

Lesley Dill's Poetic Visions

from *SHIMMER* to *SISTER GERTRUDE MORGAN*





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ESSAY BY BARBARA MATILSKY

WHATCOM MUSEUM, BELLINGHAM, WASHINGTON

Foreword

THE WHATCOM MUSEUM is pleased to present *Lesley Dill's Poetic Visions: From Shimmer to Sister Gertrude Morgan* at our new Lightcatcher Building. From the day the artist presented an inspiring lecture at the museum, it was apparent that her innovative work would resonate with our community and beyond. By organizing this traveling exhibition, which explores the relationships between language and transformational experience, the Whatcom Museum invites audiences to delve into the fields of art, literature, and spirituality.

Lesley Dill was born in Bronxville, New York, and raised in Maine. After graduating from Trinity College with a degree in English, she received her master of arts in teaching from Smith College in 1974, and her master of fine arts from the Maryland Institute College of Art in 1980. The artist soon moved to New York, where she emerged prominently as a sculptor and multimedia artist. Dill has also made significant contributions as a performance artist, and the theatrical aspects of this body of work inform the pieces in the exhibition.

Nationally recognized, Dill has shown her work in numerous solo exhibitions across the country. Her artworks are in the collections of over fifty museums, including the Albright Knox Art Gallery, Buffalo; the Cleveland Museum of Art; the High Museum, Atlanta; and the Metropolitan Museum of Art, the Museum of Modern Art, and the Whitney Museum of American Art in New York.

I thank the artist, who lives in Brooklyn, for coming to Bellingham to share her work. Since her first visit, she has generously collaborated with us in making this exhibition an outstanding success and a milestone for our new facility.

If it were not for Barbara Matilsky, the Whatcom Museum's curator of art, this exhibition would not have been mounted. I am grateful for the thoughtfulness she has brought to the project, her enthusiasm for the work of Lesley Dill, and the scholarship she continuously brings to the field.

I also thank our two major supporters, the City of Bellingham and the Whatcom Museum Foundation, for enabling the museum to provide exhibitions and programs of such rich quality.

PATRICIA LEACH
EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

Acknowledgements

Lesley Dill's Poetic Visions: From Shimmer to Sister Gertrude Morgan would not have been possible without the support of Arthur Roger and George Adams, whose galleries generously lent artwork to the Whatcom Museum. Thanks to their staff who facilitated the loans: Bradley Sabin and Carrie Yarbrough at the Arthur Roger Gallery, New Orleans, and Jessica Daniel at the George Adams Gallery, New York.

At the Whatcom Museum, the support of many people made the exhibition a reality, including Patricia Leach, Executive Director, who embraced the idea of the exhibition from the outset. Jan Olson, Curator of Collections, graciously assumed the painstaking task of arranging the shipping. Scott Wallin, Exhibitions Designer, along with Curtis Mahle, Preparator, and David Miller, Adjunct Preparator, executed the complex installation of *Sister Gertrude Morgan* to beautiful results. The Whatcom Museum's educator, Mary Jo Maude, conceived and coordinated public programs that augment the exhibition. Elsa Lenz-Kothe, former museum educator, advocated for the exhibition and coordinated Lesley Dill's first visit to the Lightcatcher.

A special thank you to Emily Zach, Curatorial Intern, for her enthusiastic help with many aspects of the exhibition, including the research and writing of the curatorial narrative, text panels, and object labels. My gratitude to Phil Kovacevich, who designed this lovely catalogue, and to John Pierce for skillfully editing the text.

It has been a joy to work with Lesley Dill on this exhibition. Twenty years have passed since our first collaboration, which resulted in the artist's first solo museum exhibition at the Queens Museum of Art's satellite gallery space. During the intervening years, I have watched Dill's career flourish. Spending time with the artist and her work has further deepened my appreciation for her contribution to contemporary art.

To Jyoti Duwadi, who is a constant source of support and inspiration.

BARBARA MATILSKY
CURATOR OF ART

For Ed, with love. —Lesley Dill



Lesley Dill's Poetic Visions

from *SHIMMER* to *SISTER GERTRUDE MORGAN*

BY BARBARA MATILSKY

Take All away from me but leave me Ecstasy

—EMILY DICKINSON

We are both earth and mist. A space of Engaged Reverie.

—LESLEY DILL

WORKING AT THE INTERSECTION of art and language, Lesley Dill reveals the potential of words to stir feelings and convey hidden meanings. The artist experiments with a wide range of tactile materials to transplant poetry into unique compositions, creating elegantly evocative sculptures, mixed-media photographs, art installations, and operatic performances with video projection. Her synthesis of a lyric vocabulary into bronze, foil, wire, paper, fabric, and horsehair informs an innovative style that radiates visual eloquence.

Poetic Visions focuses on two bodies of Dill's work: metallic sculptures such as *Shimmer* (2005–2006) and *Allegorical Figures* (2006) and the installation *Hell Hell Hell, Heaven Heaven Heaven: Encountering Sister Gertrude Morgan and Revelation* (2010), which was inspired by the New Orleans missionary and folk artist. Unified by their layers of words, figures, and symbolic imagery, the artworks in this exhibition underline Dill's desire to render transcendental experience into form. The artist cultivates wonder and a reflective atmosphere through her expressive use of materials that incorporate excerpts of poetry by Emily Dickinson, Salvador Espriu, Tom Sleight, and Franz Kafka, among others.

For centuries, poetry has penetrated the depths of human feelings and consciousness with its freely associative powers of expression. With poetry, the reader soars beyond the daily functionality of language that often masks nuance and insight. Dill's artworks revitalize poetic language

(OPPOSITE PAGE) *Dress of Flame and Upside-Down Bird*, 2006, Metal foil, organza, wire, 95 x 45 x 1 in.

to illuminate the aura of visionary awareness. She vividly refocuses on the beauty and energy of words by melding excerpted verse and abstracted human figures (or their surrogates, clothes and parts of the body). Sometimes the artist sifts through poetry and imagines a visual “carrier.” Other times, the image appears first but must wait for the right verse to emerge. Most recently, form and text simultaneously coalesce.

Jumbling and scattering words, Dill rarely presents a sequential poetic reading. In *Woman Bringing Light* (2006) superimposed passages create the allegorical figure’s densely layered dress. In her drawings for *Encountering Sister Gertrude Morgan*, Dill defines bold patterns through syncopated and improvisational compositions of text from a compendium of her favorite authors. The artist’s strategy of indecipherability encourages the viewer to relinquish the learned, analytical assembling of words to generate meaning. Instead, the artist opens doors to a more surrealistic experience in which the components of language flood the senses in tandem with the image. Viewers can discern subtle visual metaphors for water through the rivers of words flowing down the arm of *Dress of Solace and Undoing* (2006, p. 20) or forming the trailing train of *Dress of Change*. In *Shimmer*, a sixty-foot waterfall fastened to poetry plunges from ceiling to floor (pp. 16–17).

In Dill’s art, the human form and language often converge. While discussing her work, the artist conjures an unexpected picture of words falling out of our bodies, which harbor eons of collected language. A fascination with the sounds of speech emanating through the body led Dill to integrate performance art and music in her opera *Divide Light* (2008), which celebrates the poetry of Emily Dickinson. The artist conceived the opera and was its artistic director, overseeing the libretto, musical composition, costuming, and projections.

