

Caroline Bergvall is a French-Norwegian writer and artist based in London whose artistic and critical work frequently deals with bilingualism, historic and contemporary slang, speaking / writing with an accent, sonic games, new literacy and differential bodies. She has presented works in the form of books, audio works, online texts, and live or installed performances, often collaborative, in galleries and museums across Europe, Scandinavia and North America.

Ciarán Maher is an Irish composer, installation artist, and Flash developer based in Belfast. His solo work is strongly rooted in a formalist phenomenology, and his principal interests are in pitch perception, tuning and the exposition of simple perceptible processes. He has collaborated with artists from other disciplines to produce pieces incorporating text, sound, video, animation, generative process and interactivity.

## EXHIBITION GUIDE

# SAY PARSLEY

CAROLINE BERGVALL & CIARÁN MAHER

08.05.10 - 04.07.10

### HAITI KINO KIDS PROJECT

During the exhibition Arnolfini are collaborating with the Haiti Kino Kids Project, a mobile cinema and cultural exchange born from the Cube Cinema, Bristol. HKKP is a mobile cinema projecting films from around the world to children in Haiti -- creating social spaces for sharing, forging friendships and delighting in film. On Saturday 4 July, the HKKP will present an afternoon event featuring film screenings and activities for kids. All profits will be donated to HKKP.

FFI visit [www.arnolfini.org.uk](http://www.arnolfini.org.uk)

FFI on HKKP visit: [www.cubecinema.com/haiti](http://www.cubecinema.com/haiti)

### Introduction

**Say Parsley** is a sound and language installation created by writer Caroline Bergvall and composer Ciarán Maher. The audience is invited into a spatial environment of sparse, intricate, playful linguistic and sonic pieces that expose questions of belonging and violence.

The background to the title is the biblical 'shibboleth'; a brutal event where language itself is gatekeeper, and can become pretext to massacre. The pronunciation of a given word or letter exposes the identity of the speaker. How you speak will be used against you. A recent example of a shibboleth was the massacre of tens of thousands of Creole Haitians on the border of the Dominican Republic in 1937, with the criteria for their execution being whether they could correctly pronounce the word "perejil" (Spanish for parsley) with a rolling 'r'.

### LINGUA FRANCA: ON INTERMEDIARY LANGUAGES AND TRANSLATION

During Spring and Summer 2010, Arnolfini presents a series of exhibitions and events related to the idea of *Lingua Franca*: looking at intermediary language, linguistic translation and the subjectivity of language.

## ARNOLFINI

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## Gallery 2

### *Ampers&*

vinyl lettering on wall / data projection

The ampersand projection was created using the 64 ampersands found in a computer font library. The ampersand is one of the oldest exclusively visual / graphic signs of the western writing system. In its contemporary sense, it binds elements together and works as an additive device. In its medieval sense, it is a shorthand, used by copyists to speed up the endlines of words, such as aspir&, differ&.

The prose text is selected and adapted from Caroline Bergvall's critical piece 'Middling English' featured in her volume of texts *Projects for Foam* published in autumn 2010 by Nightboat Books (NY).

### *Speakers*

Stereo speaker pair

The complex tones of the speaking human voice are transformed into simple waves. At these frequencies, speech can also echo the patterns of birdsong.

## Gallery 3

### *Alpabet*

constellation of 25 plumb weights / white vinyl lettering / badge

This alphabet has 25 letters. We dropped one letter. Take it with you on the way out.

The 'h' is a troubled letter in English. Whether it is pronounced or not carries with it strong social markers. The dropping of the (h)aitch has for centuries stigmatised or located the speaker. The varying pronunciation of the letter 'h' can still be political. In the Irish language, the 'h' is very powerful. Its inclusion or omission along with its effect on pronunciation are often primary indicators of regional dialect. The 'h' is heard as shibboleth.

## *For Walls*

Vinyl lettering on walls

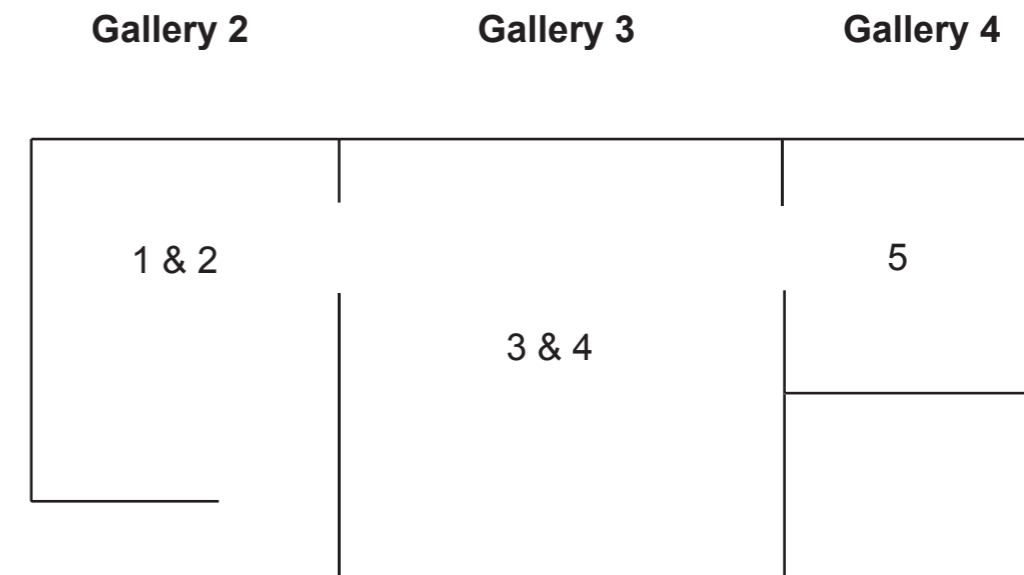
With the advent of texting, the discussion around spelling in English is again on the agenda. Spelling has a long and complicated history that has recently been associated with calls for social or political reform. So-called artificial or planned languages come with their own spellings and ideals. New Creole languages often shape their own spelling. American funk and rap music have carried activist forms of spelling from their onset. The post-apocalyptic novel *Riddley Walker* by Russell Hoban is written in a highly simplified spelling and syntax which reflects the hyper-violent and reduced lives of the survivors. It has inspired the texts composed and displayed on the walls.

## Gallery 4

### *Parsely*

Data projection/ 2 suspended speakers

Standing under a speaker, the listener can hear a list of words that runs from "Pig" to "Parsley" through small phonemic shifts and syllabic variants. The list on the wall reproduces visually the words heard as they would look in two of the languages that have influenced the development of English (Dutch and French).



1. *Ampers&*
2. *Speakers*
3. *Alpabet*

4. *For Walls*
5. *Parsely*