

# WORD DANCE

SELECTIONS FROM THE COLLECTION  
OF JOANN GONZALEZ HICKEY



DENVER ART MUSEUM

*Nulla potest maior tantum et altera simular  
 Vires, quantum si non Lesbica amata mea sit;  
 Nulla flori ullo fuit inquam in foedera iunctae.  
 Quanta in anseri tum ex parte respiciamur.*

LESBIA'S RIVALS (1)

**O**LIPS and Nose and Hoofs and Feet,  
 Not very small or very neat;  
 O Eyes all languishing, that seem  
 More close, grow evidently green;  
 O Mouth extended far and wide,  
 Ionic of the Tongue that wags inside—  
 To charm continue, if you can,  
 That bankrupt bum you call a man.  
 But in the provinces, I hear,  
 They match you with my own dear fair.  
 March you! Good Lord! Are men all mad  
 To show taste so completely bad?

THESE four lines with their bold mathematical structure (page 119) provide a fine specimen of that succinct verse-form known technically as the epigram. Six of the specimens here come together in the collection, of which this is the second. All of them are written in elegiac couplets. Exactly what the term "epigram" may mean is difficult to say. Part II, pages 117-117, explains the term in detail. It is the most powerful genius could possibly have used to cover a wide range of emotion. The first and third are for a friend, the second for a rival, and fourth passionate, the last revealing an equal vanity and intensity.



Károly Keserü  
 Untitled (1204071), 2012  
 © Károly Keserü, courtesy Patrick Heide Contemporary Art

Cover: Dan Shaw-Town  
 Untitled, 2014  
 © Dan Shaw-Town

## FOREWORD

In an article in *The Guardian* in 2009, British artist Grayson Perry mused, “Until we can insert a USB into our ear and download our thoughts, drawing remains the best way of getting visual information on to the page.” His word “thoughts” is particularly appropriate to *Word Dance: Selections from the JoAnn Gonzalez Hickey Collection*, because each drawing included in this exhibition features text as the subject or the building blocks of the image.

The immediacy and direct production characteristic of drawing attracts JoAnn Gonzalez Hickey to these artworks. I admire her well-trained eye and open heart that shaped her astounding collection. Adjunct curator Julie Augur noticed a compelling selection of works in the Hickey Collection that included text and artfully gathered them together into a small but fascinating exhibition.

The Denver Art Museum joined forces with the Boulder Museum of Contemporary Art to present a more extensive sampling of the Hickey Collection. I thank BMoCA director David Dadone and curator Mardee Goff for their willingness to partner with us and for their connoisseurship and programming. And, as always, the Denver Art Museum is indebted to the Eleanor and Henry Hitchcock Foundation for sustaining our program that presents contemporary masterworks on paper.

Christoph Heinrich  
Frederick and Jan Mayer Director

A HUMANT DOCUMENT.

ated the shelves and tables were some ornolu rays for cigars, and some inlaid cabinets for cigars, and several sets of bottles and glasses for liquors, colored and gilt as gaudily as articles in glass could make them. One thing was discovered, and one thing only. It was a shabby, shabby looking set of the ornolu ash-trays, faded and ragged, and representing half-clothed Viennese actors.

Nothing more revealing, nothing more hope was to be seen, it would have been possible in some of this was the home, or at least one of the rooms of his house to whom he was devoted everything.

He thought of the drawing-rooms at the Embassy and of the rooms there, they seemed to belong to two widely different universes — designed for the lives of people who had not thought in London. A surprise which he could not at first occupy his mind, and made him forget how the time was passing, but at last it gave place to wonder as to what Mrs. Schiller could present herself; and wonder by and by gave place to impatience and resentment.

