

SUSAN INGLETT GALLERY

LONGFORMS

Wilmer Wilson IV: Rest and Ruminaton

By Becket Gourlay



Installation view of *Embodied Lexicon* at Susan Inglett Gallery, NYC | Photo: Adam Reich

A collection of 12 chairs convene on the gallery floor, their seats waiting to be filled. Each is tagged with a single word or phrase: FUTURE, CRITIQUE, PLEASURE, I WANT. In Wilmer Wilson IV's *Embodied Lexicon*, these deceptively simple and thematically diverse concepts immediately incite a swirl of free association, identification, and consideration, while physically altering the body in space, bringing it to rest. This union of the corporeal and the written word is the crux of Wilson's exhibition, whose interests here lie in the simultaneous potency of language, its capacity and capability for connection, and even its inadequacies, forging new ways to communicate the unspoken.

A cornerstone of Wilson's practice is the disassembly of structures, be they social and intangible, or architectural and physical. The seen and unseen scaffolding that surrounds, supports, and both helps and hinders daily life is a site of tension, and Wilson probes at it with a minimalist, bare sensibility, often working with elemental media such as concrete, metal, and wood. These materials inherit their utilitarian condition from their applications in modern life, inevitably representing change, progress, creation, and the like.

Birch plywood is the chosen material for the chairs in *Embodied Lexicon*, minimally lacquered and unstained. They are spare and simple, and this simplicity and symmetry are vital to their appraisal. Wilson denotes their design as "modular" and "identical," suggesting the gatherings that take place in municipal or institutional spaces, yet their ergonomic construction also nods to the domestic, originally designed as purely functional dining room seating. This intentional level of comfort suggests that the participant is welcome to rest and ponder for as long as they please, while their

visual similitude is indicative of universality and approachability. These are not preciously ornate thrones nor unforgiving church pews, but art objects with obvious function and hospitable form.



Embodied Lexicon (FUTURE), 2026

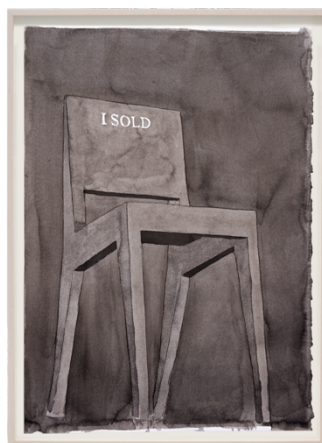
Wilson's artistic interests also lie in the invisible structures that we live within, identifying the many chutes, ladders, and barriers that exist for many. In much of his work, Wilson redefines political and cultural systems by toying with presence and absence, or ephemerality and permanence. In *Embodied Lexicon*, Wilson experiments with linguistic systems, the weight and power of words. These chosen words have generally agreed-upon definitions and applications, yet each participant presents their own interpretation of them, based on lived experience. No two viewers will experience the work identically due to preconception and context, and Wilson highlights this dissonance as a feature, not a bug, asserting collectivity and communion; definitions may differ, but the power rests in what is shared.

Across the twelve chairs in the gallery, lexical topics range from emotive (PLEASURE or RAGE) to subjective (I SOLD and I WANT). These were all selected for their accessibility, entry points for any participant. Each word or phrase is a comprehensive idea on its own, but also able to be strung together and approached collectively. In this way, the chairs become like words themselves, functional in isolation but flourishing in company.

Language inherently resists tangibility, but Wilson defies this by yoking them to the physical condition, altering the body's placement in space in concert with the consumption of and contemplation of his chosen words. Not only do the themes become unavoidably top of mind, but there is also an added level of scrutiny, in which the participant personally and publicly identifies with their chosen word or phrase. Out of the twelve available options, just one becomes associated with the sitter, revealing to those present a predilection for or identification with a certain sentiment. The choice becomes a wordless expression of interiority, something potentially more difficult to voice than the simple act of taking a seat.



ACTION, 2026



I SOLD, 2026



PRESSURE, 2026

The inclusion of the accompanying ink drawings further complicates. Depicting the same chairs, a fresh set of words is introduced. This muddies the waters, inevitably tethering two potentially disparate concepts together. The experience of a participant sitting in DEATH and gazing upon WILDERNESS will ostensibly vary wildly from another sitting in PLEASURE and looking at PRAISE. These sinuous, mismatched connections are the exercise, existing in the moments of pause and respite that the chairs demand.

In the drawings, each chair is rendered from a specific, low angle, turning the simple and recognizable forms into monolithic objects, elevated to a place of reverence. The drawings are both spectral and architectural, as clean lines stand out from their gray-washed backdrops, ranging from pale to near-black. Their angularity is contrasted by the soft, atmospheric wash of Sumi ink that surrounds them, an ink that was a conscious choice due to its historical application in calligraphy. Wilson posits that "ink is akin to speech - speech exits the body in a line, and once spoken, it cannot be put back or undone. Similarly, ink differs from watercolor or other drawing media in that it can't be removed from the paper once applied."

This immediacy is integral to an audience's consumption and selection of the chairs, the aspect of choice directly influencing one's experience of the works. The exhibition asks for conversation, both with ourselves and those seated around us. Just as their original purpose was that of gathering and togetherness, the exhibition seeks to foster the same.



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