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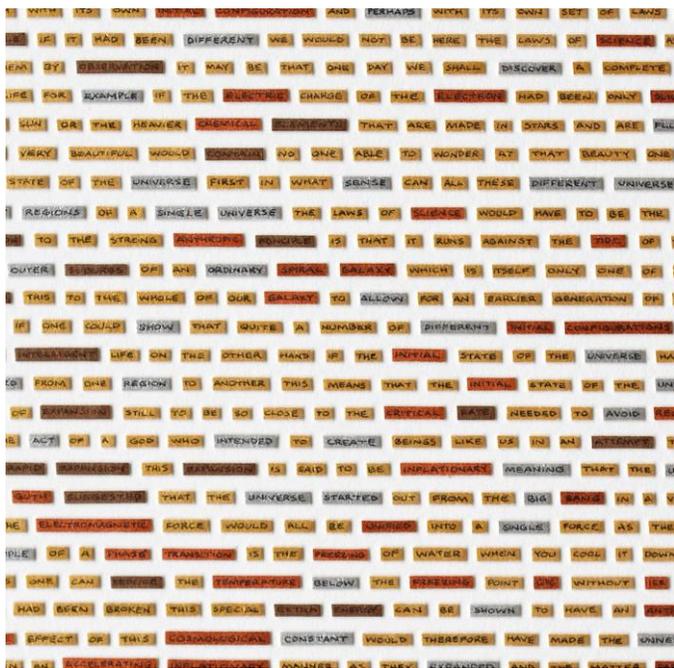
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THE SHELDON
CONCERT HALL & ART GALLERIES

**THE SHELDON ART GALLERIES OPENS EXHIBITION OF DRAWINGS BY MARTIN BRIEF,
SPANNING 12 YEARS OF ARTIST'S PRODUCTION**

ST. LOUIS, MO - The Sheldon Art Galleries presents *Martin Brief: A Brief History of Time*, October 5, 2018 – January 5, 2019 in the Nancy Spirtas Kranzberg Gallery as part of its 20th Anniversary Season. **An opening reception is scheduled for Friday, October 5 from 5 – 7 p.m.** Galleries are open until 9 p.m. for First Fridays in Grand Center. The Sheldon Art Galleries are open Tuesdays, Noon – 8 p.m.; Wednesdays - Fridays, Noon – 5 p.m.; Saturdays, 10 a.m. – 2 p.m. and one hour prior to Sheldon performances and during intermission. Admission is free. For more information on exhibitions, visit the galleries' website at TheSheldon.org.



This exhibition of drawings by Martin Brief brings together four projects—*A Brief History of Time*, *Security*, *Newspapers* and *Dictionary*—spanning 12 years of the artist's production. Over this period of time, Brief has confronted, interrogated and explored culturally significant texts and information. Some of these works include the text of the source information and others use the underlying structures. In all of these projects, Brief weaves together language and form, meaning and absurdity to produce a body of work that is quiet and contemplative.

A Brief History of Time, the most recent of these four projects, confronts the continuing dialogue between religious and scientific cosmology and doctrine. Brief's process began with an examination of the Torah, the New Testament and the Qur'an—

holy texts from the world's three dominant monotheistic religions. He then assigned colors to the words in each of the texts—those existing in all three scriptures are gold; those in two are silver; and words existing in one are bronze. Copper indicates words that appear only in Hawking's book. Each word is painstakingly handwritten on the appropriately colored "tile" of paper and collaged onto the larger sheet. The result is a mosaic in which pattern is arbitrarily determined by the coding system.

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Security is made entirely of definitions. It begins with the definition of the word security and is followed by the definition for each of the words in that definition and so on. Each word is defined one time and the process is continued until there are no new words remaining to define. In the end, the “complete” definition of security includes 6,687 definitions. Viewed from a short distance, the small handwritten lettering allows written language to transform easily into pure form. This creates a synthesis of the two systems of description (language and drawing); line becomes language and language becomes line. The drawings never fully settle into one system or the other, and in the end, reliance on either system alone leads to less comprehension, not more.

In both *Newspapers* and *Dictionary*, Brief strips information of its layers of language to arrive at unintended meaning, that is, the rhythm and form of information, and the messages encoded by any medium. He explores language at its termination point: indeterminacy.

Newspapers is derived from the front page of randomly selected issues of *The New York Times*. The drawings are created through the meditative act of filling in each letter “o” in the text. Using only the letter “o,” these drawings call to mind ballots, punch cards and standardized test forms—all encrypted datasets that must be decoded. The only reference to the original content is the date given as the title of each work. The foundation of this work, in both content and form, is the manipulation of information. By making abstract ink drawings from the front page of *The New York Times*, Brief signals the imperfect and tenuous situation of readers—as citizens, as information receptors—who live in a political climate in which the codification of information is as vital to the distribution of power as news content itself. This is an ongoing project begun in 2006. The newspapers are randomly selected from the day the artist was born to the present day.

Dictionary, also an ongoing project that began in 2006, is a series of drawings made by tracing the blocks of text on each page of a dictionary published the year Brief was born. The resulting line drawings define the space where the text had been. Progressing page by page from A to Z, Brief draws attention to the perverse manipulation of language today. Concepts in our language—such as “freedom,” “patriotism,” “truth” and “great”—are by their nature fluid and when weaponized they are diminished. Yet these words have been pressed into service and assigned new meanings: indeed, the construction of language is a political project. Brief responds in his dictionary transcriptions, in which words have been emptied of their meaning. This project will be completed when each of the 2,662 pages of the dictionary have been drawn.

Born and raised in Chicago, Martin Brief’s work has been exhibited in solo and group exhibitions nationally and internationally including exhibitions in New York; Paris; Zurich; Washington, D.C.; Philadelphia; Chicago and St. Louis. In addition, his work is in several public collections, including the Joan Flasch Artist Book Collection at the Art Institute of Chicago, Center for Creative Photography in Tucson, Arizona; and the State Foundation on Culture and the Arts in Honolulu, Hawaii. He has received fellowships from the Howard Foundation and the MacDowell Colony. Martin’s work is represented by Danese/Corey in New York. He currently lives and works in St. Louis and is an Associate Professor at Saint Louis University.

Sheldon Art Galleries/ *Martin Brief: A Brief History of Time*
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From its founding in 1998 to this fall's opening of six new exhibitions, the Sheldon Art Galleries have made their mark on the arts landscape for the past 20 years with some of the most unique, thought-provoking and diverse exhibitions in St. Louis. In this time, the Sheldon Art Galleries has organized or hosted 327 exhibits, and presented countless educational programs for young people and adults, which are offered free to the community.

The not-for-profit Sheldon Art Galleries exhibits works by local, national and international artists in all media. Over 6,000 square feet of the galleries' spaces on the 2nd floor are permanently devoted to rotating exhibits of photography, architecture, music art and history and children's art. A sculpture garden, seen from both the atrium lobby and the connecting glass bridge, features periodic rotations and installations, and the Nancy Spirtas Kranzberg Gallery on the lower level features art of all media. The Sheldon actively supports the work of St. Louis artists in all mediums and features a dedicated gallery with museum-quality exhibits by St. Louis artists, past and present.

Financial Assistance for this project has been provided by the Missouri Arts Council, a state agency. Support is provided by the Regional Arts Commission and the Arts and Education Council.

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Image caption: Martin Brief, *Elementary Particles and the Forces of Nature*, 2015 (detail) from *A Brief History of Time*, ink on paper, 32 ¼ x 19 ¼ inches, courtesy of the artist.