

TONY LEWIS
WORDNONPSEUDO

Massimo De Carlo gallery is proud to announce the opening exhibition of its 2015-2016 season with a solo show of American artist Tony Lewis.

WORDNONPSEUDO is the first solo show in Italy by Tony Lewis: his practice centers on the relationship between semiotics, language and the universal, creating a narrative that shifts constantly between historical and autobiographical.

WORDNONPSEUDO is a non-word, built to define the role of language within the exhibition. It can be broken into three distinct vocables: “word”, “non”, and “pseudo”. A word is a single distinct meaningful element of speech or writing, whereas a non-word is a group of letters without clear design, or meaning-nonsense. A pseudo-word is somewhere in between: a unit of speech or writing that appears to be a word with implied significance, but in fact has no meaning.

Upon entering the gallery the viewer is confronted with the *Gregg Shorthand Drawings**, which are loosely based words, non-words, and pseudo-words. Each micro-gesture within the drawings has a corresponding phoneme, which when combines with other phonemes, builds a word (or non- or pseudo-) or more pointedly, creates a complete string of fluid marks.

The wall drawings in the second room of the gallery are based upon the best seller *Life's Little Instruction Book* by H. Jackson Brown. First published in 1991, the book is compiled by a series of ‘rules’ that are suggestions and observations based on general knowledge and common sense. The aim of this happy-go-lucky book is to encourage the reader to live a joyful and rewarding life. Through out the years the book has been reprinted in various editions: in each one the author has added the tips and suggestion he received by his readers. This process has allowed the book to become, in the word of the artist “the embodiment of the ubiquity of conventional American wisdom.” These wall drawings have a slippery balance of sense and nonsense, and of physical authority and hollow platitudes. The sequential entries are placed to face each other- the talk to one another, to command one another. As words of consequence, ignorance, or simply of demanding presence, the drawings transform into pseudo-language with as much agency and purpose as a non-word.

The non-word enhances the denial of coherent language, it becomes the surface. The inability to penetrate the pattern on the paper, and simply recognize the character and it's corresponding sound is not failure, but the acceptance of the absence of linguistic meaning. The *Brick Walls Drawings*, a body of work that is shown for the first time in this installation form, also stems from a reflection on language generated by the *Life's Little Instruction Book*. These drawings of brick walls covered in graphite translate the impenetrability of the language itself, the visual aggression and the lack of human empathy embedded in the iconography of the wall, representing here the negation of language. Here the paradox of the urban landscape shifts between figuration and abstraction.

* The *Gregg Shorthand* system is the most widespread form of pen stenography in the United States, invented in 1888 it works through the recording and transcription of the phonetic of words in a writing system based on elliptical figures and lines that bisect them.



Tony Lewis was born in 1986 in Chicago, where he lives and works. His solo exhibitions include: *Pressure Free Weight Power Nomenclature Movement* at the Museum of Contemporary Art Cleveland in Cleveland (2015); *Bindery Projects*, Saint Paul, Minnesota (2013). Tony Lewis has taken part in group shows among which: *Walls and Words*, Elridge Street Synagogue, New York (2014); *LUMP Projects*, organized by John Neff, Raleigh (2013); *News from Chicago and New York City*, Feibach, Minninger, Cologne (2012); *People of Color*, Gene Siskel Film Center, Chicago (2012); *Ground Floor*, Hyde Park Art Center, Chicago (2012). Tony Lewis has participated the 2014 edition of the *Whitney Biennial* at the Whitney Museum of American Art in New York.

Hard Facts:

Massimo De Carlo

Via Giovanni Ventura, 5 — 20134 Milan

Opening : September 17th, at 7:00PM

Dates: September 17th – November 7th, from Tuesday to Saturday from 11:30AM to 7:30PM

For further information and materials:

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