

## One Wall, One Work: Kay Rosen

February 16 - March 23, 2019

Kay Rosen's "Various Strata" was first made in 1985 when the artist was exploring how margins affect the reading and understanding of text. As a nonlinear stacked painting, it had a natural top-down order, which was also the message of the text: a hierarchy representing male patriarchy at the top (HIM), followed by two levels below: HYMM (misspelled intentionally) which expresses paeans and devotion to HIM, and thirdly, HMMM, indicating doubt and equivocation. Any number of specific situations can be substituted for the generic male personage and his followers, including our present-day situation.

The left and right margins function as enforcement of the power structure: all three words are forced into the space between the margins. Because HIM has three letters and HYMM and HMMM have four, and because the M-spaces of HMMM take more linear space than the -YMM spaces of HYMM, their letters must necessarily be increasingly smaller in order to fit into the limitations of the space, reflecting their less powerful positions. The text is a linguistic surrogate for systems of power and domination, all enabled by spelling, typographical, and graphic rules.

Trained in languages and linguistics, Kay Rosen realized in the nineteen seventies that what most interested her about language had to be expressed visually, so she left academia and started over from square one. Drawing on her linguistic background, she began an exploration of the intersection of meaning and structure in language through pictorial means: color, materials, scale, composition, typography, and graphic design.

Five previous installations of the work have occurred. They were:

Feature, Chicago, 1985

"Art in Chicago: 1945-1995", 1996, MCA Chicago, curated by Lynne Warren

"Kay Rosen: Lifeli[k]e," (25-year survey exhibition), 1998-1999, L.A. MoCA and Otis College of Art and Design

"Kay Rosen: Big Talk," 2004, Dunedin Public Art Gallery, Dunedin, New Zealand, curated by Justin Paton

"This Brush For Hire: Norman Laich and Many Other Artists," 2018, ICA Los Angeles, curated by Meg Cranston and John Baldessari

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