Both her visionary experience and the use of language as a conduit to an inner world deepened in 1990–92 while Dill lived in India and traveled to Nepal, where she developed an affinity with the country’s spiritual traditions. Buddhist prayer flags, unfurling cloths printed with sacred text delivered by the wind to the heavens, inspire the banners in *Encountering Sister Gertrude Morgan* (pp. 26–27). The metal-working craft in Nepal, manifest in its Hindu temples, influenced Dill’s choice of materials and the sweeping composition of some of her sculptures. Even the lengthy and repetitive process of making artworks, such as winding the wire for *Shimmer*, becomes a form of meditation and ritual not unlike chanting with prayer wheels or beads.

The motivation to harmoniously merge opposites—good and evil, light and dark—often distinguishes the physical and conceptual aspects of Dill’s work. In her own witty, poetic words, the artist expresses an empathetic perspective on the push-pull nature of the human condition: “We are falling down and floating up at the same time. That is what makes us stand-up straight.”¹

Attracted to the reflection of light off metallic surfaces, the artist subtly interweaves earthly and celestial metaphors. From this more abstract plane, Dill transitions gracefully to interpretations of human identity and relationships. Here the artist balances the complexities of being both a

feminine and a powerful woman. Within this context, the female figure, often represented solely by a dress, occupies a prominent place in the artist’s work.

A friendship with the activist artist Nancy Spero (1926–2009) encouraged Dill’s personal and artistic response to feminism. Spero, recognized for scroll paintings that incorporated text and depictions of the female form, often appropriated as classical goddesses, became a mentor. Dill’s series of sculptures called *Word Queens* (2007) pays homage to Spero and her pioneering art.

Although references to the figure dominate Dill’s work, another motif also appears throughout her career: the waterfall. Fascinated by materials that “surge down like unraveled water,” the artist has attached threads and gauze to mixed-media photographs, draped words from ceiling to floor across the wall, and created long spans of dyed horsehair that descend from words of poetry.

Shimmer emerges from this body of work that explores the waterfall. Composed of 2,190,000 feet of fine wire that forms a silvery curtain, this wall sculpture references the dazzling reflections of light off the Atlantic Ocean. The sixty-foot cascade descends from a fragment of a mystical poem by the Catalan poet Salvador Espriu (1913–1985):

*You may laugh, but I feel
within me, suddenly, strange
voices of God and handles,
dog’s thirst and message of
slow memories that disappear across a fragile
bridge.*

Nature and the divine mingle in the artist’s passion for the waterfall format and the numinous mirroring qualities inherent in both metal and water. In *Shimmer*, Dill merges the light of insight with that of landscape, a nod perhaps to her New England roots in Maine. She abstractly translates the transcendental philosophy of Thoreau and Emerson that permeated nineteenth-century art and literature. As in Hudson River school paintings where the immensity of a panoramic landscape dwarfs the human presence, Dill fashions tiny foil figures that cavort among words of poetry spread across the sublime, wiry falls.

By highlighting the resemblance of sprays of wire to hair, Dill also sensitively links nature and the body. The artist notes, “In its silver, Rapunzel-like way, *Shimmer*, the sixth and last in a series, emerged from decades of making white thread water fall pieces. . . it captures light, not gravity-bound, implies energy, and feminine virility-like hair.”

The fairytale of Rapunzel, an imprisoned maiden whose long hair served to connect her to the outside world, relates to the metaphor of a bridge, which is also referenced in Espriu’s poem. A channel to the spiritual, it spans earth and sky, symbolically expressed in a variety of forms

in different cultures. In Nepal, metal, architectural ribbons gracefully glide down the roofs of Hindu temples to link the human and cosmic spheres. Dill often cites this “tongue of god” as a source of inspiration for her work.

Soon after *Shimmer*, the *Allegorical Figures* (2006) emerged while Dill was making a large wall sculpture titled *Rush* (2006–2007) for her exhibition *Tremendous World* at the Neuberger Museum of Art in 2007. This sixty-foot-long wall sculpture, assembled from over ninety figurative cut-outs, spawned a family of five stand-alone figures silhouetted in relief (pp. 18–19). Costumed in glistening shades of silver and black cut foil, “each figure represented an existential conundrum.”

The *Allegorical Figures* reflect the artist’s quest to fathom the psyche’s negative and positive forces. Each sculpture in the series—a praying figure, figures of war, confusion, light, and fire—is both grounded and ethereal, defined by what the artist describes as a “rising-up architecture.” Referencing the elements as well as mythological figures in art history, they carry language that grounds the viewer in the present.

Dress of Solace and Undoing was created while Dill’s husband, the film-maker Ed Robbins, was embedded with American forces in Iraq (p. 20). The sculpture coincided with a new, more personalized relationship to violence. The title, incorporated into the medieval-looking figure whose crown forms the word “undoing,” springs from the artist’s own imagination. According to Dill, solace comes first even though we are constantly “undone by change.” Sometimes it is through the news, the actions of others, or our own sabotaging thoughts. However, we continue to spiral back to solace as the point of consummation, which becomes essential for survival.

The incorporation of Tom Sleigh’s verse, highlighting the universe’s dramatic contrast of scale, adds another layer of complexity to the sculpture:

*Would a stone stand for a
rocket in the hand hurling
it? The stone hurled to
consummation...*

Woman Bringing Light represents a small figure densely packed with language (p. 18). She symbolizes fire and the powers of healing. Holding two talismanic objects in her hand, she resembles the Minoan snake goddess from Crete (1600 BCE) who personified renewal. Her outstretched arms balance an excerpt from a poem by Emily Dickinson: “Match Me the Silver Reticence.” By contrast, the words in Tom Sleigh’s verse are layered on top of each other to form the figure’s dress, camouflaging its message:

*...the spear point searching
through the chest like a ray*

*of light searching a darkened
room for the soul unboused,
infantile, raging...*

Dress of Flame and Upside-Down Bird manifests itself in a large figure exhaling two short, powerful words by Emily Dickinson: *Force Flame* (p. 6). The figure is accompanied by two birds, one of which is upside down, a reference to the magical mirror world that Dill interpreted in *Shimmer*. Dill spontaneously established a relationship between the woman and the bird, which perhaps becomes a messenger from another world.

With *Dress of Throat Song*, Dill abstractly interprets the sentinel-like figure of an ancient Japanese samurai (p. 21). Wrapped in ribbons of text, this warrior embodies the flowing movement of Tom Sleigh’s poetry with its reference to water:

*the many throats inside
the one throat, each
swallowing the unstoppable
flood...*

Dill interprets *Dress of Change* as a praying figure, reflecting how “the war’s course of events has its effects” (p. 19). She appears to move forward, pulling words along the train of her dress:

*I many times thought peace
had come
When peace was far away—
—EMILY DICKINSON*

*How much shall I be
changed before I am
changed...
—TOM SLEIGH*

According to the artist, these verses are the “beginning of wisps of flame. . . Fire is the great purifier.”

