

ROBERT MONTGOMERY

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Robert Montgomery brings a poetic voice and public interventionists strategies to the tradition of contemporary text art, and works across diverse media: billboard pieces, solar powered light pieces, fire poems, woodcuts and watercolors. He was the British artist selected for the 2012 Kochi Biennale and the 2016 Yinchuan Biennale. A monograph on his work was published by Distanz in 2015. Along with the architects Allied Works he was a shortlisted finalist for the UK National Holocaust Memorial in 2017 with the scheme exhibited at the V&A Museum in London. He currently has a solo show at the Aspen Art Museum.

Dane Weatherman wrote of Montgomery's work, "To encounter the work of Robert Montgomery is to make a tender encounter whose tenderness is enhanced by the public, communal quality of his work. To encounter his work is to have your body filled with a sad thunder and your head filled with a sad light. He is a complete artist and works in language, light, paper, space. He engages completely with the urban world with a translucent poetry. His work arrives at us through a kind of lucid social violence. No one has blended language, form and light in such a direct way. "

ROBERT MONTGOMERY CV

Born 1972, Chapelhall Scotland, United Kingdom

Lives and works in London, United Kingdom

Education

BA Edinburgh College of Art, 1st Class Honours 1993

MFA Edinburgh College of Art 1995

Core Program Artist-in-Residence, Museum of Fine Arts, Houston 1995-97

Visiting Professorships

Visiting Artist, Fine Art Media, The Slade School of Art, London 2014

Bartlette Critique Visiting Artist, University of Newcastle 2016

Visiting Artist, Chelsea College of Art, London 2017

Select Exhibitions

2019

"Robert Montgomery: The City in Their Echo" Aspen Art Museum, Aspen Colorado [solo show]

2018

"Paper Peace" Emergency Exit Arts and Arts Council England national touring project.

"Estuary Poem for Wyndham Lewis" One Canada Square, Canary Wharf, London. [solo show]

"In Our Dreams We See Forever" Commission for the Royal Society for Blind Children, travelling the UK.
"E-Luminate Cambridge" Kings College Cambridge.
"Bombay Beach Biennale" Bombay Beach, California.
"New Generation" Madison Gallery, San Diego.
"La Prison Exposee" Champ-Dollon À Penthes, Geneva, Switzerland.
"A Journey to Freedom" Tasmanian National Museum and Art Gallery.

2017

"Hammersmith Poem and Love Letters to Kazimir Malevich" Cob Gallery, London. [solo show]
"Frieze Billboards" billboard works, Shoreditch, East London.
"Parasolstice" Parasol Unit Art Foundation, London. [solo show]
"The UK Holocaust Memorial Shortlist" Victoria & Albert Museum, London.
"Hammersmith Poem" Hammersmith Town Hall, London. [solo show]
"The Book of the Word" (curated by Michael Petry) Helsinki Contemporary, Helsinki.
"Election Poem" Flying Leaps, London.
"NuArt Festival" Aberdeen.

2016

"Year of the Propaganda Corrupted Plebiscites" Mannerheim Gallery, Paris. [solo show]
"Year of the Corrupted Eclipse" Printspace, London. [solo show]
"Cardiff Contemporary" Cardiff, Wales.
"Yinchuan Biennale" Yinchuan Museum of Contemporary Art, China.
"La Littorale- Biennale d'art Contemporain d'Anglet", Anglet, Sud-Ouest France.
"Nuart Festival" Stavanger, Norway.
"A New Language: Root 1066 Festival" Hastings, England.
"The Crystal Ship" Oostende, Belgium.
"Poetry For Change" Kulturno Informativni Centar, Zagreb, Croatia.
"To Fast to Live Too Young to Die", solar powered installation for the Climate Coalition at Osterley Park, London. [solo show]
"Still Future", Dick Institute, Kilmarnock, Scotland.
Icona Prize, Museo Mart, Verona

2015

"Robert Montgomery" Cer Modern Museum, Ankara (S)
"Robert Montgomery". Istanbul'74, Istanbul (S)
"Chapter 6 in Which We Sit Like Docile Cattle While You Use the Aesthetics of Punk Rock to Sell Credit Cards Back to Us" Galerie Nuke and Istanbul '74, Galerie Nikki Diana Marquandt, Paris. [solo show]
"Bodies Burning at the Edges, Thomas Beal, Robert Montgomery, Jacoby Satterwhite, Kiki Smith". LeRoy Neiman Gallery, Columbia University, New York.
"People You Love." installation at The Southbank Centre, London, for National Poetry Day. [solo show]
"The Stars Pulled Down For Real". Public project for All Rise Seattle. [solo show]

