

Adam Pendleton

New Works

May 25—July 24, 2018

Pedro Cera is proud to present Adam Pendleton's fourth exhibition at the gallery.

Adam Pendleton (b. 1984) is a New York-based artist whose work examines and questions the free-dom of abstraction in relationship to language, politics, and identity. The animating force of his work is found in Black Dada—the artist's term for a broad conceptualization of blackness. Working in various modes and mediums including painting, collage, video, and performance, the artist disrupts and reconsiders preconceived notions of history and culture.

Pendleton's newest series of paintings, OK DADA OK BLACK DADA OK (2017–), is a continuation of the artist's exploration of language as material. The surfaces of these paintings are covered in a semi-regular tangle of forms: words, lines, and geometric figures. Varying in density, the screen printed and spray-painted compositions contain pieces of mostly indecipherable phrases, written and overwritten. One layer, containing the word "IF," is repeated across all of the works. Other elements are variable to different degrees. The palimpsestic canvases follow Pendleton's long-running series of Black Dada paintings (2008–), in which progressively fewer letters—sometimes as few as a single letter—are arranged across paintings in order to elliptically spell out the phrase ("BLACK DADA"). In contrast to the radical subtraction of language in the earlier series, language in OK DADA OK BLACK DADA OK has proliferated to the point of illegibility, creating a polyphonic field irreducible to any single or dominant utterance.

The works on Mylar, also shown here, are based on collages that incorporate visual material from various found sources as well as from the artist's own drawings. Isolated images and fragments from the pages of books are layered with marks, dashes, patterns, and handwriting that—like the writing in the paintings—frequently verges on the abstract. The elements are collaged using a photocopy machine and then scanned, enlarged, and silkscreened by hand in black ink onto the transparent plastic medium. Each work is unique. Many of the components, though, are reiterated and recombined throughout the series. Such recurring elements include African masks, ceramics, certain phrases ("what a day was this"; "if the function of writing is to 'express the world'"), and photographs that address Modernism in Africa. Taken together, the works articulate Pendleton's unique visual style and ability to merge disparate contemporary and historical references into a single complex body of work.

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Adam Pendleton's work has been exhibited internationally in venues including the Museum of Modern Art, the New Museum, The Kitchen (all New York), Stedelijk Museum (Amsterdam), Museum of Contemporary Art (Chicago), Whitechapel Gallery (London); Kunsthal Wien (Vienna); the Baltimore Museum of Art; and the Museum of Contemporary Art (Cleveland). His work is represented in numerous museum and private collections worldwide, including the Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum, New York; the Museum of Modern Art, New York; the Studio Museum in Harlem, New York; the Museum of Contemporary Art, Chicago, Chicago; the Museum of Contemporary Art San Diego, San Diego; the Carnegie Museum of Art, Pittsburgh; as well as Tate Modern, London.