

Marine Contemporary

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004

Jow  
A California Minute



## Essay

# Claressinka Anderson

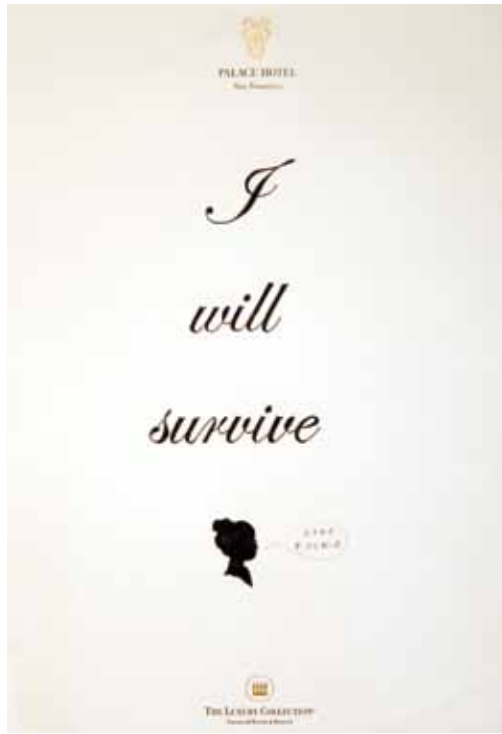
In many ways, Jow is the perfect example of everything I look for in an artist. She is idiosyncratic, strong willed and has an “I take no prisoners” attitude in life that manifests itself in every work that she makes. When I first saw Jow’s drawings, I was immediately taken with them and the way they navigate the landscape of language and text. Artists make strong work when it is inextricably linked to who they are as people, as then it is an extension of the self and cannot be anything other than brutally honest. There is no doubt that Jow’s work falls into this category and that is what makes it so compelling. Of course, brutally honest work can still be disappointingly dull, but Jow’s way of seeing the world is anything but and there isn’t a piece she makes that doesn’t make the viewer chuckle. Whether the humor is light or dark, biting or tender, it is always present. This, along with her intelligent use of literary references, satire, social commentary, punditry and plain dry wit continually draws people to her work.

In commenting on Jow’s recent solo project, “I’m in the mood for Love,” at Marine Art Salon, writer Eve Wood wrote: “If Martin Kippenberger had been born a woman, he almost surely would have made work like Jow, whose ecstatic drawings on hotel letterhead...are simultaneously riotous and contemplative, elegiac and saucy, sad and darkly witty, punctuated by short surreptitious bits of text like ‘not if you were the last boy on earth’, implying that love is, alas, only a savage little game.” Of course, it isn’t all merely a game for Jow, but word play is an important thread throughout her work and there is undoubtedly a savage humor to it all that presents each piece as a mind game for the viewer.

Jow’s early letterhead pieces were created with self-amusement in mind. A friend gave her a packet of vintage letterhead paper, which soon led to a collection. These letterheads became the canvas for a series of daily drawings, which soon became a more sophisticated body of work. Jow admits that she “needs to be clever.” Fortunately, her cleverness does not come off as obnoxious, but rather, it is simple, insightful and perhaps she has the guts to say what we were already thinking.



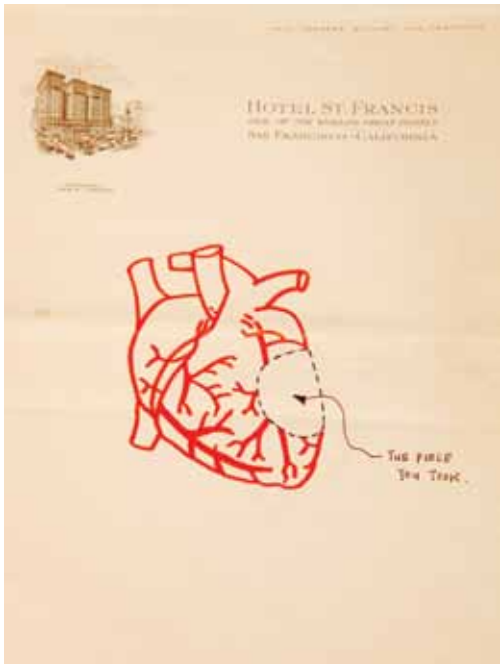
Embarrassing  
2011, Ink and pencil on letterhead,  
11" x 8.5"



Palace Hotel  
2011, Ink and pencil on letterhead,  
11" x 8.5"



Dick  
2009, Ink, paint, whiteout on  
vintage letterhead, 11" x 8.5"



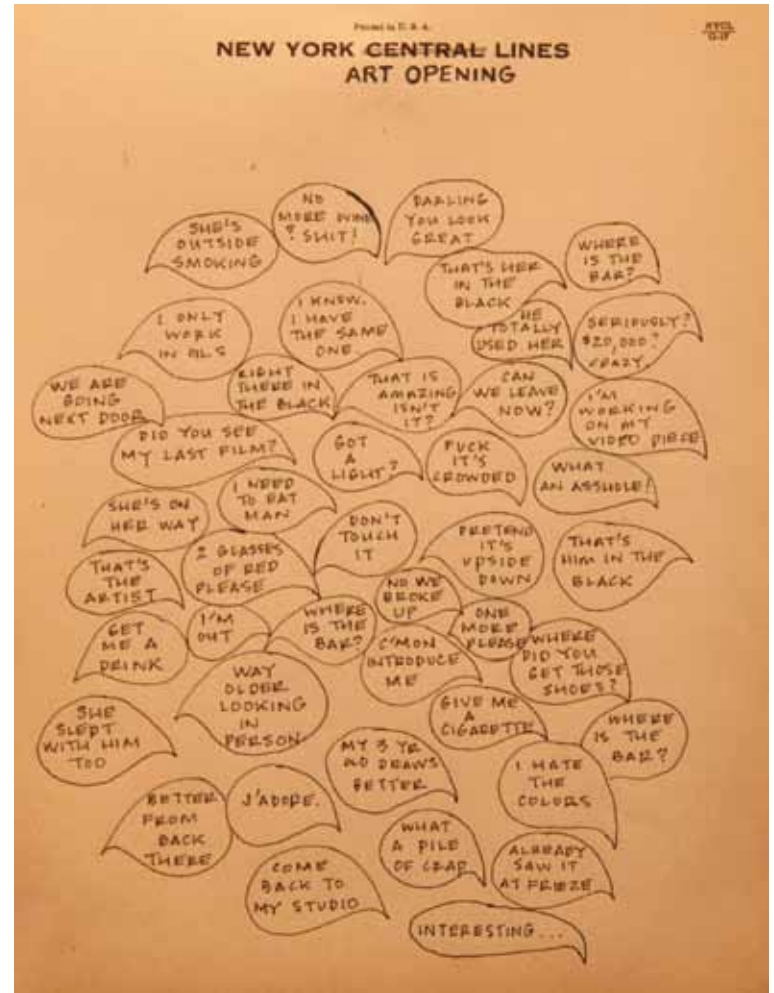
Hotel St Francis  
2011, Ink on vintage letterhead,  
11" x 8.5"



