

A Select Few
by **Jonathan Plante**

At first glance, Carl Trahan would probably not think of this page as a text about his work, but rather as a flat surface covered in seemingly ordered black marks. Letters cast in a font with a history of its own. Encrypted matter that will produce meaning. Meaning what?

Sharing his time between Berlin and Montreal, Carl Trahan has used translation as one of his preferred media to observe the fluctuations of language through space-text. But he is less interested in the exact correspondence of meaning as in the back and forth motion between utterances. He works with semantics in a psychoanalytical sense, focusing on the morphing of referents; his creative process is intertextual more than purely translational. To him, the juxtaposition of idioms exposes at once what brings them together and keeps them apart.

It is not surprising that his work should be such a shape-shifter: from graphite to lead or a dictionary and a pencil, Trahan tridimensionalises not so much the text as its body with its own formal manifestations within his preferred site of transformation: the gallery. In his recent work, he questions the representation of language by structures of power by addressing its use under the Third Reich. Who scripts the usage of language? The historical reference could bear resonance with the current rise of conservatism and demagogic right-wing discourse across the world.

Tous les mots nécessaires is informed by translation as an encoder. Here, Trahan observes that the keys to the code can be manipulated by a select few. But truthfully, one might wonder, what is meaning? It is simply the sum of all possible translations, multiplying the opportunities to become lost.

Translated from French by Claudine Hubert

Jonathan Plante lives and works in Montreal. His art addresses the different states of the image in the passage between an artwork and its documentation. His works are included in private and public collections including the Musée d'art contemporain de Montréal. He is represented by galerie Division.

Claudine Hubert relentlessly looks for meaning in art and language through translations of all dispositions.

This text is part of a writing series by members of the gallery, reflecting on the works, research and projects presented during articule's 2011-2012 programming season. Jonathan Plante's text has been produced for the exhibition *Tous les mots nécessaires* by Carl Trahan presented at articule from March 9 to April 8, 2012, and is also available as a pdf on the gallery's website.



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