

# :: GRANT WAHLQUIST GALLERY

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***Nyeema Morgan: Soft Power. Hard Margins.***

3/4/22 – 5/14/22

Grant Wahlquist Gallery is pleased to present “Soft Power. Hard Margins.,” a solo exhibition by Nyeema Morgan. The exhibition will run from March 4 – May 14, 2022.

Nyeema Morgan’s meticulous drawings, sculptures, and installations deploy non-identical repetition and juxtaposition to prompt reflection on the mechanics of representation and its political and social underpinnings and consequences. A sensual conceptualist, her formal strategies trouble the relationship between image and text (language and vision), and call into question how language mediates experience, as well as how such mediation can be represented visually. “Soft Power. Hard Margins.” is a series of neoclassical, partially gilded cast resin frames, each internally illuminated and framing a “canonical” artwork obscured by a sheet of frosted Plexiglas. Inspired by Adrian Piper’s assertion that “the right to freedom of expression is a permission, granted by the state, to engage in certain activities,”<sup>1</sup> Morgan etched the “permission” granted by each work into its face in her signature, typographically fragmented style. Installed in salon-style clusters, the works vary between three set sizes, a strategy alluding to their referents’ likelihood of recognition by the viewer while simultaneously highlighting that “the viewer” is ideologically constructed.

In a moment of renewed attempts to deconstruct or expand existing canons as well as reactionary undertakings to defend them, “Soft Power. Hard Margins.” approaches its sources with neither condemnation or valorization. Instead, the inherently unstable relationships between the elements of each work (size, frame, fragmented text, and partially-obscured image) complicates their legibility and requires the viewer—whatever the particularities of their identity and history—to contend with the ambiguous nature of artistic legacy and “greatness,” authorship, and cultural inheritance. Furthermore, by undermining the power relations that legitimize interpretation, “Soft Power. Hard Margins.” elegantly limns the gaps between presentation, representation, and endorsement and materializes, as Piper added, that “not everything that is permitted is required, nor can everything that is permitted be justified.”

Nyeema Morgan earned a B.F.A. from the Cooper Union School of Art and an M.F.A. from the California College of the Arts. She lives and works in Chicago. Morgan’s solo exhibitions include: Grant Wahlquist Gallery; table, Chicago; the Philadelphia Art Alliance at University of the Arts; the Boulder Museum of Contemporary Art; The Bindery Projects, St. Paul, Minnesota; and Art in General, New York. Her work has been shown in group exhibitions at: the Worcester Art Museum; the Bowdoin College Museum of Art; The Drawing Center; the Center for Curatorial Studies at Bard College; and the Studio Museum in Harlem. Morgan’s work is in the collections of the Bowdoin College Museum of Art, Maine, the Menil Collection, Houston (in collaboration with

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<sup>1</sup> “Power Relations Within Existing Art Institutions” (1983), *Out of Order, Out of Sight. Vol. II.*

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william cordova and Otabenga Jones and Associates), and the Worcester Art Museum. She attended the Skowhegan School of Painting and Sculpture and is a recipient of a Painters and Sculptors grant from the Joan Mitchell Foundation and an Art Matters grant. This project was supported, in part, by a Foundation for Contemporary Arts Emergency Grant.

The gallery is located at 30 City Center, Portland, Maine. Gallery hours are Wednesday through Saturday, 11 am to 6 pm, and by appointment. For more information, visit <http://grantwahlquist.com>, call 207.245.5732, or email [info@grantwahlquist.com](mailto:info@grantwahlquist.com).