

## reviews: new york

### Bruce Pearson

#### Ronald Feldman Fine Arts

Bruce Pearson's stunning new work radically alters the relationship between art and language. While the artist always explores the ambiguous frontier separating painting from sculpture, here he amalgamated those genres to create language-objects that are words, paintings, and sculptures simultaneously.

His antecedents are clear: illuminated medieval manuscripts, building inscriptions, newspaper snippets in a Picasso collage, and Ruscha's painted words. But Pearson creates his own niche by subtly alluding to a calligraphic tradition in which the act of inscribing words is itself a way to make art.

*Inhale* (2013) brilliantly illustrates Pearson's innovations. Viewers encountered a white-surfaced table with two transparent sheets hanging above it and inscribed with the word "inhale," which a computer brings in and out of focus, as if breathing. Light from above casts the word first onto the sheet below and then as a shadow—there and yet not there—onto the tabletop. It is a precarious, ephemeral structure that reflects the way we perceive it: we read the word inhale (figuratively) with one eye as we assimilate the total structure with the other.

We assume we understand the word, but our understanding is frustrated by the context. Pearson sets language free by uncoupling words from any verbal context, although here the word does invite (or command) us to breathe in—to be, therefore, "inspired" by the work of art.

All of the other pieces in the show—paintings and structures—were composed of words we must labor to decipher. The model for a proposed eight-foot-tall sculpture, *Contains real hard won insights* (2013), created in collaboration with Victoria Meyers, derives from the words in the title, but it is also a verbal labyrinth. *Intoxicating flow* (2013), a dense, black painting in his signature acrylic-on-Styrofoam format, is a tour de force, a black-hole communication. We immerse ourselves in this work and our reward is to experience semantic communion with it and with its creator.

—Alfred Mac Adam



Bruce Pearson, *Inhale*, 2013, mixed media, dimensions variable. Ronald Feldman Fine Arts.