

# LUHRING AUGUSTINE

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## **Glenn Ligon: *Neon***

Luhring Augustine

531 West 24<sup>th</sup> Street, New York, NY 10011

October 26 – December 8, 2012

Opening reception: Thursday, October 25, 6 – 8pm

Luhring Augustine is pleased to announce *Neon*, Glenn Ligon's first solo exhibition with the gallery. Throughout his career, Ligon has pursued an incisive exploration of American history, literature, and society across a body of work that builds critically on the legacies of modern painting and recent conceptual art. He is best known for his landmark series of text-based paintings, made since the 1980s, which draw on the writings and speech of diverse figures including Jean Genet, Zora Neale Hurston, Mary Shelley, and Richard Pryor. Since 2005 Ligon has made neons that push his practice into new, unexpected territories while remaining in dialogue with his text paintings. This is the first exhibition that brings together a significant number of these neon works, many never before exhibited in New York.

*Warm Broad Glow* (2005), Ligon's first exploration in neon, uses a fragment of text from *Three Lives*, the 1909 novel by American author Gertrude Stein. Ligon rendered the words "negro sunshine" in warm white neon, the letters of which were then painted black on the front. The resulting "black light" emitting from the piece plays with the notions of light and shadow, defamiliarizing the usual appearance of neon while highlighting the social and political complexities of the phrase.

Two works in the exhibition are derived from neon sculptures by Bruce Nauman. *One Live and Die* (2006) stems from Nauman's *100 Live and Die* (1984). Ligon has taken one pair of phrases from the Nauman piece and faithfully reproduced it in cobalt blue neon painted black. *Impediment* (2006) is another work inspired by Nauman, in this case the piece *My Name as Though It Were Written on the Surface of the Moon* (1968). Simultaneously a pun about being "called names" and a visual representation of slurred speech, *Impediment* presents a nuanced investigation of the multivalent nature of language and its more virulent uses.

*Double America* (2012), a new work created for the exhibition, continues a series of works that employ the word "America". This latest iteration seems at first glance to feature a mirror image of the word, but on closer inspection it becomes apparent that the pieces are imperfectly conjoined. This simple repositioning continues the strategy of reusing, recycling, and recontextualizing language that has long been a touchstone of Ligon's practice.

Glenn Ligon lives and works in New York. He received a Bachelor of Arts from Wesleyan University in 1982, and attended the Whitney Museum Independent Study Program in 1985. A mid-career retrospective of Ligon's work, titled *Glenn Ligon: AMERICA*, opened at the Whitney Museum of American Art, New York in March 2011, and traveled to the Los Angeles County Museum of Art and the Modern Art Museum of Fort Worth. Ligon has also had solo museum exhibitions at the Power Plant, Toronto (2005), the Studio Museum in Harlem (2001), the Kunstverein Munich (2001), the Walker Art Center, Minneapolis (2000), the Institute of Contemporary Art, Philadelphia (1998), the San Francisco Museum of Modern Art (1996), the Brooklyn Museum of Art (1996), and the Hirshhorn Museum and Sculpture Garden, Washington D.C. (1993).

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