

Suzanne McClelland:
Furtive Gesture_CEDepart2

October 18 through December 14, 2013

The exhibition and related publication are made possible with major support from the UAlbany Office of the President, Office of the Provost, The University at Albany Foundation, University Auxiliary Services, and the Ellsworth Kelly Foundation.

Museum Hours:

Tuesday: 10 AM – 8 PM; Wednesday – Friday: 10 AM – 5 PM
Saturday: 12 – 4 PM; Closed Thursday, November 28.
Telephone: 518-442-4035 | www.albany.edu/museum

COVER: *Carry On*, 2011, digital video, installation view
BELOW: *Furtive Gesture*, 2013, installation view, University Art Museum, University at Albany

Artist Biography

Suzanne McClelland was born in Jacksonville, Florida in 1959 and lives and works in Brooklyn, New York. Recent solo exhibitions include *Every Inch of My Love* at Team (gallery, inc.) in New York City (2013); *STrAY* at University of Virginia Art Museum in Charlottesville, Virginia (2013); *Scratch* at Shane Campbell Gallery in Chicago (2010); and *TOY* at Galerie Andres Thalmann in Zurich, Switzerland (2010). Selected group exhibitions include *Frieze Art Fair New York* at Shane Campbell Gallery in Chicago (2013); *NYC 1993 Experimental Jet Set, Trash and No Star* at The New Museum of Contemporary Art in New York City (2013); *The Master Printer and the Collaborative Process: Collaborations from the Print Studio at IPCNY* in New York City (2012); *Kind of Blue* at Larissa Goldston Gallery in New York City (2012); *Loughelton Revisited*, curated by Barbara Broughel at Winkleman Gallery in New York City (2012); *Invitational Exhibition of Visual Arts* at American Academy of Arts and Letters in New York City (2012); and *Art from the Heart* at Weatherspoon Art Museum in Greensboro, North Carolina (2012).

Acknowledgements

The artist would like to acknowledge Dean Dass, Theresa Friess, Kate Gilmore, Zheng Hu, Kim Kay, Janet Riker, Corinna Schaming, Drew Vogelman, Jeffrey Wright-Sedam, Garrett, Lucas, Alice, and Craig



Exhibition Checklist

CEDE, 2013

Deluxe Edition unbound book in U.S. Army steel ammunition box. Hand printed accordion pages on various papers, edition of twelve. 7 x 11 x 4 inches

Published by Virginia Arts of the Book Center, Charlottesville, Virginia

Foedus, 2013

Handmade bound book, edition of forty. 9 x 6 inches and 15-handmade bound books
Various sizes

Collaboration with Artist/Professor Dean Dass' students, University of Virginia. G.S. Queen supervised the printing; Kristin Adolfsen provided layout and design. Student research and printing teams: Mary Wells Ball, Courtney Dobrucky, Kate Farrell, Will Frazier, Elise Virginia Heartwell, Alli Herget, Caleb Jang, Victoria Kornick, Elizabeth Y. Pak, Thomas Pierce, Kana Saechout, Kiyoko Timmons, Alessandra van der Meulen, Alison Westfall. Printing and collating was concluded during the summer of 2013 by Shailagh Kennedy.

Furtive Gesture, 2013

with assistance from Kim Kay
Mixed media drawings, prints, and photographs on various papers
Dimensions variable

Untitled, 2013

Site-specific installation with scrim from Alice Tully Hall, videos, and sound tracks:

BWP SWYPE, 2011

Digital video, 2:06 minutes; color
Footage from Bytches With Problems' music video "We Want Money," 1991, Lyndah McCaskell and Tanisha Michelle, looped with

Carry On, 2011

Digital video, 8:57 minutes; color
Footage from Bytches With Problems' music video "Wanted," 1990, Hans Namuth and Paul Falkenberg's documentary *Jackson Pollock 51*, and Paolo Cavara, Gualtiero Jacopetti and Franco Proserpi's documentary *Mondo Cane*.

Part I soundtrack: *Wanted*, 1991 by Bytches With Problems (Lyndah McCaskell and Tanisha Michelle), with sample from *For the Love of Money*, 1973 by The O'Jays.
Part II soundtrack: Morton Feldman's score for the film *Jackson Pollock 51* by Hans Namuth and Paul Felkenberg with cello performed by Paul Stern.
Part III soundtrack: Audio from the film *Mondo Cane* by Paolo Cavara, Gualtiero Jacopetti and Franco Proserpi featuring Yves Klein's *Monotone Symphony*, 1962.

