

JOHN WOOD & PAUL HARRISON: *WORDS MADE OF ATOMS*

Von Bartha, S-chanf

19 December 2020 – 27 February 2021

Opening Reception: 19 December 2020, 4-8 pm



John Wood & Paul Harrison, *portrait / landscape*, 2020.
Image courtesy von Bartha and the artists.

Von Bartha is pleased to present *Words Made of Atoms*, a solo exhibition by British artist duo John Wood & Paul Harrison in the gallery's S-chanf space, 19 December 2020 – 27 February 2021. The exhibition is an exploration of language and its manifold interpretations, including over 40 new and recent text-based works across the media of video, painting, drawing, audio, print and installation. Running concurrently with the gallery show, a series of external artworks by the artists will be installed in the nearby village of Zuoz.

Playing with words and their meaning, the exhibition will feature a series of recent drawings and new paintings of words, about words, such as *This Is A Painting In A Room* (2020). The show will feature *Demo Tape* (2020), a new video work in which two men perform a strange demonstration using a series of placards; a silent film about saying something. *Words Made of Atoms* will also feature John Wood & Paul Harrison's first vinyl record, *This is a Circle* (2020), featuring spoken word lyrics by Lloyd Cole. Additionally, a series of twelve works will be installed outside the gallery, in the nearby village of Zuoz. These text-based works will continue the artists' investigation into language, appearing as a series of signs that direct nowhere, advertise nothing and generally provide very little information.

The works in *Words Made of Atoms* form part of John Wood & Paul Harrison's longstanding mission to 'compile an encyclopedia of the largely useless', which began when the duo first

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met in art school in the early 1990s. The artists are known for their video work which straddles the lines between tragedy, comedy and irony. These works, which are minimalist, sculptural and have elements of installation and performance, oscillate between failure, calculation and randomness. They often experiment with size, volume and movement of the human body in relation to the surrounding architecture, which the two artists have usually built themselves.

John Wood & Paul Harrison have been investigating written and spoken language in the development of their artwork since 1993. This key element of their practice has remained largely hidden in the working process, until recent years when the artists started to directly and visibly incorporate text into the works themselves. *Words Made of Atoms* is the first exhibition by the duo that focuses solely on this element of their practice.

Stefan von Bartha, Director, commented: "*Especially in these times, it means a lot to us to have an eloquent exhibition in our gallery in S-chanf. "Words made of Atoms" will start our season in the Engadin, and I look forward to a very entertaining and joyful exhibition*".

To coincide with the exhibition John Wood & Paul Harrison will produce *A Large Piece of Paper on my Wall*, an unlimited edition poster available to purchase from the gallery.

Notes to Editors

Exhibition Facts:

Title: John Wood & Paul Harrison: *Words Made of Atoms*

Exhibition dates: 19 December 2020 – 27 February 2021

Address: Somvih 46, 7525 S-chanf, Switzerland

Telephone: + 41 61 322 1000

Opening Hours:

December 20 - January 9, open daily 3 - 6.30 pm

January 10 - February 27, Tuesday - Saturday, 3 - 6.30 pm

Closed December 24, 25 and January 1st

Admission: Free

Twitter: @vonbartha

Facebook: galleryvonbartha

Instagram: @vonbartha

Von Bartha follows the recommendations of the Federal Office of Public Health. The opening of the exhibition will take place under strict safety measurements.

John Wood & Paul Harrison: *Words Made of Atoms* will also be available to view through von Bartha's online viewing room via www.vonbartha.com

About von Bartha

Initially co-founded in 1970 by Margareta and Miklos von Bartha who remain a contributing force in its strategic direction, the family-run gallery has been under the direction of Stefan von Bartha since 2008. Together, the two generations maintain an unparalleled level of expertise.

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Von Bartha is a trusted destination for its audiences and a place to gain knowledge of the artists and the specialist areas that they represent.

Von Bartha presents a cutting-edge contemporary programme, representing an international roster of artists working across a diverse range of media including Superflex, Terry Haggerty, John Wood & Paul Harrison, Anna Dickinson, Sarah Oppenheimer, and Felipe Mujica amongst others. The gallery nurtures new generations of artists, whilst supporting the continually evolving practice of their established artists. As one of the longest-running international contemporary art galleries, von Bartha continues to support the careers of influential artists such as Camille Graeser, Fritz Glarner and Olle Baertling. It facilitates discovery across the generations, and has a track record of fostering the careers of some of the leading artists of the 20th Century with a focus on Constructivism; Concrete art; and Op art.

Located in Basel, one of the world's most important centres for the display of art, and S-chanf, in the heart of the Swiss Alps, von Bartha brings together international and local art audiences across these two locations. Von Bartha creates a unique platform of events and programming including salons, openings, and exhibitions beyond the walls of the gallery, inspiring and informing audiences by making new connections and offering a fresh perspective. Von Bartha publishes books, exhibition catalogues and its own online magazine "Stories" featuring interviews, essays and insights to the gallery's work and programme. Read more at www.vonbartha.com/stories

About John Wood & Paul Harrison

John Wood (b.1969, Hong Kong) and Paul Harrison (b.1966, Wolverhampton) make things that move and things that don't, things that are flat and things that are not, things that are mildly amusing and things that are definitely not.

They make works that form a kind of reference manual for how to do, make, build or draw things that you probably never want to do, make, build or draw. They do it for you. Even though you don't need them to.

Within these works play is encouraged and the influences on the work are intentionally mixed. Wood and Harrison employ exuberant invention, subtle slapstick and a touch of light-hearted melancholy to reveal the inspiration and perspiration, as well as the occasional hint of desperation, behind all creative acts.

This attempt to compile an encyclopaedia of the largely useless, started in 1993 after they met at art college. They live and work in Bristol and Liverpool.

Selected solo museum show include: CAMH, Houston, USA; Mori Museum, Tokyo, Japan; Ikon Gallery, Birmingham, UK; and Kunstmuseum Thun, Switzerland. Selected group shows include: 'Art Now', Lightbox, Tate Britain, London; 'Richard of York Gave Battle in Vain', Whitechapel Gallery, London; 'You'll never know', Hayward Gallery Touring, UK; and 'New British Video', MoMA, New York, USA. Selected screenings include: MoMA, New York; MOCA, Los Angeles; Tate Modern, London; and Centre Pompidou, Paris. Selected Collections include: Museum of Modern Art, New York; Tate, London; Arts Council Collection, UK; Centre Pompidou Collection, Paris; and Kadist Foundation, Paris.

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