



KANG CONTEMPORARY

## Arnold Dreyblatt

### *Inventories*

21.04.23 - 23.06.23

Ways we remember history, collect memories and hold on to information is a reflection of the present more than a representation of the past. If the past and present seep into each, how does one reinvent the inventory as a record of past lives? The artworks in the exhibition *INVENTORIES* confront the reproduction of a past that has been observed through singular perspectives and told with condensed words. Through the archive as a memory we seek evidence of the stories that have passed and people who are beginning to be forgotten. The multi-disciplinary artist Arnold Dreyblatt interrogates these ways of remembering and the archive as a space. In his installations of information and text he poses the question of how information and stories are told, saved and erased and why certain information persist over others. One gazes upon the letters and digits that fill this exhibition and realizes that information floats through and transforms our world and our consciousness. As the mind attempts to focus, isolate or connect the textual fragments in the exhibition they stand as a union that lifts these components taken from documents, records, and inventories into a metaphorical sphere.

KANG Contemporary is pleased to present the exhibition *INVENTORIES* with Arnold Dreyblatt, which showcases recent and rarely exhibited works. The artist engages with categories of intertextuality, recollection and archival storage in complex textual and spatial visualizations. New lenticular and glass display cases reference crises of Europe in texts by historical and recent visionaries and critics. These important historical themes are illustrated to visitors through new media and means of technology. The exhibition *INVENTORIES* is thus intended to create a space in which these themes, guided by the artist's works, can be reflected upon and discussed by the public.

Included in this exhibition is the artwork *The Black List* based on the original site-specific memorial by the artist on the Königsplatz in Munich that was inaugurated by the Munich City Council in 2021. The new immersive staging of *The Black List* makes it possible to experience this profound artwork in Berlin for the first time. A sequence of words taken from book titles by the 310 authors who were outlawed by the Nazi regime and whose books were burned across Germany form a spiral. The book burnings marked the prelude to the systemic erasure of the literary scene from public and private life by the Nazis. For each author Dreyblatt selected the last published work up to and including 1933. Hence, the artwork emphasizes the intellectual and cultural achievements of the authors, instead of their destruction through the burning. The artwork celebrates the era of the Weimar Republic as modernism's cultural highpoint in a vivid portrayal of the literary creations from this epoch. The words merge into one another as they are arranged in a continuous spiral and are not separated by punctuation. Formally the spiral refers both to the act of burning books and to the spirals of rising smoke and burning pages seen in historical photographs of book burnings. What unfolds is a passionate discussion of the archive as a space that carries history, that can be mobilized to express new meanings but that can also be manipulated. The message can be understood in several ways: On the one hand, it encourages a



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confrontation with Nazi ideology; on the other hand, it arouses interest in that same literary and cultural contribution that the Nazis attempted to erase.

On a white wall the individual items that were part of the circa 1400 auctioned objects are projected suggesting a literal past space and possible rooms. Instead of simply listing the possessions, Dreyblatt critically reads the archival record and imagines and speculates the relations the objects might have had to each other. The position of words on the wall corresponds to the relative height of the actual objects. We are reminded that these tables, chairs, and paintings that scroll across the gallery wall carry meanings and memories. Through their categorization based on their comprised function it is left to the audience to wonder which room is depicted. This process of connecting and imagining draws a striking parallel between the observer's lived reality, their home and the inventory on the wall. The passive descriptions from the auction records are transformed and activated. *Inventar/Inventur*, therefore, offers a way to create memory out of the archive and humanize the datasets that are often singular overwhelming remnants of stories that demand to be told. Instead of centering the narrative around the auction as a moment of injustice and crime, the inventory here becomes a story about a life that was lived, a home that was built. It transforms the narratives and shifts the focus to the people as the subjects instead of the systems that foretold their end.

The media artist and composer Arnold Dreyblatt has been a member of the Akademie der Künste in Berlin and was appointed Deputy Director of the Visual Arts Section recently. From 2009 to 2022, he was professor of media art at the Muthesius Academy of Fine Arts in Kiel, Germany. His artistic practice over the past 30 years has ranged from multi-day performances to interactive artistic research projects such as "Performing the Black Mountain Archive" (2015) at the Hamburger Bahnhof Museum für Gegenwartskunst. Permanent artworks in public spaces can be seen at Königplatz in Munich and other European and US cultural institutions. Dreyblatt has numerous collaborations and received awards, including the Foundation for Contemporary Performance Arts in New York and a residency at the Center for Arts, Science and Technology at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology (MIT).

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