“Robert Montgomery”. Istanbul’74, Istanbul [solo show]

“Sunday in the Park with Ed”. Display Gallery, London

“I was dancing when I was 8 : as French protestant middle class diaspora panic reached its height around 1556, refugee goldsmiths arriving in high Calvinist Geneva landed in their new home of free-thought finding themselves forbidden from making jewelry or any other objects of idolatry”, and so were forced to begin their sullen and centuries long sexually-repressed fetishisation of watches + Smalltown Boy + the tragedy of Glasgow Rangers / a small but sustained cry against Calvin inspired by Marc Bolan and Bronski Beat”.

Galerie Analix Forever Geneva [solo show]

“Searock Songlines. Public project curated by Marc Fiedler Saalfelden Leogang, Austria [solo show]

2014

3 Poems About Buildings and Trees, Nuit Blanche Brussels

LA Billboard poems, curated by Do Art Foundation and Art Share, Los Angeles.

Louvre Fire Poem, Jardin des Tuileries, Paris.

Istanbul Fire Poem, IST Festival, Istanbul.

Piles of Dirt and Glass You Walk Upon, solo show. Galerie Colette, Paris.

Fields of Vision, Grand Depart Tour de France, Yorkshire Festival, England.

Ian Hamilton Finlay, Robert Montgomery, Lawrence Wiener. Anna Jil Lüpertz Gallery, Berlin.

Still Future, The Arts Complex, Edinburgh.

2013

Affordable Care, Manya Wynwood, Miami.

Solo Show C24 Gallery, New York.

Quand l’art Prend la Ville, Defacto, La Défense, Paris.

Edinburgh Fire Poem. Commission for the Edinburgh Art Festival, The Mound, Edinburgh.

In Dreams. Cob Gallery, London.

Sculpture al Fresco III, Great Fosters, Surrey, England.

City is Wilder. Installation at Kater Holzig, Anna Jil Lüpertz Gallery, Berlin.

Echoes of Voices in the High Towers. solo show. Galerie Nuke, Paris

Tokyo Billboards, Harajuko. Each X Other Projects.

2012

The Kochi-Muziris Biennale, Fort Kochi, Kerala, India.

Closer. Spinello Projects, Miami.

Le Printemps de Septembre a Toulouse. Curated by Paul Ardenne. Toulouse, France.

Robert Montgomery: Echoes of Voices in the High Towers. solo show part 2, Neue Berliner Räume, Stattbad Wedding, and billboard sites, Berlin.

From The Age of The Poets. Cy Twombly, Ian Hamilton Finlay, Robert Montgomery etc, Aanat & Zoo, Berlin.

Preposterous. La Scatola, London.

Sublime · Kursiv. James Lee Byars, Christian Boltanski, Douglas Gordon, Robert Montgomery etc. Anna Jill Lüpertz Gallery at Epicentro Art, Berlin.

Noir Clair, curated by Barbara Polla and Victor de Bonnacaze, Galerie Vanessa Quang, Paris, France.

Wealth. Mass, London.

Oneliners, KOP, Breda, Netherlands.

Robert Montgomery: Echoes of Voices in the High Towers. solo show, Neue Berliner Räume, site of old Tempelhof Airport and billboard sites, Berlin.

Whenever An Angel. solo show, Galerie Analix-Forever, Geneva

It Turned Out This Way cos You Dreamed it This Way. Solo show KK Outlet and billboard sites London.

A Gathering (curated by Maria-Thalia Carras & Olga Hatzidaki), Athens Festival.

Art St Barth, Valentine de Badereau Gallery, St Barths

2011

Fire of Each Other. solo show Galerie Nuke, Paris.

And Like This You Keep Them Alive/On Love. Neue Berliner Räume. Berlin.

All Palaces Are Temporary Palaces. Courtyard of the Palais de Tokyo Paris.

