

Phora and The First Line

by John Loscuito

TWO INSTALLATIONS BY ANN HAMILTON, *Phora* and *The First Line (Sounds for Drawing)*, carried their history forward as they intersected with the 2017 Presidential Inauguration. Each work of art was created years ago in completely different spaces that inspired and informed the final product. Hamilton's *Phora* was first conceived in 2005 for La Maison Rouge in Paris, France. Hamilton's and Deutsch's *The First Line (Sounds for Drawing)* was originally exhibited in 2011 at the Burchfield-Penney Art Center, Buffalo State College in Buffalo, NY.

Waltraud Forelli-Wallach, curator of the original *Phora* exhibition in 2005 remarked, "In my view, her [Hamilton's] work at La Maison Rouge in particular raises questions about the silence and individualism of the western world, saturated with what has become ineffectual discourse while others struggle to have their say." Forelli is referencing Hamilton's sensitivity to the location of the La Maison Rouge located between the Bastille Prison and the Opera Bastille. These sites of the 1789 start of the French revolution and a center of vocal artistic expression intersect with contemporary issues in the Bob Rauschenberg Gallery.

Phora's current elements include over 120 large-scale photographs hung in a grid over the four walls of the gallery almost from floor to ceiling. Each photograph is a close-up, out of focus detail of medieval wooden figures, mouths open, twisted and discomfiting. At first, the pho-

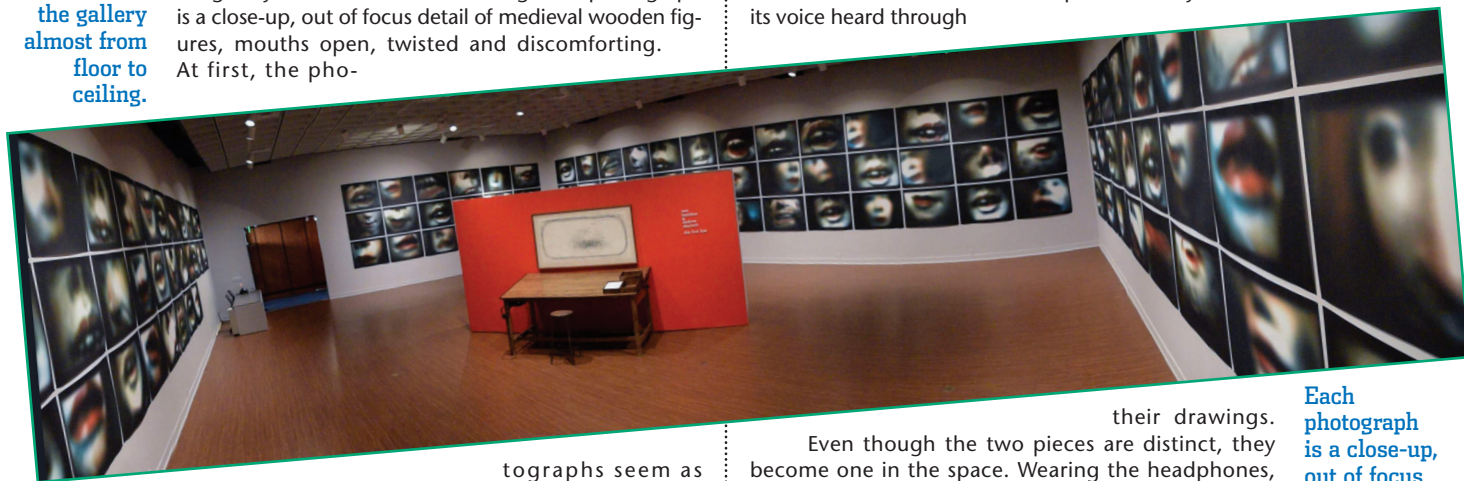
lack of verbal communication from the figures in the photos.

The second work in the exhibition *The First Line* is a collaboration between Ann Hamilton and Andrew Deutsch.

