



*Sshhh distribution, Chatou, CNEAI, 2003.*

Dear Michelle, Elisabeth, and Mamie

below is a description of the three pieces I'd like to show as part of the 2014 Whitney Biennial. By way of context and for clarification, I have appended two short texts. The first is the original project description for *Sshhh* as it appears in *Prospectus*. The second is a short text I wrote for the catalogue of the Pompidou's *VOIDS* exhibition (curated by Matheiu Copeland et al.).

I look forward to speaking further with each of you.

Yours,  
Ben

1. I would like to exhibit the *Sshhh* archive and reactivate it for the Whitney Biennial. Below are notes regarding its installation, handling, reactivation, inventory list, and cost.

Installation:

- The archive will be placed into a vitrine which will be openable (or left open) for handling by visitors to the exhibition.

- A wall text will be screened onto the wall. This wall text can be one or a combination of the following: the archive's inventory list; the invitation to the public to participate in the project; and/or the project description.

Handling:

- During the exhibition, part or all of the archive will be available for handling by visitors to the exhibition.
- I would ask that the guards keep their eyes on the archive and try to ensure that its elements are not unduly damaged or stolen, but at the same time, I'm also willing to sign a form that releases the Whitney from liability for the archive. The guards will not be responsible to explain or discuss the project.

Reactivation:

- The specifics of the reactivation of the project still need to be discussed, but one option is as follows: visitors can email me their names and the date of their conversation and I will then print their name(s) on a sheet of paper. The printing will be letterpress and the distribution back to the participant could be through the post. Then one copy of each conversation print as well as its letterpress form of lead type will be added to the archive during the exhibition.
- In Chatou, we had a reception (a casual dinner was provided) for the participants so that they could all meet each other and pick up their prints. This was very nice but I'm not sure if that would work so well at the Whitney. I am, however, open to discussing this as an alternative to using the mail for the prints' distribution.

Distribution:

- An inventory list of the archive could be given away during the exhibition and could include the "Our contract" text (see *Prospectus* appendix) as well as the project description. In this scenario, it would be photocopied and distributed for free as an Antinomian Press publication.
- Alternatively, the inventory list could be on the Whitney website with html links to scans of the individual archive items through each item's inventory number. In this version we would have the website somewhere in the space (on a card to be taken away, or simply screened onto the wall) and we wouldn't have to photocopy the inventory list and keep it replenished during the show. It would also be a means to allow people to download and print elements of the archive from their home.

Costs:

- The archive needs to be processed (it has never been exhibited before) and archive materials purchased.
- We need to find or make a vitrine. If it needs to be made, it can be done by the Whitney team or by my fabricators here in California. If it is made in California, then we would then have the additional cost of shipping and insurance.
- Fabrication of the letterpress forms, purchase of paper, printing of the sheets. The amount of cost here would depend upon how many participants we have.
- Possible postage for distribution of the printed sheets back to the participants.
- Scanning of the archive elements.

- Construction of the inventory list and archive web page on the Whitney's website.
- The wall text mentioned above.
- Possible photocopying of the inventory list (onto white paper, stapled in one corner and distributed for free to visitors during the exhibition).
- Shipping and insurance of the archive to and from California.

**2. Her only trouble in calling it art was that she didn't want or need anyone to know about it. 2005.**

Description: A white canvas measuring approximately 36 x 24 inches. On the canvas is glued a piece of paper with the above sentence printed onto it. Above this slip of paper (roughly 1 x 7 inches), are the remains of a piece of canvas hinging tape, as though someone had removed an art work and the tape remained.

Installation:

Simply hang the canvas up on the wall.

Costs:

Shipping and insurance to and from California.

**3. On becoming something else, a film. (still to be made, probably 2013-14).**

Description:

A film of interviews with artists who have become something other than artists through the pursuit of their art practice. SFMOMA is in conversation with me over the terms of a contract to produce such a film. The film's purpose would be pedagogical: on one level to affect public policy in regards to arts funding by showing that the attrition rate of artists from the arts needn't always be interpreted as a failure. The film will show examples of how the pursuit of an art practice can lead one into other professions for very good reasons (both for art and to the benefit of that new profession).

The film will be edited and produced in a form that can be utilized by teachers and available for free download and distribution. (For more on the background on this project, see the original *On becoming something else* project described in *Prospectus*.)

Installation:

Included in the Whitney film schedule.

Costs:

Unknown. Depends upon the terms currently being negotiated with SFMOMA. If we come to an arrangement then I will need to confirm that it is ok to screen it at the Whitney (I wouldn't think that this would be a problem so long as SFMOMA launches it first).

## **Texts by way of context and clarification:**

### **Sshhh , 2002-present**

I was wondering about the fragile meanings created at home and how one can create work about, or in reference to, these delicate moments without their destruction.

