

SUZANNE McCLELLAND

STEPHANIE THEODORE GALLERY

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October 1994

East of Newburgh

STEPHANIE THEODORI GALLERY  
100 W. 25th St., New York, NY 10011

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Suzanne McClelland  
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Design: Stephanie Theodori

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October 1991

Essay by Faye Hirsch

STEPHANIE THEODORE GALLERY

580 Broadway, Suite 1105 · New York, NY 10012

Design: Meredith Miller

Photography: Keith Goldstein

Essay: Faye Hirsch

Thanks to Mark Dagley and Joe Andoe

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## Snares

Suzanne McClelland shares words in performative action. Now, forever, never, always: words that hold me in thrall. Words that when spoken gain power and momentum, the coercion of a pact—"order-words," as they are called by Deleuze and Guattari. This exhibit consists almost entirely of adverbs that, as the substance of indirect discourse, set emotional conditions. Where in collage words have already completed a trip, in McClelland's paintings they are still in transit. Now they are exposed in a painting, where their drama, once merely intuited, can be manifested. What becomes immediately apparent is that they are not one thing, but many; not static, but inexhaustibly predisposed to transformation.

"Now," you say to me. The "W" gets big, turns black, grows a skin. It threatens the front plane, it wrecks the curve of an "O." "Ow!" No longer writing, no longer a letter, the "W" has transmogrified into a body that radiates the persuasive undertow of language. Bullying is bound to occur, erotic force irrupting into corporeal sight. The "n" clings to an island of floating acrylic medium; "o" vaporizes into the background. In one "forever," the "for," shabbily disguised in mirror-reversal, takes refuge in a painterly wedge that crushes "ever" beneath its weight. Elsewhere, a blank expanse of rabbit-glue blasts "ever" into the periphery, where the fusillage of its erstwhile singularity bursts into dazzling fragments.

For a word whose content is determined by expression, relations are key. In McClelland's work, words chaperone nonletter marks and vice-versa. I try to read the marks, mistake the letters for drawings. Cumulus outlines, or sentimental tracings of "forever?" The adverb becomes a noun, the letter a form, reifying a veiled seduction; but new mysteries proliferate amongst non-representational marks. One panel's "never" washes in a wave of red that thereby registers an expressive state. This in addition to the ubiquitous alphabetic scrambling

that as the tool of undermined clarity always illuminates a shifting emotional field. "Always, waysal, ayslaw..." The more I scrutinize the word, the more prone it is to become something else—a game, a drawing, a clay relief—and the more likely new order-words will make themselves felt in the overall pictorial domain.

The "empty" spaces in McClelland's work act as force fields, converging and disrupting. In the wood panels, they refuse to settle as ground, their grains swimming into strokes of grave immanence. Elsewhere they are pockmarked with transparent medium, scratched, mottled. Never inert, they intensify the work's characteristic propulsion and render absurd the notion of a *tabula rasa*. While there are numerous tender gestures—the melting "f" of forever or the repetitive, childlike script of "always"—no amount of sympathy relieves the dangerous inevitability of collision and mutation. Unlike the rarified script of Cy Twombly, which they most resemble, these words are grounded in a physicality that offers plenty of concrete possibilities in the acknowledged absence of absolutes. Here and now, "here" flapping between wings, temporal and audible; "now" ruminating in domesticated quarters, "n" startlingly earlike atop a big "o."

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by Faye Hirsch for Stephanie Theodore

















1. *Now*  
1991  
Clay, acrylic, enamel, gesso on canvas  
48 x 48 inches
  
2. *Forever*  
1991  
Clay, acrylic, charcoal, dry pigment, oil, gesso on canvas  
48 x 48 inches
  
3. *Ever*  
1991  
Clay, acrylic, oil, rabbit skin glue on canvas  
48 x 48 inches
  
4. *Now*  
1991  
Clay, acrylic, gesso, rabbit skin glue on canvas  
48 x 48 inches
  
5. *Forever*  
1991  
Clay, acrylic, enamel, gesso on canvas  
48 x 48 inches
  
6. *Till*  
1991  
Charcoal, acrylic, oil on canvas  
48 x 48 inches



## SUZANNE MCCLELLAND

### EDUCATION

School of Visual Arts, New York, New York—MFA  
University of Michigan, Ann Arbor, Michigan—BFA  
Universita Italiana per Stranieri, Perugia, Italy

### INDIVIDUAL EXHIBITIONS

1991 Stephanie Theodore Gallery, New York, NY

### SELECTED GROUP EXHIBITIONS

- 1991 *New York Diary: Almost 25 Different Things*, P.S. 1 Museum, Long Island City, NY  
Curated by Zdenka Gabolova and Ryszard Wasko  
*Breathing Room*, Amy Lipton Gallery, New York, NY  
[Wendy Jacob, Suzanne McClelland, Alan Rath, Michael Rees, Carol Szymanski]  
*Group Show*, Petersburg Gallery, New York, NY  
[Nayland Blake, Suzanne McClelland, Teddy Shapiro, Ilyse Soutine, Chris Wilder]
- 1990 *To Know a Hawk From a Handsaw*, Wolff Gallery, New York, NY  
[Mitchell Kane, Annette Lemieux, Claudia Matzko, Suzanne McClelland, Mary Weatherford]  
*ACT UP/New York Auction for Action*, New York, NY
- 1989 *Line*, Visual Arts Gallery, New York, NY. Curated by Loren Madsen  
*Homeland*, Minor Injury, Brooklyn, NY. Curated by Yong Soon Min, Shirin Neshat
- 1988 Group Exhibition, Visual Arts Gallery, New York, NY. Curated by Walter Darby Bannard
- 1987 *Metro Show*, City Without Walls, Newark, NJ. Curated by Peter Frank, Stefan Stux
- 1985 *Homeless at Home*, Storefront for Art and Architecture, New York, NY
- 1984 *1984—A Preview*, Ronald Feldman Fine Arts, New York, NY

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*Foreign Intrigue*, NEW YORK Magazine, May 20, 1991
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*Painting and Its Others*, ARTS Magazine, Summer 1991
- Saltz, Jerry  
*Cries and Whispers*, ARTS Magazine, Summer 1991

