

Lynne McCabe
Room to be (Ms.)understood:
A Social Sculpture Workshop



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August 28–December 4, 2012

Social relations and experience-as-medium play an increasingly important role in contemporary art, as many artists orchestrate social gestures and services as primary modes of working. In *Room to be (Ms.)understood*, multi-disciplinary artist Lynne McCabe aims to interrogate the origins and genealogies of these practices by looking to an often neglected history of feminist writing, performance, and site-specific interventions from the 1970s. McCabe's method is pedagogical and interactive, transforming Blaffer's Media Gallery into an incubator where the artist leads participants through a series of lectures, performances, and workshops in collaboration with visiting artists and scholars.

All meetings take place in the Media Gallery of Blaffer Art Museum (2nd floor) on Tuesday evenings from 5:30–8:30pm unless otherwise noted. Participation in *Room to be (Ms.)understood: A Social Sculpture Workshop* is available to students of the University of Houston enrolled in IART 3365-6395 and open to the general public. To reserve a spot for individual classes or the entire series of events, please call 713.743.2043. For more information on the minor in interdisciplinary arts offered by the Cynthia Woods Mitchell Center for the Arts, visit www.mitchellcenterforthearts.org.

COURSE SCHEDULE

Friday, August 24:
Project Kick-Off Reception
 Reception to introduce the public and the University to the project with introductory remarks from artist and curator. Blaffer Media Gallery, 5:30–7:30pm. Learn about *Room to be (Ms.)understood* and discover ways to participate throughout the fall semester.

August 28:
Course Orientation
 The premise of *Room to be (Ms.)understood* is to create a space that privileges alternate forms of knowledge production. Using divergent frameworks, including but not limited to, conversation, performance, collaboration, lectures and panel discussions, we will coalesce a rich body of knowledge that will have an afterlife as an artist book published by Blaffer Art Museum.

September 4:
A Brief History of Feminist Art Practices
 This class meeting will be a conversation tracing the trajectory of feminist thinking in the larger social arena. We will pay particular attention to the social and political events surrounding feminist art practices.

September 11:
Retracting Relational Aesthetics
 This class will overview and recontextualize Relational Aesthetics, a term first used by curator and critic Nicolas Bourriaud to describe a group of artists who were making art about connectivity and social relationships in the early 1990s.

September 18:
Any Theory of the "Subject" Has Always Been Appropriated by the "Masculine"
 Luce Irigaray is a Belgian born philosopher who received her Masters degree in Philosophy and Art from the University of Louvain in Belgium in 1955. In 1960 she moved to France to study psychology at the University of Paris where she received a Masters degree in 1961. During the decade that followed she trained and became a psychoanalyst under the tutelage of Jacques Lacan. In 1974, while studying at the Ecole Freudienne de Paris she published her second doctoral thesis, *Speculum of the Other Woman*. A controversial text, Irigaray lays forth an argument describing the formation of female subjectivity as being forever tied to the masculine as the direct result of the pervasive cultural sexism in the use of language. Irigaray questions in particular the sexist foundations of psychoanalytic theory. Her thesis resulted in her expulsion from her position at the University of Vincennes and her subsequent rise to prominence in the European woman's movement. *Room to be (Ms.)understood* takes an excerpted chapter of Irigaray's text and prints it directly on the gallery walls, inscribing them into the academic institution Blaffer represents. The text will transform the gallery into an incubator for the production of new knowledge developed during the workshop.

September 25:
Framing the Concepts and Content of the Book, Part 1
Room to be (Ms.)understood will have an afterlife as a Blaffer publication. The book will be a document of the labors, gestures and exchanges of the workshop. Documentation strategies, art historical narratives and the use of language are core inquiries of *Room to be (Ms.)understood* and the resulting publication will explore these concerns in both subject and design. The publication will be released in the fall of 2013.

In this class we will explore the possibilities of what the artist book can be by focusing on alternative writing practices and knowledge production. We will also install an onsite library of books that inspire and influence us.

October 2 and October 9:
Visiting artist: Wynne Greenwood
 We are extremely excited to have Wynne Greenwood visit the class for two weeks. Wynne is a queer feminist artist working with video, performance, music, object, role and relationships. Her work has been included in performances and exhibitions at independent and institutional spaces internationally, including the Tate Modern, the Whitney Biennial, the Frye Art Museum, The Kitchen and On the Boards. Best known for her work with Tracy and the Plastics, she has also worked collectively with artist K8Hardy under the name LTRR (Lesbians To The Rescue). She currently teaches at Seattle University. She received her MFA in 2004 from the Milton Avery Graduate School for the Arts, Bard College, Annandale-on-Hudson, NY. Over the course of her visit Wynne will present her work to the students and create a collaborative artwork with the class.

