



The Synopticon and the Unsaid Self

Henry Chung and Robert Walden

September 9 - October 30, 2026

Reception: Wednesday, September 9
5:30-7pm

Lesley Heller Windowspace

53 Orchard Street
New York, NY 10002
9am-6pm Mon-Sat

Closed Sunday

Lesley Heller returns to the Lower East Side with the opening of her new storefront exhibition space, Lesley Heller Windowspace. The name of this space references her first gallery, The Workspace located in SoHo back in the 1990s and early 2000s. Of her new venture Lesley says, "It is a place for artists to experiment, be curious and express new ideas. The storefront architecture presents artists a chance to engage a broader viewing public, try something new, challenge themselves and push their studio practice in unexpected directions."

The inaugural exhibition, *The Synopticon and the Unsaid Self* is a collaborative site-specific installation between artists Henry Chung and Robert Walden that reinterprets a work originally created at Building 408B on Governors Island, NYC, during the artists' 4 Heads Artist Residency in Fall 2022. The installation brings together two distinct but interconnected practices, exploring themes of identity, memory, time, and the nature of place.

Chung's electronic devices echo the news soundbites that punctuated our "Last Year", interpreted as the three years beginning with the onset the COVID pandemic. Rendered in Morse code on some devices (accessed by scanning a QR code with a smart phone), or letter-by-letter on an LED display, quotes that punctuated that period of time ("shelter in place", "I can't breath", "I have a family", "my body, my rights", "no one is above the law", "vote" and "why do we let this keep happening?") reflect a portrait of our collective identities. All together, they overwhelm us with a sense of urgency, but without a clear path forward. They are the cries for help that we see but can't decipher, hear but can't understand.

Walden uses the language of cartography as visual metaphors to explore ontology -- the metaphysical study of the nature of being. In his drawings each line is a representation of the moment it is drawn and each drawing is a representation of the network of moments that define a state of being. The collection of lines on the page also represent a fictional mostly urban landscape that perhaps allude to our collective consciousness. In the original 2022 installation he applied this language in mechanical pencil to the cracked, pitted and textured plaster walls of 408B Colonels Row as a technique to draw out the space's identity, history, and its own state of being. His video "fly-over" of one of those wall drawings titled *Ontological Surveillance Drone 092622 G.I. Recon. 7707-1*, is presented in *The Synopticon and the Unsaid Self*.

Together, the works reflect the unsettled period in which they were made, as the COVID-19 pandemic and its accompanying social upheavals reshaped our individual and collective experience. The installation considers how places, events, and memories accumulate over time, leaving traces that shape both our sense of self and our understanding of the world around us.