Of all the troubles of life, the suspense of protracted waiting, with every nerve of doubt and hope, and of expectant hearing stretched upon the rack, is in proportion to its real importance the hardest for some temperaments to bear. Grenville now discovered his own temperament to be one of these; and

# WORD DANCE

## SELECTIONS FROM THE COLLECTION

### OF JOANN GONZALEZ HICKEY

19 March – 6 August 2017

Denver Art Museum

*Feel the paper, perfect offers no entrance, books and letters are DNA, seek narrative in hand's shadow, density renders breathlessness, small cedes little to big, taste the texture, markings are iconic, spontaneity has virtue, unknowing yields wonder.*

*JoAnn Gonzalez Hickey*

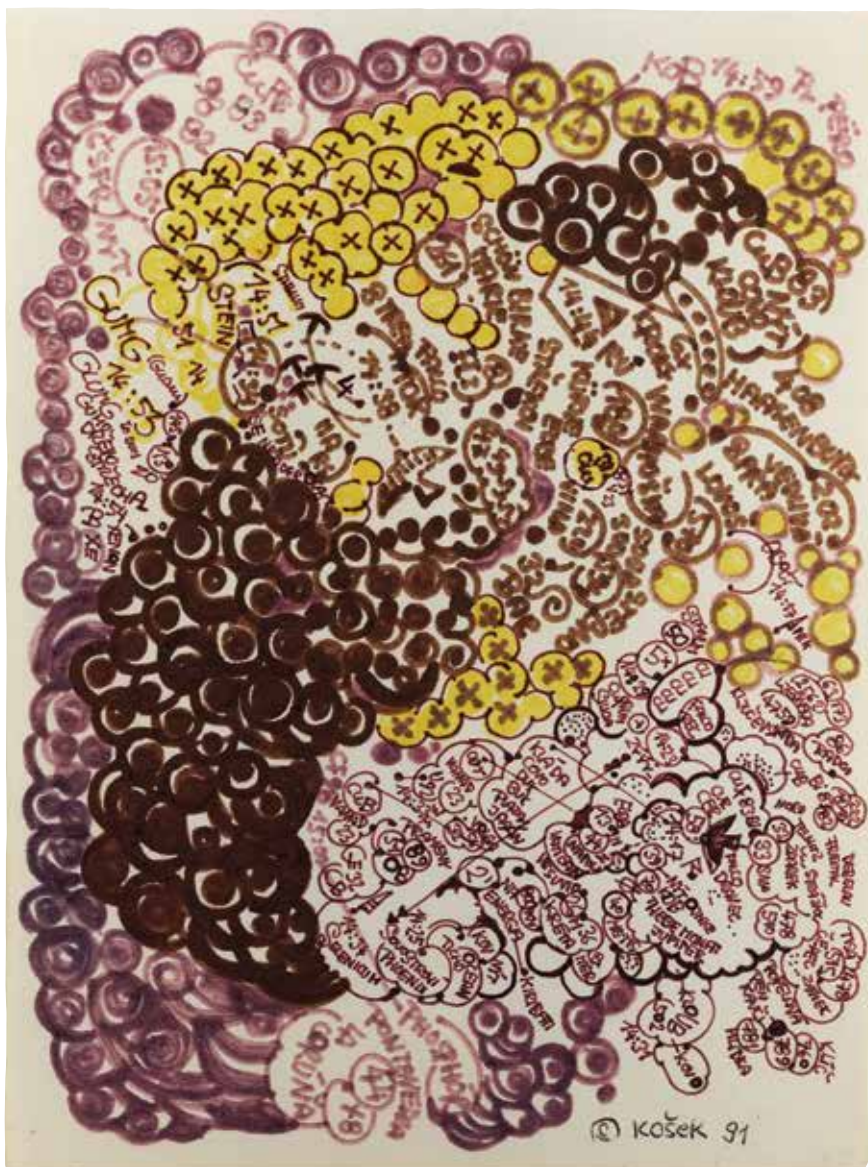
JoAnn Hickey is one of those rare, passionate collectors who listens to her heart, mind, and gut, and who luckily lives in Colorado where she came up on my radar in my constant quest for who's sitting on treasures—in this case, works of art on paper.

