

## **COLLECTIVELY ASSEMBLED: 9<sup>th</sup> Annual Exhibition of tART Collective**

COLLECTIVELY ASSEMBLED showcases twenty eight artists who are members of the feminist tART Collective. tART was formed to provide a support structure and network for artists who self-identify as female, and the collective combines art exhibitions with public programming - embracing emerging artists who juggle contemporary art practices, the challenges of gender stereotypes and the obligations of domestic responsibilities.

Every year, a host of young and talented women artists receive their MFA. Looming student debt and overproduction of creative individuals make for a precarious future. In this vulnerable economic position, women artists must struggle to hold onto their feminist ideals, even as they find themselves sandwiched between the slogans of 1970s feminism and subsequent feminist waves and counter-waves, and bring their personal experience to the forefront of contemporary perspectives on what it means to work as an artist today.

Recent debates about feminist art history demonstrate that Feminism and Art are far from fixed terms. Between the poles of “feminist art” and “art by women artists,” resides a vast diversity of practices, ranging from Judy Chicago’s activist feminism to Eva Hesse’s minimalism. The wide range of artistic styles that lie between these extremes provides the ground for exploration of the psychological, philosophical, socio-economic and existential challenges of the lives of women artists. tART members consider these as legitimate and compelling investigations in their art making and art practice as well as in their co-existence with one another and the surrounding community.

Two core stylistic groups are visible within **COLLECTIVELY ASSEMBLED**: the formalists and the conceptualists. The formalists follow the traditions of modernism. They employ the medium of painting and sculpture to investigate visual tensions, hard edge abstraction and the canon of medium specificity. We see the influences of Joan Mitchell, Bridget Riley and Mary Heilmann. The conceptualists employ a post-modern approach that uses installation, mixed and digital media, and narrative. They work with photography, video and performance to investigate subjects of identity, parenthood, and

environment. They draw on the legacies of Mary Kelly, Adrian Piper and Jenny Saville. Several artists push their conceptual engagement further, interacting directly with the public through participatory practices, building on work done by individual artists like Suzanne Lacy and Martha Rosler and collectives like Heresies and Group Material. The overall scope of work is dynamic and refreshing and presents a microcosm that is both part of and distinct from New York's current art scene.

In addition to their creative careers, the members of tART are also wives, girl-friends, daughters, mothers, sisters and working women. It is the balancing of these multiple roles that require a support network to stay connected to the important ideas that women artists share. In this way, tART women are able to play the role of coach to each other, as individuals and as a collective. This is one of the important benefits of being part of the collective, affirming their camaraderie and situating their work within the historical narrative of women art collectives and networks of mutual support.

*Collectively Assembled* is rooted in the origins of the tART Collective, the studio visit, and the exhibition melds tART's studio visit tradition with the Surrealist game, Exquisite Corpse. Over the past year, a linked chain of studio visits has built the exhibition. One member visited another's studio and selected work for the show. The receiving member then interpreted what she felt was central to her selected work and proceeded on to the next member's studio to select work with that concept in mind.

The collective recently welcomed seven new members, including Glendalys Medina who is this year's fellow of the American Academy in Rome, and Kathleen Vance who is co-director of the Front Room Gallery, Brooklyn. All new members bring another dimension to the evolving production of the collective. In response to the growing professionalization of the art scene, tART needs to consider some constructive changes that will make the group stronger, in terms of membership criteria, mission statement, fundraising and whether to form an Advisory Board and apply for 501c3 non-profit status.

I am very familiar with the administrative challenges that often limit creative development. During formation of my own non-profit organization (Brooklyn House of Kulture) I was faced with many of the same administrative decisions and strategic challenges. Brooklyn House of Kulture allowed me to implement the community based curatorial projects that I could not have done as an individual. As a professional curator, I've experienced the challenges facing women during a personal journey, that has taken me from post-Soviet Russia to residences and studies in South East Asia and the US, where I have been living for the last eight years. I share this journey with the members of tART and have a deep personal understanding of the group's challenges and ambitions. I am honored to be personally involved in the development of the group.

Yulia Tikhonova, curator