



Andrew Witkin (among others), *untitled*, 2007 - 2016 - newspaper clippings, shrinkwrap, 12-ply museum board, frame, 16 x 19 inches (40 x 48 cm)

## MERCY MERCY MERCY MERCY by Andrew Witkin (among others)

Andrew Witkin wraps a line of grey vinyl text across the middle of all three walls of the booth. Sourced from the 1964 Don Covay song, “Mercy, Mercy”, the lyrics’ pronouns and the word “mercy” are displayed sequentially, as they appear in the song. Famous for the Rolling Stones’ version, “Mercy, Mercy” is, in some ways, a song of love and love lost. With verbs and specifics removed, the “mercy” mentioned could be an exclamation - “Mercy!”, a request - “mercy?”, or a statement - “mercy.” Furthermore, who is asking, demanding, giving and/or receiving is unknown.

MERCY MERCY MERCY MERCY ME

Since the removal of the lyrics’ context pushes the narrative away from specifics, focus is on the word, “mercy”, a broad term that refers to benevolence, forgiveness and kindness in a variety of ethical, legal, religious and social contexts. In a judicial context, mercy is often termed “clemency”, a prerogative that resides in the executive and is discretionary. John Locke defined it as the power to act according to discretion, for the public good, without the prescription of the Law, and sometimes even against it. Current events make it easy to continue down different trains of thought in regards to clemency, discretion, mercy and power.

I MY SHE YOUR YOU HER MERCY MERCY MERCY MERCY ME YOU ME YOU ME I'M

The ‘news of the day’ make up the the images in the second body of work exhibited in the booth. This body consists of stacks of newspaper clippings (from 2007 to the present), all selected because they contain printing errors (an ink bleed, a mis-registration, missing information, etc.). Each stack of these printing errors is shrinkwrapped to a board and then encased in a custom frame. No clipping is permanently adhered to any other clipping. Each stack could be unwrapped, re-edited, re-ordered and/or separated. The shrinkwrapping serves to temporarily freeze the groups of clippings and the frames serve as much as specimen boxes as frames.

MERCY MERCY MERCY MERCY ME I YOU WE'RE MERCY MERCY MERCY MERCY ME YOU I

Each stack is unique in elements included (printing mistakes are inherently not something commonly desired to be repeated ... ) and in choices made to ‘freeze’ a particular arrangement. Meanwhile, as there are always more errors, events and information, the material is seemingly never-ending. What one does with all this information (the clippings) is a question repeatedly asked. With each grouping, the questions and answers vary and no one choice is better than another. All options are open and yet every decision made provides a specific situation, lense or opportunity with which to look. Perhaps a metaphor for ways to engage today’s information overload, this work is at once hopeful and pessimistic, as well as all the grey areas in between.

YOU I'M I'M MY YOU MERCY MERCY MERCY MERCY ME MERCY MERCY MERCY MERCY ME

Andrew Witkin has had solo museum exhibitions at the Currier Museum of Art, Manchester, NH and the DeCordova Sculpture Park & Museum in Lincoln, MA. He has been in group shows at the Institute of Contemporary Art, Boston, MA, Museum of Fine Arts, Boston, MA, the Carpenter Center for Visual Arts at Harvard University, Cambridge, MA, as well as in numerous galleries. He has works in the permanent collections of Museum of Fine Arts, Houston, Museum of Fine Arts, Boston, Institute of Contemporary Art, Boston and the DeCordova Sculpture Park and Museum. He is co-represented by Theodore:Art in Bushwick and James Harris Gallery in Seattle, Washington where he has an upcoming exhibition. He lives in Boston, Massachusetts.