The drawings I chose for this show are a tiny fraction of her collection. While exploring drawings concerned with words, letters, or a connection with language, I found a rhythm and movement in these works, hence “Word Dance.” There's a lightness and energy permeating these pieces, with suggestions of dance moves. Dan Shaw-Town's letters come wrapped in a tango, while Tom Phillips's sentences seem to fox trot down the page. Justin Quinn's “Moby Dick” series has the feel of a line dance or conga, while Alice Attie's letters take flight as a lovely waltz around the paper. Meanwhile, John Sparagana's tiny mosaics jitterbug up, down, and across the page.

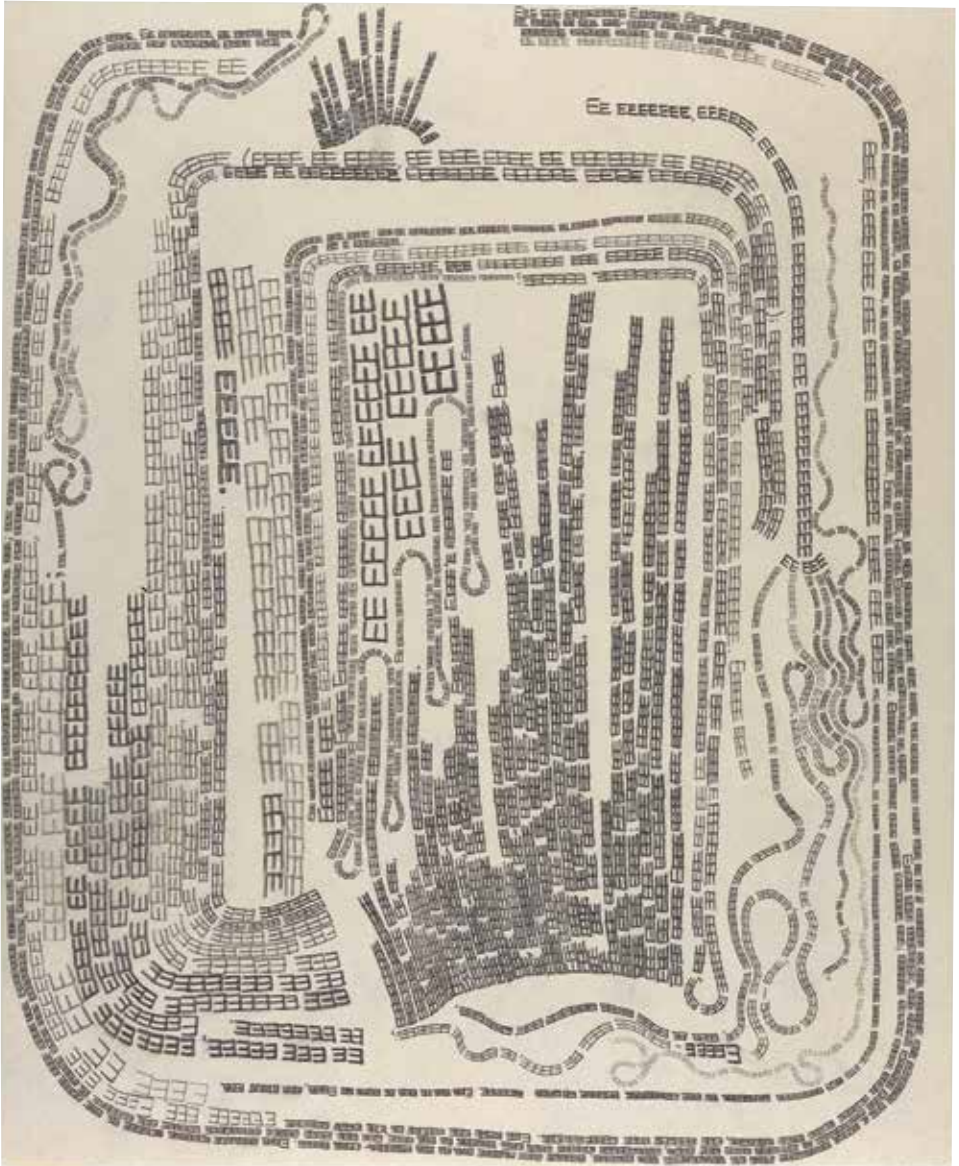
These artists have all developed a distinctly individual language for drawing, which invites us into their private worlds. It's a great treat and pleasure to have JoAnn Hickey allow us access into her aesthetic.

