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CONTEMPORARY ART MUSEUM ST. LOUIS PRESENTS

Carey Young: Speech Acts

May 8 – August 2, 2009



Carey Young, *The Representative*, 2005. Professional call center agent, direct dial telephone connection, two telephones, chair, lamp, table, framed photo of call center agent. Courtesy of the artist and Paula Cooper Gallery, New York.

St. Louis, MO—In May 2009, the Contemporary Art Museum St. Louis presents *Speech Acts*, British-based artist Carey Young's first solo museum exhibition in the United States. Foregrounding her performative and participative practice, Young launches a series of "call center art works," in which visitors can engage with live telephone operators through a series of specially-adapted call center services.

To prepare her exhibition, Young has collaborated with a communications company headquartered in St. Louis. Employing its tools, software, and its agents—Young presents a new installation at the museum: a series of ready-to-use telephones that greet us in a setting which is both theatrical and administrative. The museum visitor, upon picking up the telephone receiver, instantly becomes both listener and performer, in dialogue with live agents scripted and trained by the artist. Whether connected to the off-site call center or navigating a labyrinth of call menus transformed into compellingly bizarre "cut up" narratives, Young offers a distinct encounter with each work.

Call centers have become an increasingly ubiquitous interface between businesses and the public, whether callers are routed to a live agent or to an automated voice offering endless menu options. As consumers, we are now conditioned to such spaces of communication, wherein scripted information-exchange endures over personal contact. For her presentation at the Contemporary, Young intends to juxtapose the imposing physical space of the museum's architecture with what she imagines as the museum's "negative space," or, the telephonic, hypertextual labyrinths we can explore by phone. Suggestive (and critical) of the increasing corporatization of the art world, Young's project blends the commercial and technocratic with the fictional, the political, and the absurd. At its core, *Speech Acts* contemplates the conditions of site-specificity, language, and our own capacity to communicate in the world.



Carey Young, *Nothing Ventured*, 2001. Call center, script written by the artist, direct dial telephone connection, telephone, desk, table, chair, cassette recorder and tapes, transcriptions. As installed at Fig-1 gallery, London. Courtesy of the artist and Paula Cooper Gallery, New York.

In recent years, Carey Young has gained international recognition for her multidisciplinary work—including photography, video, text and performance—which investigates the languages of business and law, and the increasing incorporation of the personal and public domains into the commercial realm. In today's socio-political climate, images of radicality and revolution are marshalled by global brands and marketed to us as exchangeable commodities. In response, and throughout her practice, Young often takes an ambiguous political stance: from legal contracts presented as art works, to corporate-training sessions, to her performed speeches that blend political and corporate language, Young deliberately and provocatively blurs distinctions between critique and complicity. In past projects, she has hired specialists in fields ranging from conflict negotiators to lawyers and venture capitalists, as she appropriates corporate and legal systems and rhetoric for her elaborate, often participatory, projects. For her exhibition in St. Louis, Young will transform the Contemporary—from its entrance, to its Front Room gallery, to its administrative offices—into a space where the notion of "customer service" assumes a conspicuous, inverted, and unexpected presence.

Speech Acts is organized by Contemporary Art Museum St. Louis Assistant Curator Laura Fried.

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ABOUT THE ARTIST

Carey Young has exhibited widely in the United Kingdom and internationally, and her work has been featured in solo exhibitions at Modern Art Oxford (2007); Performa 05 Biennial (2005); the Henry Moore Institute, Leeds (2004); Index, Stockholm (2004); and the Kunstverein München (2003-4). Her work has appeared in numerous group shows including The Space of the Work and the Place of the Object, Sculpture Center, New York (2008); Objects of Value, Miami Art Museum (2008); Islands and Ghettoes, Heidelberger Kunstverein (2008), Business as Usual, Museum of Contemporary Art, Detroit (2008), the performance series Hey Hey Glossolalia, Creative Time, New York (2008); Moscow Biennale 2, Moscow (2007); Global Feminisms, Brooklyn Museum (2007); How to Improve the World, Hayward Gallery, London (2006); British Art Show 6, BALTIC, Newcastle (touring 2005-6); Sharjah Biennial 7, Sharjah (2005); and A Short History of Performance Part II, Whitechapel Gallery, London (2003); In March 2009, the Power Plant, Toronto, will present a monographic survey of her work. Young is represented by Paula Cooper Gallery in New York.

CONTEMPORARY ART MUSEUM ST. LOUIS

With a vision of presenting the most relevant and experimental developments in contemporary art and developing successful community partnerships, education programs and outreach initiatives, the Contemporary makes the arts available to wide and diverse audiences throughout the St. Louis metropolitan area. Founded as the Forum for Contemporary Art in 1980, the Contemporary Art Museum St. Louis re-opened with a new 25,000 square foot building in 2003.