Starving  
2011, Ink on letterhead,  
11" x 8.5"



Chateau Marmont  
2009, Ink on letterhead,  
11" x 8.5"



Lines  
2006, Ink, paint, whiteout on  
vintage letterhead, 11" x 8.5"



Ho (Hollywood)  
2011, Neon  
10" x 42" x 6", edition of 3

Hollywood  
2011, Neon  
10" x 42" x 6", edition of 3



LA (Plastic)  
2011, Neon  
10" x 42" x 4", edition of 3

Plastic  
2011, Neon  
10" x 42" x 4", edition of 3

For many years, Jow's work in the film industry as a stylist has had her living between Los Angeles and New York. Both cities have a strong voice in her work, as the artist continually highlights the similarities and differences between the two. As much as the cities themselves are important, they also are irrelevant, as ultimately, it is simply life that Jow observes and comments on through her drawings. Jow explains, "My influences are vintage and modern in all realms: magazines, books, news, travel, film, fashion and music. All are filed away, along with momentary observations and overhead snippets of conversation, in a personal reference library that I draw on to craft socially transformative narratives designed to trigger laughter and insight." Her work always has an implied narrative, whether it is the fictitious girl Friday of her letterhead drawings, who sketches on the company stationary rather than doing her mundane job, or the New York City stories depicted in her Braille work.

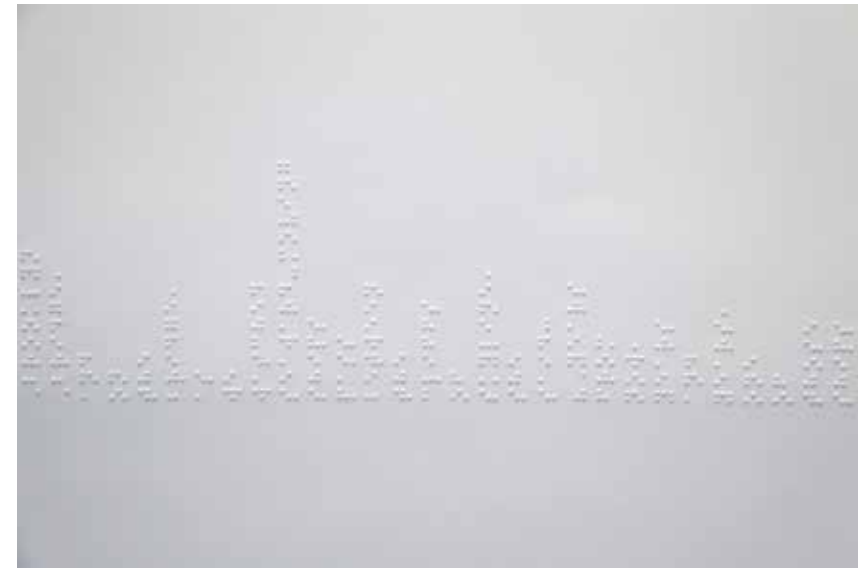
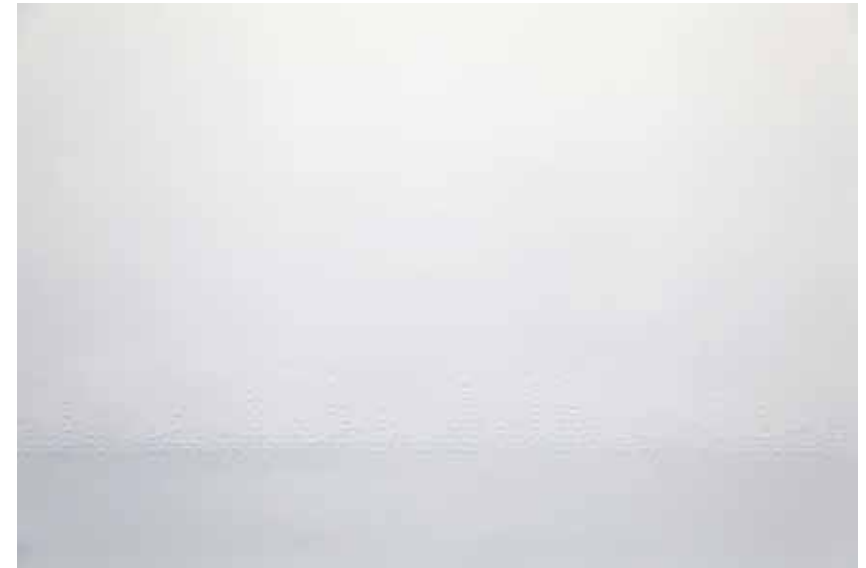
The quieter and minimal Braille pieces may seem quite different from the letterhead drawings at first, but are born out of the same conceptual framework: word play and text-based codes are employed to form a simple, yet complex link between the visual part of the work and the meaning in the text. Using sentences from five books that are based in New York City, *Catcher in the Rye* (J. D. Salinger), *Breakfast at Tiffany's* (Truman Capote), *The Great Gatsby* (F. Scott Fitzgerald), *The Age of Innocence* (Edith Wharton) and *The Bonfire of the Vanities* (Tom Wolfe), Jow hand embosses the words in Braille to form the skyline of New York. There is something poignant in these works, in the fact that they are barely there and can be seen well only in certain lights. However, they are never too fragile, since her wry smile is never far beyond the surface, and apparent in her choice of excerpts from the novels.

#### *Catcher in the Rye* (J. D. Salinger)

"I went down in the elevator again and got a cab and told the driver to take me down to Ernie's. Ernie's is this nightclub in Greenwich Village that my brother D.B. used to go to quite frequently before he went out to Hollywood and prostituted himself. He used to take me with him once in a while. Ernie's a big fat colored guy that plays the piano. He's a terrific snob"

#### *Breakfast at Tiffany's* (Truman Capote)

"then moseyed across the Brooklyn Bridge, and on the bridge, as we watched seaward-moving ships pass between the cliffs of burning skyline, she said: "Years from now, years and years, one of those ships will bring me back, me and my nine Brazilian brats. Because yes, they must see this, these lights, the river –I love New York, even though it isn't mine, the way something has to be, a tree or a street or"



*Catcher in the Rye*  
2007, Braille emboss on paper,  
26" x 32" Edition of 5.

