

Pechman, Ali. "Critics' Picks: Between the Lines," *ArtForum online*, January 2014.

"Between the Lines"
TANYA BONAKDAR GALLERY
521 West 21st Street
January 9–February 8



View of "Between the Lines," 2014.

The most arresting tableau in "Between the Lines," a group show devoted to text-based work of seventeen artists, sets [Mark Dion](#)'s installation *Slide Spill*, 2014, against [Haim Steinbach](#)'s wall text *Hello. Again.*, 2013. In Dion's piece, slides of Picassos, Klees, and ancient pottery from the collection at the Minneapolis Institute of Arts pour out from a large canister; the images—barely visible on the slides—can only be identified by their titles. Inversely, Steinbach's graphic wall work blows text up into image. But the more time one spends with it, the more *Hello. Again.* feels like a stasis rather than a beginning, greeting us again and again in a looped circuit. Placing Steinbach's work behind Dion's makes the takeaway for both especially potent, the obsolete slides paling in the face of the overwhelming text behind them.

The show casts a wide range, from the poetic narratives in [Mark Manders](#)'s installation to [Charles Long](#)'s car medallions cast into a clay rock formation. Some works, however, seem too concerned with the syntaxes of actual reading, a safe move given the show's title. The strongest works share a dark comic streak, calling upon text to reveal a foreboding future. [Agnieszka Kurant](#)'s pieces assume the role of modern oracle bones; for *Future Anterior*, 2008, she created eight pages of a 2020 issue of the *New York Times* based on the predictions of a clairvoyant. But the ink, foretelling a disastrous Los Angeles earthquake and a Russian invasion of China, disappears depending on the temperature of the room. For *Study for Gravestone Writing 1980–*, 2013, [Analia Saban](#) engraved her birth year into a marble slab and then scribbled the same date all over its surface. The text itself is irrelevant—the far more haunting subject is Saban's own easily erasable attempts at inscribing her name into history. Kurant and Saban are two of three artists under the age of forty included in "Between the Lines" and, as such, it is no coincidence that their works are among the most provocative on display: For this generation, using language to do a kind black magic—in a landscape where words pour from monitors, screens, and devices—is familiar territory.

— [Ali Pechman](#)