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The Sculptural Wordplay of Samuel Jablon Gives Readers Pause For Thought

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It's the art of language, rather than the language of art, that surfaces in the visual phrases of artist, poet, and performer Samuel Jablon. Hybrids of poetry, painting, and sculpture, Jablon's works are crafted from found materials and texts, created from vibrant swathes of paint, sequins, mirrors, and tiles. This fall, Chelsea gallery Freight + Volume welcomes Jablon's mixed-media poetry in a new solo exhibition titled "Word:Play."

“Poetry and art have merged into one practice for me,” Jablon has said about his work. “I was always painting and making things, and I have always been writing and performing.” Moved by the great Allen Ginsberg and other Beat Generation poets, Jablon takes his language from a number of sources, including copy from advertisements and titles from other paintings, before deconstructing the language therein. Though Jablon emerges among an established lineage of artists utilizing text as art, including Jenny Holzer, Ed Ruscha, and On Kawara, he is less interested in narrative and much more so in the shape and form of words. In *Get Nowhere* (2014), Jablon has spaced out the words “Get Nowhere” so that they read “Get No” on the first line, “Whe” on the second, and “re” on the third. While the human mind can make sense of the text, this fragmentation demands pause before the words can be processed. In *Going* (2014), the titular word is repeated three times, but due to the letters either being reversed or broken up by a large white cross, one’s mind focuses on the shapes and colors of the letters, and the reflective surface of the mirror. Speaking of this disjointed approach to language, Jablon explains, “I wanted them to be hard to read. I don’t want the work to reveal itself on first look; I want people to stay with the objects for a moment.”

—Haniya Rae

“Word:Play” is on view at Freight + Volume, New York, Aug. 21st–Sept. 20th, 2014.