

ABOUT THE ARTIST

An Introduction to Nameless Love is Jonathan Berger's (b. New York City, 1980) largest project to date. Berger has presented solo projects at the 2012 Busan Biennial, South Korea; Vox Populi, Philadelphia; Maccarone and Karma Gallery, New York; Frieze Projects, London; Adams and Ollman, Portland; and VEDA, Florence. His collaborative and curatorial projects have been presented at various venues, including MOCA, Los Angeles; The Hebbel Theater, Berlin; The Queens Museum of Art, PARTICIPANT INC, and Performance Space 122, New York. From 2013 to 2016, Berger served as Director of 80WSE Gallery at NYU, where he mounted major exhibition projects through a wide range of collaborative projects presenting the work of Ellen Cantor, Bob Mizer, Printed Matter, James Son Ford Thomas, Michael Stipe, Vaginal Davis, Susanne Sachsse, and xiu xiu, among others. He is a Clinical Associate Professor in the Department of Art and Art Professions at New York University.

Jonathan Berger: An Introduction to Nameless Love is curated by Dan Byers, John R. and Barbara Robinson Family Director of the Carpenter Center for the Visual Arts, and Lia Gangitano, Founder and Director of PARTICIPANT INC, New York City. The exhibition will be on view at PARTICIPANT INC from February 23–April 5, 2020. An exhibition catalogue will be co-published with Karma, New York.

Free and Open to the Public
Gallery Hours Tue–Sun, 12–5 pm
24 Quincy Street, Cambridge, MA 02138
Harvard University

JONATHAN BERGER: AN INTRODUCTION TO NAMELESS LOVE

In collaboration with Mady Schutzman, Emily Anderson, Tina Beebe, Julian Bittiner, Matthew Brannon, Barbara Fahs Charles, Brother Arnold Hadd, Erica Heilman, Esther Kaplan, Margaret Morton, Richard Ogust, Maria A. Prado, Robert Staples, Michael Stipe, Mark Utter, Michael Wiener, and Sarah Workneh

October 17–December 29, 2019
Levels 1 and 3

An Introduction to Nameless Love charts a series of extraordinary relationships, each built on a connection that lies outside the bounds of conventional romance yet nonetheless reaches the intensity and transformative experience often associated with “true love.” These relationships are chronicled in the text-sculptures on view, which find form in writing, tin, and nickel, held in the transformed gallery space. Together, the sculptures present bonds forged in work, friendship, religion, service, mentorship, community, and family, between people and places, objects, and animals.

THE TEXTS

Over the past five years, Berger has been interviewing a series of diverse subjects, or those close to them, about each person's respective relationship. The individuals chronicled are:

On Level 1:

- Shaker Brother Arnold Hadd
- Designers Charles and Ray Eames
- Turtle conservationist Richard Ogust

On Level 3:

- Maria A. Prado, a former resident of the New York City underground homeless community known as “The Tunnel”
- Autistic writer-philosopher Mark Utter and his communication supporter and collaborator Emily Anderson
- Berger's project is informed by a two-year correspondence he initiated with writer Mady Schutzman, who has concurrently written the book *Behold the Elusive Night Parrot* (on sale at the front desk), a separate yet parallel project exploring the same topic. Schutzman's book occupies its own section of Berger's exhibition on Level 3.

For each relationship and conversation, Berger worked closely with the subject(s) and a different guest editor to shape the thousands of generated words into tightly worked, precise, and often poetic texts that form each sculpture. The guest editors—artists, writers, a journalist, podcaster, and educator—are acknowledged at the end of the parenthetical titling of each work. Richard Ogust's name stands alone, signaling his role as both the subject and editor of his text. Every narrative becomes its own idiosyncratic and collectively produced work.

THE SCULPTURES

Through an enormous amount of collaborative labor, *An Introduction to Nameless Love* synthesizes multiple facets of Berger's practice, bringing together his work in experimental forms of research, oral history, and biographical narrative with his work in sculpture, installation, curating, and exhibition design.

The sculptures are comprised of over 33,000 tin letters and "spacers," each cut to a specially designed font and soldered to nickel wire supports. (In the work that chronicles Mark Utter and Emily Anderson's relationship, the spacers between every letter in Mark's contributions indicate the pace of his typing into the computer program through which he speaks). The works were made in the Northeast Kingdom of Vermont, where Berger engaged a longtime community of creative individuals. Together, they devised a multistep system by which each sculpture's unique layout and spacing was translated into lines of running text and formed by hand, line by line, and finally soldered together to form the tapestry-like objects on view.

