

# WHITNEY

## Press Release

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### THE WHITNEY TO PRESENT *SHARON HAYES: THERE'S SO MUCH I WANT TO SAY TO YOU*

June 21-September 9, 2012



Sharon Hayes (b.1970), *Everything Else Has Failed! Don't You Think It's Time For Love?*, 2007.  
Documentation of performance, United Bank of Switzerland, New York, NY

**NEW YORK, May 7, 2012** – Beginning June 21, artist Sharon Hayes (b. 1970) will take over the Whitney Museum of American Art's third-floor Peter Norton Family Galleries for a project-based exhibition – her largest museum installation to date – featuring a group of new works

commissioned by the Whitney as well as a selection of existing works. All the works articulate different forms of what the artist refers to as “speech acts.” Neither a retrospective nor a survey of Hayes’s career, *There’s so much I want to say to you* is the fourth in a series of full-floor artist projects that has so far included exhibitions by Paul McCarthy, Christian Marclay, and Cory Arcangel. Hayes’s exhibition is curated by Chrissie Iles, the Whitney’s Anne & Joel Ehrenkranz Curator, in close collaboration with the artist.

Throughout her work in performance, video, photography, sound, and installation, Sharon Hayes explores the connections between love, politics, and history, through various forms of address. The new works, made especially for this exhibition, include a video work on the subject of Anita Bryant, featuring a large-scale projection of the notoriously homophobic Bryant getting hit in the face with a pie while crusading against gay rights. A vinyl record titled *Sarah H. Gordon's Strike Journal, May 1970*, specially pressed for the exhibition, records Sarah Gordon reading from a journal she wrote as a student during a strike at her university against the Vietnam War. For a large wall piece titled *Join Us*, Hayes has assembled 600 flyers inviting participation in various political actions from the 1960s to the present. A one-hundred-foot-long curtain with text introduces the exhibition, and a video installation of voice portraits will be shown, as well as a new film installation made in collaboration with the 1960s feminist activist Kate Millett. The artist also plans a live performance in the exhibition space.

Hayes is collaborating with fellow artist Andrea Geyer – the two have known each other since studying together in the Whitney’s Independent Study Program – to create an environment for the exhibition, a site-specific structure that both contains all the works in the show and functions as an independent artwork. Using the vernacular of transient staging for trade shows, political rallies, and other outdoor events, Hayes and Geyer are creating a space using platforms, walls, and seating arrangements that indicate a series of impending temporary events, in which speech of various kinds is always implied. The exhibition’s staging of speech using found footage, video and audio recordings, ephemera, and language, weaves together narratives from the past and the present with personal declarations of desire, longing, and love. *There’s So Much I Want to Say to You* becomes a declaration to us, the viewers; to an unknown lover; and to an as yet unidentified public, in a complex dialogue between the domains of public, private, and political speech.

Among the existing works to be shown are the video installation *Symbionese Liberation Army (SLA) Screeds #13, 16, 20, & 29* (2003), some of which will be shown in New York for the first time. On February 4, 1974, the heiress Patty Hearst was kidnapped from her apartment in Berkeley, California, by the radical political organization called the Symbionese Liberation Army (SLA). From February to April 1974, the SLA and Hearst made four audio tapes in which Hearst addressed her parents about her kidnapping, the SLA's ransom (that the Hearst family feed all the poor in California), and the actions of the family and the FBI during the ordeal. In the last tape, Patty Hearst (rechristened Tania by this point) announced that she was joining the SLA in their struggle. From June 2001 to January 2002, Hayes performed a recitation of each of the four audio tapes. In each instance, the artist partially memorized the transcripts and spoke the text in front of an audience to whom she gave the text. She asked the audience to correct her mistakes and to feed her a line when she needed it.

*Everything Else has Failed! Don't you Think It's Time for Love* (2007), a sound installation with framed posters, documents the period from September 17 to 21, 2007, when Hayes emerged each day at lunchtime from the corporate headquarters of UBS in midtown Manhattan to speak to an anonymous lover. Beginning "My dear lover" or "My sweet lover," the texts Hayes spoke were addressed to an unnamed "you" from whom the speaker was separated for some unexplained reason. Woven in between comments on and about personal longing and desire were observations about politics and the trauma and dislocation of living in a time of war. By inserting "private correspondence" into a scene of public speech, *Everything Else Has Failed! Don't You Think It's Time for Love?* provokes questions about the territory of the space of the "political" and the "unspeakable" as it relates to love and the notion of "free speech."