Dill has reinterpreted these allegorical figures over the years. Although translated into other media and at different scales, they often suggest similar ideas. Some of them participate in the chorus of figures in Dill’s epic installation honoring Sister Gertrude Morgan, *Hell Hell Hell, Heaven Heaven Heaven: Encountering Sister Gertrude Morgan and Revelation*, 2010

When Dill was invited by the Arthur Roger Gallery in New Orleans to create her first art installation, she immediately recalled her experience at the American Folk Art Museum in New York City, where an exhibition of Sister Gertrude Morgan was held in 2004. Morgan, an influential figure in New Orleans’ Ninth Ward for over four decades, seemed the perfect protagonist, in part because the self-styled missionary preacher, musician, and folk artist also combined text and images in her own art. After reading Bill Fagaly’s inspiring catalogue, *Tools of Her Ministry: The Art of Sister Gertrude Morgan* (2004), Dill connected with Morgan’s artistry as well as her leadership, fervent beliefs, and devotion to calling.

Answering a divine vision to preach to the world, Sister Gertrude Morgan (1900–1980) left her family in Alabama in 1939 and headed to New Orleans, which she referred to as the “headquarters of sin.” With two other women, she established a mission and children’s home in the French Quarter. After the orphanage closed in 1957, Morgan inaugurated the Everlasting Gospel Mission in the Ninth Ward, where she delivered spontaneous sermons in a personal, improvisational preaching style accompanied by tambourine or guitar.

Dressing only in white in response to the life-changing revelation that she was selected to be the bride of Christ, Morgan abandoned her earlier black-only attire that she wore for eighteen years. She also received divine instruction to illustrate her sermons.

Morgan often painted and made drawings on found materials, including cardboard, wood, Styrofoam trays, and discarded paper. Employing bright acrylic and tempera paints, she created exuberantly patterned compositions filled with joyous figures, biographical scenes, and religious iconography. Narrative texts fill empty spaces with events and places labeled in pencil and pen.

By the time Morgan died, her artworks were selling to major museums and private collections. In response to critical acclaim, she steadfastly refused any credit, insisting that it was “Dada Jesus” all along: “He moves my hand. Do you think I would ever know how to do a picture like this by myself?”²

Hell Hell Hell, Heaven Heaven Heaven: Encountering Sister Gertrude Morgan and Revelation references the heroine’s biography but also suggests the apocalyptic mood of a city ravaged by Hurricane Katrina only a few years earlier. One drawing, titled *Hell Water*, contains a cyclonic wave that thrusts text to the periphery of the composition (p. 35). Ultimately, the installation is about faith and healing.

Dill conceives her installation as a theatrical stage set, which evolved from her opera *Divide Light*. Dressed in artist-designed costumes covered with words and images, singers bequeathed musical life to Emily Dickinson’s poetry, which was also projected as text in the background.

Encountering Sister Gertrude Morgan consists of ten heroically scaled drawings, as large as 8 by 10 feet, that fuse text and image. A strip of language—key phrases mostly drawn from Morgan’s writings—and hundreds of small, cutout, emblematic figures run along the top of the drawing like a processional frieze in classical architecture.

These drawings surround two mannequins dressed in lavish gowns, designed by Dill to carry language and to contrast the two stages of Morgan’s life: before and after her “marriage” to Christ. The artist covers the black dress with hand-sewn letters that spell “Hell” and “Heaven,” the words repeated many times in the symbolic colors red, orange, and white. This dress also bears a secret sign of redemption in the allegorical figure *Woman Bringing Light*, reinterpreted in fabric and hidden under her jacket.

The Heaven costume is conceived as a sumptuous wedding dress with black, red, blue, and gold words that, according to Dill, “are about glory, calling, and revelation.” Emanating from this dress, eighteen banners ascend the gallery wall, a reference to Buddhist prayer flags marking Himalayan stupas and sacred landscapes. Their text invokes “wonder, faith, the eye awake, song, a nearness to tremendousness.”³

For Dill, Sister Gertrude’s decision to wear only white resonated with other associations and recalled the uniform of a nurse who could minister help if a congregational member fainted during the intensity of a Gospel service. Her habit was also reminiscent of Emily Dickinson, who dressed in white as well.

The gowns in this installation reflect the potential of dresses to express intense emotions and complex ideas. The artist, inspired by the saris and henna body painting that adorn Indian women who epitomize femininity, assimilated the ritualizing of fashion into her own philosophy and art. As in *Divide Light*, in which costumes unrolled and spiraled to reveal excerpts from Dickinson’s poetry, the dresses in *Encountering Sister Gertrude Morgan* incorporate language that vibrates through contrasting colors and scale.

Most of the language in the drawings stems from Sister Gertrude Morgan or her own selections from the Book of Revelations. These selections are supplemented with text by Dickinson, Pablo Neruda, Katherine Ann Porter, Tom Sleigh, and Franz Kafka, the excerpts drawn to parallel Morgan’s writing. For the artist, creating this installation was like writing a libretto, integrating the voices of many writers.

The drawings, oil pastels, and collages on Tyvek are sturdy, yet they possess qualities of vellum, relished by the artist for its reflective light effects and association with sacred medieval texts. They are grouped in pairs corresponding to five themes: the life of Sister Gertrude, her revelations and visionary experiences, the Whore of Babylon, hell, and heaven.

Catalogue

Shimmer

Allegorical Figures

*Hell Hell Hell/ Heaven Heaven Heaven
Encountering Sister Gertrude Morgan and Revelation*

Integrating the contrasting realms of the sacred and profane, these panels pulse with energy as the artist plays with the size, density, and spacing of words and symbolic images. Dill’s expressive arrangement of words, which reflects her protagonist’s frenetic and passionate preaching style, builds on the legacy of Russian constructivist graphic design of the 1920s.

Although Dill has experimented with paper as sculpture, it is surprising to learn that these are the artist’s first drawings. Their emotional power and deftness of line attest to the artist’s strength as a multimedia artist who thrives on interpreting a variety of materials, media, and techniques to present her ideas.

The environmentally scaled drawings that enclose the viewer on all sides are punctuated by small, colorful paper cutouts no larger than 17 x 17 inches (pp. 1, 39–42, 47). Made with India ink and thread on paper, these text-bearing figures appear both playful and emblematic of the Christian, Hindu, and Buddhist faiths. Scattered among the hundreds of dancing figures is the ubiquitous skeleton, which references death in so many cultures. The all-seeing eye, symbolizing the clarity of inner vision in diverse spiritual traditions, also makes its appearance. This emblem also emerges in Sister Gertrude Morgan’s drawings.

