out like terrazzo floors, quilts, or abstract stained glass, letters collide forming abstracted negative space and unfamiliar shapes. Jablon's paintings land somewhere between Magic Eye and existential Madlib, making a home in our current linguistic swamp, hardly pulling viewers out from it.

His phrases are the malaise of adult life combined with romantic childhood memory. Some texts speak to innocence, some to beauty. *Honey on My Tongue* and *Washed by Sun*, could be chapters in a biography on summers in the South of France. Paired with *Death is Elsewhere*, *Oaths Against Dying*, and *Comfort Can Fuck Itself*, Nihilist undertones emerge. These words are a psychoanalytic wormhole running the viewer from benign critical designation (*Trouble*) to mundane anxiety (*Burnt by Sun*, *Sleepless*) and fever dreams (*Choices Blur With Rattlesnakes*, *Half Destroyed Instruments Washed By Sun*).

Oil stick lends the paintings a strange convergence of colors and a spontaneous hand. Blocky capital letters are often hard to read, yet aggressive. They are anthropomorphic. They scream at the viewer. And yet, potential meaning and initial understanding is intentionally obscured by a glut of ocular information. Not unlike emails written with caps lock on or declarations carved into the trunk of a tree, the script is executed with the utmost intentionality, apparent even long after the moment of passion and purpose has passed.

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