*I March in the Parade of Liberty, But As Long As I Love You I am Not Free* (2007-2008), a sound installation with framed posters: For eight days between December 1, 2007, and January 12, 2008, Hayes walked forth from The New Museum at Bowery and Prince Streets in lower Manhattan, stopping at street corners every few blocks and speaking a single, repeated love address to an unnamed lover. Drawing from sources such as *De Profundis*, Oscar Wilde's prison letter to Lord Alfred Douglas, and slogans from early gay liberation parades in New York City,

the “love address” uses so-called private speech to get to the emotional overlapping of promise and disappointment in collective political action. Part of a series of works dealing with the relationship between personal and political desire and between love and politics, *I March in the Parade of Liberty, But As Long As I Love You I’m Not Free* raises questions about war, the emotional landscape of protest actions, and public speech.

***We Knew We Would Go to Jail*** (2003/2012): This two-screen video projection examines the present political moment through three quasi-fictional dialogues between pairs of 20-24 year-olds. Positioned side-by-side, facing out at the camera, each pair converses with each other through the filter of the camera/viewer. In this intentionally disjointed structure, the pairs discuss their impressions of 1960s and 70s radical politics, their memory of the 80s, as well as the possibilities of radical action in a present moment. Directly opposing the image of the talking pairs, and synched up to it in time, is another video image, this one a structured montage of shots of the university. Largely composed of stark institutional footage of university buildings, hallways, and classrooms, this screen becomes the frame or container for the dialogue. Simultaneously, the image presents an impossibility: it is impossible to see both images at once. This impossibility of vision, points to other resonant fractures: between history and memory, knowing and doing, fact and fiction, and individual and group desire.

***The Lesbian*** (2000/2012), a video and slide projection, documents a seventy-five-minute performance piece in which Hayes explores lesbian identity. The material for the performance was gathered by Hayes during a three-and-a-half-month research trip traveling across America, in which she interviewed lesbians, documenting communities and performing in homes. Under the guise of leading the audience through an “exhibit on the natural history of lesbians,” drawing on theater, Hayes takes on different roles—The Researcher, The Interviewer, The Choreographer, and The Girlfriend—organizing the performance as a series of scenes in a drama. Throughout the piece, Hayes presents herself as unreliable guide, unable to define or situate what the lesbian might be, which in turn undermines conventional notions of identity in general. Hayes explains, “I attempted to develop a discourse of lesbian identity that was slapped – literally – onto the American landscape, becoming a filter, a blanket in a sense, draped on top of other aspects of US national mythology.”

*Gay Power* (2007/2012), commissioned for the exhibition, is a collaboration between Sharon Hayes and Kate Millet, feminist, author, and a leading activist for women's rights since the 1960s. The film installation shows footage of the Women's Liberation Movement and New York's Christopher Street Day Parade, which celebrates the Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual and Transgender community, and campaigns for equal rights. The footage was shot by the Women's Liberation Cinema, of which Millet was a central figure. Hayes and Millet have created a voiceover soundtrack to accompany—or speak with—the footage. As two voices from different generations, Hayes and Millet address the footage and the “movement” from their different historical perspectives, demonstrating an enduring activism that lies at the core of both the gay and women's rights movements.

In *Yard (Sign)* (2009/2012), Sharon Hayes reinterprets the artist Allan Kaprow's 1961 installation *Yard*, a seminal work in which Kaprow filled the back yard behind the Martha Jackson Gallery at 32 East 69th Street with a mountain of car tires and tar paper, and invited visitors to the exhibition to climb, jump, and crawl over them. Rather than tires, Hayes has filled the space with a group of signs like those often seen on front lawns across America. Originally exhibited in the Lower East side's Marble Cemetery, *Yard (Sign)* introduces a silent but aggressive form of speech into a quiet place of contemplation. Juxtaposing political signs with religious, personal, and informational signs, Hayes creates a group of disparate voices that are both rooted in the past (“Free Huey”) and exist outside time (“Enter”). In doing so, she collapses history and geography into a quasi-aggregate American lawn on which disparate, often opposing, voices are gathered.