October 16:
Framing the Concepts and Content of the Book, Part 2
 This evening's class will be dedicated to the discussion of proposals for book contributions.

October 23:
Visiting artist: Leslie Labowitz-Starus
 It is a privilege to host Leslie Labowitz as visiting artist this week via Skype. Leslie is best known for her groundbreaking feminist art and activism created in Los Angeles in the 1970s. Collaborating with Suzanne Lacy, they together created some of the most important feminist art of the decade. Her performance and collaborative work *Sprout Time*, begun in 1980, is an early example of an eco-feminist practice that was to inform such contemporary projects as *Fallen Fruit*, an artist collaborative based in Los Angeles and *Future Farmers*, based in San Francisco. Leslie will present her work to the students.

October 30 and November 6:
Visiting artist: Carolina Caycedo
 We are fortunate to have the wonderful Carolina Caycedo skydiving in to the class for two consecutive weeks. Carolina's work excavates a space for viewer and artist to meet through intimate moments of exchange. She uses the primary economy of bartering to engage with wider societal issues of migration, immigration and globalization. Carolina has shown extensively, both nationally and internationally, including the 2006 Whitney Biennial, the 2003 Venice Biennale and Manifesta 4. Carolina will present her work to the students and create a collaborative artwork engaging a number of different publics.

November 13:
OPEN TO THE PUBLIC
Participation and Feminist Strategies: Excavating a Forgotten Legacy, a panel discussion with Jack Apple, Elizabeth Gregory, and Lynne McCabe, with Jenni Sorokin moderating
 5:30pm, Media Gallery, Blaffer Art Museum, 2nd floor
 This panel aims to interrogate the origins and genealogies of contemporary art practices that operate under the rubric of social practice. Drawing on the legacy and influence of Luce Irigaray and her contemporaries in the 1970s who were engaged in feminist strategies of performance and installation, the panel will ask why these women's works have been overlooked in the dominant art historical narrative surrounding Relational Aesthetics.

Since 1971 multi-disciplinary artist and educator Jack Apple's diverse artistic career has encompassed a wide range of media and forms, including but not limited to, multimedia installations, interdisciplinary performance, audio, radio, photography, video, film, artist books, drawings, site specific works, and public art projects. She co-founded and curated exhibitions and performance at Franklin Furnace in New York City from 1976–80. She is a professor at Art Center College of Design in Pasadena, CA where has she been a faculty member since 1983. She is currently preparing four decades of her archives for the Archives of American Art at the Smithsonian Institute in Washington, DC. Her ongoing web archive can be seen at www.jackapple.com.

Elizabeth Gregory is Professor in the English Department and Director of Women's, Gender & Sexuality Studies at the University of Houston.

Jenni Sorokin is Assistant Professor of Contemporary Art and Critical Studies in the School of Art at the University of Houston.

Wednesday, November 14:
OPEN TO THE PUBLIC
"Working with Social Works" A public lecture by Shannon Jackson followed by a conversation with Lynne McCabe
 6:30pm, Media Gallery, Blaffer Art Museum, 2nd floor
 Shannon Jackson is the Richard and Rhoda Goldman Distinguished Professor in the Arts and Humanities in the Departments of Rhetoric and of Theater, Dance and Performance Studies at the University of California, Berkeley. She is also currently the Director of the Arts Research Center at Berkeley. Jackson's most recent book is *Social Works: Performing Art, Supporting Politics* (2011); she is also working on a book about The Builders Association.

November 20: No Class
November 27:
Framing the Concepts and Content of the Book, Part 3
 In this class we will review the class's documentation and workshop contributions for the artist book generated by *Room to be (Ms.)understood*. We will determine an editorial framework for the publication.

December 4:
Conclusion of Workshop
 The final class is an open forum for participants to engage in an open dialogue about the workshop and assess and critique their experience.



Jacki Apple and Martha Wilson, from *Transformance*, Claudia, 1973



Leslie Labowitz-Starus, *Sprout Time*, 1983

All images courtesy of the artists.



Carolina Caycedo, *Leila Kahled*, 2002



Wynne Greenwood, *Culture Keeper* (video still), 2012



Temporary Services, *11 People 16 Spaces / How To Guerrilla Art*, 2006

Originally from Scotland, Lynne McCabe received her MFA in Social Practice from the California College of the Arts in 2010 and her BA with honors from the Glasgow School of Art in 1999.

Lynne McCabe, *Room to be (Ms.)understood: A Social Sculpture Workshop* is a collaboration between Blaffer Art Museum and the Cynthia Woods Mitchell Center for the Arts. The public events are co-sponsored by the Center for Creative Work in The Honors College and by Women's, Gender and Sexuality Studies.

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