

## Editors' Introduction

### JORDAN KARNEY CHAIM & ERIN MCKELLAR



Lawrence Weiner, *A TRANSLATION FROM ONE LANGUAGE TO ANOTHER*, 2015, temporary mural. The Greenway Wall at Dewey Square Park, Boston (Courtesy of the Rose Kennedy Greenway Conservancy).

The current issue of SEQUITUR takes as its theme the concept of interface. In its noun form, “interface” suggests a point of access, a mode of mediation, and a site of contact. As a verb, it refers to an interaction, connection or dialogic exchange between a range of entities — including individuals, institutions, disciplines, objects, and ideas. Broadly speaking, “interface” thus expresses a means or a site for the transfer, communication, or translation of knowledge, constituting an idea that is inextricably bound to the creation, study, and consumption of art and architecture. This issue’s contributors engage the theme in varied, provocative ways: they investigate how people have interacted with artworks and buildings in the past or the present; they meditate on the role of the artist and scholar in translation; and they explore how exhibitions may function as dialogues between artworks, museums and viewers. Moreover, our contributors showcase the ways in which both works of art and their scholarly consideration facilitate a deeper understanding of the intersection of art history and cultural life.

This issue’s featured essay, “Building Babel: The 1876 International Exhibition at the Philadelphia Centennial” by **Kelsey Gustin**, dissects the unusual floor plan of the Centennial’s arts exhibition, which included works from Europe and the United States, to reveal its underlying ideological agenda. As Gustin’s analysis illuminates, Chief of the Bureau of Installation, Henry Pettit, and Chief of the Bureau of the Arts, John Sartain, created an interface between nations and visitors by negotiating the space allocated to each country and arranging the pieces so as to invite visitors to compare the art of Europe and the United States. As planned by Pettit and Sartain, and encountered by fairgoers, the exhibition’s layout served to legitimize American art within a global context.

The reviews included within this issue analyze three exhibitions—two current shows in Boston and one recently closed exhibition in Istanbul. **Bryn Schockmel** reviews the first

monographic presentation of Italian Renaissance painter Carlo Crivelli's work to an American audience at Boston's Isabella Stewart Gardner Museum. By highlighting certain curatorial decisions and fascinating comparisons, Schockmel draws attention to the ways in which an institution can shape the potential modes of interface between viewers and artworks. **Elisa Germán** reviews a second Boston exhibition: the Institute of Contemporary Art's *Leap Before you Look: Black Mountain College 1933-1957*. Here Germán examines the first large-scale museum exhibition in the United States to treat this historic locus of artistic experimentation and exchange. Finally, in her review of *Camera Ottomana: Photography and Modernity in the Ottoman Empire, 1840-1914* at Koç University Research Center for Anatolian Civilizations in Istanbul, Turkey, **Lydia Harrington** explores the exhibition's various didactic elements. She examines how maps, timelines, and supplementary text are used to illuminate photography's historic role as interface for the Ottoman Empire by portraying its riches to an international public.

This issue's two research spotlights consider technology and translation as modes of interface. SEQUITUR Senior Editor **Steve Burges** examines ASK Brooklyn Museum, a smartphone app that invites curious visitors to ask questions or start conversations about the artwork they see on display. Burges illustrates how the app's easy-to-use interface grants visitors access to the museum's institutional knowledge by encouraging them to ask questions and supplying a team of experts—the museum's own art historians and educators—to answer queries in real time. Meanwhile, **Annemarie Iker** explores the multilayered interpretation that accompanies the process of translating ideas across media. She reflects on her experience translating Spanish artist Darío de Regoyos' 1889 travelogue, *España negra*, and considers how this process, and the range of voices and viewpoints embedded in the literature itself, manifest the notion of interface.

Finally, **Gabriel Sosa's** visual essay, "Notebooks," marks the introduction of a new feature to SEQUITUR. Sosa's charcoal and oil pastel drawings are based on his work as a court interpreter. These frenzied images aim to fix an ephemeral moment—capturing, translating, and preserving the recollections of a witness on the stand. In various states of articulation and erasure, Sosa's drawings elucidate the interfacing function of both the court interpreter and artist, as the vehicle through which the memories of others are given voice or visualization.

Our contributors have approached their investigations in myriad ways—they analyze exhibition design, explore the interaction of the museum with the public, and elucidate the role of the artist or scholar as translator. This, our first themed issue of SEQUITUR, thus unifies diverse subjects and perspectives under the central theme of interface. After all, the journal itself is a medium of communication and in its efforts to promote discussion and scholarly exchange it too can be seen as a mode of translation, interaction, and a site of interface.