

LAUREL WOODCOCK

walkthrough

2013

Adhesive vinyl

Commissioned by TIFF 2013

Courtesy the artist and MKG127, Toronto

The Word is now a virus.

— WILLIAM S. BURROUGHS, *THE TICKET THAT EXPLODED* (1962)

Exterminate all rational thought.

— WILLIAM LEE FROM WILLIAM S. BURROUGHS'S *NAKED LUNCH* (1959)

American author William S. Burroughs saw language as an infectious, parasitic virus—an agent of control—that limits the imagination, preventing us from thinking, from being creative, from realizing our full potential. During the late 1950s, using a literary technique invented by fellow writer and Beat Generation mentor Brion Gysin, Burroughs wrote a trilogy of novels using the now-famous “cut-up” method of writing: essentially a literary form of collage that freed language from predictability and the constraints of linear thought. Thus liberated, the imagination is unlocked. Structure, meaning and even time and space become fluid, mutable and associative.

In *walkthrough*, Laurel Woodcock liberates passages from Cronenberg’s scripts, extracting them from their original contexts, from the realm of fictionalized cinematic time and space, and placing them into the gallery visitor’s real-time experience and physical space. The specific placements of the slug lines throughout the gallery space also function as a meta-narrative for the exhibition. Installed above the gallery attendant’s desk in the museum lobby, the line, Surprisingly, the show has a moderately classy look to it for middle-of-the-road softcore., reads as a cheeky introduction. The first work encountered in the exhibition space—The room goes totally silent. There’s the feeling that something terrible is going to happen.—sets an ominous tone in the manner of horror and action-thriller genres, and, of course, of the many moments of sinister apprehension in Cronenberg’s films. A similar tone is conveyed by She turns and disappears around a corner.—installed low on the gallery wall next to a corridor.

Surprisingly, the show has a moderately classy look to it for middle-of-the-road softcore.

The room goes totally silent. There’s the feeling that something terrible is going to happen.

As though realizing the implications of what she was saying for the first time,

(DEADLY SERIOUS)

She turns and disappears around a corner.

He can’t help but overhear passing conversations.

(RELIEVED NOT TO HAVE TO DEAL WITH A SCENE)

INT. BAR — DUSK

Through the displacement of narrative, Woodcock creates unexpected juxtapositions and relationships among language, architecture, cinema and memory, transporting us, as art and cinema do, to other planes of reality—to the possibilities of new meanings. Dark as they may be, and as uncomfortable as they may make us feel, David Cronenberg’s films possess the uncanny ability to probe beyond rational thought, beyond parameters of the physical, freeing us to roam the most nebulous regions of our imaginations, and challenging us to project our own emotions, intellects and anxieties, to deeply question the circumstances of our being, and to consider what it means to be human, here and now, and into the future.

In her ongoing site-specific series *walkthrough*, Laurel Woodcock examines the relationship between cinema and the written word. Slug lines culled from Cronenberg’s scripts are reproduced in screenplay-standard Courier font and placed throughout the gallery. By recontextualizing instructions that were never meant to be seen, Woodcock presents a cinema stripped of the moving image. The texts slyly infiltrate the exhibition, appearing both to comment on and direct the action that takes place around them. This performative quality calls attention to the linguistic origins of cinema in a formally elegant work that seems to place the viewer in a film of their own creation. This latest iteration of *walkthrough* also includes an installation throughout the TIFF Bell Lightbox building in conjunction with the exhibition “David Cronenberg: Evolution.”

— LAUREL MacMILLAN (FOR TIFF 2013)

(DEADLY SERIOUS)