

Mark Van Yetter

## GETTING THE PICTURE

In 1929, German neurosurgeon Otrid Foerster performed surgery on a conscious patient who during operation on his midbrain began to uncontrollably blurt puns and sound associations at the doctor. Though disjointed, the patient's utterances reflected an awareness of his condition as a subject undergoing surgery yet immediately proliferated into an unexpected series of connections through language and sound.

Thought of as the basis for metaphorical thinking, these leaps in logic rely on a kind of lateral deviation beginning at one subjective point and its departure into the realm of contingent associations æ surfing on coincidences, contradictions, reversals, and juxtapositions.

The work of artist Mark Van Yetter draws on these associative sequences, relating to the tipping point at which formalism becomes untethered to reveal multiple possibilities while referring to the underlying impossibility (absurdity) of its original premise.<sup>1</sup>

This is where the construction and operations of a pun come into play æ the deliberate conflation and misuse of language, sounds, and symbols to logically improbable effect. Yetter's practice employs this strategy, pointing to a lexicon of staid art formalisms and the risky limit at which the very destabilizing maneuvers become an easily recitable pun.

<sup>1</sup> Known as Foerster Syndrome or *Witzelsucht* derived from the German *witzel(ei)* meaning pun or joke, and *sucht* meaning addiction or yearning.