



Detail of "We Are Ill Equipped & Unprepared", Archival Inkjet print on film, 2013

April Dean / *Blowing In The Wind*

Exhibition: February 26, 2016 - April 9, 2016

Opening Reception: February 26, 2016 8:00pm - 9:00pm

Artist Talk: February 26, 2016 7:00pm - 8:00pm



Alberta Printmakers Gallery
4025 4 Street SE, Calgary AB

April Dean's Word Work
Blair Brennan

April Dean is an artist and a writer who transmits messages from her home in Edmonton. In this Alberta Printmakers exhibition, Dean presents prints and related work that reveals her ongoing interest in the connection between emotions and words. Dean confronts our seemingly inexhaustible need to relate our deepest thoughts and feelings and the misplaced sloganizing that often accompanies our attempts to communicate meaningfully with others.

The majority of works in this show are photographic images of text on T-shirts. Dean prints phrases on the T-shirts and photographs them wet on a light table. The final works are digitally printed on transparent Pictorico Film and displayed off the wall by a few inches. These works have the feel of X-rays, nicely commenting on our need to communicate our innermost desires with this relatively recent fashion item. T-shirts proclaim, "this is what is inside me", whether they say, "WE ARE ILL-EQUIPPED & UNPREPARED", as one of Dean's works declares, or "Go Oilers!"

Dean's phrases are provocative, sometimes vague, but consistently open to deeper interpretation about the meaning of these specific words or larger ideas about how living language works. Like a Facebook update, Dean's printed T-shirts disclose our current status to world. In most cases, Dean's phrases are assertive announcements in capital letters that begin with a plural pronoun. Nonetheless, the proclamations express some awkward self-doubt. Dean is interested in how various public platforms are used to express emotional states however the text's peculiar evasiveness may reflect Dean's parallel interest in the things we choose not to share publicly.

Much has been written about the benefits and challenges that current technology brings to communication. A recent Globe and Mail article on media scholar Sherry Turkel's new book *Reclaiming Conversation: the Power of Talk in the Digital Age*, suggests that electronic communication may hinder face to face communication. Distracted by technology, we "move in and out of paying attention, our conversations become light, losing much of their empathetic possibility." Some psychic urgency in Dean's communications leaves me anxious about the state of language itself. I wonder if words can still elicit genuine empathy.

In June 1916, Hugo Ball stated that it was “imperative to write invulnerable sentences.” When Ball wrote this, it must have seemed to him and his Dada compatriots that language had been rendered useless in the face of the carnage of the First World War. Nightly performances at the Cabaret Voltaire and other seemingly absurd actions could be interpreted as a ritualized madness for a world gone mad with Ball’s own sound poetry revealing a special kind of trauma-induced linguistic madness.

Contemporary life is difficult (not WWI difficult) although, on a daily basis, we negotiate challenging psychic and emotional territory. Without fail, language is our primary tool in these negotiations. It is a way to communicate with others and, simultaneously, the way we discover our own thoughts. April Dean’s oddly self-assured declarations draw attention to the process of language as thought and language as self-examination.

Blair Brennan Biography

Blair Brennan combines his writing and art practice from his home in Edmonton. His sculpture, installation and drawing have been exhibited nationally in numerous group and solo exhibitions. Brennan has contributed articles to a number of printed and digital arts and cultural publications and his work was recently included in a three-person exhibition in Athens, Greece, the first substantial exhibition of his work internationally. A 1988 Globe and Mail art review noted the “rude punk brutality” of Brennan’s art work. With regard to visual art in his home city of Edmonton, he has been called an “enfant terrible” and a “dissenter” (to an established school of Edmonton-based abstract sculpture). Edmonton Journal arts reporter Pamela Anthony gets closer to the poetic nature of Brennan’s work, comparing him to Joseph Campbell and, more recently, Regina-based artist and critical art writer David Garneau has called him an “Edmonton-based neo-beat poet disguised as a blue-collar industrial artist who brands walls, books, leather and paper with the world’s subtexts.”

April Dean Biography

April Dean is a visual artist living and working in Edmonton, Alberta. She has a diploma in photographic technology from the Northern Alberta Institute for Technology (NAIT), a Bachelor of Arts Degree with distinction from The University of Alberta with a major in Art & Design (Printmaking) and a minor in English. In 2012 she was granted a Master of Fine Arts Degree in Fine & Media Arts from the Nova Scotia College of Art & Design (NSCAD University) in Halifax, Nova Scotia. Her graduate thesis research was funded by the Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council of Canada. Her work is held in both public and private collections and has been purchased by the Alberta Foundation for the Arts. In 2012 Her work was selected to represent contemporary Canadian print media in the Novosibirsk International Triennial of Contemporary Graphic Art and the International Printmaking Biennial Of Douro in Alijó, Portugal. Her creative practice incorporates all forms of print and print related media, video, installation and text-based expressions of humanness. In her spare time she is the Executive Director of the Society of Northern Alberta Print-Artists (SNAP), a non-profit & artist-run centre in Edmonton, Alberta.

www.aprildeanart.com

Alberta Printmakers (A/P) is a non-profit, artist-run centre founded in 1989 in Calgary, Alberta, Canada. The organization’s goals are to increase public awareness of print media, to engage a diverse audience, to provide resources for the artistic community and production facilities for printmaking.

A/P has an open membership, and is governed by a board of directors. Management and administration of A/P’s activities are the responsibilities of its Directors, who reach out to volunteers in accomplishing A/P’s goals. A/P also hosts residency and summer student programs.

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A/P thanks its funders:

