

## **INTERVIEW QUESTIONS**

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**1.** What kind of working process do you use? Do you proceed from materials to ideas or from ideas to materials? Or is your production process different and, if so, could you please describe it?

**2.** What is your work's vocabulary? How does your choice of material constrain or expand it? Does your distribution context(s) (e.g. a museum, commercial gallery, public space, etc.) determine your choice of materials, scale, or other formal considerations?

**3.** Is your work meant to provide a critical interpretation of the world in general or the world of art? In other words, are its references and concerns independent of art history and art criticism, or do you see your work as being situated in the continuum of art history, in which it relates to art of the past and/or to contemporary art with concerns parallel to yours?

**4.** How do you measure a work's "success" or effectiveness? And how is your measurement different from or similar to measurements used in the larger art discourse?

**5.** Has your work put you in any danger or become a threat to you in any way? Or, in what way, if any, does the political sphere collide with your work?

**6.** Do you have periods of non-productivity? How do you resume work after such a period? If you have never experienced a hiatus, how do you maintain your optimism?

**7.** To what degree are you concerned with your work's social effect? Is it addressed to a specific or general audience? Do you think of this audience as local, national or international, or as one having or not having power?

**8.** To what degree does your work address topical events or circumstances in your local milieu? Is it concerned with issues of nationality, ethnicity, gender, or with things specific to your personal history?

**9.** Given that it is impossible to achieve, could you describe the ideal response to your work?

**10.** What question or questions would you like to ask the other artists, specifically or generally, in the exhibition? Or to ask all artists? Or the audience?

**11.** Do you believe that art has or can have any effect on politics?

(The interview questions have been printed on this flap, which can be folded out and referred to when reading the individual interviews.)

(taped interview)

"At first, I went to the dictionary and looked for the meaning of *rhetorical*. The art of persuasion. There was nothing about the 'rhetorical image,' but there was something about rhetorical questions. One that requires no answer. And I thought, 'Oh, here I am,' you know. 'The work is done. There is no need to answer,' because the questions are pretty much very rhetorical ultimately. I'm someone who has been very influenced by Conceptual art, by people who go back to the dictionary and look for the meanings of words. . . . Every dictionary has a history. Every question has an agenda."

1. Both. In the jigsaw pieces, I start from an image and make a puzzle out of it. In the big stacks of paper, I wanted to make a work about collaborating and contextualizing, about breaking the barriers between being in a private gallery space, which is also a public space. The work belongs to the people who can take it away, and the material had to be paper because I think marble would be difficult to give away. . . . Although some of my ideas are from materials, I'm not really much into materials. It's always very confusing to me when people start to have a physicality with material, especially sculptors, who have that very weird language about playing with space. I never understood that, even when I went to school. I think I'm too old to understand that sort of thing now. I missed the boat.

2. Any site is a social site, as well as a physical site. I call it a social landscape. I try to take into account other events in the city. For instance, the billboard I did on Christopher Street was a six-month monument which occurred on the twentieth anniversary of the Stonewall rebellion. I intersected the present with Oscar Wilde, because they are all part of the same history. I don't want to impose a strict reading on the viewer. When you read the whole thing, you know there is something there about lesbian and gay liberation, but I have to be honest with regard to a sense of public. I have my boyfriend and he is the only public I really know, and I always want to know how he feels about my work. . . . So-called public space is often private. You have to be Bacardi Rum or Philip Morris to get those "public" billboard spaces. It is similar to the freedom of expression or First Amendment issues. You can have them as long as you have the money to pay.

3. I do take into consideration art history. I love the art world . . . at least, the art world I know. I think there are big myths about the art world. It's not black or white. The art world has a lot of wonderful people that are very caring and very involved with social issues. . . . Art history is very exciting and you can learn not to reinvent the wheel from it or to reinvent the wheel and use it in a different way.

4. I think the artistic position is as good as any to start from for change, and it can be measured in so many different ways that it's really no problem. I had an experience with the printer who makes my "sculptures." He said that after twenty years as a printer he had always considered paper as paper, or as reams. Now, he jokes and tells his workers, "Move that sculpture over there," so his idea about his own work has been changed. . . . Che Guevara once said that whatever your profession or position, that is your trench. The struggle is at many levels. Not everyone can be at the front line.

5. No, not at all. Not at all. I once wanted to make a big white flag and the Lower Manhattan Cultural Council was reluctant to put it into a park. For me, white means peace, for others, it might mean surrender, but the communications were confusing. That was the only time I was censored. When I see a work by Andres Serrano and how much disturbance was created on the Right, it is very clear that artists have a lot of power—at least, in this part of the world. On the Left, we've had a problem for a long time. We are always answering or fighting back against the agenda of the Right. We must redefine the conditions of the argument. I think we should all say, "Okay, we love the flag . . . now let's talk about real issues. Let's talk about the savings and loan scandal, the housing and urban development scandal, the lack of health care. Stick the flag wherever you want." People are making it a priority to burn the flag . . . I mean, there are so many other things I'd like to burn first.

6. This is the question I liked the most. I don't think periods of non-productivity have ever happened because I don't measure my work by the object produced—I'm always working. Once, I thought I hadn't done anything, but I realized I'd read five books, and I thought, you know, "That's really a lot of work." If only going to a studio is work. God almighty, the world will be covered with sensitive sculpture and sensitive brush strokes for the next five billion years. . . . I keep my optimism by having two cats. They are very soothing. They remind me that there might be a better place, a better world. But I have to make this a better place because, so far, I've never been anywhere else than this place, and I don't know anyone who has. So, I have to fight against inequality, poverty, sexism, homophobia, and so many dicks proving their size for all these years, to remain optimistic and to make a better place for my cats and me.

7. The audience has absolute power. With this new piece—the stacks of paper—I'm trying to give the information back to the viewer, back to the public. I'm taking a little bit of information and displaying this information in absolutely ironic and illogical meetings . . . bits of information about giving money to the Fresh Air Fund, or the cost of a B-2 bomber (\$500 million) in relation to Congress's debate about giving money to people with AIDS (\$650 million) . . . with a front and a back with different, contradictory information. And hoping that by the use of irony, I will help to reveal the real meaning of issues. Because, after all, numbers don't mean anything to the majority of people.

8. It is all my personal history, all that stuff . . . gender and sexual preference, it's all that. I can't separate my art from my life. You can't separate Helen Frankenthaler from ads for Rolex watches in *U.S. News & World Report*, and you can't separate Franz Kline's paintings from the political ends to which they are used. The other day, a group called Neighbor to Neighbor was boycotting coffee from El Salvador, and the coffee company said that political groups were trying to boycott products—as though they themselves were not political in buying Salvadorian beans.

9. The answer will be very rhetorical because it would be, in each case, dependent upon the site, the date, and the purpose of the work, which changes in each case. I suppose I would be satisfied if they took action sometimes, or if it caused them to be critical, moved, inspired. Or to celebrate difference and the idea of change and renewal, the chance for love. I'd like to propose once more the "radical" idea that we can make this a better place for everyone.