Julie Augur

Adjunct Curator of Drawings, Modern and Contemporary Art



Zdeněk Košek  
Untitled (Phosphor), 1991  
© Zdeněk Košek, courtesy Cavin-Morris Gallery



# THE JOANN GONZALEZ HICKEY COLLECTION AND SYZYGY

The JoAnn Gonzalez Hickey Collection is specifically focused on abstract contemporary works on paper. In 2005, JoAnn began amassing the collection in earnest, with abstraction as the defining theme. She chose the medium of drawing both out of her love of paper and the fresh directness that works on paper held for her eye.

I have been graced with the good fortune to work with JoAnn on her collection for ten years. Over this time I have witnessed a great many shifts in the collector's ideas about the role of drawing in the studio and the greater world, and how drawings function in her own life. The collection eventually evolved from abstract minimalism to groundbreaking new territories that explore all that a drawing can be, and what can be gleaned by sharing the artworks in the context of academia. During this decade I have become a second pair of eyes, a guardian of the collection, and the director of Syzygy, a curatorial study platform.

JoAnn believes there is value in connecting with the artist in order to gain an understanding of the underlying forces central to the artist's work. It is here she derives great pleasure and knowledge through conversation, as avenues of unconscious memory open to reveal shared associations and personal history. She ingests drawings with her eyes and feels art viscerally. She refers to her studio visits with artists as "archaeological digs." These "digs" often hold unexpected revelations with long-lasting impact for all parties involved. Drawing is often about immediacy of gesture and expression. Paper as substrate lets the medium dance on the surface. Ideas, thoughts, and emotions are exposed. The germination of an artist's entire artistic oeuvre can be experienced in viewing the collection. The artworks she collects capture moments of deep personal realization.





Top: Phoebe Washburn  
*A Champ Sighting*, 2012  
© Phoebe Washburn, courtesy  
Josée Bienvenu Gallery



Right: Alice Attie  
*Strolling and Wandering*, 2012  
© Alice Attie

There are nearly 450 artists represented in the collection, with a strong focus on artists from the Americas. The small selection of artwork presented in *Word Dance* pays tribute to one of the aesthetic threads found in the collection. Words, language, and literary prose represent a basis of visual communication. These artworks also form a sort of visual diary of the collector's eye.

The works on paper acquired for the collection reflect not only an individual aesthetic but also the existence of syzygy, connecting collector to artist through the artwork. Syzygy (from the Greek word *syzygos*) is a pair of connected or corresponding things. Relationships are a key component that bind together all of the artworks in the JoAnn Gonzalez Hickey Collection. Layers upon layers of relationships, built within and around the collection, await investigation and discovery.

The Syzygy study platform offers students direct access and hands-on engagement with the collection in an environment designed to maximize the potential for research. The vast range of drawings encourages an exploration of the question, "What is drawing?" Syzygy serves as a comprehensive resource available to graduate-level curatorial, studio art, and art history students, as well as poets and creative writers, for scholarly investigation. The platform has been established in an effort to promote a deeper understanding of the nature of works on paper while mining the many layers of the artworks held in the collection.

Functioning as a curatorial lending library, the program offers students and scholars the opportunity to access the collection for historical research, genre studies, critical analysis, catalogue writing, installation methodology, collecting and archival practices, salon presentations, and formal exhibitions. Syzygy offers an exceptional opportunity to study the dynamics of an independent art collecting philosophy.

