



AEIOWHO, 2019

Wil Aballe Art Projects is pleased to present

**MITCH SPEED**  
***PERMANENT HEAD***

September 12 – October 12, 2019

## **PERMANENT HEAD**

1.

The snow is coming down like angel spit. Meanwhile, the ground is falling away. I've been trying to put words to pictures, and the dumb fact of the matter is that those falling flakes just reminded me of the marks falling into these pages.

It was early morning, and a couple of hours had already disappeared into the day's maw. My drooping eyes trawled for something to say. I wanted something other than ideas. Because ideas mislead; because ideas serve meaning the noun, to the expense of meaning the verb, its better sibling.

First, something enchanting tumbles into your lap: frozen crystals, a letter, the silhouette of a plunging throat. Serving pleasure, that thing goes into the page. But then a craving arises, for a stranger satisfaction. And so you chase it. The artwork records this fumbling pursuit.

2.

Let's call the resultant space a bardo of the re-worked image. Here, things are always breaking down in real time.

At a certain point, alongside the words and letters, enclosures appeared: jails, castles, prisons. I noticed with horror how similar things had been cropping up in my friends work. It was like being snared in collective consciousness. The ego wrestled with its banal carrier, flesh blood and bone.

In the bowel of my childhood home, on a shelf filled with rubber bins, sits a handmade castle. Not far away is the blue-flaming furnace, a boxy metal shower, and an old wooden door, held shut by a bent nail. The grey castle walls are jotted with stones. It's a barbaric kind of cute. Like all enclosures, its energy is confused. Like letters and words, which empower and bind, which stir the border between sense, and the semantic wild.

3.

A rare moment of clarity: Catch it! Stuff it in a box! Stamp it down in text and don't ever let it get away!

I'm drawn to the shape of letters and words, as they push slip and fall, out of your lips, gullet, stomach. Speaking and writing as things soothing and excruciating. The images are becoming analogues for this feeling of weird letters and words, moving in and out of weird you.

4.

In her masterful essay *My Emily Dickinson*, the poet Susan Howe asked her reader: “Who polices questions of grammar, parts of speech, connection, and connotation? Whose order is shut inside the structure of a sentence? What inner articulation releases the coils and complications of Saying’s assertion?”

In Howe’s meaning, one kind of logic disappears through broken syntaxes and sentences, in order to admit another. She reveres Dickinson’s bravery in “the implications of breaking the law just short of breaking off communication with a reader.” The essay does the same. It communes with its subject.

For three years, the book has been a restless obsession. It’s only recently that I’ve seen the link between its splintered syntaxes, and these broken language pictures.

5.

And if letters, what about ligatures? Like ligaments they connect. Stretching a little further, they pacify contradiction.

The writer Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick thought that art and literature could have a reparative or soothing function, helping to ease the self’s internal rifts. She worked hard to countervail the true oppositional thinking that causes paradoxes within the self to feel painfully wrong. For Kosofsky Sedgwick’s predecessor, the child psychoanalyst Melanie Klein, “omnipotence and powerlessness” formed a crucial, interdependent dynamic. Power and weakness were always bundled, tangled. And in a way it really is that simple. The pleasure of these images is like lolling in this mixed up primordial soup.

A kind of language that has nothing to say, floating into pieces and loving it. What a fantasy — like flirting with shameful and delicious non-meaning.

6.

Concerning shame, there’s also that of relishing the page, the shared apartment of reading, writing, and drawing.

Kosofsky Sedgwick produced breathtaking passages linking reading to shame. It seems fair enough to apply her observations to writing and drawing, as well. In collaboration with Adam Frank, she described how while “the lowering of the eyelids, the lowering of the eyes, the hanging of the head is the attitude of shame, it may also be that of reading.” And then, invoking the pleasure of thinking: “without positive affect there can be no shame, only a scene that offers you ensconement or engages your interest can make you blush.”

Recently, while reading for the purpose of writing, I’ve noticed a change in the way I select quotes. Gone are the days of rigorously decoding sentence after sentence. Now I just read and wait for a pull to emit from the book’s cracks and crevices. This is also how signs appear and shape shift on the drawn page. This way you can breathe.

