

**Robert Barry**

**May 3, 2014 - June 14, 2014**

Barbara Krakow Gallery is pleased to announce Robert Barry's first ever solo exhibition in Boston. Known as one of the founders of Conceptual Art, Robert Barry explored, in his early works, sound waves, barely visible string, releasing inert gas into the atmosphere and announcing that exhibitions would be closed, among other gestures and works that engaged issues of audience involvement, perception, spatial relationships and art world structures. All the while, he used written language as art, counter-point and explanation for his work. The use of language soon became his 'signature' medium.

The works in this show continue this exploration as they all consist of words applied to surfaces. Sometimes the words are drawn with pencil, sometimes painted via stencil and still other times they are adhesive decals. The surfaces used range from paper to raw wood to canvas to the gallery's walls. Several works are on painted backgrounds while others are on plain white paper or on raw wood. As one can tell, the medium of presentation changes (as all surfaces have potential for Barry), yet the ideas and aesthetic are consistent.

Barry's works are in, one sense, austere. Clean words and surfaces provide visual allure. Reading the chosen words provides an opportunity to get into the works and to better "read" the art. However, no defined references exist in the works. One must be willing to question and explore the potential connections, both for the artist, but more so for the viewer. Each of the formal decisions Barry makes provides opportunities for more specific readings of the work, all the while, there is no one narrative or reference to be made. How the artist makes works that are powerful to look at, captivating to read in their specificity, introspective to explore and yet wide open, is a big part of why the work is so strong.

Within the show that we have up, there are two 'groups' of works. The INCOMPLETE ... and the Untitled works.

The texts, in the INCOMPLETE ... works are singular and centered. The letters are all uppercase

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and each work only has one word: "INCOMPLETE ...". While not painted boldly, Barry has chosen

a firm and strong font that holds the surface in a seemingly complete way. However, the subject matter and the ellipsis ("...") leave room for more. What that "more" is, is open for discussion, but Barry has created works that are simultaneously complete and incomplete.

As a contrast, the texts in the Untitled works have a good number of words and thus seem much more "full" yet they have no one specific narrative or point of departure. Several works contain lists of words orderly descending the center of the page with ample space between them. One of these works also has an inverse list running upside-down up the center of the page creating a list of words that are alternating up-right and upside-down. For other works, Barry has dispersed the words across, over and beyond the surfaces. Words such as "DIFFERENT" and "SOMEHOW" give general feelings to the art, but don't define it. The arrangements, juxtapositions, and proximities of the words give further opportunity not only to read the words but to read INTO the words to think about what the relationships may be.

Several of the Untitled works are made with metallic decals that not only are legible as words, but also as mirrors of the surroundings. In the full room installation, the words (and their letters) help to define the architecture by emphasizing the corners, creases and various doors that cause them to bend or cut into the words. The mirror quality reflects colors in the space and highlights the subtle differences in coloration within the room, as well as reversing, repeating and spotlighting various elements of the words, all the while having their inherent meanings within the words. How much is on purpose and how much is open to chance is forever unknown. The known, the unknown and the grey area between are key to equally examine in Barry's work. In order to do this, one must also equally examine the general, the personal and the universal.

In terms of the artist's history, his first solo museum exhibition was in 1971 at The Tate in London and over the years he has proceeded to have solo exhibitions at the Stedelijk in Amsterdam, the Folkwangmuseum Essen in Germany, the former Museum of Conceptual Art in San Francisco, the Musée St. Pierre, Art Contemporain in Lyon, France, the Haags Gemeentemuseum in Den Haag, Netherlands, the Dum Umeni Brno in the Czech Republic, and the Kunsthalle Nurnberg among others.

Group exhibitions with Barry's work have taken place at the Guggenheim Museum in New York, Seattle Art Museum, Jewish Museum, Kyoto Museum of Fine Arts, Museum of Modern Art in New York, among hundreds of others.

His works are in the collections of the Whitney Museum of American Art, New York, NY, Van  
Abbemuseum, Eindhoven, Stedelijk Museum, Amsterdam, Panza Collection, Varese, Ludwig  
Collection, Cologne, Museum of Modern Art, New York, Hirshorn Museum and Sculpture Garden,  
Washington D.C., Musee National d'Art Moderne, Centre George Pompidou, Paris, Kunstmuseum  
Basel, Basel, National Gallery of Art, Washington, D.C., The Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum, New  
York, Museum für Moderne Kunst Frankfurt am Main, Frankfurt, Germany, Museum of  
Contemporary Art Los Angeles, Los Angeles, and the Musée d'Orsay, Paris, among many others.

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