Blind Contours at Tobey's Pawn Shop, 2012

Digital video, 3:30 minutes; black and white; no sound

Current Models, 2012

Digital video, 2:44 minutes; black and white; no sound

Erase You, 2011

Digital video, 59 seconds; color; sound
Footage from the original TV series "I Dream of Jeannie" and "Bewitched," 1965-1970

Sweep for Dana Birnbaum, 2011

Digital video, 58 seconds; color; sound
Footage from the original TV series "Wonder Woman," 1964-1972

All videos with assistance from Theresa Friess
All works courtesy of the artist, Team (gallery, inc.), and Shane Campbell Gallery



ABOVE AND LEFT: *Furtive Gesture* (details), 2013

Suzanne McClelland

Furtive Gesture_CEDepart2



Suzanne McClelland

On the occasion of their concurrent one-person exhibitions at the University Art Museum, artists Suzanne McClelland and Kate Gilmore interviewed each other via email. Summer 2013

Kate Gilmore: Suzanne! As you know, you've heard from me a thousand times. I'm a huge fan. I love the intense energy in your work, the feeling of the personal in each brush stroke, the social con-

sciousness in everything you do. To start this interview off, could you talk about how you go about starting a new piece? Your process, how you begin?

Suzanne McClelland: I always start by gathering sound sources and fragments of speech, which I translate into visual material so that original context is lost. I treat them as "real" observed or found things. These bits of speech and sound come in the form of both drawing and writing. Any "social consciousness" that is read in the work comes from observation; I listen and I look out at the world.

When I draw out a physical space or surface for action it's a kind of landscape for movement, a place for the ingredients to bump up against each another to dissolve, merge, or combine. Action usually leaves a trail or trace of itself...it's affected by gravitational tension that might occur between line and liquid. In the case of *Furtive Gesture*, the piece

falls within the lineage of Robert Rauschenberg's use of *Rebus*. The [Albany] installation is intended to be displayed as a horizontal list or a line of painted and drawn images, writing and photographs running the circumference of the space, so that one must actually walk the circle in order to read it. The piece is splayed out at eye-level like an unbound book. It is a line in itself. It includes sections of my photo archive, as well as a collection of publicly documented "pointing" people—hand-

shakes and hugs and kisses between "famous" politicians, religious leaders, and pop icons. "Sign language" is something I've been observing in conversation over the years, and when it's frozen by photography it has a relationship to gesture in painting. Gestures we all make while speaking are habitual and patterned and have meaning...not always meanings that are understood or familiar across cultures. It's the misunderstandings that occur in a painting or a drawing that open up interesting space for questions.

Recent discussion in the news about "stop and frisk" led me to research causes for suspicion. One of the conditions for stopping someone and frisking them is if the person displays a "furtive gesture" or is "fleeing." This is a very subjective practice. What kind of physical movements are considered normal, and which ones are expressive in a way that raises suspicion? Gestures have qualities that are read and misread all the time.

A painting or drawing is the trace of a gesture...it's a trail. And in some circles the history of written language has its beginnings in footprints in the sand.

Furtive Gesture_CEDepart2 literally extend and expand upon the subject of the treaty. I used this in a book I worked on with students at the University of Virginia this past winter, in a class created by the artist and professor Dean Dass. It included creative writing students and artists working together to make handmade letterpress books in the shop at the Virginia Arts of the Book Center. The only directive I gave them was for our collaborative book. I gave them the task of locating images or text relating to peace treaties from the Albert and Shirley Small Special Collections Library at UVA. They made their own books and also collaborated to make *Foedus*, a limited edition bound book.

Images of historical signing ceremonies come in many forms and require written material, as well as a good ol' boy handshake and in some cultures

a critique, the political? I see this in your work; it's definitely a big part of what draws me to it. I would also love you to expand on your own body in relation to your work. I see so much "performance" in what you do. I can picture you making every mark, like a dance—often an aggressive dance. Is this part of the way you think about your work?

