
SIGNATURE APPEARANCES

Dear Cindy, Amanda and Holly,

As I begin writing, signing and appearing on the page, I realize I am only beginning to know your work. I first learned about it via the channels of the art world: viewing photos and slides, textual descriptions and emails. Through time, attention, imagination, conversation, the partial and circuitous paths of the art scenes, of art histories, I am becoming more familiar with you and your work. At the time I write this, I have only met Cindy, when I saw your work in 1998 (a text and textiles installation in Edmonton.) I recall you said smart things, which now escape me, I am embarrassed to say.

Though I am always looking for something, both consciously and not, your work recently appeared to me as part of an invitation to participate in programming at The New Gallery. As an avid letter writer, I am often looking for correspondences and new correspondents. As a performance art lover, I am always looking for new acts (and old ones): especially actions that fall outside the margins, hide behind the furniture, are so ubiquitous they are almost invisible. I am interested in the performative in everyday life: how particular things get framed, frozen or chosen as the art, the focus, the thing.

When you consider all of the steps or processes an artist goes through to create a work, I find it interesting how and what they choose to present publicly. For the past few years in my own art and writing I have tried, as an exercise, to document (mostly with photography) all moments of my production. It allows me to get a more encompassing view of what I do and find out what is most interesting about it. I often wonder, where does a work end? At the edge of the wall? When the exhibition is over? When conversation and materials run out?

At one point in the production of each of your works comes a meeting with the walls. For display purposes, for support, for hiding behind. Each of your works touches or

hits the wall for a period of time, before it moves into other hands, or other spaces. Though the history of relationships between art and walls is very old, I still wonder how the phrase "wallworks" entered art parlance. I remember first hearing an artist from California saying it in the late 80s, and wondered, "How can you say that phrase so casually, like it was a given category?"

I recently came across a passage about walls by Georges Perec:

I put a picture up on a wall. Then I forget there is a wall. I no longer know what there is behind this wall, I no longer know there is a wall, I no longer know this wall is a wall, I know longer know what a wall is. I no longer know that in my apartment there are walls, and that if there weren't any walls, there would be no apartment. The wall is no longer what delimits and defines the place where I live, that which separates it from the other places where other people live, it is nothing more than a support for the picture. But I also forget the picture, I no longer look at it, I no longer know how to look at it. I have put the picture on the wall so as to forget there was a wall, but in forgetting the wall, I forget the picture too. There are pictures because there are walls. We have to be able to forget there are walls, and have found no better way to do that than pictures. Pictures efface walls. But walls kill pictures. So we need continually to be changing, either the wall or the picture, to be forever putting other pictures up on the walls, or else constantly moving the picture from one wall to another.

We could write on our walls (as we sometimes write on the fronts of houses, on fences round building sites and on the walls of prisons), but we do it only very rarely.

When I am reading a book (or an artwork) that touches my heart and mind, I find I often flip to the author's photo (or imagine the artist) and wonder how that person could have written (created) what I just read. What was going on in their life; who were they trying to reach? What were their writing and living habits? Perhaps I am interested in shop talk. Perhaps I am looking for camaraderie or friendship. I am curious about how other people live and

create in the world, how they meet their challenges and transform their lives.

The verbs ?to deliver? and ?to touch? come to mind first when I think of the objects you have produced. Other verbs include: to send, to cast on, to cast off, to invite, to confer, to exchange, to link, to correspond, to imagine, to philosophize, to declare, to be (amenable), to hide, to display, to emerge, to disappear, to be present, to present, to labour, to embroider, to draw, to figure, to announce, to attempt, to trace, to attend to, to engage, to take time, to repeat, to copy, to do (business, but not business as usual), to sign on, to sign off, to hold, to fictionalize, to be real.

I read somewhere (Derrida?) that a signature signifies or promises a debt will be paid. If this is true, your work acts like a countersignable cheque, but for an unnameable type of currency in an unaccountable amount. A signature is also a trace of a presence, a potential sign of something witnessed. Though each of your singular experiences informs your work, what holds me to it (beside its intelligence and beauty) is the potential for participation: you throw me a line.

What holds me to Holly's work is a kind of inside/outside call and response. The images and texts on your pillowcases allow me to shift my focus back and forth between domestic life in ?interior? ecologies and animal life in ?wilderness? ecologies. They lead me to wonder how these ecologies or spaces inform each other, and how they might depend on each other in the future, in more mutually healthy ways. Your work depends on the work of commercial pillowcase-makers, commercial embroiderers (who render the text), and audience members to complete it. It involves both the time of industry, and that of individuals, who are invited to add their own daily rhythm, or agenda to the work. I wonder how sleeping on pillowcases like these might effect people's dreams and subsequent waking hours?

What holds me to Cindy's work - besides the way it might function as a virtual map of her travels - is the questions it raises about modes of communication, decorum and community. Your work depends both on the work of commercial

telegram companies, and on an awareness or mapping of events in the art community. The thing that keeps me wondering the most, however, is this disembodied voice embedded in the telegram texts (who you describe as an ?arrogant ex-pat?). Though you have signed the work with your name, you appear literally from the past (the time it takes to send and receive a telegram) and through an (almost) past means of transmission. This conjures ideas of time-travel, cultural currency and obsolescence, in relation to history, technologies and art institutions. It makes me wonder about careerism in relation to community service.

As in Holly?s and Cindy?s work, the use of everyday materials allows me an entrance to Amanda?s work. What holds me here is the ambiguity and repetition of the activities. The actions of crafting the rubber band balls and of the writing on the walls evoke memories of women?s labour from (at least) the greater part of the 20th century (for instance, knitting and stenography). Your objects and writings act as decoys for the activities behind the wall, before the wall, simultaneously restoring images of the artist as labourer and as alchemist. You?ve created holding patterns, where time allows meanings to emerge.

If I were an astrologer or predicator, I would write this: You shift and intensify your relationships with your audiences through subtle placements of presences and absences. At least this is what I predict, or believe will happen, is happening, though the details remain to appear.

Sincerely,

Joanne