So I invited people living in Chatou to have a conversation in their home, amongst themselves, and to consider the possibility of this conversation as a work of art. Before, in the museum, I spoke about past projects and historical precedents for conversation as sculpture. The families who participated then went home, each later notifying me by email to say when they had had their conversation. The content and nature of each conversation remained a secret known only to them.

Afterwards, I made each family an engraving. The plate's impression on the paper was blind with the exception of the family's name and the date of their conversation. At my request each family chose the size and color of their engraving and four impressions were made of each: one for the participant, one for the museum, one for the Bibliothèque Nationale, and one for myself.

The engraving does not document the content of the conversation. It tells only that there was a conversation had by a family on a certain day. However, it does function as an art object, as something to be exhibited and which can circulate within the art world. For those within the family, the engraving is more; it comes out of a domestic moment and functions as an aide memoire for a conversation once had.

Archive begun 2002. 23 families participated. Centre national de l'édition et de l'art imprimé, Chatou, France. Project can be repeated. Prints in the collections of the families, CNEAI, Bibliothèque Nationale, and the artist.

BK 2010

### **The art world is not invited.**

Some artists bring new ideas, participants, and locations into the art discourse. These artists change the matter of the art world and in so doing satisfy the art world's appetite for the new. But there is no guarantee that the art world has understood or even savored what it has consumed. This phenomenon of absorption, not surprisingly, seems to be happening with increasing rapidity, even with confrontational practices such as institutional critique.

As new people, places, and ideas from outside of the art world are brought into the art discourse, ethics come into play due to the disjunction between value structures. Examples might include Christo's conflict with the California Coastal Commission during his *Running Fence* project (1972-76); Tim Rollins

work with KOS (Kids of Survival) in the South Bronx (begun 1984); and more recently Rirkrit Tiravanija's work *Demonstration Drawings* (2007), a collection of drawings commissioned by Rirkrit and based upon pictures of political demonstrations found in the Herald Tribune. All of these projects reach out to new people, places, and ideas and yet raise concerns around authorship, objectification, and purpose.

Alternatively, one can try to understand that which is not included while simultaneously accepting that it will never be brought into the art discourse. This is to say that some art practices can lead an artist out of the art world and into an idea, group, or place where the value structure of the art discourse cannot follow and the art world is not invited.

For myself, this is an indication that a project has become something else. The acute difficulty is in trying to understand what it means and whether or not to communicate the content of that experience to others, and if so, to whom. From the viewpoint of the departing artist, when looking over one's shoulder back at the art world, there is a sensation of closing a door and accepting that departure. From the viewpoint of the person entering into something new, there is the question of how to sustain this practice and find value in one's work.

BK 2008



Ben Kinmont &lt;bkinmont@gmail.com&gt;

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**printing**

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**Elisabeth Sherman, Curatorial** <Elisabeth\_Sherman@whitney.org>

Thu, Aug 22, 2013 at 3:31 PM

To: Ben Kinmont &lt;bkinmont@gmail.com&gt;, Michelle Grabner &lt;mgrabn@artic.edu&gt;, "Mamie Tinkler, Exhibitions" &lt;Mamie\_Tinkler@whitney.org&gt;

Dear Ben,

Thanks for this information. We definitely have a few questions about this part of your proposal. Can you just explain the whole process in a bit more detail for us?

Additionally, we met with our registrar this week to discuss the logistics of your archive and allowing the public to interact with it. We definitely think that we'll be able to find a great way to make this happen. I'm out of the office tomorrow and want to confer with Mamie before recapping that meeting for you, but will do so on Monday so we can start to move forward.

Thanks so much.

Best,  
Elisabeth

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**From:** Ben Kinmont [[bkinmont@gmail.com](mailto:bkinmont@gmail.com)]**Sent:** Thursday, August 22, 2013 5:22 PM**To:** Michelle Grabner; Mamie Tinkler, Exhibitions; Elisabeth Sherman, Curatorial; Ben Kinmont**Subject:** printing

[Quoted text hidden]



Ben Kinmont &lt;bkinmont@gmail.com&gt;

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**printing**

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**Ben Kinmont** <bkinmont@gmail.com>

Thu, Aug 22, 2013 at 2:22 PM

To: Michelle Grabner &lt;mgrabn@artic.edu&gt;, "Mamie Tinkler, Exhibitions" &lt;Mamie\_Tinkler@whitney.org&gt;, "Elisabeth Sherman, Curatorial" &lt;Elisabeth\_Sherman@whitney.org&gt;, Ben Kinmont &lt;bkinmont@gmail.com&gt;

Dear Michelle, Elisabeth, and Mamie

the cost of printing three sets of 20 names (i.e. a total of 60 participants and subsequent conversation sheets) is roughly \$2000. This is based on the printing being done once a month for three months, with 20 names each month. This does not include shipping from California to the participants' addresses.

I asked my printer for this price so we could have something to work with to get an idea of how many participants we can afford and coordinate.

I hope this is helpful.

Yours,

Ben

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