SM: I move inside the frames of the paintings and I move the paintings themselves around also...fabric and frames that can be turned and leaned and rested flat or hung on the wall. The sizes I choose have a direct relationship to my body size and my strength. The way a spill or a stain or a scrape happens is determined by what I can reach...and I do reach quite often. The time I take to look is much longer than the time I take to physically paint. Thinking before moving, and reflecting upon it afterwards, is a large part of my studio process and requires a different type of focus than physical body

a real bear hug—all physical gestures with several levels of meaning. After years of observing and investigating, I'm still interested in physical gesture as language. Since 2008, I've focused on collecting lists of numbers, top-ten lists and statistics that are created to "represent" real things and people in the world. It's the gap between real experience and the numbers (figures) and language (names) that represent them that's interesting [to me]...the abstraction it represents!

KG: I love this idea of the good ol' boy handshake—what potential! This way of focusing on a physical gesture as meaning, the idea of the abstraction. And it's interesting that you mention it in relation to your work, because it's so much of what I deal with as well. What does focusing on the physical and the gestural reveal on a larger scale? How can one use the body, the object, or an action to express an idea, a moment, a character, a history,

movement itself. The other conditions—like gravity, my own energy, and the weight of the thing, as well as the speed of the material that I use on the particular type of paper or linen surface—are all ingredients.

In your work, Kate, I like the way you honor hard work and the absurdity of it in relation to larger goals, dreams, and ambitions. It seems that it's woven into the overall strategy. The hard work seems to overwhelm the plan at times, and the plan is often absurd...like this world we live in. At times my plans dominate any physical work, so they remain plans or drawings. This is the case in *Furtive Gesture*. The piece will reveal the jumps and splits in plans, and it lays the plan out horizontally, at eye level.

I recently spent time with a bee handler up in Vermont. The bees have such an elaborate social structure and are driven by all the same things that we're driven by: work, sex, food...systems that are

so complex and full of purpose. Humans want contact, engagement on an intellectual, spiritual, and physical level, and that aspect of the bee world escaped me in my first visit. It was educational to watch the creatures so busy producing their product for a self-sufficient economy. All of that energy without excessive accumulation. The reason for making stuff is simple, and beauty in the structures they build is a result of their drive/desire.

KG: In *Furtive Gesture*, will you be painting on images you found on the Internet? How will paint come into play? While your work is really planned and thought out—researched—it also seems to be very reactionary to the materials and what you have at hand. It's like you start out with a mission, and then you're pulled and pushed in all these different ways, with the final piece being how you got out of it. I love that in your work.

SM: I will not be painting solely on found images...I hunt for specific images based on words like "handshake" and "hug." I look for world leaders making physical contact. The piece is a visual rebus, a linear combination of un-nameable and nameable images. Handwriting and drawing are close in appearance these days, and photographic images are altered by hand by anyone who can press a button or use a trackpad. The paint is used as a field in some pages and as an eraser or obliterator in others. Pure water can dissolve and destroy or just alter a digital image, and it can extend a pigment and binder as well. Outside of web space, I've collected images from paper magazines too, magazines designed for specific interest groups. There's a magazine called *ART5*, and a magazine for sneakers, basketball, and hip-hop all in one, and there's a pinup rag that you can read from two directions. One-half is crime stories and weapons; the other end is pinup spreads

of girls with large behinds—it's two magazines in one. There have always been strange combinations of guns and girls, or cars and girls...the Myrtle Avenue tobacco shop carries all sorts of rags, so I pull from this imagery that I find in my neighborhood, my physical environment. When I snag images, words, or numbers from the world it's always in a fractured way. It's more important to keep the words isolated or fragmented so that there's an implication that the world is bigger than what we're seeing within that frame at that moment.

Yes, I do create a situation in each painting and in each drawing in which a problem occurs. I enjoy the embarrassment of sharing a space with a painted or drawn or written thing. I find a word within a particular category (or a number within a set), and then I throw ingredients into the space that might create a condition for this subject. In a sense, a weather condition, a climate or an

energy, occurs out of the combination of found elements. There's a place for gravitational pull within the frame. The framed location for a word or set of numbers can be a deep or shallow or flat space, and in some cases the space is finite, but in others it's self-aware...or the space is sliced by the edge of the frame. In the case of *Furtive Gesture*, it will be read in a linear fashion, so the edges of each frame have the appropriate connection (or disconnection) with one another. It's the disconnect that fires me up. I have hope that viewers will take some pleasure in "reading" the disconnections in this horizontal list or line of frames and find some humor in the form itself. Hopefully this "lineup" can offer a place to meet outside of our individual heads. *Furtive Gesture* has taken me into deep Internet space where people meet virtually...these are fragments that have drifted out of line.



ABOVE AND FAR LEFT: *Furtive Gesture* (details), 2013