

An Opera of Whispers

Joy Episalla / Suzanne Silver / Sivan Silver-Swartz

Curated by Margaret Tedesco

September 16, 2023 - March 23, 2024

Opening Reception: September 16, 5 - 7pm

/ 1150 25th St, Building B, San Francisco

Open Thursday - Saturday, 11am - 6pm

"In the 'foldtograms,' I'm using these scars as damage that activates. It is the damage that creates the silver gelatin object. We also talk about a photograph as a memory. In the foldtograms, memory is embedded in their making; they are made under particular conditions, at a particular moment on a particular day."

- Joy Episalla

"I have used wordplay (puns, palindromes, anagrams), sentence diagrams, and punctuation in my art for a long time. I have been working with coded language (Morse code, semaphore signaling) since 2016 and focusing on sound and silence since 2020. The recording as sound and memory, its voluntary and involuntary suppression, speech as freedom of expression politically and poetically are subjects I try to 'voice' through unexpected combinations of materials in space. These configurations fluctuate depending on site and relative ephemerality of the given medium."

- Suzanne Silver

The site-specific exhibition, *An Opera of Whispers* brings together artists Joy Episalla, Suzanne Silver, and Sivan Silver-Swartz within the Slash library site; an embodied thoroughfare in dialogue. All three artists create an archive of marks and sound capturing fugitive moments, hauntingly poetic, a combination that constructs a network of language patterns open to multiple readings.

Joy Episalla returns to the Bay Area, where she graduated from California College of the Arts and Crafts in the 70s, after a long hiatus. Episalla's works, "foldtograms" made from an entire roll of photographic paper, are a series of sculptural prints produced from the darkroom process of camera-less photography (develop, stop, fix, and wash, not necessarily in that order). Through this method, she creates a private "pliant forward motion of articulation and re-articulation"¹ that performs itself over time in various acts of folding, creasing, and manipulating the paper, "'carrying its histories'"² in chance occurrences.

¹ From "Agents of Change," by Jo-ey Tang, published in *JOY EPISALLA - CRACK FOLD BURN BRIGHT*, Tibor de Nagy, 2022.

² Joy Episalla quoted in "Agents of Change," by Jo-ey Tang, *ibid.*

Suzanne Silver assembles and collages messages through distortion and invention – an abstract process encoding and cracking pieces of existing communication systems beyond the literal. Silver borrows from existing visual communication systems to reveal hidden images and complex memories and emotions. Her drawings and objects continue to investigate the possibility of expressively legible vocabularies, employing quotidian modes of transmission.

For *An Opera of Whispers*, Suzanne Silver will work in collaboration with her son, Sivan Silver-Swartz, who is providing a score for her installation. Silver-Swartz produces experimental music through notated composition, performed song, and installation. When making music, he thinks about just intonation, information aesthetics, duration, cyclicity, and counterpoint.

Both Episalla and Silver archive acts of utterance or expression – intrinsic modes of transmission – suggesting mementos of shadow and light. Whereas Episalla's works catalogue an ephemeral wrinkled pattern language, Silver's works are a series of vanishing acts, gestures of Morse code detritus.

An Opera of Whispers falls within the inventory of visual abstractions in strength and fragility, impermanent in nature, depicting visceral sensation – a dialogue in the territory of sculpture.

- Margaret Tedesco

An Opera of Whispers, curated by Margaret Tedesco, is the second in a series of six-month exhibitions and projects in our library, each organized by Bay Area-based guest curators and artists with longer-term, archive-, research-, and community-based practices. The exhibition will be accompanied by in-person and online public programs.

Joy Episalla (she/they) is a New York-based interdisciplinary artist, whose work repositions photography and the moving image into the territory of sculpture. She has been exhibiting in the US and internationally since the 1980s, including at MoMA PS1, Artist Space and ICP in New York, ICA Philadelphia, Centre Pompidou and Palais de Tokyo in Paris. Writing about her work has appeared in *The New Yorker*, *Artforum*, the *New York Times* and *Two Coats of Paint*. Episalla is a founding member of the queer art collective fierce pussy. They are represented by Tibor de Nagy Gallery in New York.

Suzanne Silver makes drawings, paintings, objects, and installations where unexpected materials are combined to create a visual language that is open to multiple readings. Silver has exhibited her work in solo and group exhibitions in the US and internationally, including in France, Italy, and Israel. Her work is in the collection of the Centre Pompidou in Paris and the Jewish Museum in New York, and her artist's book, *Blacklists/Whitelists*, was published by Logan Elm Press. Silver is Associate Professor of Art at The Ohio State University.

Sivan Silver-Swartz (b. 1993) makes experimental music through notated composition, installation, and performance. Harmony, tuning, counterpoint, and memory are all things he often thinks about when making music. He has studied under Michael Pisaro-Liu and Wolfgang von Schweinitz and received an MFA from the California Institute of the Arts. He was raised in Columbus, Ohio and lives in Los Angeles.

Margaret Tedesco is an artist, independent curator, and designer who has collaborated with artists, writers, choreographers, and filmmakers for over three decades. In 2007, she established 2nd Floor Projects, an artist-run exhibition and publishing imprint, and received the Southern Exposure Alternative Exposure Award. 2nd Floor Projects has participated in Printed Matter's New York & Los Angeles Art Book Fairs, the San Francisco Art Book Fair, Berlin Art Book Fair, KADIST and Southern Exposure's Book Fairs, and SFMOMA's Printed Publics exhibition. As an artist, Tedesco has exhibited nationally and internationally.

/ (Slash) is a nonprofit visual art space founded in 2018 to advance and promote the expanding field of contemporary art in San Francisco through exhibitions, publications, and public programming.