



LOS ANGELES

Tm Gratkowski: "Epithelia"
at Walter Maciel Gallery

When pages full of language are torn, cut or crumpled, the relationship between the words changes. Tm Gratkowski is interested in these new and often uncanny juxtapositions that occur by happenstance. He is a collector and has amassed a diverse archive of source materials from which he draws to create his pieces, using pages from art and popular magazines as well as brightly colored advertising posters that he cuts or tears apart and then reassembles into visually dynamic, richly textured collages. Words in myriad typefaces overlap, creating a dense surface that, although composed from language, is impossible to read. There is a fine line between what is to be looked at and what is to be read in his works. In "Epithelia," an ambitious multi-room exhibition, the installation-, wall-, and floor-based works are interrelated as Gratkowski loads formal and aesthetic choices with socio-political content.

101 Bad Words (2015-16), *Polyphony* (2016) and *Paper Delirium* (2016), are large-scale works that push his endeavors into uncharted territories. In *101 Bad Words*, Gratkowski collaged both sides of thousands of paper shipping tags cutting out the letters of each of 101 trigger words—those that are deemed derogatory by conservative groups and distributed to American public schools—suspending them from the ceiling so they flutter and cast evocative shadows on the wall. The words can be pieced together, however Gratkowski also includes the key as two large-scale works on paper that present the excised letters and entire list of words. Hidden treasures abound in the eleven panel *Polyphony* an abstracted yellow-toned bar graph that charts the number

of gun deaths in the United States over the last eleven years. Embedded among layers of collaged magazine fragments, factual stats and the poetic text: "physical structures that constitute boundaries { skin } aren't necessary to identify" are silhouettes of machine guns and soldiers. In this compelling work, Gratkowski successfully allows form and content to coexist.

Paper Delirium is a *tour de force* pedestal-based work. The form rises from a low, Mylar covered pedestal blossoming like a giant ball of crumpled paper made from printed materials that undulate like interlocking Mobius strips competing for attention. From the fragments, depending where one looks, different emotionally charged words emerge from the surface. That they never coalesce reinforces Gratkowski's overall desire to create works where significant words bubble to the surface, creating ways to discern order from the chaos of information overflow.

—JODY ZELLEN

"PAPER DELIRIUM," 2016, **Tm Gratkowski**
COLLAGED PAPER ON PAPER, MYLAR AND PAPER
ON WOOD BASE, 48" x 48" x 48"
PHOTO: COURTESY WALTER MACIEL GALLERY