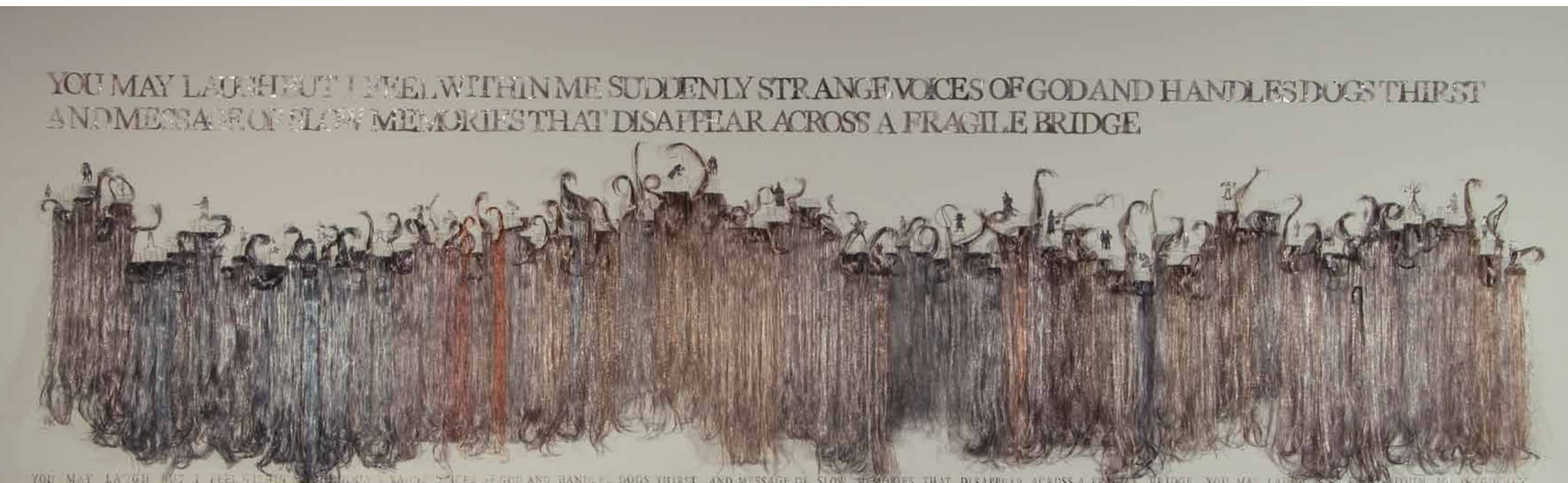
Other cutouts include *Sister Gertrude Morgan*, appearing as a dress; the whore, personifying the pagan excesses of the Roman Empire; *Angels*; *Woman Bringing Light*, a miniaturized silhouette of the 2007 work from *Allegorical Figures*; and *Lucifer*; among others. Some text resurfaces in a new incarnation, including “force flame,” inscribed here on the devil but found earlier in *Dress of Flame and Upside-Down Bird*.

Dill’s installation honors not only Sister Gertrude Morgan but the city of New Orleans. As a woman of faith inspired by the Buddhist tradition, the artist views Morgan as a kindred spirit who embraced creativity to communicate personal insight and the affirmation of life.

Dill finds inspiration by “inhabiting other people’s words.” For the artist, language contains the seeds of spiritual illumination, which in turn suggest images layered with multiple meanings. Her art practice reflects the philosophy that people can find solace amidst the complexities of contemporary life. Through an innovative use of materials and media, Dill opens the door to this experience and leaves her mark on contemporary art.

NOTES

- 1 Unless otherwise indicated, all quotations are from a conversation with the artist on April 19, 2011.
- 2 William A. Fagaly, *Tools of Her Ministry: The Art of Sister Gertrude Morgan* (New York: Rizzoli, 2004), 31.
- 3 Quote from Lesley Dill’s e-mail message to the author, August 3, 2010.



Installation of *Shimmer* at the Neuberger Museum, 2007
Wire, metal foil
12 x 60 x 15 ft.



Installation of *Allegorical Figures* at the Neuberger Museum, 2007

Left to right:

Woman Bringing Light

Dress of Flame and Upside-Down Bird

Dress of Throat Song

Dress of Change

Dress of Solace and Undoing

Metal foil, organza, wire



(OPPOSITE)
Dress of Solace and Undoing, 2006
 Metal foil, organza, wire
 77 x 42 x 1 in.

(ABOVE)
Dress of Throat Song, 2006
 Metal foil, organza, wire
 59 x 32 ½ x 1 in.



Hell Hell Hell / Heaven Heaven Heaven: Encountering Sister Gertrude Morgan and Revelation
at the Arthur Roger Gallery, New Orleans, 2010.

A banner hanging from a wooden beam with the text "SIS E R G E R T R U D E M O R G A N" in a stylized font. The banner is white with black lettering and is strung across the frame. The letters are in a decorative, slightly gothic or medieval style. The banner is attached to a dark wooden beam at the top of the image. The background is a plain, light-colored wall.

