

PIPPY HOULDSWORTH GALLERY



Mary Kelly, *Post-Partum Document: Documentation VI (Silver Autone Prints)* (detail), 1983



Kenturah Davis, *Limen VI*, 2020

KENTURAH DAVIS
MARY KELLY
AGNES MARTIN

Lines of Thought

3 December 2020-6 February 2021

Opening | Thursday 3 December | 12 – 8pm

Pippy Houldsworth Gallery is delighted to present Kenturah Davis, Mary Kelly and Agnes Martin in *Lines of Thought*, an exhibition exploring the poetics and politics of language. Important unseen work by Kelly and new 'text drawings' and weavings by Davis enter into conversation with the hand-drawn lines and gridded compositions of Martin's works on paper.

Lines of Thought is the first UK presentation of work by young LA-based artist, Kenturah Davis. Four works (2020) from her series, *Limen*, pair portraiture with weaving, expressing how individuals are inseparable from the ideas and language that shape identity. Each portrait takes shape through a meticulous process of rubbing pencil across embossed paper inscribed with handwritten text. As the figure emerges, areas of script become legible, while others remain nearly invisible. Juxtaposed is a textile woven from related handwritten script on paper, transformed into thread using the Japanese technique *shifu*. Drawing on the etymological link between text and textiles, the fibres hint at their encoded information only through tiny flecks of ink. Davis draws on writings from Africa and its diaspora, including those by scholars Fred Moten and Jedidah Isler, touching on subjects from shadows, to black holes, time travel, proverbs and philosophy. Through concealment and illumination, Davis complicates binary categories of black and white, light and dark, East and West.

Exhibited for the first time will be Mary Kelly's *Post-Partum Document: Documentation VI (Silver Autone Prints)* (1983), a unique installation made of 15 parts based on the artist's artwork of the same name. It was while working on the book version for *Post-Partum Document* that Kelly devised this rare photographic technique. In *Documentation VI*, Kelly explores the linguistic formation and development of gender identity, referencing the Rosetta Stone to examine the importance of repetition to the development of language and meaning. Also on view is Kelly's *London, 1974* (2017) in which the artist uses her unique lint medium to integrate personal memories of motherhood and communal living as experienced by feminists in the 1970s. Kelly transposes this private, handwritten correspondence into gridded panels, the materiality of the process reflecting that of Davis' weavings, and together forming a dialogue on our fragile comprehension of formative events and social structures.

Grid-like arrangements echo throughout the exhibition. This is crystallised in Agnes Martin's drawing *The Peach* (1964). Delicate graphite lines appear to blaze an unswerving path into the infinite, only to reach an abrupt stop at the outer limits of the grid. Simultaneously constricting and liberating, the grid functions as a tool to approach ambiguous concepts of identity, memory and emotion. The drawings by Martin will be accompanied by works from her only major printing project, *On a clear day* (1973), inviting the viewer to meditate upon the mutability of structure and the potential of seriality to generate meaning. This body of work marks a critical point in Martin's career, signalling a return to artmaking after a self-imposed hiatus. By the time of her pencil, ink and watercolour drawing, *Untitled* (1995), Martin's grids have been simplified into straight horizontal (sometimes vertical) lines, not unlike those of a school workbook. As Nancy Princenthal has suggested, Martin's hand drawn lines are directly 'tied to handwriting and to verbal language ... not so much represent[ing] conditions in the material world ... as states of mind, or more precisely, lines of thought'.¹

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About the artists

Kenturah Davis holds a BA from Occidental College, CA, and an MFA from Yale University School of Art (2018). The artist's first solo museum exhibition, *Everything That Cannot Be Known*, is currently on show at Savannah College of Art and Design (SCAD). Other exhibitions include Wadsworth Atheneum Museum of Art, Hartford (2019); California African American Museum, Los Angeles (2019); Robert and Frances Museum of Art, San Bernardino (2017). Davis has been commissioned by the Los Angeles Metro Rail to create a large-scale, site-specific work that will be permanently installed on the new Crenshaw/LAX rail line. Her work is held in the collections of Blanton Museum of Art, Austin; Bunker (Beth Rudin DeWoody Collection), West Palm Beach; Cornell Fine Arts Museum at Rollins College; Hammer Museum, Los Angeles; Rubell Family Collection, Miami, and the Chicago Booth Art Collection, Chicago. The artist, who is represented by Matthew Brown, LA, lives and works between Los Angeles, CA, and Accra, Ghana.

Mary Kelly (b. 1941) came to prominence in the 1970's with *Post-Partum Document* (1973-9), a study of the intersubjective relationship between mother and child. Her work has been the subject of major solo exhibitions at the ICA, London (1976 and 1993); New Museum of Contemporary Art, New York (1990); Vancouver Art Gallery (1990); The Power Plant, Toronto (1991); Generali Foundation, Vienna (1998); Santa Monica Museum of Art (2001); Center for Contemporary Art, Ujazdowski Castle, Warsaw (2008); Moderna Museet, Stockholm (2010); Whitworth Art Gallery, Manchester (2011), and Weatherspoon Art Museum, Greensboro (2019). Kelly was represented in the 1991 and 2004 Whitney Biennials; Documenta 12, Kassel, 2007, the 2008 Biennale of Sydney and the 2019 Desert X Biennial. Her work is included in numerous public collections, including Museum of Modern Art, New York; Tate, London; Centre Pompidou, Paris; Whitney Museum of American Art, New York; Hammer Museum, Los Angeles; Moderna Museet, Stockholm; MOCA, Los Angeles; Museum of Contemporary Art, Chicago; Museum of New Zealand, Wellington, and New Museum of Contemporary Art, New York. The artist lives and works in Los Angeles.

Agnes Martin was born in Macklin, Saskatchewan, in 1912. The artist's first solo museum exhibition was held in 1973 at the Institute of Contemporary Art, University of Pennsylvania, Philadelphia, travelling to the Pasadena Art Museum. During the same year she opened a solo exhibition at The Museum of Modern Art, New York. Major solo exhibitions during her lifetime include the Stedelijk Museum, Amsterdam, travelling to France and Germany (1991-92), and The Whitney Museum of American Art, New York, traveling to Milwaukee, Miami, Houston and Madrid (1992-4). Martin also participated in Documenta 5, Kassel (1972); Venice Biennale (1976, 1980, 1997); and the Whitney Biennial (1977, 1995). After her death, a retrospective was initiated by Tate Modern, London in 2015, which travelled to the Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum, New York; Kunstsammlung Nordrhein-Westfalen, Düsseldorf and the Los Angeles County Museum of Art. Martin died in Taos in 2004.

¹ Nancy Princenthal, *Agnes Martin: Her Life and Art*, Thames and Hudson (2015)