*Breakfast at Tiffany's*  
2007, Braille emboss on paper,  
26" x 32" Edition of 5. (Detail)



It seems obvious in a way, that a lover of words would by default be a lover of literature, but is Jow's ability to draw out snippets of information from literary references and observations about life and filter them through her particular voice as an artist, that makes her work distinctive.

The new work presented here for A California Minute is a natural progression from the Braille work and focuses more on the artist's love for language in its purest visual form: abstraction. The predominant focus of this show is lyrics from songs about California from the 1960's and early 1970's. Jow became interested in Morse code, not only for its capacity to communicate language and its romantic sense of nostalgia, but also because its graphic qualities are reminiscent of work by minimalist artists of the same period. For A California Minute, Jow explores the complexity of California's allure and fantasies about the Golden State's promise through the simple dots and dashes that articulate Morse code. Each Morse code painting represents different songs, which include:

California Dreamin',  
The Mamas + Papas (1965)

California Girls,  
Beach Boys (1965)

California Here I Come,  
Al Jolson (1924)

California Nights,  
Lesley Gore (1967)

California Stars,  
Woody Guthrie (1940–1967)  
Billy Bragg & Wilco (1998)

Going to California,  
Led Zeppelin (1971)

California Soul,  
5th dimension, Marlena Shaw (1968)

California,  
Joni Mitchell (1970)

This show is scheduled to run during Pacific Standard Time, The Getty's citywide initiative to explore the history of art in Southern California from 1945 to 1980. The paintings and drawings in A California Minute are particularly sensitive to this period, honoring and celebrating a special part of California history to which all artists living and working in Los Angeles feel an affinity. As a gallery, our location in Venice, where many key Los Angeles artists including Ed Ruscha, John Baldessari, Larry Bell and Charles Ray, started working and have or had their studios for many years is also a factor in our choice to schedule this show at this particular time and celebrate Pacific Standard Time.

## Jow

(b. Vancouver, Canada)  
Lives and works in Los Angeles

Solo Exhibitions include:

— 2010  
I'm in the Mood for Love,  
Marine Art Salon, Santa Monica, CA

— 2008  
See Line Salon,  
See Line gallery, Santa Monica, CA

— 2007  
Letterhead,  
Eugene Choo, Vancouver, BC

— 2000  
Mixed nuts,  
Trylowsky Gallery, Vancouver,

Group Exhibitions include:

— 2011  
If These Walls Could Talk,  
Marine Art Salon, Santa Monica, CA  
& Charlie James Gallery, Los Angeles, CA

— 2010  
Salon No.4, Works 092–140,  
Marine Art Salon, Santa Monica, CA

— 2009  
Salon No. 2, works 030–065,  
Marine Art Salon, Santa Monica, CA

— 2007  
The Great American Store (age),  
Spring Gallery, Brooklyn, NY

— 2005  
Illuminated, Spring Gallery,  
Brooklyn, NY

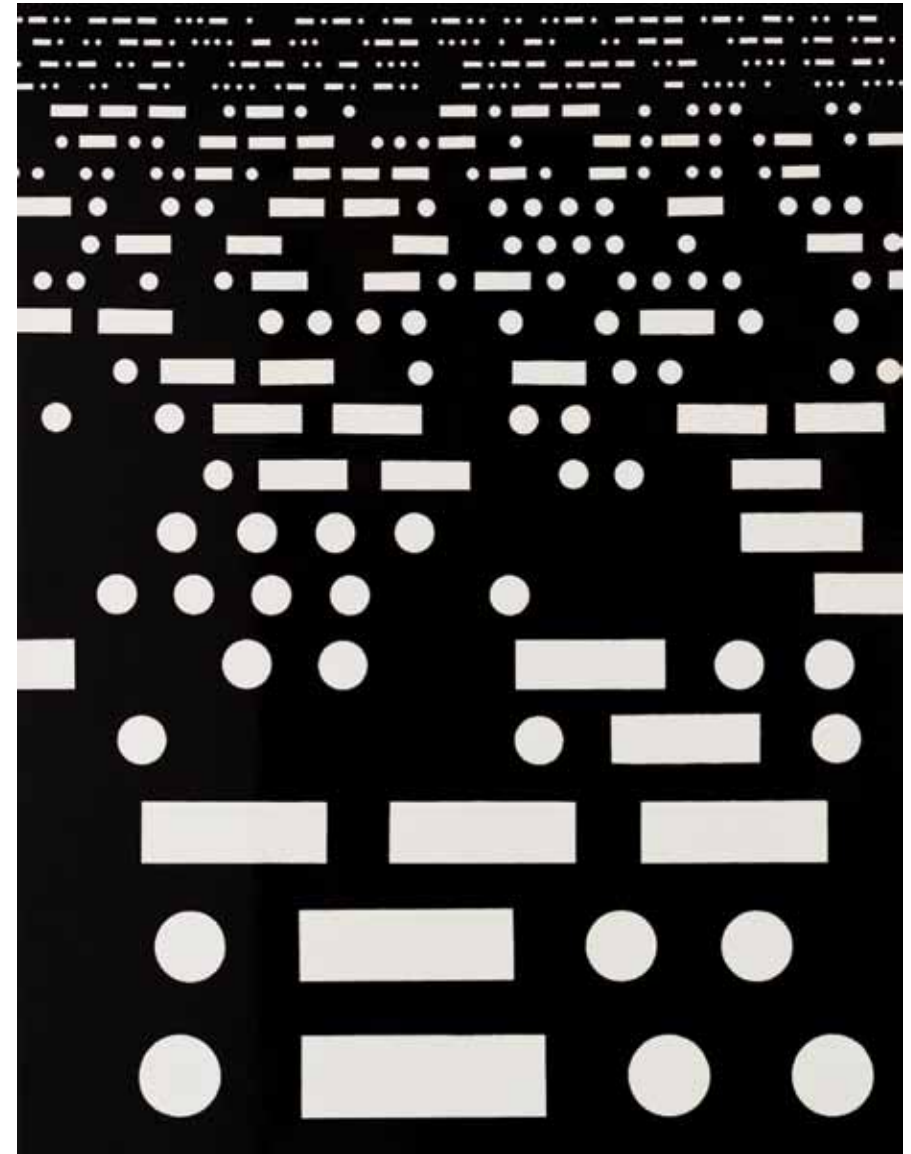
— 2006  
Well Rounded,  
Spring Gallery, Brooklyn, NY

Jow studied fine arts at Capilano College and the Emily Carr Institute of Art + Design in Vancouver before relocating to the United States. She has previously exhibited in Vancouver, New York and Los Angeles.

