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Arts, Culture and Innovation



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Clinton Hill Exhibition Displays Personal, Global History with Collages of Letters and Maps

By Anna Bradley-Smith (/author/anna-bradley-smith)

October 25, 2017, 3:35 pm

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Tillou Fine Art presents 'Remains to Be Seen,' a solo presentation of painting, collages and works on paper by Brooklyn-based artist John Spinks

Artist John Spinks with his work 'Condensed Books'

Distressed, tactile and functional materials are the foundation of Brooklyn-based artist John Spinks' solo exhibition "Remains to Be Seen," which opens at Tillou Fine Art gallery on Wednesday, October 25.

The exhibit explores the shifting relationship between “what we see” and “what we know” by joining letters, musical notes, maps and geometric forms, highlighting the affinity between writing and drawing as means of communication.

Original letters sent to Spinks from his father are featured in several pieces.

In his newest exhibition of paintings and collages, John Spinks prominently features personal letters from his late father in England. The letters, incorporated in several collages, serve as memorials– not just to the relationship between father and son, but also to domestic and world events.



Spinks said the pieces give him a chance to honor his father, who worked as a store-keeper in post-war Britain, in the way he should have been honored.



“My father didn’t have a great job, but he had a great mind,” said Spinks. “The thing that concerns me about the society that we live in: There are a lot of people who do incredible work on the frontline – doctors, nurses, people who clean, people who do menial tasks in a heroic manner – but you never hear anything about them.”

Spinks incorporates the letters within his drawings, creating collages that explore marks and display dimensions and depth, while celebrating the dying art of cursive script.

In some of his other exhibited works at Tillou, he uses a different way of expression, incorporating maps and patterns to display depth and landscape, while circles give a diurnal nature to the pieces. By connecting images and text out of the original “customary” context, Spinks makes the familiar unfamiliar.

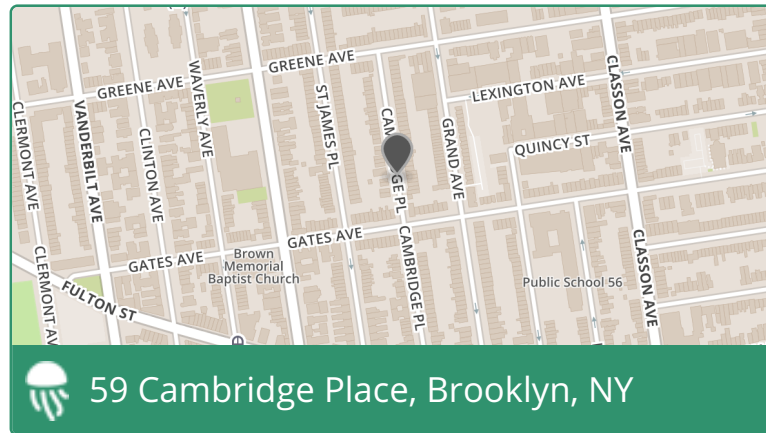
Yet, in a quest of familiarity, and as an immigrant who was born in Ireland and raised in Northern England, Spinks said, he needed to re-examine his culture to find out who he is. His father’s letters were essential to that journey of self-discovery.

Tillou Fine Art Gallery in Clinton Hill

“It’s a collaboration with a dead man,” Spinks said. “This was meat and drink to me because I was allowed to spend time with him.”

John Spinks’ exhibition ‘Remains to Be Seen’ opens on Wednesday, October 25 at [Tillou Fine Art](http://www.tilloufineart.com/artists/john-spinks) (<http://www.tilloufineart.com/artists/john-spinks>) with a reception

from 6:00pm to 9:00pm. Tillou Fine Art will hold a [salon \(http://www.tilloufineart.com/news/saturday-salon-remains-to-be-seen\)](http://www.tilloufineart.com/news/saturday-salon-remains-to-be-seen), John Spinks in conversation with Mimi Thompson, on Saturday, November 4.



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ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Anna Bradley-Smith

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Hi! I'm Anna Bradley-Smith and I'm a New Zealand import to Bed-Stuy. Before moving to the most vibrant city in the world I worked at a daily newspaper and national website in New Zealand, where I covered everything from council meetings, to court cases, to football. I love being a journalist and helping people keep in touch with their communities and be represented in their local news, so hit me up with your Bed-Stuy happenings - I'd love to chat.

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