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Alexander Gray Associates, Germantown presents Bethany Collins: *Years*, an exhibition of recent work by the artist that maps the interconnection between loss and identity. Building on Collins's first exhibition with the Gallery in 2023, this focused presentation foregrounds her *Years* series—black, blind embossed prints of public notices placed by formerly enslaved individuals seeking loved ones.

The black paper used in these works obfuscates the notices' text, and, by extension, the missing family they describe. In this way, the dark, textured surfaces of prints like *Years, 1865 (The Black Republican) (2023)* force viewers to grapple with illegibility and the unknown—that which remains lost. Imbuing words with absence, Collins's *Years* transforms the act of reading into endless searching—a metamorphosis that echoes the subtext of the notices, themselves, as well as the actions of the men and women who first placed them.

Literalizing the connection between language and loss, the 2023 artist book *The Battle Hymn of the Republic: A Hymnal* physically excises paper from its binding until all that remains is, in the artist's words, "the dust of language." The book collates one hundred different versions of "The Battle Hymn of the Republic," a patriotic Union song written in the midst of the American Civil War, lasering out the shared score and leaving a charred corpus to past (in)cohesion. "[Erasure] makes me feel I can control a text that feels out of my hands," Collins explains. "I feel a physical mastering of language. By deciding what's legible, I'm dragging out the meaning already there." As such, Collins's *Southern Review* turns to erasure as a method for revealing meaning. Using charcoal to obscure the text of the venerable literary journal, the artist translates the language of redaction into a formalist play of black and white—a gesture that makes visible the ways in which race is embedded in its pages.

Collins ultimately uses language—and its absence—as a charged lens through which to critically examine history, uncovering hidden structures and identities. Her works collapse past and present, fracturing texts to rewrite American narratives. Collins concludes, "... struggling with the duality of language—its potential and inevitable failure to make sense of the world—remains the basis for my making."

Collins's work is the subject of a solo exhibition at the Seattle Art Museum, WA (2024), in recognition of her having won the museum's Gwendolyn and Jacob Lawrence Prize (2023). Her work is also included in the triennial *the future is present, the harbinger is home*, Prospect.6, New Orleans, LA (2024). Other recent one-person exhibitions include *Bethany Collins: Accord*, Jule Collins Smith Museum of Fine Arts, Auburn, AL (2023); *America: A Hymnal*, Crystal Bridges Museum of American Art, Bentonville, AK (2021); *Chorus*, Contemporary Art Museum St. Louis, MO (2019); and *Benediction*, The University of Kentucky Art Museum, Lexington, KY (2019). Other group exhibitions include *Monochrome Multitudes*, Smart Museum of Art, The University of Chicago, IL (2022); *The Dirty South: Contemporary Art, Material Culture, and the Sonic Impulse*, Virginia Museum of Fine Arts, Richmond, VA (2021), traveled to Contemporary Arts Museum Houston, TX (2021), Crystal Bridges Museum of American Art, Bentonville, AR (2022), and Museum of Contemporary Art Denver, CO (2022); and *Jacob Lawrence: The American Struggle*, Peabody Essex Museum, Salem, MA (2020), traveled to Seattle Art Museum, WA (2021) and The Phillips Collection, Washington, D.C. (2021), among others. Collins's work is represented in the collections of The Art Institute of Chicago, IL; Birmingham Museum of Art, AL; High Museum of Art, Atlanta, GA; The Morgan Library & Museum, New York, NY; Pennsylvania Academy of the Fine Arts Museum, Philadelphia, PA; Saint Louis Art Museum, MO; Smart Museum of Art, The University of Chicago, IL; Speed Art Museum, Louisville, KY; and The Studio Museum in Harlem, New York, NY, among others. She is the recipient of many awards and grants, including the Joan Mitchell Fellowship (2022); Lucas Artist Fellowship, Montalvo Arts Center, Saratoga, CA (2019); Artadia Award, Chicago, IL and Atlanta, GA (2019 and 2014); Illinois Arts Council Artist Fellowship, Chicago, IL (2019); Foundation for Contemporary Arts Emergency Grant, New York, NY (2018); and The Pollock-Krasner Foundation Grant (2015). Bethany Collins is also represented by PATRON Gallery, Chicago, IL.