



Cesar & Lois, *Fruiting Plato* (2019), from the series *Thinking like a Mushroom* (2019–)

Texts and Soundings: The Image Talks Back

April 15 – May 20

Curated by Jenny Wu

With works by Cesar & Lois, Jessica Bremehr, Ryan Erickson,
Sierra Faust, Masimba Hwati, James Parker, Allison Parrish

Opening Reception: Friday, April 15, 6-8pm
NARS Main Gallery

NARS Foundation is pleased to present ***Texts and Soundings: The Image Talks Back***, a group show of seven artists and collectives curated by Tulsa-based independent curator **Jenny Wu**. The exhibition considers the zone of instability in which language is passed from tongue to tongue, knowledge is distorted and reborn, written words and sonic landscapes deceive and delight. The show's main argument is this: reality as we know it is constructed by language and conjured by voice, and when we talk back, we seldom say what we were originally programmed to say. As such, this eclectic show invites a proliferation of readings and interpretations.

The word *sokunge*, translated from Shona to mean “as if,” is not only the title of a video work by **Masimba Hwati** but also the exhibition’s guiding principle. The video in question features deconstructed musical instruments to evoke the unauthorized or unofficial proliferation of sounds and systems of communication in postcolonial Zimbabwe.

James Parker’s sonic arrangement is a meditation on translation and mutation, wherein a musical motif representing a perfectly pronounced name, the marker of an individual’s identity, is improvised upon until it is unrecognizable.

The Brazilian and American eco-artist duo **Cesar & Lois’s** artifacts, consisting of fungi growing from the pages of books, represent ecological knowledge that has decolonized and translated the human alphabet into a form of post-human knowledge usable by all species.

In game designer **Allison Parrish’s** work, viewers are invited to engage in their own wordplay on a wall projection, experiencing first-hand how a vowel shift alters the timbre and texture of a word and exposes the instability of the systems we use to communicate.

Sierra Faust’s works on paper, printed grids covered in intimate handmade marks, offer a kind of asemic writing that mirrors the record-keeping function of contemporary digital media, while the orphaned speech acts that **Ryan Erickson** collects are presented as pencil drawings in which the words themselves are broken into malleable shapes.

Finally, a trace of the human body appears on **Jessica Bremehr’s** three provocative biomorphic sculptures, which each feature an isolated tongue protruding from an unexpected location, their defamiliarized organicity completing the cycle that started with a room devoid of human figures.

How is our present reality constructed in the ongoing process of images “talking back”? As these artists and collectives have shown, the process is never straightforward. By engaging with texts and soundings, we open ourselves to the intimacies and eclecticism of exploratory dialogue.

About the curator:

Jenny Wu is a fiction writer and arts worker based in Tulsa, Oklahoma. Her writing, which explores East Asian history and identity through an experimental feminist lens, has received generous support from the Rona Jaffe Foundation, the George Kaiser Family Foundation, the Louis B. Sudler Prize in the Arts, and the Fox Center for Humanistic Inquiry. Her literary and art criticism has been featured in publications such as *Asymptote*, *BOMB*, and *Harp & Altar*. *Texts and Soundings: The Image Talks Back* is her first independently curated art exhibition.

About the artists:

Cesar & Lois layers fungal and human intelligences. The art collective includes Lucy HG Solomon (California) and Cesar Baio (Brazil). Lucy HG Solomon is an associate professor at California State University San Marcos, where she leads the DaTA Lab. Cesar Baio is an associate professor of Art and Technology at Universidade Estadual de Campinas (UNICAMP) and the director of ACTlab. Cesar & Lois received the 2018 Lumen Prize in AI and were selected for Singapore's Global Digital Art Prize biennial in 2019, the Aesthetica Prize Future Now anthology in 2021 and the Mercosul Biennial in Brazil in 2022.

Jessica Bremehr is a visual artist working in St. Louis, Missouri. Through sculpture, painting and installation, she offers an escape into fantastical realms where themes of environmentalism, gender, and science fiction intersect. She received her MFA in Visual Arts from Sam Fox School of Design & Visual Arts at Washington University in St. Louis in 2021.

James Parker is an interdisciplinary artist whose work includes sound, performance, sculpture, music, photography, and public projects. His work playfully engages with nostalgia and memory, and often invites participants to take part in the creation of new works. James' work has been performed internationally at various festivals, conferences and showcases including the Navy Saxophone Symposium and the Cohen New Works Festival. He has been a fellow at Can Serrat artists residency in El Bruc, Spain, the Atlantic Center for the Arts, an ASCAP Fellow at the So Percussion Summer Institute, and is Co-Director of Tetractys New Music.

Sierra Faust is a Kansas City based artist and writer. She received her bachelor's degree in Sculpture from the Kansas City Art Institute in 2018. Her drawings appropriate and map text onto physical space through the act of hand copying. The text in the work is sourced from postmodern writers like Richard Brautigan and Don DeLillo, and post-punk music like Wire and Gang of Four. This body of work is particularly influenced by Jack Spicer's *The Holy Grail*. The grail quest is a fitting metaphor for how copying acts as a fixation with its goal a myth in itself.

Ryan Erickson is an interdisciplinary artist whose work destabilizes and ultimately questions how language, methodologies, and social institutions function. Erickson received his MFA in Visual Art from Washington University in St. Louis and his BA in Visual Art & Design from the University of Northern Colorado. Recently, his work has been on view at Trestle gallery, New York, Rojo gallery, San Antonio, and Kemper Art Museum, St. Louis. Erickson has served as a Peace Corps volunteer in Cambodia from 2015-2017 and is a recipient of the 2021 John T. Milliken Foreign Travel MFA Award.

Masimba Hwati was born in 1982, two years after Zimbabwe's political independence from Colonial Britain. This is the year Juluka released "Scatterlings of Africa," a hit song appealing colonial fantasies and celebrating enigmatic Africa and flawed ethnic equality against the backdrop of Apartheid in South Africa. The following year, 1983, the new black Zimbabwean government unleashed "Gukurahundi," the ethnic cleansing genocide on the southern part of the country. This is also the year Michael Jackson released "Human Nature." Hwati is preoccupied with sound, micro-politics, sculpture, and performance

and has created projects in Harare, Detroit, Johannesburg, Capetown, South Carolina, Nova Scotia, and Weimar.

Allison Parrish is a computer programmer, poet, and game designer whose teaching and practice address the unusual phenomena that blossom when language and computers meet. She is an Assistant Arts Professor at NYU's Interactive Telecommunications Program. Allison was named "Best Maker of Poetry Bots" by the Village Voice in 2016, and her zine of computer-generated poems called "Compasses" received an honorary mention in the 2021 Prix Ars Electronica. Allison is the co-creator of the board game Rewordable (Clarkson Potter, 2017) and author of several books, including @Everyword: The Book (Instar, 2015) and Articulations (Counterpath, 2018). Her poetry has recently appeared in BOMB Magazine and Strange Horizons. Allison is originally from West Bountiful, Utah and currently lives in Brooklyn.

The NARS Galleries are open Monday - Friday from 12 to 5 pm. Due to the ongoing pandemic, we require visitors to make an appointment to visit the exhibitions, by calling the office: 718-768-2765 or by emailing info@narsfoundation.org, and bring proof of vaccination.

The New York Art Residency and Studios (NARS) Foundation is a 501(c)(3) not-for-profit arts organization committed to supporting artists and curators on an international level as well as engaging the local community in Brooklyn and the Greater New York area. Our mission is to present diverse platforms on which to nurture creative inspiration and innovative cross-pollination of ideas.

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