C — the dit dit dah of morse code travels through the  
A — dark blue water, white tipped waves beneath the moonlight  
L — displaced in a foreign land  
I — longing to be back in California  
F — distance + desire  
O — comforted by the lyrics from that familiar tune  
R — sunshine, sand, blue skies, palm trees, LEMONS  
N — soul, stars, girls, nights  
I — slow pace, laid back, dreamin'  
A — California minute

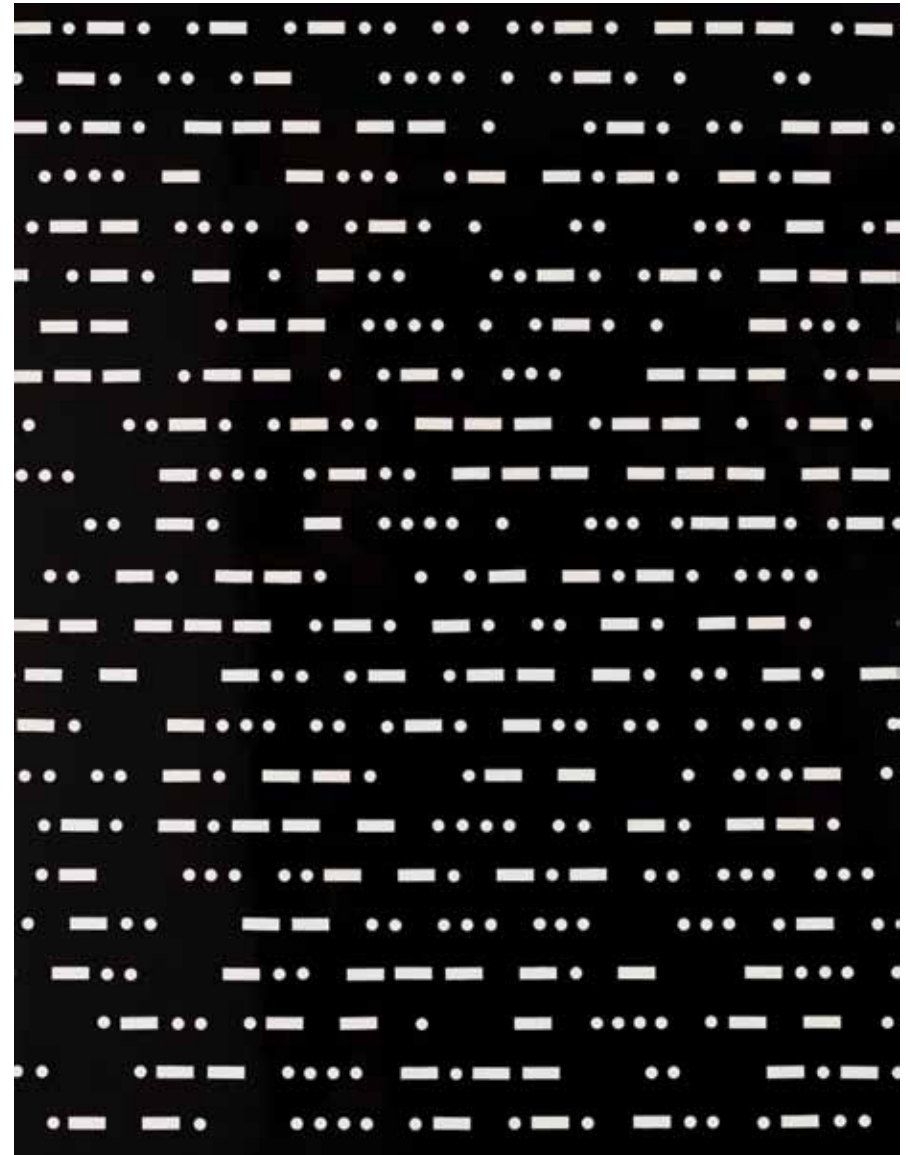
— Jow, 2011

California Nights  
2011, Acrylic and polyurethane  
on panel, 36" x 48"





California, Here I Come  
2011, Acrylic and polyurethane  
on panel, 36" x 48"

