

Projects 2 : Judith Barry : The Museum of Modern Art, New York, May 3-June 3, 1986

Author

Barry, Judith, 1949-

Date

1986

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The Museum of Modern Art

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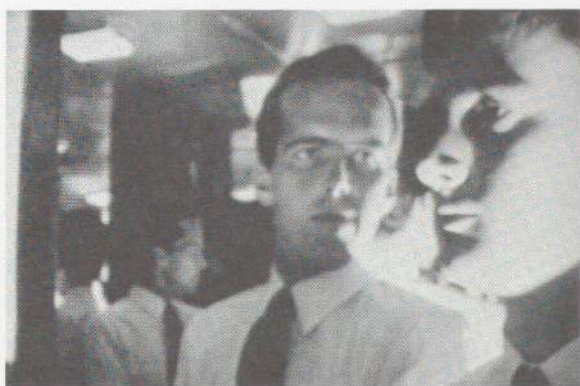
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The Museum of Modern Art,
New York
May 3–June 3, 1986

projects: judith barry

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Video stills from *Echo*. 1986.
Installation of slides, Super-8/video, and audio.
Collection the artist.

projects: judith barry

Judith Barry's multimedia installation, *Echo*, is the second exhibition in The Museum of Modern Art's new **projects** series. Based on the Museum's original **projects** exhibitions, which were held from 1971 to 1982, the new series presents recent work by contemporary artists.

The artists presented are chosen by the members of all the Museum's curatorial departments in a process involving an active dialogue and close critical scrutiny of art today. Individual exhibitions, as well as occasional small group shows, will be organized on a regular basis in order to focus on a variety of current concerns and new developments in the visual arts.

One particularly vital development has emerged in recent years in the work of new video- and filmmakers: artists' installations incorporating slide and film projections, often including video and audio components. Because of the transitory nature and complex technical demands of this kind of work, it has remained an under-appreciated and noncommercial art form, one which is therefore ideally suited for the **projects** series.

Barry has been presenting her films, performances, videotapes, and installations for nearly ten years and has developed a strong and compelling artistic voice. We are very pleased to premiere her newest work, *Echo*.

Linda Shearer,
Curator,
Department of Painting and Sculpture

judith barry: echo

The title of this installation of slides, Super-8/video, and audio by Judith Barry comes from the Greek myth of the nymph Echo. Echo's unrequited love for Narcissus, whom the gods had punished by making him fall in love with his own image, caused her to pine away until nothing but her voice remained. In Barry's contemporary, urban treatment of the story, Narcissus is replaced by the archetypal successful businessman, and Echo by those who remain outside the corporate world.

The visual component of *Echo* takes place on an eleven-by-nineteen-foot screen, both sides of which are filled with slowly dissolving slide images of coldly luxurious public spaces and equally sterile private settings. Running concurrently in windowlike areas on both sides of the screen are one-minute Super-8 film loops showing various male professionals considering their reflections. There are young ones gazing appraisingly at themselves, and older ones who appear to be trapped by their own images. These window-size film projections serve as a foil to the cinematically scaled slides that frame them, and provide a cryptic narrative subtext. The sound component of *Echo*, a conspicuously nonverbal mix of urban ambient noise and music, compounds the sense of alienation.

Barry uses images of urban architecture to represent her conception of a segregated American corporate structure, which in her view is reinforced through mass-media advertising. She specifically addresses this issue in her choice of format—the multimedia presentation commonly used by corporations to convey marketing strategies at sales meetings. In *Echo*, the artist uses a highly personalized version of this familiar communication device to contrast images of urban public spaces, for example, lobby-reception areas of corporate headquarters, with shots composed around the picture window of a country house. These mirror- and glass-filled spaces seem to raise questions about their inhabitants and about the viewer, who is physically enveloped by the installation yet unable to participate in the projected world.

Barry's concerns with media manipulation and urban architecture have evolved from her first performances in San Francisco during the early 1970s, through her initial experiments with video, to her first major performance/installation, in 1977. Her use of nontraditional, time-based forms and her tendency to work outside the commercial gallery system link her with other artists in this country and abroad who have experimented with alternative materials presented in unusual situations.

Barry's investigation of architecture and popular culture is particularly connected to the early work of Daniel Buren, who has questioned the meaning of signs in Western culture by replacing posters in the Paris Métro system with his signature red-and-white stripes; and to the work of Dan Graham, who has challenged the role of the observer in perceptual/conceptual performances and installations involving two-way mirrors and video. Her work is also related to that of Vancouver artist Jeff Wall, who examines photographic representation through large, back-lit color transparencies depicting life-size characters.

Her early performance work in California, which focused on language as it relates to women, reflected some of the concerns of artists Barbara Kruger and Silvia Kolbowski. The late Theresa Cha, who performed Tai Chi-like movements amid slide projections of words, posed similar formal questions about language.

Judith Barry's work has been shown in numerous exhibitions, festivals, and screenings in this country and abroad. Her wide interests and vigorous intellectual probings have extended the boundaries of such diverse artistic mediums as film, video, photography, and performance.

Barbara London, Assistant Curator, Video,
Department of Film, with the assistance of
Sally Berger and Mark Verabioff



Video stills from *Echo*. 1986.
Installation of slides, Super-8/video, and audio.
Collection the artist.

biography

Born Columbus, Ohio,
October 14, 1949

education

New York Institute of Technology,
New York. 1984–85

University of California at Berkeley. 1975–78

San Francisco Art Institute. 1974–75

University of Florida, Gainesville.
B.S., Finance/Architecture, 1972

teaching

S.U.N.Y., College of Old Westbury, New York.
Department of Visual Arts. 1982 to present

selected individual exhibitions, performances, and screenings

1985

Times Square, New York
Spectacolor Board program
Sponsored by Public Art Fund

1984

Stichting de Appel, Amsterdam
Mass Fantasies/Special Cultures
Performance

1982

Whitney Museum of American Art, New York
New American Filmmakers, "Ideology/Praxis"
Screening

Internationaal Cultureel Centrum, Antwerp
Space Invaders
Installation

1980

Mayfield Mall Project, Palo Alto, California
Museum of Signs
Installation

The Museum of Modern Art, New York
Video Viewpoints
Screening

1978

San Francisco Museum of Modern Art
Kaleidoscope
Performance

1977

La Mamelle Gallery, San Francisco
Cup/Couch
Performance

80 Langton Street, San Francisco
Past Present Future Tense
Performance/Installation

selected group exhibitions, performances, and screenings

1985

Artists Space, New York
Dark Rooms
Installation

Long Beach Museum of Art, California
A Passage Repeated
Installation

The New Museum of Contemporary Art,
New York
The Art of Memory/The Loss of History
Installation

1984

Allen Memorial Art Museum, Oberlin, Ohio
New Voices 4
Screening

The New Museum of Contemporary Art,
New York
Difference
Screening

Walter Phillips Gallery, Banff, Canada
Social Spaces
Screening

1983

Institute of Contemporary Arts, London
Scenes and Conventions, Artists' Architecture
Installation

1982

Biennale of Sydney, Australia
Vision in Disbelief
Screening

Rudiger Schottle Galerie, Munich
Godard/Barry, Graham/Knight
Installation

selected bibliography

Barry, Judith. "Casual Shopper."
Discourse 4 (winter 1981–82).

Barry, Judith, and Sandy Flitterman.
"Textual Practice—The Politics of Art Making."
Screen 21 (summer 1980).

Lehman, Peter. "Video Art and Video Games:
An Interview with Judith Barry."
Wide Angle 6 (March 1984).