7.

Warm air passes from the lungs, through the throat, and past the Palatine Uvula. As kids, we worked the Uvula into the mouths of heroes and villains. It was important, that white protuberance carved into lead black. It was crucial to the depiction we wanted. And besides, it was just fun to draw.

Although we wouldn't have thought of it this way, it was also marker dividing the sculpted exterior from the mushy inside. It was a way of probing the speaking, breathing, sucking, eating coughing hole. Our chubby drawing digits were like Saint Thomas's finger to Christ's red wound.

8.

Sitting with friends, I shared the work of an artist, whose work digs deeply into the self. Accusations flew like darts into the work's apparent indulgence. Not because it was bright and juicy; the opposite — because it was slow and self-examining. The artist in question was dragged into an imaginary town square, for public shaming. Later, after the crowd dissipated, another friend said: "I don't understand how anyone could not like her work."

Maybe it's true that interiority is a fortresses, ensconcing artists, intellectuals and their work. Still, to go their seems important. It also feels good, in a bittersweet way.

9.

It's snowing again. The flakes are drifting and across the day they've drifted from small to large. Later the wind makes them sweep. The background is all smudgy blue and pink. Several hours ago I opened a high-res scan of one drawing. Holding down CTRL + I dove into the translated image. The black flecks swelled. Shame of shames, delight of delights.

- Mitch Speed

*Trachea*, 2019

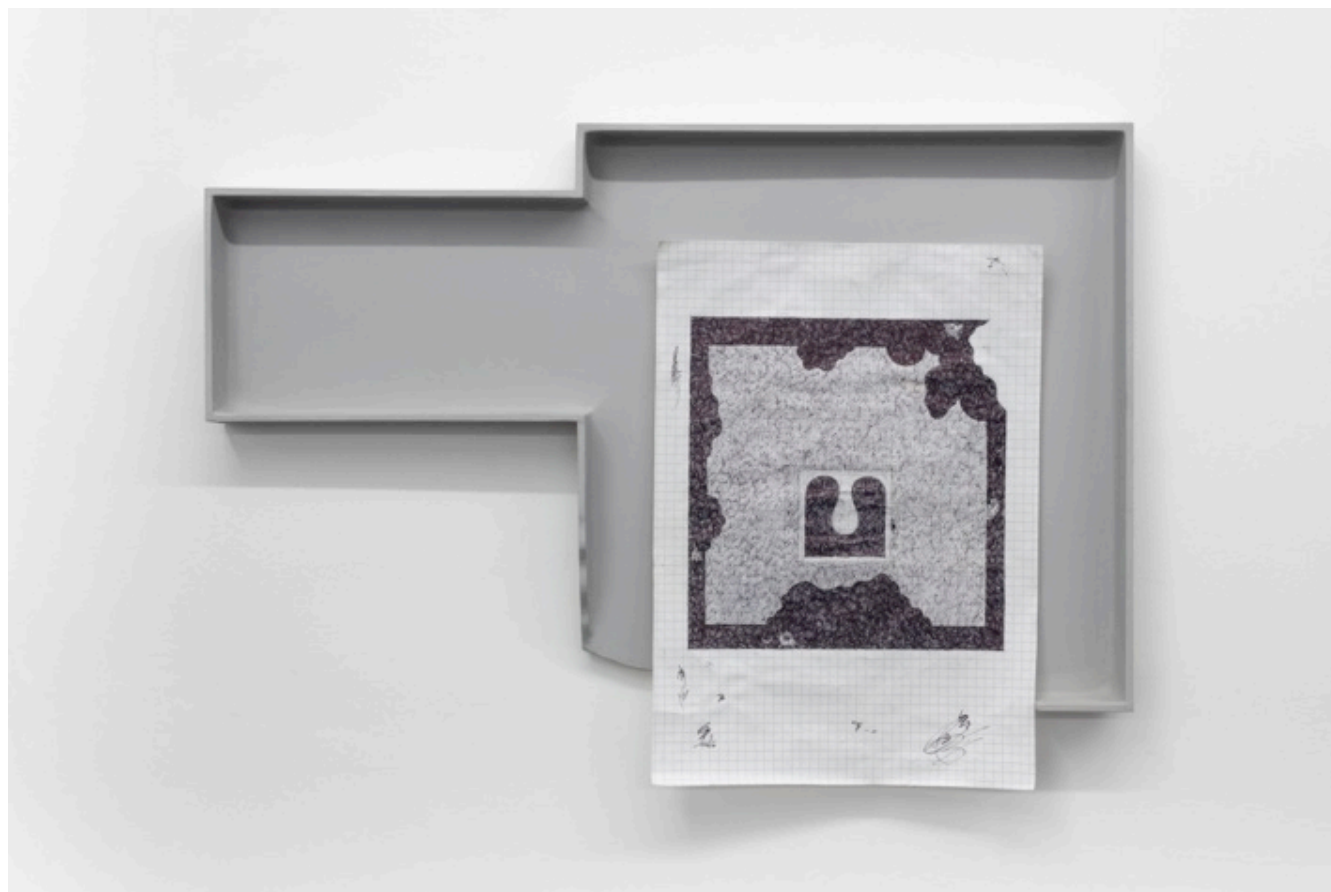
Graphite coloured pencil, paper, watercolour, custom container

