

POSTMASTERS

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MARY KELLY

Mary Kelly is known for her project-based work, addressing questions of sexuality, identity and historical memory in the form of large-scale narrative installations. She studied painting in Florence, Italy, in the sixties, and then taught art in Beirut, Lebanon during a time of intense cultural activity known as the “golden age”. In 1968, at the peak of the student movements in Europe, she moved to London, England to continue postgraduate study at St. Martin’s School of Art. There, she began her long-term critique of conceptualism, informed by the feminist theory of the early women’s movement in which she was actively involved throughout the 1970s. She was also a member of the Berwick Street Film Collective and a founder of the Artists’ Union. During this time, she collaborated on the film, *Nightcleaners*, 1970-75, and the installation, *Women & Work: a document on the division of labor in industry*, 1975, as well as producing her iconic work on the mother/child relationship, *Post-Partum Document*, 1973-79. Documentation I, the infamous “nappies”, caused a scandal in the media when it was first exhibited at the Institute of Contemporary Art in London in 1976.

In 1989 she joined the faculty of the Independent Study Program at the Whitney Museum of American Art in New York. Her four part work interrogating women’s relation to the body, money, history and power, *Interim*, 1984-89, was shown in its entirety at the New Museum of Contemporary Art in 1990 and the symposium that was organized in conjunction with it, *On the Subject of History*, marked a highpoint in the feminism and postmodernism debate instigated by the critic, and early supporter of Kelly’s work, Craig Owens. During the nineties, she focused on the issue of war: first, spectacle, in *Gloria Patri*, 1992, using components of polished aluminum, then trauma, in *Mea Culpa*, 1999, developing the ephemeral medium of compressed lint to form text in intaglio. This process culminated in a continuous, linear relief of more than 200 feet, *The Ballad of Kastriot Rexhepi*, 2001. The exhibition included an original score for Kelly’s Ballad by composer, Michael Nyman, and a live performance by soprano, Sarah Leonard, with the Nyman Quartet at the openings in Los Angeles, New York and Mexico City. More recently, she has turned to the theme of collective memory. For *Circa 1968*, first shown in the 2004 Whitney Biennial, she transcribed an emblematic image of Paris on the eve of the general strike into lint and projected light noise, and in *Love Songs*, 2005-07, she collaborated with younger women on the restaging of

protest photographs from her archive. *Multi-Story House*, a three dimensional intergenerational narrative reflecting on feminism, was commissioned for Documenta XII. Since 1996, Kelly has been Professor of Art and Critical Theory Art in the School of Art and Architecture at the University of California, Los Angeles where she has established an Interdisciplinary Studio area for graduate students engaged in site-specific, collective and project-based practices.

Selected solo exhibitions: “Words are Things” Ujazdowski Castle, Center for Contemporary Art, Warsaw, Poland 2008, Espacio AV, Murcia 2006; Museo Universitario de Ciencias y Arte, Mexico City, 2004; Santa Monica Museum of Art, 2001; Generali Foundation, Vienna, 1998; Konstmuseet Malmo, 1996; Helsinki City Art Museum, 1994; ; Institute of Contemporary Art, London, 1993; New Museum of Contemporary Art, New York, 1990; Vancouver Art Gallery, 1990; Power Plant, Toronto, 1991; Riverside Studios, London, 1986; Institute of Contemporary Art, London, 1976; Museum of Modern Art, Oxford, 1977.

Selected group exhibitions: *Documenta XII*, Kassel, 2007; *WACK! Art and the Feminist Revolution*, Museum of Contemporary Art, Los Angeles, 2007; *Academy*, Museum van Hedendaagse Kunst, Antwerp, 2006; *Occupying Space*, Haus der Kunst, Munich, Nederlands fotomuseum/Witte de With and Museum of Contemporary Art Zagreb, 2005; *2004 Biennial* Whitney Museum of American Art, New York; *Self Evident*, Tate Britain, London, 2002; *Tempus Fugit*, Nelson-Atkins Museum of Art, Kansas City, 2000; *Nude/Body/Action*, Tate Modern, London, 2000; *The American Century 1950-2000*, Whitney Museum of American Art, New York, 1999; *La Memoire*, Academie de France a Rome, 1999; *Global Conceptualism*, Walker Arts Center, Minneapolis and the Queens Museum of Art, New York, 1999; *NowHere*, Louisiana Museum of Modern Art, Denmark, 1996; *Auf den Leib Geschrieben*, Kunsthalle, Vienna, 1995; *1991 Biennial*, Whitney Museum of American Art, New York; *The British Edge*, Institute of Contemporary Art, Boston; *The Critical Eye/I*, Yale Center for British Art, New Haven, 1984; *4th Biennial of Sydney*, Gallery of New South Wales, 1982; *Un Certain Art Anglais*, Musee d'Art Moderne de la Ville de Paris, 1979; *Feministische Kunst Internationaal*, Haags Gemeentemuseum, 1979; Hayward Annual 1978, London.

Recent Small Exhibitions: *Coup De Grace*, Simon Preston Gallery, New York 2008, *Mother Cuts: Experiments in Film and Video*, New Jersey City University, 2008,

Publications by the artist: *Post-Partum Document*, Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1983, reprint, English and German, Generali Foundation , Vienna and University of

California Press, Berkeley, 1998; *Imaging Desire*, MIT Press, 1996; *Pecunia Olet*, Top Stories, New York 1989.

Publications on the artist: *Mary Kelly: La balada de Kastriot Rexhepi/ Musica original de Michael Nyman*, (catalog), Universidad Nacional Autonoma de Mexico, 2004; *Rereading Post-Partum Document*, Generali Foundation, Vienna, 1999; *Mary Kelly*, Phaidon Press, London, 1997; *Social Process Collaborative Action: Mary Kelly 1970-1975*, Charles H. Scott Gallery, Vancouver, 1997; *Mary Kelly: Gloria Patri*, (catalog) Herbert F. Johnson Museum, Cornell University and Ezra & Cecile Zilkha Gallery, Wesleyan University; *Mary Kelly: Interim*, (catalog), New Museum of Contemporary Art, New York, 1990. Ian White, *The Body Politic*, frieze, May 2007, p. 130-135

Public collections include Tate Modern, Tate Britain, Whitney Museum of American Art, Zurich Museum, Art Gallery of Ontario, National Gallery of Australia, Vancouver Art Gallery, Helsinki City Art Museum, Generali Foundation