The Streets Belong to No One. Truck on the streets of the Galata neighbourhood. Casa dell Arte project collateral to the 12th Istanbul Biennale, Istanbul.

All Palaces Are Temporary Palaces. Lyon Docks, Docks Art Fair Program, Lyon.

Orientele*. curated by Maurizio Bortolotti and Shwetal Patel collateral to the Venice Biennale. Chiesa delle Zitelle, Venice.

Royal Wedding Poem (gesso panel version). Scope Foundation project with Galerie Analix-Forever, Scope Art Basel, Basel.

Royal Wedding Poems. Billboard series, London.

Génération Polluée: Davide Bertocchi, Cyprien Gaillard, Camille Henrot, Marc Horowitz, Robert Montgomery, Douglas White. Galerie Nuke, Paris.

2010

Trees. Galerie Analix-Forever, Geneva.

Heart of Glass. 20 Hoxton Square Projects, London.

The People You Love Become Ghosts Inside of You. Scope Foundation project with Galerie Analix-Forever, Scope Art Basel, Basel.

I Won't Give Up. with Fabio Paleari, Resistance Inc and Guido Costa Projects at Coningsby Gallery, London.

Cars & Bikes. Galerie Analix-Forever, Geneva.

Don't Jump- Mary Heilman, Robert Montgomery, Julie Ryan, Lawrence Weiner. Galerie Bigger Better Space, Vienna.

The People You Love Become Ghosts Inside of You. The De La Warr Pavilion, Bexhill.

2009

Emotional Emergency. solo show, Analix Forever Gallery, Geneva.

Words in the City at Night. Billboard Series. London.

Utopia/Distopia. The Grand Palais, Paris (Art Paris program).

Learning by Doing: 25 Years of Artist's in Residence at the MFAH. Museum of Fine Arts, Houston.

2008

Derniers Jours: May 68/May 08. solo show, Galerie Nuke, Paris.

I Won't Give Up. collaboration with Fabio Paleari, Guido Costa Projects, Turin.

2007

Strategic Art Getts. curated by Neil Mulholland. The Embassy, Edinburgh.

Dazed & Confused versus Andy Warhol. THE BALTIC, Newcastle-Gateshead.

2006

The Circle of Dead Grass Where the Circus Used to Be, Sean Flynn, David Fryer, Robert Montgomery.
Trolley Gallery, London.

Words in the City at Night. The Margaret Thatcher Project, New York.

2005

God is Bored of Us. Fast Moving Consumer Goods, London.

Words in the City at Night, London

WORKS HELD IN THE FOLLOWING COLLECTIONS

Cass Sculpture Foundation, Chichester, UK

Manja Gideon Collection, Geneva, Switzerland

Florence Welch Collection, London

Michael Stipe Collection, New York, USA

Wassner Collection, New York, USA

Museum of Fine Arts, Houston, USA

Edinburgh Art Festival Collection, Edinburgh, UK

LVMH Collection. Work on permanent display at Dior Homme space, Soho, New York, USA

