

# GAZELLI ART HOUSE



© Bob and Roberta Smith, *Green Phone*, 2021

## *Let's Talk About Text*

He An, Babi Badalov, Derek Boshier, Jane McAdam Freud,  
Ray Johnson, Kalliopi Lemos, Markus Martinovich,  
Alexander Reben & Bob and Roberta Smith

Private view: 10th June, 6-8pm (BST)

Exhibition: 11th June – 10th July, 2021

Gazelli Art House presents 'Let's Talk About Text', a group exhibition of artists united by their use of text. Spanning decades and regions, seemingly disparate artists who use text humorously, in protest, as a vehicle for self-exploration or as code, the exhibition pulls together a variety of ways of looking at text as art. The group exhibition includes the artworks of; He An, Babi Badalov, Derek Boshier, Jane McAdam Freud, Ray Johnson, Kalliopi Lemos, Markus Martinovich, Alexander Reben and Bob and Roberta Smith.

Mila Askarova, founder and CEO of Gazelli Art House, says, "The exhibition highlights the importance of text as a communication vehicle to artistic expression, the artists displayed in 'Let's Talk About Text' utilise letters, numbers, and words as a key means to support their message."

Azeri artist Babi Badalov self-titles his practice "visual language", using the complexities of the Azeri language; which is constantly evolving, to create aesthetic texts and patterns. Badalov works across languages, including Azeri, Russian and English, fusing languages to create new words and meanings and subverting writing as a formal exercise to focus on the visualisation of language.

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In the same vein, Ray Johnson subverted the traditionally formal act of letter writing to create comic letters. A selection of these letters sent by Johnson to artist and BOMB magazine journalist Saul Ostrow are included in the exhibition, alongside a letter to Clive Barker that features an anatomically accurate cartoon elephant character sketch. Named by The New York Times' art critic, Grace Gluek, in 1965 as "New York's most famous unknown artist", Ray Johnson was a forerunner of mail art creating the "New York Correspondence School".

British contemporary artist Bob and Roberta Smith OBE RA unveils six new works from 2021, including a highly personal artwork inspired by his father, the landscape painter Frederick Brill. *Green Phone* (2021) depicts a large green telephone from Smith's memory of his father's Chelsea School of Art office phone, with the different departments his father coordinated displayed in graphic text. Other works included support the artist's political agenda to make art accessible to all. Smith is currently working on a Thamesmead estate project with Tate and Peabody, interviewing residents as part of Peabody's ambitious cultural strategy for Thamesmead and Tate's wider community partnership programme. Other everyday items are animated by text in Jane McAdam Freud's found-object artworks. McAdam Freud incorporates lettering to give life to the inanimate. *HerE* (2016) is an installation created from gravel which raises feminist queries of He/ Her / Here, inspired by Freud's formative years when her mother would discuss womens' traditional roles. These conversations provoked a young Freud to say "er" as seen in the artwork, this can also read as women are "here". Other works, *Breadbook* and *Distressed Green Box* explore the digital world where a recipe book can be replaced by an I-pad and latterly the 2015-2016 refugee crisis. Kalliopi Lemos' mixed media collages included in the exhibition also explore this fractious period of migration.

14 year old artist Markus Martinovich was diagnosed with autism as a young child and throughout his childhood he has used art as a way to express himself. The young Russian artist explores text in his large-scale paintings to demonstrate his unique view of the world. A difficult aspect of Martinovich's works is looking for meaning in the works when there simply is none. There's text included in the works however there is no dialogue with viewers. In a similar manner an AI tapestry series by new media artist and MIT-trained roboticist, Alexander Reben, will be presented. Where text and meaning is hidden within the digitally created artwork. Reben's AI fortune prints are woven by using the QR code scans from a printed receipt. During the show Reben will drop an NFT.

Finally Wuhan based artist He An will present a large-scale neon sign of unravelled Chinese characters *The night or with its day* (2015). He An honed his craft of creating iconic signs by using stolen neon lettering from his hometown as a means to comment on the mafia-led streets at the time. The artist then traditionally reworks the characters to create signs of the names of his friends and family.

## About the Gallery

Founded in 2011 by Mila Askarova, Gazelli Art House brings a fresh perspective to Mayfair showcasing a polyphony of artist voices from across the world. With galleries in London and Baku, Gazelli Art House promotes art from Azerbaijan and its neighbours to further a greater understanding of the rich linguistic, religious and historic ties that connect this geography. Since 2015, the gallery has expanded to support artists working in the realm of digital art through its online platform [Gazelli.io](https://Gazelli.io), and in the London gallery space which now houses a VR library and project space.