

# frieze

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## Jeremiah Day / Simone Forti / Fred Dewey

### Ludlow 38

Despite its humble size, 'Jeremiah Day / Simone Forti / Fred Dewey' at Ludlow 38 was one of those exhibitions where the visit was only the beginning of a longer engagement with the artists. The works on view were mostly of an ephemeral nature: notebook pages, books, photographs and video footage were brought to life by a three-day event series featuring each of the artists. Day, Dewey and Forti have worked alongside one another for almost a decade now, writing, publishing and performing together, weaving their practices in and out of each other in a variety of configurations. Their work takes on a form of continuous, interrelated research that reveals a common interest in the synthesizing of information through language, speech, imagery, writing, movement, dance and – most of all – improvisation. Their work recalls the act of chewing – the chewing of information to make it palpable, digestible or moldable.

Improvisation – whether in public, as in the performances of Forti and Day, or more in private, such as in the notebook pages of Dewey – was treated as something that synthesizes shared experience with the personal. Like surrealist word games, improvisation can generate a 'gap between what might be called declarative or definitive statements and more poetic or metaphorical structures and formations,' as Dewey phrases it. And it is this gap that made the works in the show so alluring.

For Day, the personal and the shared meet not only through improvisation but also through the blending of sources, media and styles. In his work *Jefferson Project* (2004–6), Day combines a series of photographs of public monuments in Washington D.C. under reconstruction during the second Bush election period with notes and a performance that allow his personal associations to seep in and inform our appreciation of the official narrative. Dewey's writing, publishing practice and work in local politics synthesize abstract political reality with the mundane everyday experience. These efforts were exhibited here in the form of

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eclectic thought-collages in the pages of his notebooks. The most engaging contribution in the show was Forti's. In the late 1980s, Forti, mainly known for her contributions to modern dance, developed a profound interest in the relationship between movement and language. After the death of her father, who had always kept the family informed through reading the papers, Forti felt that it was now her turn to take on this responsibility, and she started working on a project titled News Animations, in which she publicly reads the news. To understand often complex and intangible information, Forti began to translate the news into movement, channelling the headlines of the day through her body, allowing herself to be choreographed by the situation in the headlines.

In News Animation Improvisation, a recording of a performance by Forti at Mad Brook Farm, Vermont in 1988, one can observe how her efforts materialize in the form of a danced social commentary. Varying from literal translations, to symbolic gestures, to abstract and impulsive gestural utterances, her movements are reminiscent of Eurhythmy, the movement-art developed by Rudolf Steiner in the early 20th century. As part of his anthroposophical philosophy, the repertoire of Eurhythmic movements related to sounds, rhythms of speech, and emotions that were invented explicitly as a new means of artistic expression to remedy an apparent lack in the possibilities of physical expression. Dewey, Day and Forti seem to be developing an assorted array of bodily expressions that can be employed as a means to interpret and channel the heap of information that we encounter on a daily basis. Cross-pollinating each other's work, the practices of all three seem to stem from the common belief that sometimes language has to be disassembled, defamiliarized and acted out in order to make a difference.

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