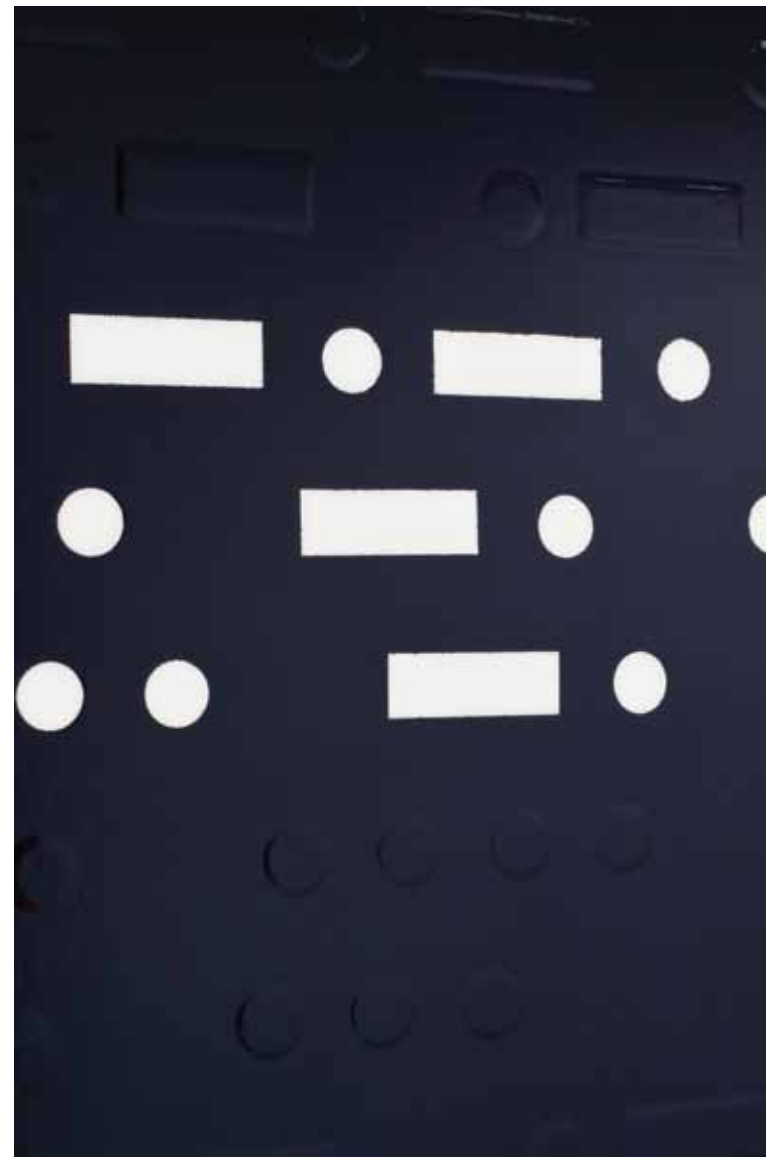


California Stars  
2011, Acrylic and polyurethane  
on panel, 36" x 48"





California Dreamin'  
2011, Acrylic and polyurethane  
on panel, 36" x 48"



California Dreamin'  
2011, Acrylic and polyurethane  
on panel, 36" x 48" (Detail)