DOWN Dirty cheaping triChin! Lying ForNicaTion

W
HORE

of

B
BABY LON

WATER like a River
Rushing Water
WATER

the



LOW down Dirty cheating tripping Lying ForNiraTiON

HOW ARE WE BORN

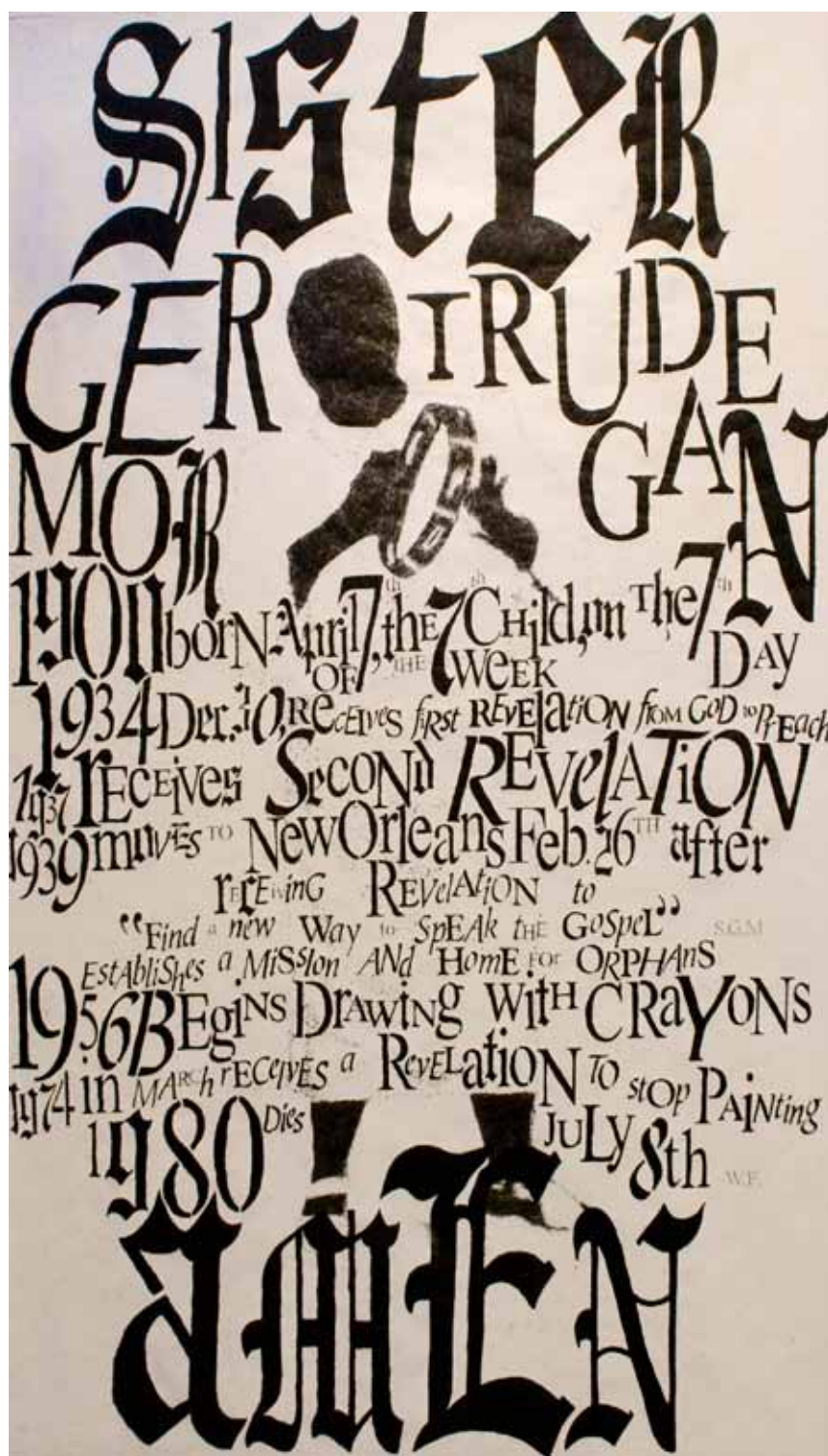


as HEAVY as Light
Wit

And From his Mouth
THE KINGDOM PLUNGED
the Serpent
in the Kingdom

Chewed water like a River
Rushing Water

I am a G
The
L
S
U
S
ABY



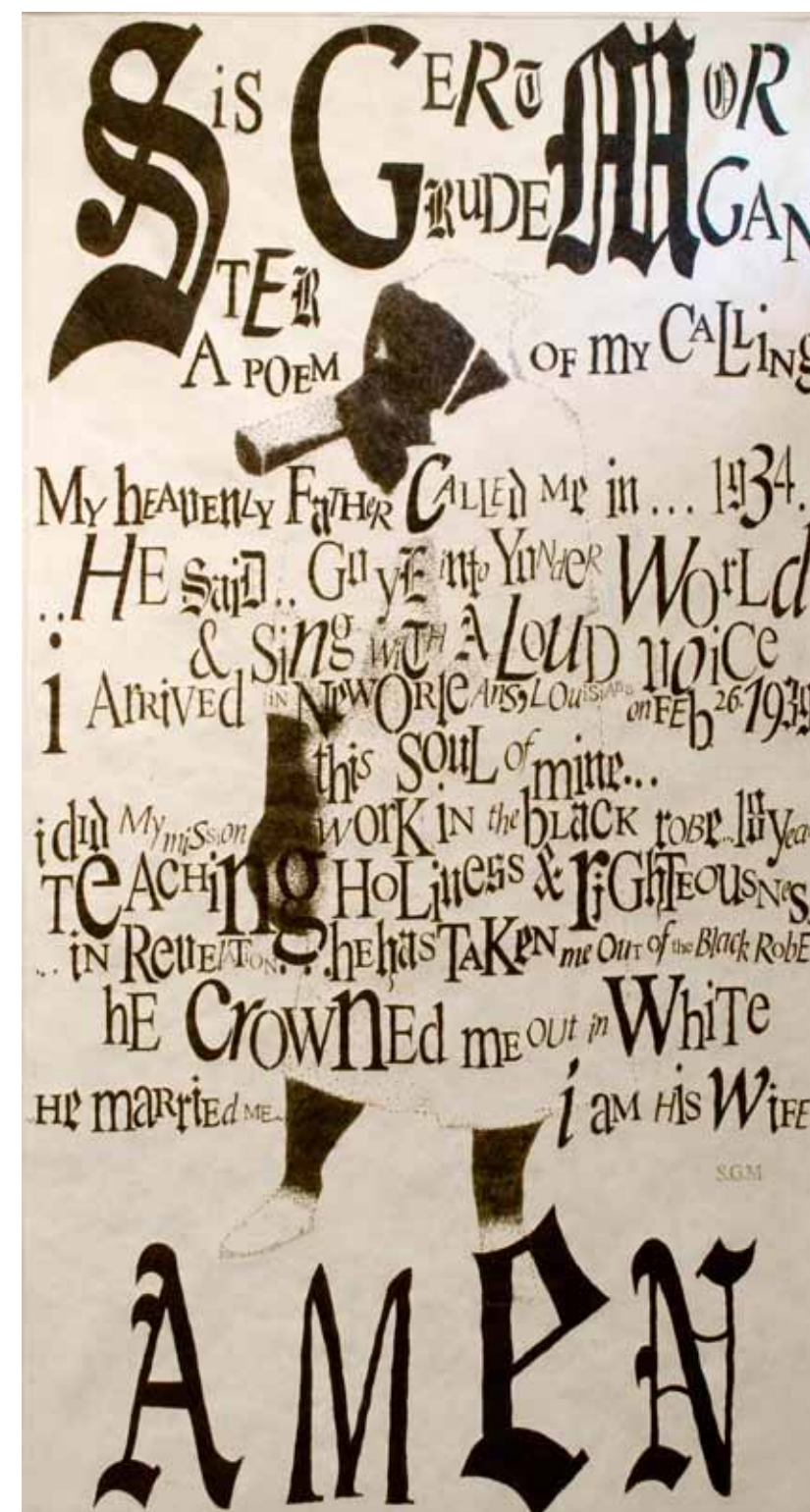
Gertrude Morgan: Timeline, 2010
Oil stick and watercolor pencil on Tyvek
102 x 60 in.



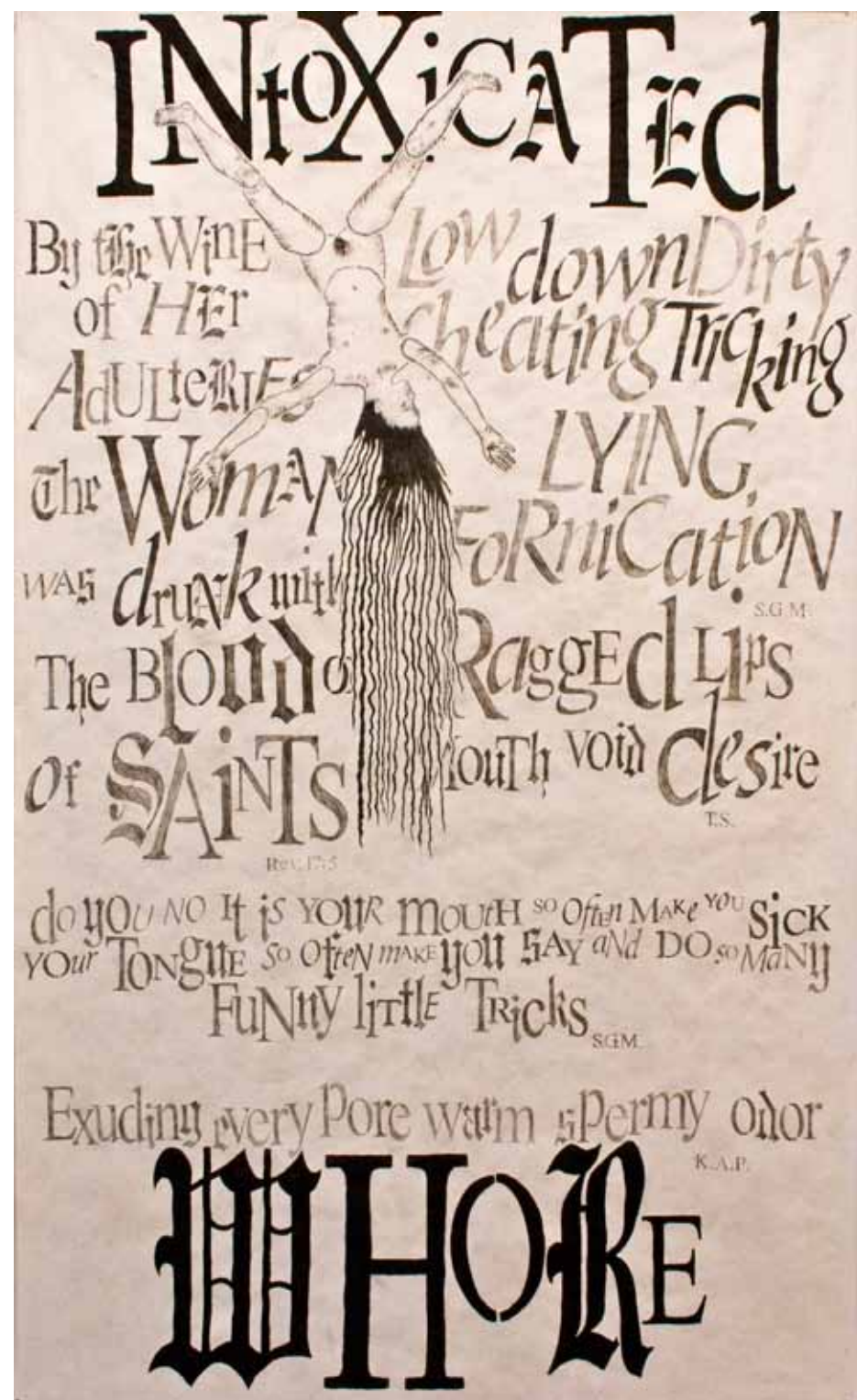
I Heard a Voice Like a Trumpet, 2010
Oil stick and watercolor pencil on Tyvek
102 x 60 in.



