

Adelheid Mers
Statement for Early Adopters
Sept. 15 – Oct. 27, 2005, 3Arts, Chicago

Background

As a student in the visual arts, I was initially introduced to a notion of the artist as an inspired and somewhat solitary practitioner, a person who needs to mainly be visually literate, and whose work is mediated to the public through the critic and/or historian. Skeptical of this proposition, I continued to work in the studio with field-like, open shapes (floor sculptures, light installations) and studied the history of ideas, developing interests in theories of language and communication (how to actively make sense), and in aspects of Phenomenology (being in the world) and Pragmatism (making choices in the absence of certainty.) As I began to invite viewers and colleagues into my installations, my practice directly explored myths and realities regarding roles artists can take, and the sociology of art worlds. I approach my investigations not as an academic striving for an objective point of view, but as a biased participant in the enterprise. I have cast myself in a role of hybrid artist/experimenter/curator/editor/educator. Thus, one of my practices is to create events under premises that invite artists and audiences to reflect on their investment in and use of the art world, and its intersections with social and political life. Put simply, I have had one question all along: 'Where am I?' From my place in the world, I am looking at the fields I am part of.

In individually and collaboratively organized exhibitions, I have explored fields that encompass viewer and artwork ("Present" with Jacqueline Terrassa at the Hyde Park Art Center, 1997,) fields that develop between artists and their work ("Millennium Fusion Project", with Mark Genrich and Shuko Wada, ARC Raw Space, 99/00, and "A Collaborative Fusion" with Elisabeth Condon at 450 Broadway Gallery, NY, 2001,) a field that spans artistic creation modes from formal to relational ("Face Off" at the Betty Rymer Gallery, 2001,) and fields comprised by individual artists' lives that include various professional and often also hybrid roles these artists take on ("Retrospectives", at Gallery 312, 2003.) I have also mapped and diagrammed texts (transformed linear texts into fields) that are relevant to my subject matter and method of working, including essays on new media, communication and exile by Vilém Flusser, and, before the 2004 U.S. elections, the book "Moral Politics" by George Lakoff.

Early Adopters

With "Early Adopters", I am seeking to address the relations between artists and audiences, and ultimately wish to raise the question of who takes on which responsibility in the field of culture. The show has four sections: 1. an exhibition of artwork by residents of Chicago who have been asked to address the question of how they wish their audiences to participate in their work. 2. A website that collects artists' reports on the same subject and a collection of links to academic and other presentations, <http://adelheidmers.org/earlyadopters/> 3. Posters are exhibited that have been created by artists in response to an open call posted on the website. 4. A discussion will be held with arts administrators on the subject of cultural participation.

As part of the first section, I have created a poster that elucidates the idea of this exhibition. This poster has been sent out as the invitation for "Early Adopters". Three annotated versions are exhibited that address related questions. "Representational Preference" asks how a person prefers to make sense of the world, "Agonistic Plurality" addresses the need to take and defend positions if a productive dialogue is desired within and across a community, and "Art History" attempts to transform a linear view of historical developments into a simultaneous presentation of competing and/or complementary positions.

Sponsors Give Art to the Public

Also included in the show is one print from my series of twelve, "Sponsors Give Art to the Public", that addresses the question of how new technologies with the ability to produce unlimited multiples can be made viable within an art market, while widening access to art works. If one of these unique ink-jet prints is purchased, the name of the buyer will be inserted into a printable digital file of the same image, that will then be made available for public download, free of charge, on this website: <http://adelheidmers.org/aweb/sgattp.htm>