In this installation there is a single drawing hung on a red freestanding wall above a large drafting table housing a set of headphones with multiple ports to plug into. The red wall is nod to *Phora's* original location, La Maison Rouge. The piece is centered in the middle of the gallery surrounded by and disrupting *Phora*. Hamilton's drawing is a layered montage of words encircled by a repetition of oval lines. Deutsch set up a series of microphones to record the sound of Hamilton making the drawing, capturing the graphite rubbing on the paper along with Hamilton's chanting. The tracks created by Andrew Deutsch are remixed versions of that original recording. Visitors are encouraged one by one to sit at the table and listen to the tracks while making their own drawings inspired by the sounds of Hamilton making her creation. The box of blank papers slowly diminishing as each visitor deposits their drawing into the archive.

Performative actions are common to Hamilton's installations and here the audience's participation closes the circle of the senses and of the public's ability to have its voice heard through

Phora's current elements include over 120 large-scale photographs hung in a grid over the four walls of the gallery almost from floor to ceiling.



tographs seem as though they are of living people surrounding the viewer with wildly colored lips, a silent choir of faces blanketing the space. These images come from a video Hamilton took of small painted medieval altarpiece sculptures at Stockholm's Museum of National Antiquities. They are accompanied by a newly composed sound piece from Andrew Deutsch played through 6 ceiling speakers. Hamilton's incomprehensible voice flows over the space amplifying the frustration surrounding the

their drawings. Even though the two pieces are distinct, they become one in the space. Wearing the headphones, the viewer removes oneself from the public space accessing a private internal space to create a visual interpretation of Deutsch's interpretation of Hamilton's drawing. At the same time the participant becomes a performer within the piece. This becomes another layer of separation created by time and space with the effort to be heard through text, voice and image. These metaphors of separation and struggles to communicate become real through the public's engagement.

Each photograph is a close-up, out of focus detail of medieval wooden figures, mouths open, twisted and discomfiting.

For this exhibition, there was a surprise addition to Hamilton and Deutsch's work. Beginning at 11am on January 20, 2017, FSW Humanities professor Wendy Chase gave a talk about the exhibition. At approximately 11:40, coinciding with the Presidential Inauguration, a group of twelve FSW students interrupted the presentation to perform a piece inspired by Ann Hamilton. The students stood up one by one, playing backwards recordings of their concerns through their phones. Although the work was not coordinated with Hamilton or Deutsch, it emphasized the timeless and timely themes in their work.

Regardless of any political affiliation, the desire to be heard is shared amongst all people. The convergence of the French Revolution and President Trump's Inauguration was emphasized by the students' performance. Ann Hamilton's and Andrew Deutsch's works do not aim to comment specifically on that relationship, but the poetic nature of art is



Visitors are encouraged one by one to sit at the table and listen to the tracks while making their own drawings inspired by the sounds of Hamilton making her creation.

perfect to encompass it. In line with Robert Rauschenberg's legacy, Hamilton's and Deutsch's encouragement of public engagement is as important now as it ever was.

Renowned international artist Ann Hamilton

is a recipient of a MacArthur Fellowship, an NEA Visual Arts Fellowship and represented the United States at the 1999 Venice Biennale. She has created site-sensitive installations worldwide, engaging the senses and the mind, incorporating diverse cultures, materials, architecture, and language. Andrew Deutsch is a sound artist who has worked with artists such as Pauline Oliveros, Stephen Vitiello and Tony Conrad. He has audio work released by Anomalous Records, Institute for Electronic Arts, and Deep Listening. Deutsch is a member of the Institute for Electronic Art at Alfred University where he and

Hamilton have worked on a number of projects. •

Ann Hamilton's Phora and The First Line (Sounds for Drawing) are on view thru March 18 at the Bob Rauschenberg Gallery, located on the campus of Florida SouthWestern State College, located at 8099 College Pkwy SW, Building L, in Fort Myers. The Gallery is open Mon-Fri 10am-4pm & Sat 11am-3pm. For more information, call 489-9313.