Elizabeth Tenenbaum  
Curator of Public Programming  
for the JoAnn Gonzalez Hickey Collection  
Director of the Syzygy Curatorial Study Platform, [Syzygy-nyc.org](http://Syzygy-nyc.org)

**WORD DANCE**  
SELECTIONS FROM  
THE COLLECTION OF  
JOANN GONZALEZ HICKEY

This exhibition is generously supported by the Eleanor and Henry Hitchcock Foundation

**ALICE ATTIE**  
American, born 1950;  
works in New York City  
*The Inferno* by Dante Alighieri  
2008  
Ink on paper, 22 x 30 in.  
*Strolling and Wandering*  
2012  
Ink on paper, 30 x 22 in.

**KÁROLY KESERÜ**  
Hungarian, born 1962;  
works in Debrecen, Hungary  
*Untitled* (0612051)  
2007  
Ink on paper, 7¼ x 7 in.  
*Untitled* (0707071)  
2007  
Ink on paper, 11<sup>5</sup>/<sub>8</sub> x 8<sup>1</sup>/<sub>8</sub> in.  
*Untitled* (0911134)  
2006  
Ink on laminated paper collage,  
11¾ x 8¼ in.  
*Untitled* (1204071)  
2012  
Ink on paper, 10<sup>5</sup>/<sub>8</sub> x 7<sup>5</sup>/<sub>8</sub> in.

**ZDENĚK KOŠEK**  
Czech, 1949–2015  
*Untitled* (Cigarette)  
1990  
Ballpoint pen on paper,  
8¼ x 10¼ in.  
*Untitled* (Halo)  
1981–2000  
Ballpoint pen and marker  
on paper, 8¼ x 12 in.  
*Untitled* (Phosphor)  
1991  
Ballpoint pen and marker  
on paper, 7¾ x 5¾ in.

**TOM PHILLIPS**  
British, born 1937;  
works in London  
*Garsington Opera Programme Humument*  
page 326  
2007  
Watercolor on paper, 7¾ x 5 in.  
*Humument Fragment: Hateful Familiarity of Old Calculations*  
2005  
Collage on paper, 12¾ x 11¾ in.  
*Humument Fragment: Rays of Art Discovered Hope*  
2005  
Watercolor on paper, 5½ x 5½ in.

*Humument Page 4*  
2007  
Watercolor and collage  
on paper, 7¾ x 5 in.

**JUSTIN QUINN**  
American, born 1972;  
works in St. Cloud, MN  
*Moby Dick chapters 4 to 9*  
2009  
Graphite on paper, 44 x 30 in.  
*Toner with Foundation*  
2009  
Toner transfer and collage  
on paper, 4 x 6 in.  
*Moby Dick Chapter 44 or 4206 times E*  
2005  
Graphite on paper, 11 x 9 in.

**DAN SHAW-TOWN**  
British, born 1983;  
works in New York City  
and London  
*Untitled*  
2014  
Spray enamel, newspaper ink,  
and graphite on Econolite with  
steel frame, 72 x 48½ in.

**JOHN SPARAGANA**  
American, born 1958; works in  
Chicago and Houston  
*Untitled*  
2011  
Sampled magazine pages, fatigued  
and mixed, on paper, 19¾ x 15½ in.  
*Esopus: The Revolutionaries*  
2013  
Fatigued, sliced, and mixed  
magazine pages with oil stick  
on paper, 20 x 32 in.  
*Untitled* (Action Abstraction,  
Apocalyptic Superman)  
2014  
Archival ink jet prints, sliced and  
mixed, 95 x 65 in.

**PHOEBE WASHBURN**  
American, born 1973;  
works in New York City  
*Meat in the Web*  
2012  
Mixed media on paper,  
21¾ x 27 in.  
*A Champ Sighting*  
2012  
Mixed media on paper,  
21¾ x 24 in.



John Sparagana  
*Untitled*, 2011  
© John Sparagana

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**syzygy**

[www.syzygy-nyc.org](http://www.syzygy-nyc.org)