

A. K. Burns

CALLICOON FINE ARTS
 49 Delancey Street
 February 26–April 9

Outsiders are not welcome: A forbidding fence obscures the view through the front window of the gallery. Two more like it appear throughout the space, each patterned with barely legible phrases à la Donald Rumsfeld: Known known, known unknown, and unknown unknown. In the exhibition “Fault Lines,” A. K. Burns reflects on the power of language to colonize our physical realities with political polarities. A picture of the Dakota Access Pipeline crawls like a blind, wormy beast through the sunshine landscapes of the show’s press release, while *Better Off Without You* (all works cited, 2017) is a suite of adhesive prints that transpose newspaper images of the terrain surrounding the pipeline. A page from the *New York Times* is overlaid with an imprisoning and painterly grid in *Post Times (Weather Report)*.

Burns inscribes these images of our current dystopia with phrases that are frightening precisely for their actuality and absurdity: Here, Rumsfeld’s puzzling wordplay on whether or not Iraq was supplying “weapons of mass destruction” to terrorist groups literally becomes barriers. Mitch McConnell’s comment on Elizabeth Warren being shut down in the Senate as she argued against Jeff Sessions’s appointment to the post of attorney general inflames *She Was Warned*, the artist’s sculpture of Artemis, the Greek goddess of hunting and childbirth. The sculpture *You’re Fired* features this famously bloviating phrase from our current president, floating up from a foot like a happy-go-lucky manacle chain. The language of spin and debasement never ceases: The “known unknowns” of yesterday are the “alternative facts” of today. Burns’s barricades guard our borderlines, conceal the truth, and cut us off from the rest of the world. Ignorance is its own conviction, but the margin by which Hillary Clinton won the popular vote says that we are not all true believers.



A. K. Burns, *She Was Warned*, 2017, cement hydrocal mix, concrete, rebar, steel wire, steel concrete reinforcement, plastic, pigmented resin, 73 x 25 x 12".

— Nicole Kaack