Lesley Dill opens at deCordova in May 2014
20-year survey explores the alchemy of language

Lincoln, MA, March 17, 2014—DeCordova Sculpture Park and Museum is pleased to present Lesley Dill, a 20-year survey of work by the American artist. On view from Friday, May 16, through Monday, October 13, 2014, Lesley Dill will feature oil pastel drawings, a large-scale metal wall drawing, and bronze and paper sculptures in the Joyce and Edward Linde Gallery, as well as an outdoor sculpture on the Pollock Terrace.

Dill is known for combining language with the human form in a variety of mediums. In her work, she uses text as a mode of communication, as a physical subject, and as a symbol by painting it onto bronze sculptures, stitching it into paper, and sculpting it in metal. The words of poets including Emily Dickinson, Franz Kafka, Salvador Espriu, and most recently Tom Sleigh, inspire and find physical form within her visceral works. Lines of text appear on disembodied heads, hands, and dresses—all reoccurring motifs in Dill’s oeuvre—communicating the artist’s interest in the politics of the figure, psychology, and faith.

Dill calls herself a collector and a creature of language: “I’m interested in the alchemy of language, the uncertainty of meaning and the resonance within our bodies with a metaphor clicks… Language is a manifestation of the human need to reach out. As much as my work is about language, it’s also about what the image does to you, and how the two together make a whole.”

The exhibition at deCordova will feature sixteen works made between 1993 and 2012. Highlighting Dill’s ambitious artistic experimentation with material as well as the tension between two- and three-dimensional sculpture are Hair Poem Dress (1993), a small dress made of horse hair, thread, and paper; Rush (2006–2007), a 60-foot long mural made of silver foil, organza, and wire; and Wood Word Woman with Wood Word Pedestal (2011), a bust covered with oil stick and silver leaf. Poems by Emily Dickinson are Dill’s conceptual starting point for several works including Word Made Flesh (2002), a small paper sculpture of an outstretched hand holding a pile of letters; and Rapture’s Germination (2010), a large oil pastel drawing on Tyvek. Here, Dickinson’s words are enlarged, multiplied, and elongated, taking on new shape and meaning through their adaptation into physical form. The visual echoing of letters in Dill’s practice alludes to mantras, prayers, and poetry, all of which are commonly recited repeatedly to enforce meaning and memory.

In her most recent artist’s book, I Had a Blueprint of History, Dill found inspiration in the words of her contemporary, poet Tom Sleigh. The indignation and darkness Dill discovers in Sleigh’s poems counterbalance Dickinson’s references to ecstasy and faith, enabling a full range of emotional and psychological expression for Dill’s images.
About the Artist

Lesley Dill was born in 1950 in Bronxville, New York, raised in Maine, and currently lives and works in Brooklyn, New York. She has worked as a sculptor, photographer, printmaker, and performance artist for the last thirty years. Dill’s work has been widely exhibited and is in the collections of many institutions, including Albright Knox Art Gallery, Buffalo; Cleveland Museum of Art, Cleveland; Kemper Museum of Contemporary Art, Kansas City; the Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York City; the Museum of Modern Art, New York City; and the Whitney Museum of American Art, New York. The artist is represented by George Adams Gallery, New York, and Arthur Roger Gallery, New Orleans.

Related Programs

Meet the Artist
Join artist Lesley Dill, poet Tom Sleigh, and Chief Curator Jennifer Gross for a discussion about Dill’s and Sleigh’s collaborations, such as the poem by Sleigh included in Dill’s book, I Had a Blueprint of History, on display in the exhibition.
   Friday, May 16, 7 pm

(Iced) Coffee with the Curator
Tour Lesley Dill with Assistant Curator Lexi Lee Sullivan, then discuss the exhibition over coffee with Sullivan in deCordova | Café.
   Wednesday, June 25, 1 pm

Poet in the Park
Join acclaimed poets for a reading of their work and a conversation in response to the exhibitions.
   Thursday, July 17, 6:30 pm: David Rivard, Guggenheim Fellowship winner
   Thursday, September 18, 7 pm: Cole Swensen, National Poetry Series winner
   Thursday, October 2, 7 pm: Charles Simic, Pulitzer Prize winner and US Poet Laureate

About deCordova

Established in 1950 and located just 20 miles west of Boston, deCordova Sculpture Park and Museum is dedicated to fostering the creation and exploration of contemporary sculpture and art through a dynamic slate of rotating exhibitions, innovative learning opportunities, a constantly changing 30-acre landscape of large-scale, outdoor, modern and contemporary sculpture, and site-specific installations.

General Information

DeCordova is located at 51 Sandy Pond Road in Lincoln, MA. Summer hours (beginning Memorial Day weekend) are every day, 10 am to 5 pm. Winter hours (beginning Columbus Day weekend) are Wednesday–Friday, 10 am to 4 pm, and Saturday–Sunday, 10 am to 5 pm. Admission is $14 for adults, $12 for seniors, $10 for students (ages 13 and up), and free for children 12 and under. Members, Lincoln residents, and active duty military personnel and their families are admitted free of charge with proper ID. Public, private, and self-guided tours of the Sculpture Park and of the Museum are also available. Visit decordova.org or call 781.259.8355 for further information.