



Installation view: *Arbitrary Order*, Alexander Gray Associates, New York, 2023

Luis Camnitzer: *Arbitrary Order*

New York: January 19–February 25, 2023

Alexander Gray Associates, New York presents Luis Camnitzer: *Arbitrary Order*, the artist's seventh one-person exhibition with the Gallery. It debuts *A to Cosmopolite*, the first installment of an ongoing series in which Camnitzer annotates the dictionary using Google Maps. His combination of these reference tools questions cartography and lexicography as definitive systems of order, underscoring his career-long interrogation of authoritative systems.

Camnitzer began this new body of work in 2020 as a form of virtual travel amid the isolation wrought by the Covid-19 pandemic. It constitutes an unconventional portrait of the artist as generated by machine learning algorithms. The eclectic results are global in scope but skew to Camnitzer's personal search history and the location of his Long Island home.

A to Cosmopolite begins with a 1972 Webster's unabridged English dictionary. Word by word Camnitzer searches each entry in Google Maps. From there he captures a screenshot of the first result and incorporates that image onto the page alongside its corresponding definition. The outcome is a mapped dictionary that is less functional than either system on its own.

Most of the pairings between words and their locations are straightforward. Searches for "accountant" and "attorney" direct Camnitzer predictably to local professionals providing those services. However, revealing patterns and anomalies materialize across the breadth of the 678-page installation. Prejudiced terms like "aborigine" and "blackface" have physical sites—Aborigines Gully and Blackface Lake—that betray language as an instrument of

subjugation and the map as an index of colonization. Language is less direct in other examples. A query for “arrest” does not point to legal aid but to an exterminator called Arrest-a-Pest. Instead of providing resources for treatment, searches for “addict” and “addicted” turn up Hair Addict beauty salon and Addicted to Ink tattoo parlor, respectively. Characterizing his deadpan approach, Camnitzer does not editorialize these results. Rather, his “illustrated geography of meaning” beckons the viewer to reflect on how they use language to navigate the physical world.

Several works by Camnitzer dating back to the 1960s are also on view. Like *A to Cosmopolite*, they address the relationship between language and geography to question how, and by whom, meaning is formed. As Camnitzer declares, “More often than not, we end up believing that the order we create to make sense of things is in fact reality itself, and the system becomes our referent, rather than what has been systematized.”

Retrospectives of Camnitzer’s work have been presented at El Museo Nacional Centro de Arte Reina Sofía, Madrid, Spain (2018); Museo de Arte de la Universidad Nacional de Colombia, Bogotá (2012); El Museo del Barrio, New York, NY (2011); Daros Museum, Zurich, Switzerland (2010); Kunsthalle zu Kiel, Germany (2003); and Lehman College Art Gallery, Bronx, NY (1991). Camnitzer’s work has been the subject of one-person exhibitions at El Museo de la Memoria y los Derechos Humanos, Santiago, Chile (2013); Kemper Art Museum, St. Louis, MO (2011); El Museo del Barrio, New York, NY (1995); and Museo Carrillo Gil, Mexico City, Mexico (1993), among others. His work has been included in many group exhibitions, including *This Must Be the Place: Latin American Artists in New York, 1965–1975*, Americas Society, New York, NY (2020–21); *HOME—So Different, So Appealing*, Los Angeles County Museum of Art, CA, traveled to Museum of Fine Arts, Houston, TX (2017); *I am you, you are too*, Walker Art Center, Minneapolis, MN (2017); *Under the Same Sun: Art from Latin America Today*, Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum, New York, NY (2014); and *Information*, The Museum of Modern Art, New York, NY (1970). He has been featured in several international biennials, including the Bienal de la Habana, Cuba (2009, 1991, 1986, 1984); documenta 11, Kassel, Germany (2002); Whitney Biennial, New York, NY (2000); and Pavilion of Uruguay, 43rd Venice Biennale, Italy (1988). Camnitzer’s work is represented in the collections of the Centre Pompidou, Paris, France; The Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York, NY; Museo de Arte Contemporáneo de Castilla y León, Spain; El Museo del Barrio, New York, NY; Museum of Fine Arts, Houston, TX; The Museum of Modern Art, New York, NY; São Paulo Museum of Art, Brazil; Smithsonian American Art Museum, Washington, D.C.; Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum, New York, NY; Tate Modern, London, United Kingdom; Walker Art Center, Minneapolis, MN; and Whitney Museum of American Art, New York, NY, among others. His honors include the 2022 Francis J. Greenburger Award by Art Omi and the Guggenheim Fellowship in 1982 and 1961. From 1969–2000, he taught at the State University of New York (SUNY) College at Old Westbury, and is professor emeritus.

Alexander Gray Associates is a contemporary art gallery in New York City and Germantown, NY. Through exhibitions, research, and artist representation, the Gallery spotlights artistic movements and artists active in the twentieth and twenty-first century. Influential in cultural, social, and political spheres, these artists are notable for creating work that crosses geographic borders, generational contexts, and artistic disciplines. Alexander Gray Associates is an organization committed to anti-racist and feminist principles.

New York: Tuesday–Saturday, 10:30 AM–6:00 PM

Germantown: Friday–Saturday, 12:00 PM–6:00 PM, and by appointment