

CODIFIED AT KRAKOW



Left: Jenny Holzer 'Arno, Blue', 2005. Vertical LED sign: white diodes, stainless steel housing.
Right: Jenny Holzer '8 Truisms', 1977-79. Set of eight offset posters on paper (Installation view)

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The Jenny Holzer show at Barbara Krakow Gallery is a great primer on the premier conceptual artist. Holzer's canny use of text exposes how language concretizes ideas, and how it can disable us from thinking on our own.

The earliest work here, the classic "8 Truisms" (1977-79), comprises posters listing bromides in alphabetical order. Read them and they have an earnest authority: "Disorganization is a kind of anesthesia," "Humor is a release." Each is emphatic and strangely reassuring, until you stumble over one you disagree with: "People who don't work with their hands are parasites."

Holzer recycles her texts in a variety of formats, imbuing them with different voices. Truisms carved into a granite footstool must be true -- mustn't they? But digitally projected -- Holzer's medium of choice in the last several years -- truisms sliding and twisting on a dark wall are playful and passing.

"Blue Blue, text: Blue 1998," (2003) is an LED sign, with text streaming across like news headlines. Yet the text feels intimate: "The pain is your signature and the start. We are no fit..." Words that might apply to a personal relationship transform, in this format, into something societal, something to be broadcast.

Jenny Holzer: 1977-2003

At: Barbara Krakow Gallery,
10 Newbury St.,
through April 25th.
617-262-4490,
barbarakrakowgallery.com

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