

CHORUS

Language does not begin with the signs that one gives, with words. Language is above all the fact of being addressed ... which means the saying much more than the said.

– Emmanuel Levinas, 1988

The classical origin of the word *culture* comes from the Latin root, *cultura*, meaning literally cultivation. First used by Cicero speaking of the cultivation of the soul, the word came in time to refer to the betterment of individuals and the development of universal human capacity. Culture is built upon and with the languages of people, their aural and written documents collectively produced and shared. It is in words that recognition is made and ideas are formed. The names of people and events are carved into stone and remembered. Whether brought about by elective succession or conflict, governmental and generational thresholds are crossed with speeches, promises and the repetition of ritualized oaths. The legal foundation of contemporary civic institutions recognizes and protects rights crafted in a belief in words' covenanting power. Poets use words to remind us of where we are and imagine a future we can't yet touch.

This project is a field of text woven from nationally and internationally authored declarations of human rights and independence set in monochromatic stone and glass mosaic. The debossed letterforms are organized in a concordance, which crosses vertical spine words with horizontal phrases according to their frequency in a text. The spine words come from the preamble of the Declaration of Independence. The horizontal lines represent the occurrence of these principal words in the United Nations Universal Declaration of Human Rights set in a contemporary design of Trajan, the classical letter form that wreaths the column commemorating a ruler known not only as a soldier-emperor but as a benevolent philanthropic leader of social welfare policies.

A concordance is also an agreement, a harmony. In this concordance, the woven text forms a white-on-white tactile surface that frames and brackets the subway platforms and the movement of the city through the site. It is a continuous field from which the eye, in passing, focuses on words that aggregate in the readers' mind. In the repetition, a chorus, and a refrain, sounds: everyone, equal, rights,... These underground crossings of texts and people are the social, legal and institutional pillars that underlay cultural life above ground.

–Ann Hamilton