

Morgan Presents

Topography & Language: Mike Shultis & Bruce Nauman
May 5th—June 15th, 2022
155 Suffolk Street, New York, NY 10002



In 1964, Bob Dylan proclaimed: *The Times They Are a-Changin'*.

This exhibition, showcasing a new body of work by Mike Shultis, in dialogue with a Bruce Nauman neon text piece, examines the moments preceding and following great social upheaval.

Shultis' three Plexiglas works, superimpose two Goya watercolors and a sketch of a gentleman hunter by Manet, atop collaged scenes of stylized contemporary life. Two corporate office-workers wrestle, while a pair of nurses pose in a suggestive advertisement, and a proud American trophy hunter kneels above his prey. A reworking of Fragonard's *The Swing* draws a parallel between the indulgent era of French rococo and contemporary American society—where expanding wealth inequality is once again masked by ever-growing consumption.

Shultis' Plexiglas works speak further to this commodification of American society, resembling toy boxes stacked on shelves to be sold—reflecting our present day values back to ourselves as consumers.

While Goya's *Disasters of War*, depicting the depravity of the Napoleonic occupation of Spain, and Manet's *Execution of Maximilian of Austria*, remain some of each respective artist's best-known creations—the retranslated images in these works are depictions of everyday life, in stark contrast to these times of war and social turmoil. This juxtaposition is heightened by the compression of these historical reworked images on top of Shultis' characterized, collaged everyday scenes.

This idea of societal change is echoed by the disappearance and reappearance of the oscillating words in Nauman's neon work. Flashing in bright color, and then just as quickly disappearing, are the alternating words Read and Reap. The rhythmic absence of each alternating word leads us to seek a further legibility in its withdrawal. The differentiation of each word by only one letter also presents a confounding search for meaning—particularly when presented in this overlapping geometric pattern of an X.

Flashing and flickering is inherent to the nature of the neon medium, simultaneously evoking the mom & pop stores of rural America, as well as the commercial swaggering of city centers. Shultis' work shares a fascination with Americana; particularly in reference to the power of images, symbols and languages in a commoditized, capitalist culture dominated by advertisements and commerce.

Each one of these works examines both historical and contemporary ingredients to social upheaval and change, yet they leave ambiguous whether our moment is one preceding or following such a great societal shift. The only thing we can know for certain is, that our times are certainly *a-changin'*.

Mike Shultis (b. 1987, Albuquerque, NM) lives and works in Albuquerque, NM. He received an MFA in Painting and Printmaking from Yale School of Art and a BFA in Painting from Pennsylvania Academy of the Fine Arts. He has had solo exhibitions at Ashes/Ashes, New York City; PM/AM, London; Diane Rosenstein, Los Angeles; and a two-person exhibition at Thierry Goldberg Gallery, New York City. His work has been included in group exhibitions at: Carl Kostyál, Stockholm and Malmö, Sweden; The Bronx Museum of the Arts; and Rizzuto Gallery, Palermo, Italy.

Bruce Nauman (b. 1941, New York City, NY) is widely recognised as one of the most influential living American artists and a pioneer of conceptual and performance art. Surveys and retrospectives include: Los Angeles County Museum of Art and the Whitney Museum of American Art (1972-73); The Walker Art Center and the Hirshhorn Museum, which opened at the Museo Nacional Centro de Arte Reina Sofia, Madrid, and travelled to the Museum of Contemporary Art, Los Angeles; The Museum of Modern Art, New York; and Kunsthaus Zurich (1993-95); a commission for Tate Modern's Turbine Hall (2004). Nauman represented the United States at the 2009 Venice Biennale—the pavilion was awarded the Golden Lion for Best National Participation.

Morgan Presents is a New York exhibition space founded and directed by Morgan Aguiar-Lucander, an independent curator, writer, dealer, and advisor to both artists and collectors.

Morgan Presents invites pairs of artists to create an exhibition that offers a new perspective into their practice. Morgan Presents is not a representing gallery, and no one artist will exhibit twice during the run of the program. Morgan Presents intends to offer an insight into today's emerging vanguard of painting and sculpture in collaboration and dialogue with established artists and galleries both domestically and abroad. A hardback publication, cataloguing each exhibition, will be published at the conclusion of the project. The curatorial program will be presented out of 155 Suffolk Street in Manhattan, commencing from September 2021.

For press inquiries please contact Alan Gutierrez at alan@morgan-presents.com
Image: Mike Shultis, *La Di Da*, 2022, mixed media on panel, 73 x 90 inches