

## CRITICS' PICKS

## New York

**ARTFORUM****Mary Kelly**

POSTMASTERS

459 West 19th Street

February 18–March 24

Mary Kelly's seminal works operate as much as intellectual inquiries as material exercises, consistently probing the liminal bond between the subjective and the collective. Over the past decade, she has assembled large framed works composed of multiple lint sections, each one produced in her dryer's filter screen. During repeated loads of white and black garments, vinyl letters (which are subsequently removed after the cycle is finished) in each screen are surrounded by millions of tiny felted fabric particles, resulting in a feminized cryptogram that—rather than engaging in the futile capture of a subject's unconscious, as automatic writing purports to do—serves to provide unintentional materiality for shared histories.

Hundreds of loads and hours also produced Kelly's latest series, titled "Mimus," 2012. Taking the form of large documents—that merge the objectivizing vernacular of the legal file with the narrative conventions of the stage direction—these three lint pieces are based on the House Un-American Activities Committee's questioning of three activists from Women Strike for Peace—Blanche Posner, Ruth Meyers, and Dagmar Wilson—in 1962. Crude interrogation is met here with elusive answers. When asked if she belongs to the organization, for example, Meyers responds: "Women Strike for Peace has no members." Kelly reanimates this phrase in *Mimus II*, 2012. Beyond its sardonic wit, the statement attests to the group's nonhierarchical structure, thus providing an illuminating feminist precedent for contemporary protest movements.

*Habitus: Type I*, 2010, a piece made in collaboration with sculptor Ray Barrie, emulates a mass-produced British bomb shelter from World War II. Incised into the metal surface are inverted texts, stories of war that only become legible when read in the mirrored base of the semicircular structure. These are not typical war sagas, but memories in which familiar grand narratives are obscured by the entanglement of interpersonal relationships. The act of reflected reading provides a phenomenological experience of history that is doubly filtered—through the desires of a contemporary audience as well as through the recollections of those who lived to tell us the tale. Fittingly, in this mirrored encounter, the half-circle of the shelter appears whole, creating a projected cover in which our bodies cannot properly dwell.



View of "Mary Kelly," 2012, Postmasters, New York. From left: *MIMUS: Act I-III*, 2012, compressed lint, 83 1/2 x 61 x 2"; Mary Kelly and Ray Barrie, *HABITUS: Type I*, 2010, laser-cut acrylic, mirror, wood, 48 x 96 x 96".

— Sarah Lookofsky