

Nancy Dwyer **ALWAYS** June 5 – August 1, 2025

Ortuzar is pleased to present *Nancy Dwyer ALWAYS*, a solo exhibition surveying four decades of work by American artist Nancy Dwyer (b. 1954, New York). The exhibition brings together paintings and sculptures from the 1980s to the present, tracking the evolution of the artist's wry and incisive experimentation with language as form.

Dwyer mines contemporary American media and pop culture for material. Spanning painting, sculpture and site-specific installation, Dwyer's practice appropriates the visual and verbal codes of American mass media—from billboard slogans and product design to television tropes and tabloid material—reconfiguring its language and imagery into punchy, potent objects that unsettle as much as they entertain. By giving words physical form displaced from their original contexts and formats, she imbues otherwise banal statements with enigmatic associations, surpassing their original commercial purposes. Dwyer stages physical interactions with language—treating words not solely as carriers of meaning but as material forms that can be reconfigured—in order to expose the instability of shared signs. The artist suggests that in their shape, weight and presence, words might yield new meanings and affects beyond the ones we're conditioned to expect.

Starting in the early 1980s, Dwyer distilled appropriated images into pictograms: a girl contorted into a yoga pose becomes an icon. Later in the decade, she transfigures words into sculptural objects to create visual puns, such as "ENVY," which takes the form of an executive desk, or a cage-like structure spelling "BODY." Paintings from this period manipulate familiar visual designs found in advertisements and science textbooks, or distort marketing jargon. Dwyer's most recent paintings, from 2023 to the present, emulate the television screen with text graphics reminiscent of news or sports broadcasting, even featuring swiveling wall mounts. Since the 2000s, shaped paintings similarly employ trompe l'oeil to create the illusion of text protruding or receding into space, such as in *Deep III* (2006) or a new work *High Relief* (2025).

Dwyer emerged in the 1980s as a member of the Pictures Generation, a group of artists known for their critical engagement with mass media. In 1974, alongside peers including Cindy Sherman, Robert Longo and Charles Clough, Dwyer co-founded Hallwalls, an interdisciplinary artists cooperative in Buffalo, New York. She moved to New York in 1976, where she was based for many years. From 2004 to 2020, Dwyer held a teaching position at the University of Vermont, Burlington. She now lives and works in Santa Fe.

Dwyer has been the subject of institutional solo exhibitions at the Kunsthalle Winterthur, Switzerland (2024), and the Fisher Landau Center for Art, Long Island City, NY (2013). She has been included in notable group exhibitions such as *The Pictures Generation, 1974–1984*, Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York (2009); *Sign Language*, The Museum of Contemporary Art, Los Angeles (2004); *Bad Girls*, New Museum, New York (1994); *Word as Image: American Art 1960–1990*, Contemporary Arts Museum, Houston; Milwaukee Art Museum, Wisconsin; and the Oklahoma City Museum (1990–1991); the Whitney Biennial 1987, Whitney Museum of American Art, New York (1987); and *Art and Media*, The Renaissance Society, University of Chicago (1982). Dwyer's work is held in the collections of The Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York; Museum of Contemporary Art, Los Angeles; The Walker Art Center, Minneapolis; the Buffalo AKG Art Museum, New York; The Art Institute of Chicago; and the Burchfield Penney Art Center, Buffalo, among others.

The gallery thanks Jordan Barse of Theta, New York for her research and assistance in mounting this exhibition.