Berger's sculptures draw on techniques borrowed from antiquated methods of metalwork, vernacular typography, multi-hand collective craft skills like quilting, the devotional labor of illuminated manuscripts, and the rhythm and repetition of weaving. Each sculpture occupies a plane of the gallery space, conflating experiences of looking and reading, touch and vision. They ask the viewer to be a reader, adopting the reader's desire for and receptivity to narrative and an imagined world beyond one's immediate perceived surroundings. And they ask the reader

to become a viewer, adopting the viewer's inherent awareness of and sensitivity to the body in space and its relation to vision.

THE EXHIBITION

The floors are made of over 500,000 charcoal cubes, accentuating the multisensory experience of the works by lending a soft and intricately textured surface to the galleries. This addition to the exhibition design further reflects Berger's commitment to making through repetition, and the ways labor, time, and collective work may form meaning and community—an ethic central to the worlds of craft but sometimes neglected in contemporary art. The enveloping black floor creates a world apart for the works, connecting them by a shared material plane.

This "setting for sculpture" creates a kind of choreographed, object-based documentary, an indeterminate genre where the most personal and acutely felt experiences may be known through the artifice of display.

Berger's choice of tin, nickel, and charcoal to convey feeling and the intimacies of close relationships places the project's aesthetic vocabulary somehow outside of recognizable time or reference. This approach encourages a series of analogies and transformations. The exhibition becomes a book of chapters. Relationships become words. Words become sculpture. People become objects. The objects give life—and love—to each subject and relationship, honoring them through the care and labor of the human hand and time spent together, in dialogue.

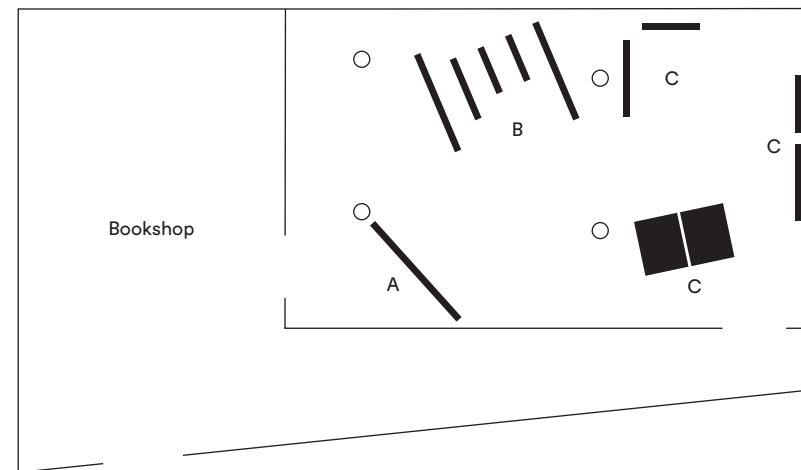
CHECKLIST

Level 3

A.
Untitled
(Maria A. Prado and Margaret Morton, with Esther Kaplan)

B.
Untitled
(from *Behold the Elusive Night Parrot*, by Mady Schutzman)

C.
Untitled
(Emily Anderson and Mark Utter, with Erica Heilman)



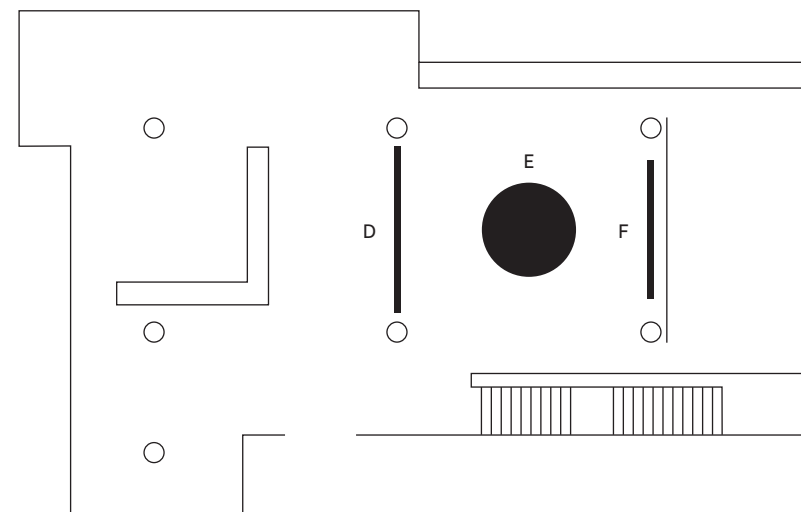
Level 1

D.
Untitled
(Brother Arnold Hadd, with Sarah Workneh)

E.
Untitled
(Tina Beebe, Barbara Fahs Charles, Robert Staples, and Michael Wiener, with Matthew Brannon)

+
Untitled
(My Name is Ray, By Michael Stipe)

F.
Untitled
(Richard Ogust)



All works 2019, tin and nickel.
Courtesy of Adams and Ollman, Portland, Oregon; VEDA, Florence, Italy; and the artist