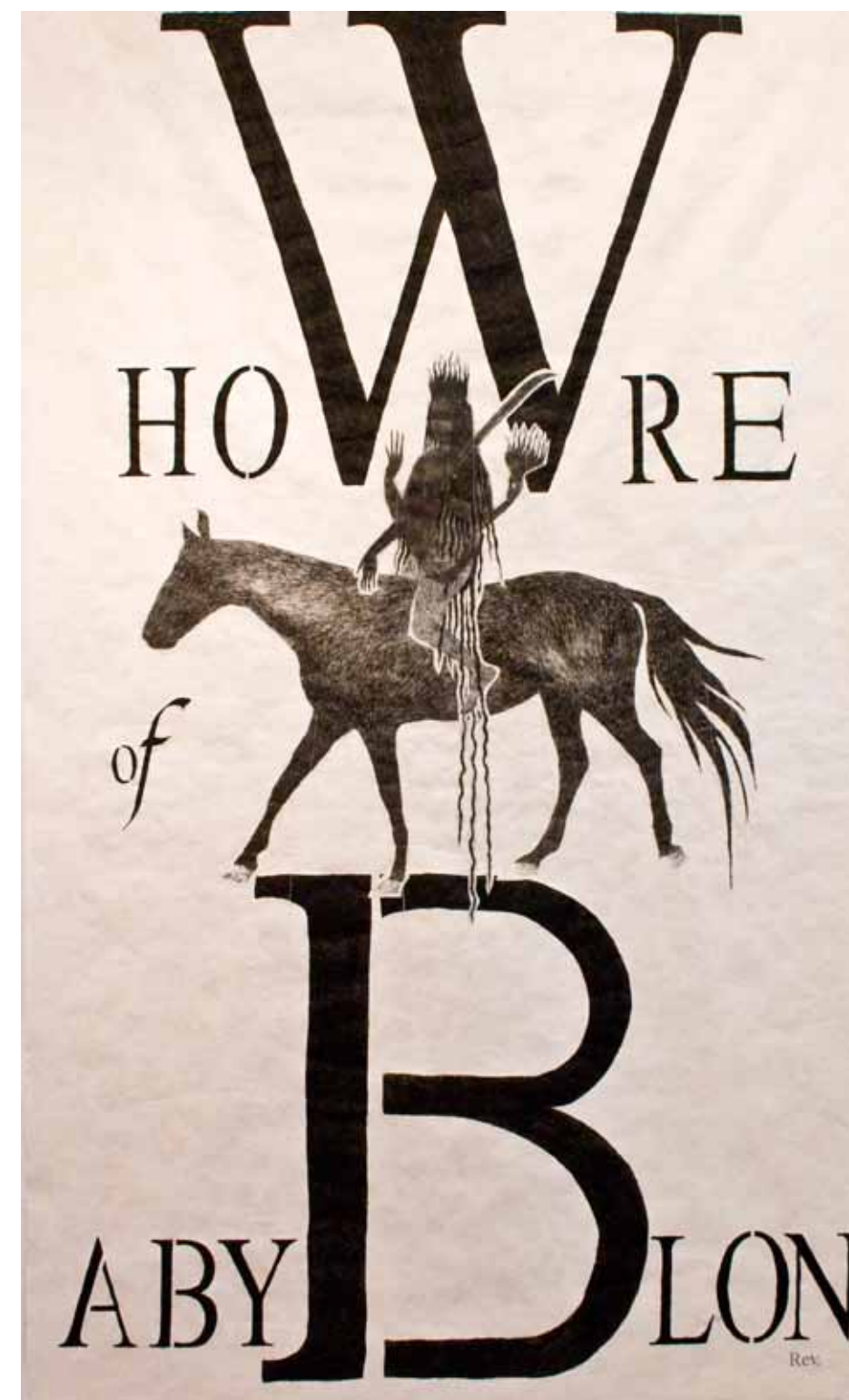
There Is an All Seeing Eye, 2010
Oil stick on Tyvek
102 x 60 in.



Sister Gertrude Morgan: A Poem of My Calling, 2010
Oil stick on Tyvek
102 x 60 in.



Intoxicated Whore, 2010
Oil stick and watercolor pencil on Tyvek
102 x 60 in.



Whore of Babylon, 2010
Oil stick and watercolor pencil on Tyvek
102 x 60 in.