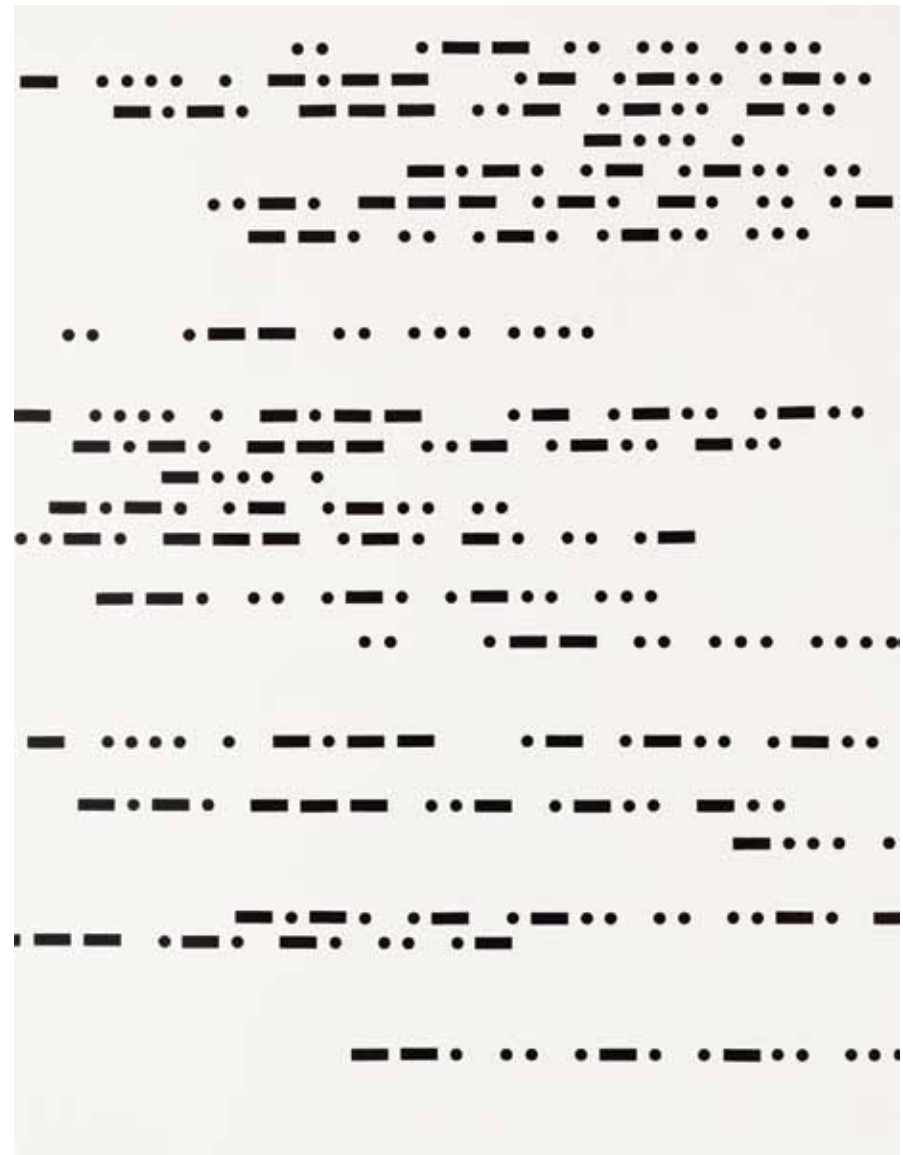


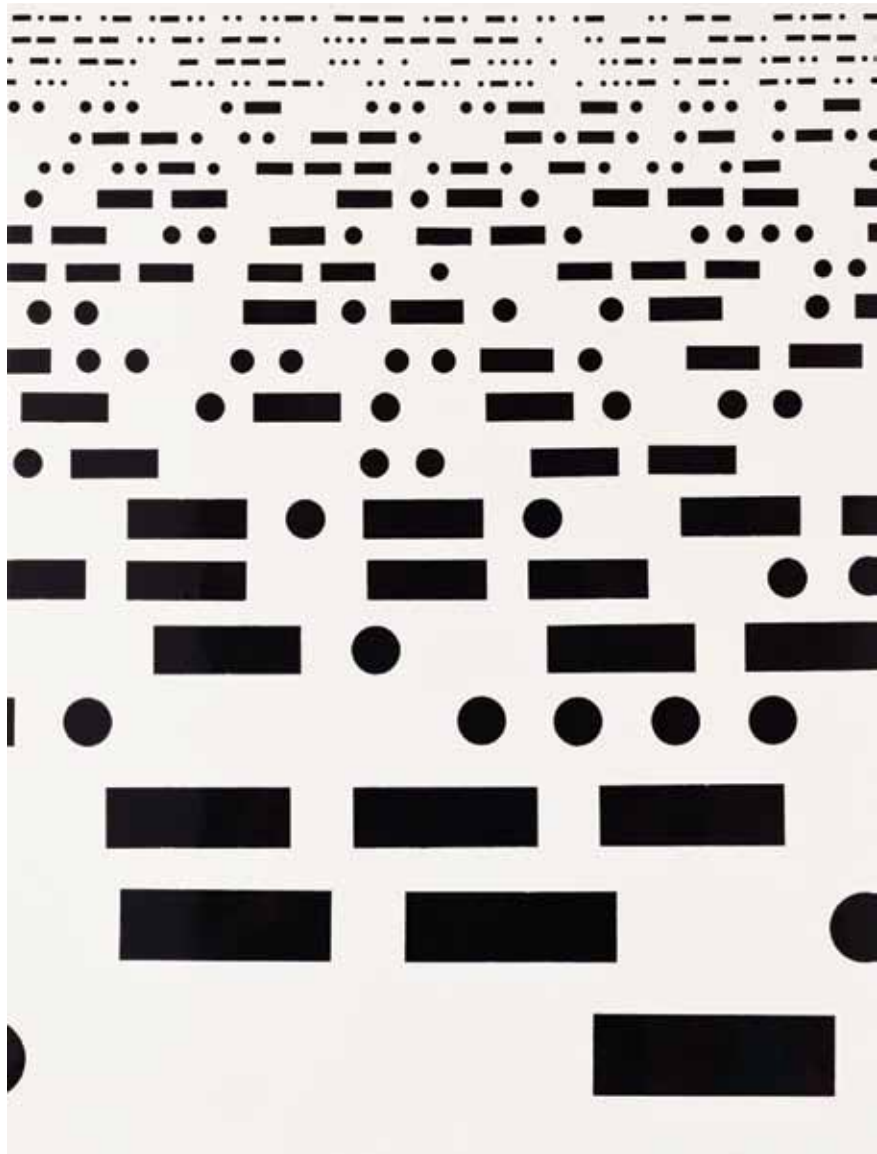
California Soul  
2011, Acrylic and polyurethane  
on panel, 36" x 48"



Going Soul  
2011, Acrylic and polyurethane  
on panel, 36" x 48" (Detail)

California Girls  
2011, Acrylic and polyurethane  
on panel, 36" x 48"

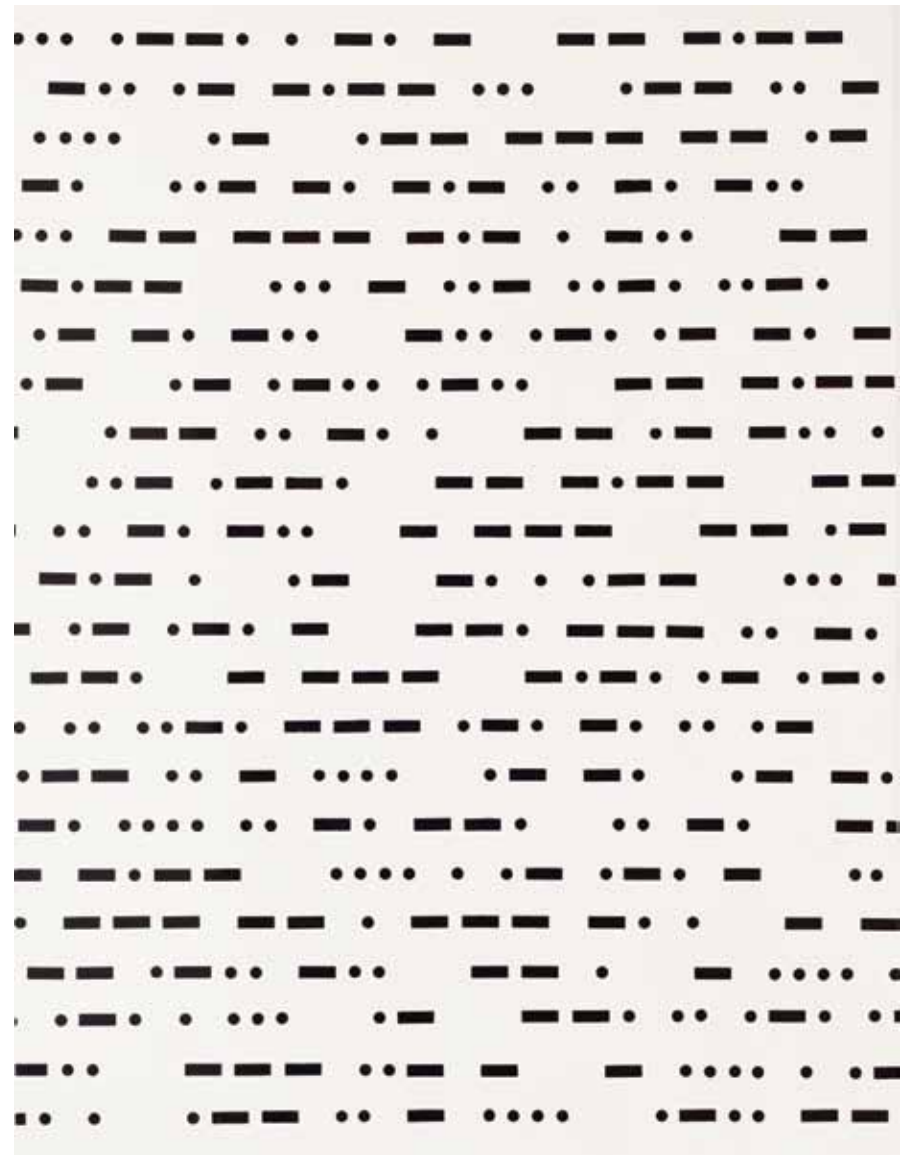




California  
2011, Acrylic and polyurethane  
on panel, 36" x 48"

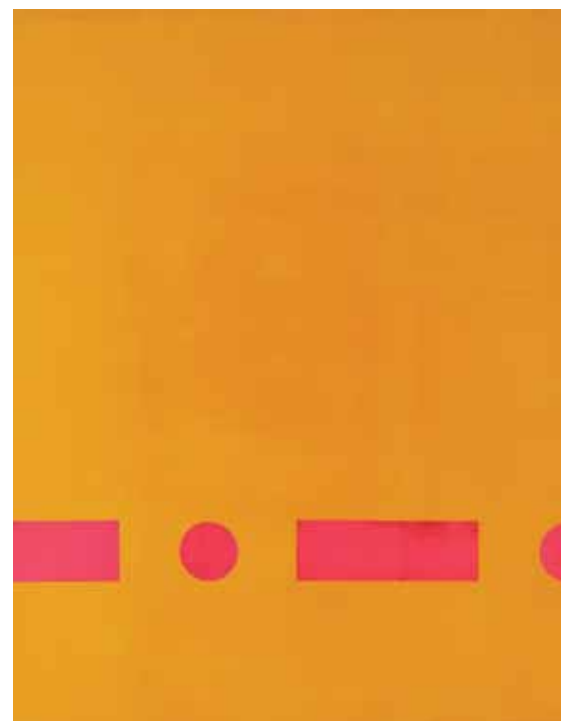


Going to California  
2011, Acrylic and polyurethane  
on panel, 36" x 48"