16.5 x 43 in



(detail)

*Tickler*, 2018  
Pen, paper, custom container  
24 x 19.38 in



*Vent*, 2018

Pen, coloured pencil, paper, custom container

11.63 x 17.25 in



*AEIOYOU*, 2019

Graphite, coloured pencil, found materials, pastel watercolour, paper, custom container  
25.38 x 24.25 in





*Permanent Head, 2019*

Graphite, coloured pencil, found material, paper, custom container  
22.13 x 46.75 in



(detail)

*Play and Learn, 2018*  
Pen, graphite, paper, found materials, custom container  
25.38 x 24.25 in



(detail)

*AEIOWHO*, 2019  
Coloured pencil, paper, custom container  
24.25 x 21.75 in



*Leming*, 2018  
Pen, watercolour, paper, custom container  
19.13 x 12.25 in



(detail)

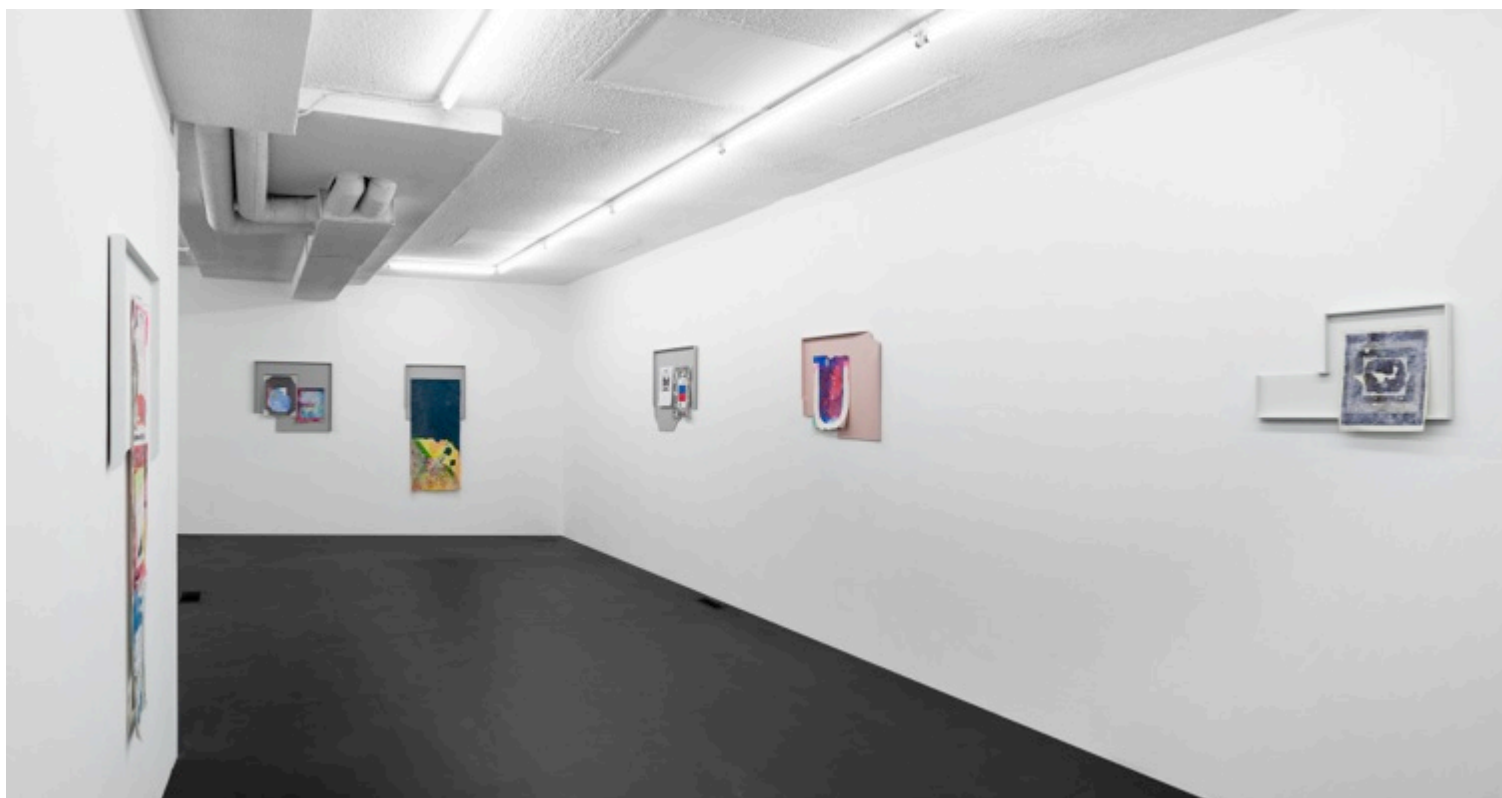
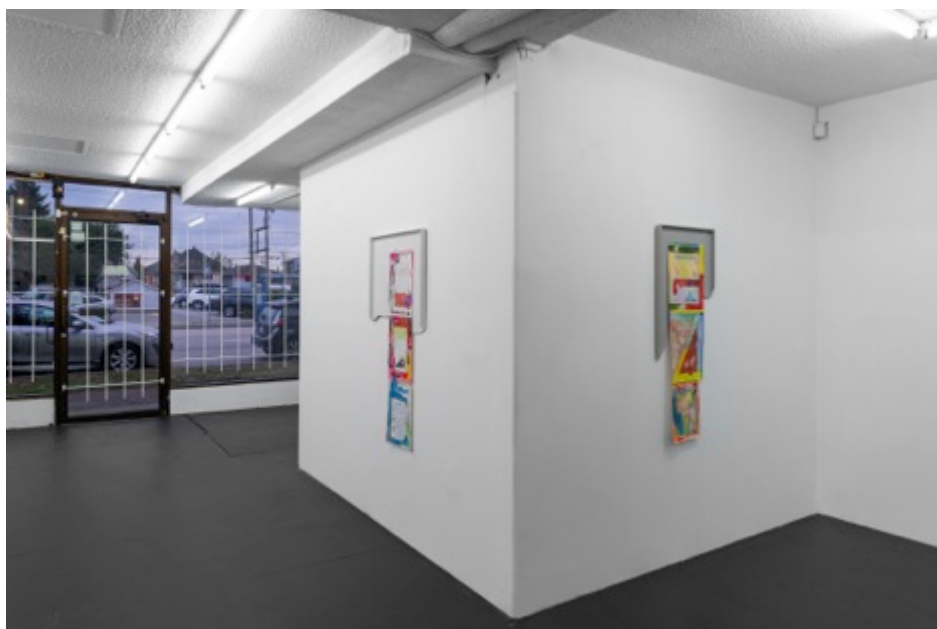


*Lovestruck*, 2018

Graphite, coloured pencil, found materials, paper, custom container  
25.5 x 47 in



## INSTALLATION PHOTOS





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## ABOUT THE ARTIST

**MITCH SPEED** is an artist and writer based in Berlin. He contributes to several publications, including Frieze, Mousse, Momus, and Camera Austria. His book 'Mark Leckey: Fiorucci Made Me Hardcore,' about Leckey's 1999 work of that title, will be published by Afterall Books in Autumn 2019. Speed is currently working on a book length essay, concerning the problematic and mythological relationship between drinking and artistry.