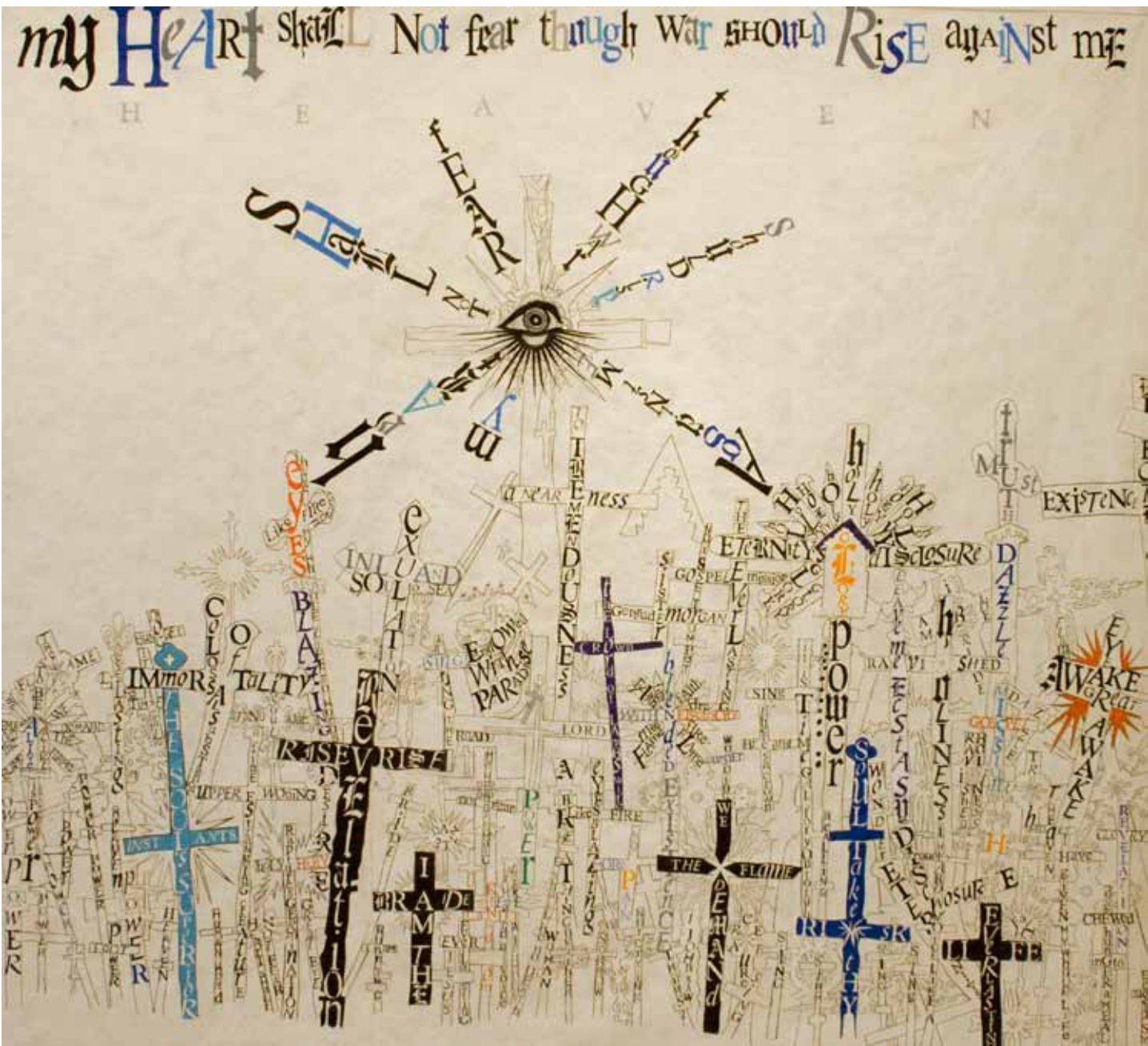
Hell, 2010
Oil stick on Tyvek
102 x 120 in.



Hell Water, 2010
Oil stick, India ink, and thread on Tyvek
102 x 120 in.



Faith, 2010
Oil stick and India ink on Tyvek, and silver leaf on brown paper
102 x 120 in.



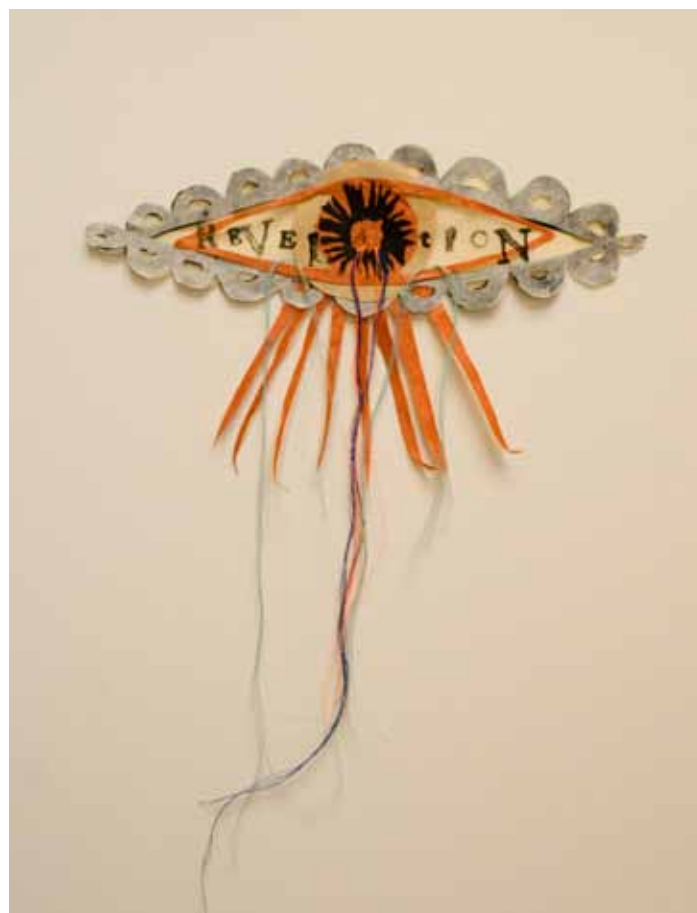
My Heart Shall Not Fear, 2010
Oil stick and watercolor pencil on Tyvek
102 x 120 in.



(OPPOSITE)
Faith, 2010
 Glass, steel, paint
 76 x 51 x 4 in.

(ABOVE LEFT)
Skeleton (Ecstasy #1), cutout from *Hell Hell Hell/Heaven Heaven Heaven: Encountering Sister Gertrude and Revelation*, 2010,
 India ink and thread on paper, 14 x 11 in.

(ABOVE RIGHT)
Lucifer #1, cutout from *Hell Hell Hell /Heaven Heaven Heaven: Encountering Sister Gertrude Morgan and Revelation*, 2010
 India ink and thread on paper
 9 ½ x 5 ½ in.



(ABOVE LEFT)

Al Seeing Eye, cutout from *Hell Hell Hell /Heaven Heaven Heaven: Encountering Sister Gertrude Morgan and Revelation*, 2010
Ink and thread on paper
12 x 9 in.

(ABOVE RIGHT)

Harlot #2, cutout from *Hell Hell Hell /Heaven Heaven Heaven: Encountering Sister Gertrude Morgan and Revelation*, 2010
India ink and thread on paper
16 x 12 in.

(OPPOSITE)

Angel, cutout from *Hell Hell Hell /Heaven Heaven Heaven: Encountering Sister Gertrude Morgan and Revelation*, 2010
India ink and thread on paper
15 x 12 in.



Checklist



Woman Bringing Light, cutout from Hell Hell Hell /Heaven Heaven Heaven:
Encountering Sister Gertrude Morgan and Revelation, 2010
Ink and thread on paper
11 x 10 in.