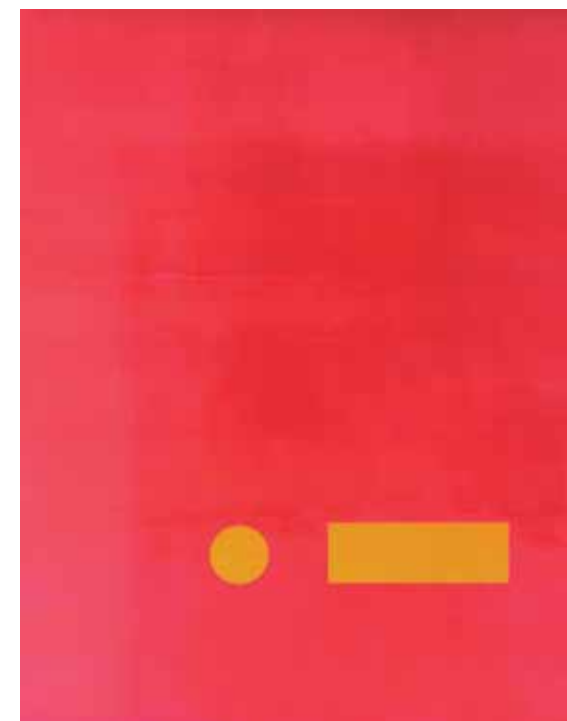




C A (diptych)  
2011, Acrylic and polyurethane  
on panel, each 24" x 30"



C  
2011, Acrylic and polyurethane  
on panel, 24" x 30"



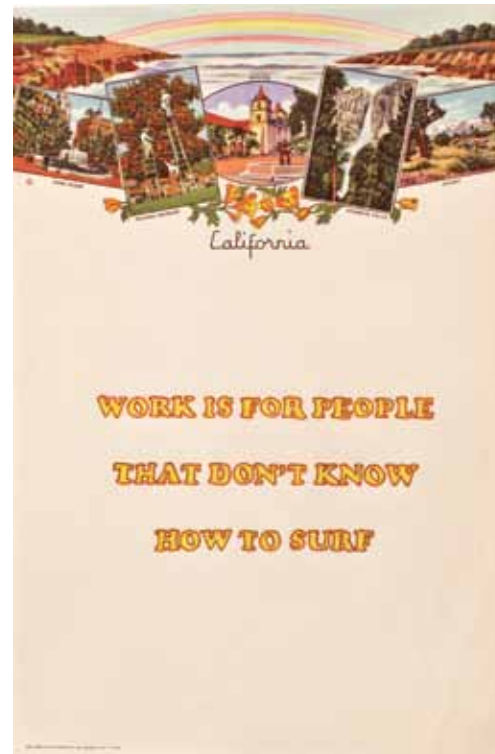
A  
2011, Acrylic and polyurethane  
on panel, 24" x 30"



Super Cali  
2011, Ink on letterhead  
8.5" x 11"



A California Minute  
2011, Pencil on letterhead  
8.5" x 11"



Surf  
2011, Ink and pencil crayon on vintage letterhead, 6.75" x 10"



Super Cali II  
2011, Ink and pencil crayon on vintage letterhead, 6.75" x 10"



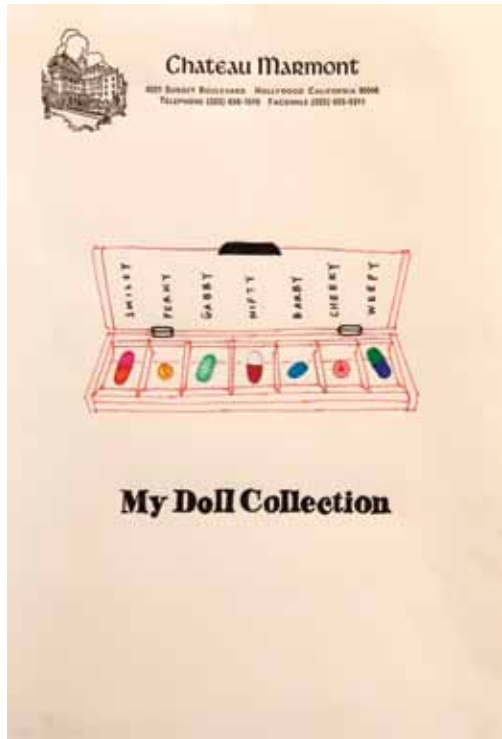
**The Golden State**  
2011, Ink and on vintage letterhead,  
6.75" x 10"