Henrik Wobbe Collection, Hamburg, Germany

The Museum of Contemporary Art, Yinchuan, China

Benoit Pierre Emery Collection, Paris, France

Collection of Patrick Van Ommeslaeghe, Antwerp, Belgium

Charlie and Elizabeth Cetin Collection, London, UK

Gianni and Michael Alen-Buckley Collection, London,

UK Municipal Collection Saalfelden Leogang, Salzburg, Austria

Artshare Collection, Los Angeles, USA

Luepertz Collection, Berlin, Germany

Jacques Esseberg Collection, Paris and St Tropez, France

Dick Institute Collection, Scotland, UK

Casa dell Arte Collection, Bodrum, Turkey

Television

BBC documentary: *Who's Afraid of Conceptual Art?*

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=pEjjQLV4y8o>

Select Bibliography

- "THE WORD IS ART" by Michael Petry, Thames & Hudson, 2018. ISBN 978-0-500-23966-7
- "Concrete Poetry: Robert Montgomery's Hammersmith Poem", Geoff Cowart, *The Quietus*, March 25th, 2017 <http://thequietus.com/articles/22074-robert-montgomery-interview-hammersmith-poem>
- "Robert Montgomery", monograph. texts by Henrik Wobbe, Douglas Gordon, Anna Lupertz, Manuel Wischnewski et al. *Distanz*. 2015 ISBN 978-3-95476-077-0
- "The New Concrete: Visual Poetry in The 21st Century", Victoria Bean and Chris McCabe. Hayward Gallery/The Southbank Centre. 2015 ISBN 978-1-85332-328-7
- "The Poetics of Robert Montgomery", Rachel Small. *Interview Magazine*. September 2013. <http://www.interviewmagazine.com/art/robert-montgomery-c24-gallery>
- "Lovelos" (collection of new London poetry). Publishers Legg & Wallis. ISBN 978-0-9576934-0-1 *Revue Magazine*, Berlin. Issue 13. Summer 2013. Artist's magazine cover and feature by Rabea Edel.
- "Kochi-Muziris Biennale" Amanprit Sandhur, *Frieze*, Issue 153, March 2013.
- "Echoes of Voices in the High Towers" monograph. Published by Mono Kultur, Berlin, 2012.
- "Robert Montgomery Brings His Word Art to the Billboards of Berlin" Susanna Davies-Crook, *Exberliner magazine*, July/August 2012.
- "Signs of the Times" Audrey Gillian, *The Scotsman Magazine*, 23 June 2012.
- "Robert Montgomery" *Vinyl Riot Magazine*, Spring 2012.
- "The Artist Vandalising Advertising With Poetry" Matilda Battersby, *The Independent*, February 3rd 2012.
- "Fire of Each Other" monograph, published by Nuke Editions, Paris, 2011.
- "Robert Montgomery" by Olivier Zahm. *Purple Magazine*, Fall/Winter 2011. Vol. III issue 16, Paris.
- "The Don Draper With Soul". Interview with Laura Havlin for Phaidon. October 2011. <http://uk.phaidon.com/agenda/art/articles/2011/october/12/the-don-draper-with-soul/>
- "Robert Montgomery- Social Distortion" by Sven Fortmann. *Lodown Magazine* issue 78, October 2011, Berlin.
- "Collective 1984-2009". by Kate Gray and Neil Mulholland. published by Revolver and the Collective Gallery. 2011. ISBN-10: 3868950338.
- "Ghost in the Machine" interview with John Paul Pryor for *Dazed & Confused*. May 2011. <http://www.dazeddigital.com/artsandculture/article/9142/1/robert-montgomery-ghost-in-the-machine>
- "Robert Montgomery, The Circle of Dead Grass Where the Circus Used to Be" *SOME/THINGS MAGAZINE*, issue 2. Paris, 2010.
- "Street Art" by Francesca Gavin. *Dazed&Confused Japan*. April issue 2009.
- "Robert Montgomery, Whenever You See the Sun Reflected in the Window of a Building it is an Angel" *SOME/THINGS MAGAZINE*, issue 1. Paris 2009.

“Core Artists and Critics in Residence” published by the Museum of Fine Arts Houston, 2008. ISBN: 9780890901625.

“Robert Montgomery, Derniers Jours. Paris May 68/08” exhibition catalogue published by Nuke Editions, texts by Jerome Sans and David Dorrell. 2008.

“I Won’t Give Up” Robert Montgomery & Fabio Paleari, published by Damiani, 2008 ISBN:9788862080194.

“Robert Montgomery at Inman” by Frances Colpitt. Art in America, Vol. 85, No.9.

Press quotes about Robert Montgomery’s work:

Interview Magazine (Rachel Small)

“There is something pacifying about Robert Montgomery’s text-based artwork. The poems he composes suggest a steady faith that humanity can heal the ecological and emotional trauma of our times, with a lyricism that recalls poets like Philip Larkin and Sylvia Plath. When he reads them aloud, as he’ll often do prefacing further explanation, he breathes a calm, steady hum into the verse—a haunting effect that’s inherently intimate.

Yet Montgomery’s focus lies in broadcasting his message to a wider audience. His preferred installation format is co-opted billboards: his own text, replacing the billboards’, subverts their intended purpose of disseminating ads. Light poems are another major part of his work. Similar in size to billboards, they are instead made of environmentally friendly LED solar-powered lights that brighten and dim with changing weather. Softer and more quiet are his watercolors and woodcut monochrome canvases.

Montgomery’s art has graced the cityscapes of Paris, Berlin, and London, where he is based. His first solo exhibition in New York opened last week at C24 Gallery, comprising the largest collection of his works gathered together to date.