1.
Shimmer, 2005–2006
Wire, metal foil
12 x 60 x 15 ft.
Courtesy of the George Adams
Gallery, New York

*You may laugh, but I feel
within me, suddenly, strange
voices of God and bundles,
dog’s thirst and message of
slow memories that
disappear across a fragile
bridge*
—Salvador Espriu

2.
Dress of Change, 2006
Metal foil, organza, wire
73 x 38 ½ x 1 in.
Courtesy of the George Adams
Gallery, New York

*I many times thought peace
had come
When peace was far away—*
—Emily Dickinson

*How much shall I be
changed before I am
changed...*
—Tom Sleigh

3.
Dress of Flame and Upside-Down Bird,
2006
Metal foil, organza, wire
95 x 45 x 1 in.
Courtesy of the George Adams
Gallery, New York

Force Flame
—Emily Dickinson

4.
Dress of Solace and Undoing, 2006
Metal foil, organza, wire
77 x 42 x 1 in.
Courtesy of the George Adams
Gallery, New York

*Dress of Solace and
Undoing.*
—Lesley Dill

*Would a stone stand for a
rocket in the hand hurling
it? The stone hurled to
consummation...*
—Tom Sleigh

5.
Woman Bringing Light, 2006
Metal foil, organza, wire
56 ½ x 43 ½ in.
Courtesy of the George Adams
Gallery, New York

*Match Me the Silver
Reticence...*
—Emily Dickinson

*...the spear point searching
through the chest like a ray
of light searching a darkened
room for the soul unboused,
infantile, raging...*
—Tom Sleigh

6.
Dress of Throat Song, 2006
Metal foil, organza, wire
59 x 32 ½ x 1 in.
Courtesy of the George Adams
Gallery, New York

*...the many throats inside
the one throat, each
swallowing the unstoppable
flood...*
—Tom Sleigh

7.
*Hell Hell Hell / Heaven Heaven
Heaven: Encountering Sister Gertrude
Morgan and Revelation*, 2010
Multimedia art installation
Variable dimensions
Courtesy of the Arthur Roger
Gallery, New Orleans

DRESSES

Heaven/Hell Dress, 2010
Assorted fabric
65 x 36 x 44 in.

Hell Hell Hell
—Sister Gertrude Morgan

Heaven Heaven Heaven
—Sister Gertrude Morgan

*Sister Gertrude Morgan Wedding
Dress*, 2010
Assorted fabric
74 x 72 x 72 in.

GLORY. POWER. GLORY.
HOLY. HEAVEN. DAZZLE.
THE EVERLASTING HOLY
GOSPEL.
MISSION. REVELATION.
JOY. A CALLING. FAITH.
HEAVEN. HOLY. GREAT
WONDER FROM HEAVEN.
TRUMPET. SING ALONG
THE ROAD. JESUS.
—Sister Gertrude Morgan

BANNERS

SISTER Gertrude Morgan Sister
Gertrude Morgan
—Sister Gertrude Morgan

My Heart shall not fear
—Sister Gertrude Morgan

I Heard a voice like a Trumpet
—Sister Gertrude Morgan

Power
—Sister Gertrude Morgan

*There shall be no death, neither sorrow
nor crying*
—Sister Gertrude Morgan

A Breathing Woman
—Emily Dickinson

A Nearness to Tremendousness
—Emily Dickinson

Lord
—Sister Gertrude Morgan

Eyes Blazing like Fire
—Sister Gertrude Morgan

Crown the Lord Lamb's wife
—Sister Gertrude Morgan

No More Pain
—Sister Gertrude Morgan

Sister Gertrude Morgan
—Sister Gertrude Morgan

Blended Existence with Electricity
—Pablo Neruda

Faith, Fire, Faith, Fire, Fire Flame
—Sister Gertrude Morgan

Fire, Flame
—Sister Gertrude Morgan

Thirst
—Sister Gertrude Morgan

I John Saw
—Revelation 1:1

The Everlasting Gospel Mission
—Sister Gertrude Morgan

Upper Wooing
—Emily Dickinson

We Demand the Flame
—Emily Dickinson

Creature
—Sister Gertrude Morgan

Sing
—Sister Gertrude Morgan

Sing
—Sister Gertrude Morgan

Sing
—Sister Gertrude Morgan

Sing
—Sister Gertrude Morgan

Sing
—Sister Gertrude Morgan

Sing, it is time Gal for you to turn
—Sister Gertrude Morgan

There's a Bright Crown
—Sister Gertrude Morgan

*Glory. Power. Eternity's Disclosure.
Glory. Glory. Holy. Holy. Holy. Holy.
Holy. Holy. Holy. Holy. Holy.*
—Sister Gertrude Morgan

Soul Take thy Risk
—Emily Dickinson

Wonder
—Sister Gertrude Morgan

Leave me Ecstasy
—Emily Dickinson

Eternity's Disclosure
—Emily Dickinson

I Heard a Voice like a Trumpet
—Sister Gertrude Morgan

Ravisbed Holiness
—Emily Dickinson

I am the Bride
—Sister Gertrude Morgan

Ravisbed Holiness
—Emily Dickinson

Truth Must Dazzle
—Emily Dickinson

Gospel Mission
—Sister Gertrude Morgan

Heaven
—Sister Gertrude Morgan

Dazzle
—Emily Dickinson

Truth
—Emily Dickinson

Faith
—Franz Kafka

Flame
—Emily Dickinson

Awake Great Eye Awake
—Sister Gertrude Morgan

Heaven, Holy
—Sister Gertrude Morgan

I have given my whole Life
—Salvador Espriu

Chewed Dog Hunger into a Meal
—Salvador Espriu

Revelation glory
—Sister Gertrude Morgan

Electricity Existence
—Pablo Neruda

Sing. Ecstasy
—Sister Gertrude Morgan, Emily
Dickinson

*My Heart shall not Fear though War
Should Rise Against Me*
—Sister Gertrude Morgan

Heaven
—Sister Gertrude Morgan

CUT OUTS

100 cutouts, including:
Sister Gertrude Morgan (Holy)
Woman Bringing Light
Whore
Angel
Lucifer
Flying Angel
Eye (Revelation)
Skeleton on Horse
Slut
Harlot
There is a Bright Crown
Al Seeing Eye
Horse and Riders (Glory Glory)
India ink and thread on paper
No larger than 17 x 17 in.



Horse and Riders (Glory Glory), cutout from *Hell Hell Hell /Heaven Heaven Heaven: Encountering Sister Gertrude Morgan and Revelation*, 2010
Ink and thread on paper
16 x 17 in.

This publication accompanies the touring exhibition, *Lesley Dill's Poetic Visions: From Shimmer to Sister Gertrude Morgan*, organized by the Whatcom Museum, Bellingham, Washington. Supported by the City of Bellingham and the Whatcom Museum Foundation.

Whatcom Museum

Bellingham, Washington
October 22, 2011–March 5, 2012

Halsey Institute of Contemporary Art

College of Charleston, School of the Arts
Charleston, South Carolina
January 25–March 8, 2013

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Printed in Canada by Friesen's Book Division

Distributed by the University of Washington Press,
P.O. Box 50096, Seattle, WA 98145 USA,
www.washington.edu/uwpress

(FRONT COVER) Lesley Dill, *Hell Hell Hell/Heaven Heaven Heaven: Encountering Sister Gertrude and Revelation*, 2010, multi-media art installation, variable dimensions

(BACK COVER AND FRONTISPIECE) Lesley Dill, *Shimmer* (detail), 2005–2006, wire, metal, foil, 12 x 60 x 15 ft.

(TITLE PAGE) *Eye (Revelation) #2*, 2010, India ink and thread on paper, 12 ¾ x 9 ¼ in.

ISBN: 978-0-295-99156-6



Published in the United States by
Whatcom Museum
121 Prospect Street
Bellingham, WA 98225
www.whatcommuseum.org

Designed by Phil Kovacevich
Edited by John Pierce

Photo credits:

Pages 2, 6, 16–21, Back Cover: Courtesy of George Adams Gallery. Photos by Adam Reich.

Pages 1, 22–42, 47, Front Cover: Courtesy of Arthur Roger Gallery.