**Bust**  
2011, Ink and pencil crayon on  
vintage letterhead, 6.75" x 10"



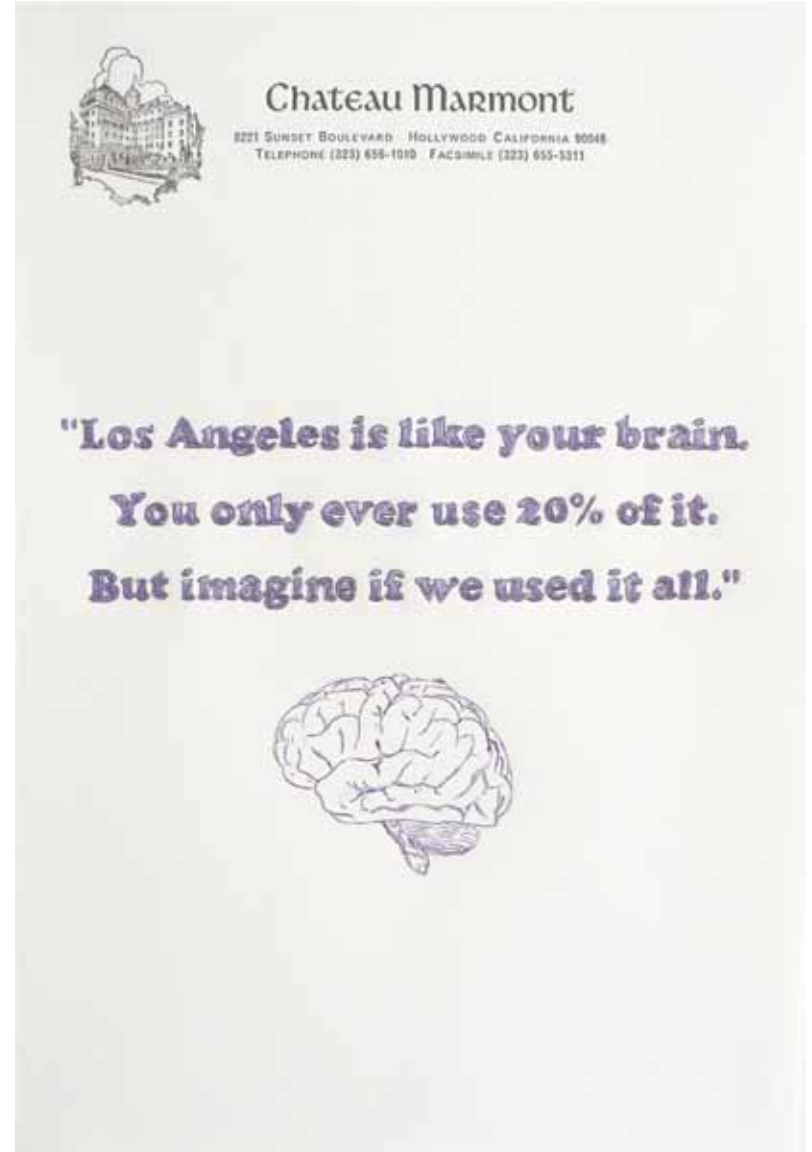
**Itsy Bitsy**  
2011, Ink and pencil crayon on  
vintage letterhead, 6.75" x 10"



Dolls  
2011, Ink on letterhead  
7.25" x 10.5"

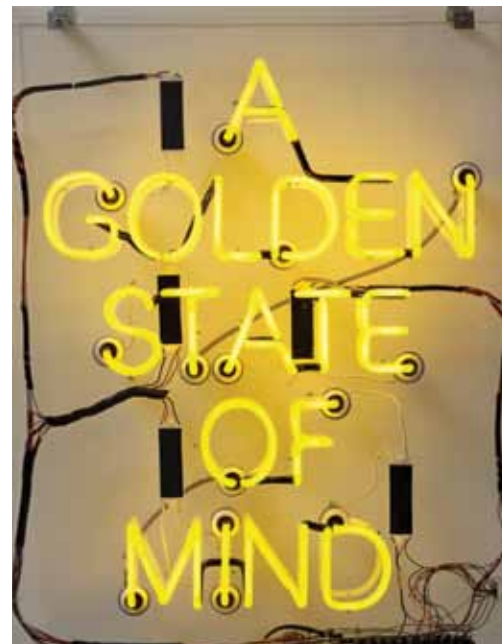
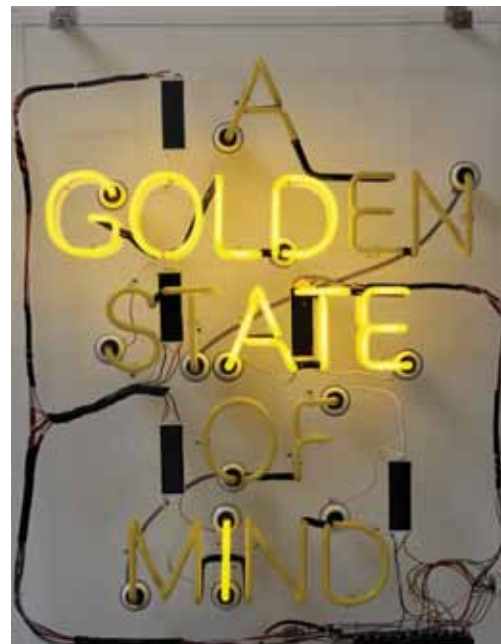
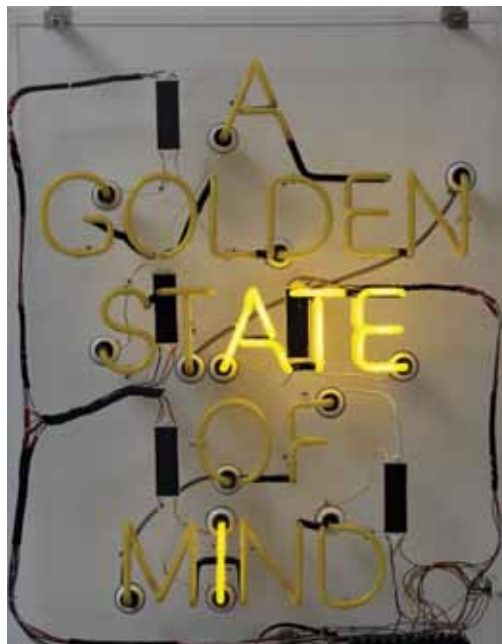
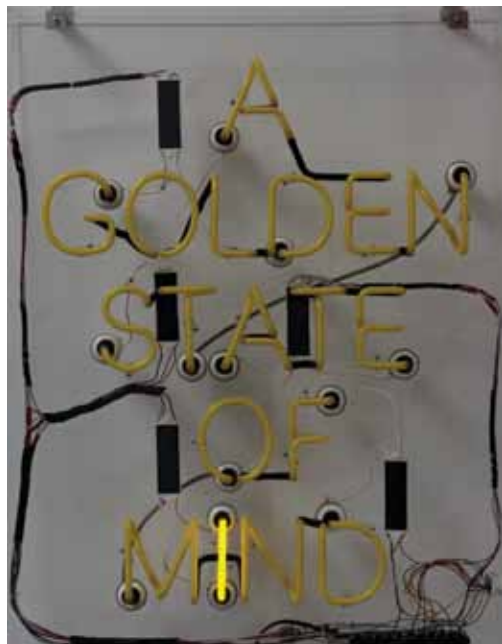


Capitol  
2011, Ink on letterhead  
7.25" x 10.5"



20%  
2011, Ink on letterhead  
7.25" x 10.5"





A Golden State of Mind  
2011, Neon  
Approx. 26" x 32"





A California Minute  
Installation



Marine Contemporary 004  
Jow: A California Minute

First edition published September 10, 2011  
Los Angeles, CA

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Design: October  
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