[mitch-speed.com](http://mitch-speed.com)

## EDUCATION

- 2016 MFA - Rutgers University, New Brunswick, NJ
- 2012 BFA - Emily Carr University of Art & Design, Vancouver, BC
- 2010 Exchange - Universität der Künste, Berlin

## SELECTED EXHIBITIONS

- 2017 Sine Gallery: Berlin, Berlin  
Period Pieces (A Sunset Terrace Retrospective), Projet Pangée, Montreal
- 2016 Hungry Heart, The Invisible Dog, Brooklyn, NY  
Friend, Mason Gross Galleries, New Brunswick, NJ
- 2015 Pop Tarts: Mitch Speed and Rob Dallas, Mason Gross Project Space, New Brunswick, NJ
- 2014 Status Whoah!!! Mason Gross School of the Arts, New Brunswick, NJ  
Robert Kleyn and Mitch Speed, The Apartment, Vancouver, BC
- 2013 The Fourth wall, The Willows, Brooklyn, NY  
Pleinairism, The Banff Centre, Banff AB (As part of A Paper, A Drawing, A Mountain residency)  
Century City, ESA Showspace, Leeds, UK  
Mitch Speed: Styles of Behaviour, Sunset Terrace, Vancouver, BC  
Echo Location, 330 G Gallery, Saskatoon, SK
- 2012 New Forms Festival, FIT Goethe-Institut, Vancouver, BC  
Graduate Exhibition, Emily Carr University of Art and Design, BC
- 2011 A Good Day for Horse Races, East Van Studios, Vancouver, BC  
Don't Call it a Comeback, Concourse Gallery, Vancouver, BC
- 2010 Umsetzen. Freien Museum, Berlin, DE
- 2009 Group Project, VSA Gallery, Vancouver, BC  
Our Sunlit Fields, 1247 East Georgia, Vancouver, BC  
If the World Was One Building I Would Have One Window, WOO Gallery, Vancouver, BC
- 2006 Small Things, The Avenue Gallery, Saskatoon, SK

## EDITORIAL WORK

- 2016-present MOMUS, contributing editor - Berlin
- 2011-15 Setup Magazine, editor and co-founder - Vancouver, BC
- 2012 The Child Alberta, produced in conjunction with the residency, A Paper, A Drawing, A Mountain at the Banff Centre, and the Walter Phillips Gallery, Banff, AB. Co-edited with Silke Otto-Knapp, Jan Verwoert and David Giordano



## **PUBLIC TALKS**

- 2015      Hello, Cruel World: Notes on Art and Civil Disobedience, presented in conjunction  
                 with the exhibition Function Creep, curated by Xander Karskens - Ateliers,  
                 Amsterdam
- 2012      Conversation with Judy Radul, presented by Canadian Art Magazine - Catriona Jeffries  
                 Gallery, Vancouver
- 2011      Liminal Positions - Reading|Culture|Writing: Symposium (with keynote by Lisa  
                 Robertson), Organizer and Moderator - Emily Carr University, Vancouver, BC



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# WAAP | Wil Aballe Arts Projects

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Tuesday – Saturday, 12:00pm – 5:00pm

## EXHIBITIONS

Mitch Speed  
*Permanent Head*  
September 12 – October 12, 2019

Brian Kokoska  
October 17 – November 30, 2019

## FAIRS

Art Toronto, TORONTO  
SOLO with Lyse Lemieux  
October 23 – 27, 2019

NADA Miami, MIAMI  
Nicolas Sassoon  
December 5 – 8, 2019

## REPRESENTED ARTISTS

Kim Kennedy Austin  
Scott Billings  
Maegan Hill-Carroll  
Ryan Quast  
Nicolas Sassoon  
Evann Siebens  
Patryk Stasieczek