

Dana Frankfort

*Works on Paper*

November 30, 2017 – January 28, 2018

Using language as an introduction, Dana Frankfort layers, distorts, and redacts letterforms into visual abstractions of blocks, lines, and curves. The immediacy of the text's message is amplified or skewed through the material processes of obliteration and retraction and the literal meanings of her terms are distorted, becoming self-referential. Frankfort's visual manipulation of text illustrates the cumbersome suggestions of language and the limitations inherent to communication. The complexity of her painting and printmaking processes opposes the essentialism of the sentiments expressed; the texts conveying something to be read but not consulted. The phrase "She sells sea shells" is visually interesting through its formal repetition but the trick of the tongue twister is useless when read instead of spoken. The disintegration of the phrase, as seen across several iterations, highlights the formal qualities of the shapes and marks that make up the text; but being illegible does not parallel being unseen.

In his essay "Catalogue," Jean-Luc Nancy describes the interaction of three modes of communication—writing, visual art, and writing about visual art. In this third mode, writing is most often used to contextualize the work of visual art. How then, to put into context works of art using text, or writing, as a visual stating point? The difficulty arises out of the fact that Frankfort's images are not about communication as much as they are about the interaction of modes of communication. (Similarly this text is not as much about visual works of art as it is about communicating the interaction of works of art.) Jean-Luc Nancy draws out the complexity of this situation calling it "a blocking and suspension of the system of reference...If we go so far as to evoke any writing whatsoever, it is because there is something legible in visibility of and for itself." Meaning that writing about art responds to what it finds already "written" in the work of art—specifically, what is seen. "But," as Nancy states:

"...this is also what makes it so difficult, even dangerous, to write about painting from anywhere other than from within painting. This is not to say that the painter is in the best position in which to write...What it does mean, however, is that writing about painting...must always begin with a stroke...a legibility that painting itself conceals, or whose layout, whose trace, sketch, outline, etc., it produces. The nature of this writing-in-painting will not be easy to determine—indeed, will perhaps even be impossible, since it has, of course, nothing to do with painted writing..."

Jean-Luc Nancy, "Catalogue" in *Multiple Arts: The Muses II*, trans. Simon Sparks, (Stanford University Press, 2006). 143-158.