Born in Scotland in 1972, Montgomery was raised as a Christian. His early spirituality, he shares, still motivates him to create poems as a means of divine solace. After graduating from the Edinburgh College of Art, he studied at the core program at the Museum of Fine Arts, Houston. All Palaces are Temporary Palaces was featured at the 2011 Venice Biennale, and his work was also featured at the first Indian Biennale in 2012.

We visited Montgomery at C24 gallery while he was installing, starting the interview with a tour. Walking in the entrance with blaring words of lights ahead and on either side felt like entering a cathedral.”

The Independent (Mathilda Battersby)

“An article about an artist who sneaks around London plastering verses of poetry over advertising billboards published in The Independent earlier this year elicited huge interest, gaining more than 2.5K ‘Likes’ on Facebook and starting a social networking frenzy. Among your comments were: “I love an intelligent response to advertising. Who asked the public if we want our faces filled with adverts as we walk the streets?”

and “Hooray! More of this. Everyone should start doing this to adverts”. The relatively unknown artist responsible, Robert Montgomery from Scotland, seems to have struck a chord with readers. His verses were presented sparsely in black and white typography. They appeared overnight and passers-by, used probably to blanking out colourful sales images, either didn’t notice at all, or stopped transfixed to read the poems. A new movement of advertising artists have followed in Montgomery’s wake. Nicknamed ‘Brandalism’.

<http://www.independent.co.uk/arts-entertainment/art/features/brandalism-street-artists-hijack-billboards-for-subvertising-campaign-7953151.html>

The Huffington Post (US) says,

“The Scottish artist installs poetry in unexpected urban sites with his stripped down white-on-black text. Others are made of lights or even lit on fire, adding a ghostly air to the lonely public spaces. Some of his poems comment on the ways capitalism has created a paranoid public in which we live in a flood of images detached from our world and ourselves. Montgomery’s work is inspired by detournement, the Situationist practice of hijacking ad space. It is hard to read an article about Montgomery without seeing the name Guy Debord pop up -- the man who predicted capitalism would create a society where spectacle overtakes reality. Anyone who has been following the current MOCA debate knows where this has been going”

http://www.huffingtonpost.com/2012/07/30/robert-montgomery_n_1694971.html

Black & Blue (Dane Weatherman)

“To encounter the work of Robert Montgomery is to make a tender encounter whose tenderness is enhanced by the public, communal quality of his work. To encounter his work is to have your body filled with a sad thunder and your head filled with a sad light. He is a complete artist and works in language, light, paper, space. He engages completely with the urban world with a translucent poetry. His work arrives at us through a kind of lucid social violence. No one has blended language, form and light in such a direct way.

<http://blackbluewriting.com/2012/07/16/robert-montgomery-new-language-for-sad-times/>

Manuel Wischnewski

“For lack of a better word, there is a profoundly magical moment in the works of Robert Montgomery: In the middle of the street, we might come across one of his poems and realise that someone is speaking with us. Like a ghostly whisper. It is the idea that someone knows us and has known us all along that is at the unsettling and touching core of Robert’s work. He recognises us in his poems. He speaks with us and never just to us. And within that recognition – somewhere on a street amongst strangers – is a deeply dignifying moment.

Robert’s words lend a grace to our stories and memories that we secretly feared would be merely mundane and meaningful only in our own world. More than anything, his poems are an archive of moments that poignantly capture the way it feels to live at this moment in time. In doing so, Montgomery always finds an honesty that is ready to acknowledge both the pain and hopefulness that are inextricably tied up in the biographies we share. His poems are not interested in distancing themselves, but rather in creating a dialogue in which we can find ourselves (again). Even at its most melancholic, Robert’s work is never based

in fear, as it is always laced with the idea that we can move beyond whatever holds us back.

Robert stages large parts of his work in the public space. This idea of radical publicity perhaps finds its most authentic expression in Robert's altering of billboard advertising spaces, which he uses to display his poems in a simple white-on-black-format. All his other works – including the large light installations – are a variant of these simple interventions in our everyday lives.

Edward Lucie-Smith (Art Historian)

“Yes to this, and yes again. It's democratic art and democratic literature. I'd love to see more of it here in Britain.”