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Looking Forward: Anne Ellegood

Leading curators select some stand-out presentations at Frieze New York 2017

BY ANNE ELLEGOOD



Julien Bismuth, *Steganogram 30 (balsa)*, 2017, digital image, dimensions variable. Courtesy: the artist and The Box, Los Angeles

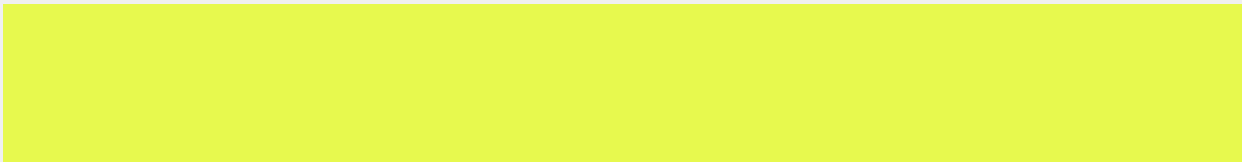
p.p1 {margin: 0.0px 0.0px 0.0px 0.0px; font-size: 12px; font-weight: normal; font-family: sans-serif; line-height: 1.2; text-align: left; vertical-align: top; white-space: nowrap; width: 100%;} span.s1 {font-kerning: auto; font-size: 12px; font-weight: normal; font-family: sans-serif; line-height: 1.2; text-align: left; vertical-align: top; white-space: nowrap; width: 100%;} Julien Bismuth, *Steganogram 30 (balsa)*, 2017, digital image, dimensions variable. Courtesy: the artist and The Box, Los Angeles

When Stephen Colbert ushered the word “truthiness” into the American vernacular, more than a decade ago, we maybe couldn’t have anticipated its relevance today: when representatives of the President defend blatant acts of misrepresentation and manipulation with appeals like “well, that’s what he believes”.

In this moment, the nuanced exploration of language at the core of Julien Bismuth’s work, which **The Box** <<https://frieze.com/gallery/box>> will present at the fair, is particularly intriguing to me. For his ‘Steganogram’ series, Bismuth entangles text and image not to complement or illustrate one another (as is often the case in advertising, journalism and even art) but rather so that digitally – and then physically – the text permanently alters the very structure of the image, distorting it according to a level of visibility selected by the artist. Having encoded text into an image so that its operation is intrinsic yet invisible, Bismuth then exhibits the result alongside the text encrypted into it: exposing the process, but giving nothing away; the text, he has said “does not seek to explain anything. It has been written to evacuate speech.”

While the poeticism of Bismuth’s work may not have been made to shed light on the unprecedented political climate we face, his excavation of the failures of language, the emptying of speech and the complexities bound up in the process of deriving meaning from words and images has a particular relevance now.

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