### **Book**

The exhibition is accompanied by a book that serves as a document of Hayes's thinking process, featuring original contributions from Hayes and some two-dozen other writers, artists, and activists, which provide insight into the motivations and development of her projects. The catalogue includes images carefully selected by the artist—photographs, vinyl LP covers, flyers, images of Hayes's own work—and a short text response by each of the contributors. Designed

by Garrick Gott, in close collaboration with the artist, the book is published by the Whitney and distributed by Yale University Press.

Contributors include: Dennis Adams, Lauren Berlant, Saramina Berman, Claire Bishop, Juli Carson, Kabir Carter, Christhian Diaz, Saeed Taji Farouky, Malik Gaines, Andrea Geyer, Leah Gilliam, Michela Griffo, Sharon Hayes, A.B. Huber, Holly Hughes, Chrissie Iles, Iman Issa, Hans Kuzmich, Cristobal Lehyt, Ralph Lemon, Brooke O’Harra, Jenni Olson, Dean Spade, Lynne Tillman, What, How & For Whom/WHW, and Craig Willse.

### **About the Artist**

Sharon Hayes’s work has been seen at national and international exhibition spaces including documenta 12 (collaborative project), Kassel; Generali Foundation, Vienna; P.S. 1, New York; Museum Moderner Kunst (MUMOK), Vienna; The Warhol Museum, Pittsburgh; Artists Space, New York; Art-in-General, New York; New Museum of Contemporary Art, New York; Lisson Gallery, London; Tate Modern, London; Yokohama Triennial; Istanbul Biennale; Kunstmuseum St. Gallen; Göteborgs Konsthall; the Whitney Museum of American Art, New York, where she appeared in the 2010 Biennial with her multiple channel audio and video work *Parole*; and the 4th Auckland Triennial. She will have a solo exhibition at the Reina Sofia, Madrid, May 30-September 24, 2012. Hayes lives and works in New York.

### **About the Whitney**

The Whitney Museum of American Art is the world’s leading museum of twentieth-century and contemporary art of the United States. Focusing particularly on works by living artists, the Whitney is celebrated for presenting important exhibitions and for its renowned collection, which comprises over 19,000 works by more than 2,900 artists. With a history of exhibiting the most promising and influential artists and provoking intense debate, the Whitney Biennial, the Museum's signature exhibition, has become the most important survey of the state of contemporary art in the United States. In addition to its landmark exhibitions, the Museum is known internationally for events and educational programs of exceptional significance and as a center for research, scholarship, and conservation.

Founded by sculptor and arts patron Gertrude Vanderbilt Whitney in 1930, the Whitney was first housed on West 8th Street in Greenwich Village. The Museum relocated in 1954 to West 54th Street and, in 1966, inaugurated its present home, designed by Marcel Breuer, at 945 Madison

Avenue on the Upper East Side. While its vibrant program of exhibitions and events continues uptown, the Whitney is moving forward with a new building project, designed by Renzo Piano, in downtown Manhattan. Located at the corner of Gansevoort and Washington Streets in the Meatpacking District, at the southern entrance to the High Line, the new building, which has generated immense momentum and support, will enable the Whitney to vastly increase the size and scope of its exhibition and programming space. Ground was broken on the new building in May 2011, and it is projected to open to the public in 2015.

### **Current and Upcoming Exhibitions at the Whitney Museum of American Art**

<b>Whitney Biennial</b>	Through May 27, 2012
<b>Singular Visions</b>	Through April 2012
<b>Yayoi Kusama's <i>Fireflies on the Water</i></b>	Opens June 13, 2012
<b>Sharon Hayes</b>	June 21-September 9, 2012
<b>Signs &amp; Symbols</b>	June 28-October 28, 2012
<b>Oskar Fischinger</b>	June 28-October 28, 2012
<b>Yayoi Kusama</b>	July 12-September 30, 2012

*The Whitney Museum is located at 945 Madison Avenue at 75th Street, New York City. Museum hours are: Wednesday, Thursday, Saturday, and Sunday from 11 a.m. to 6 p.m., Friday from 1 p.m. to 9 p.m., closed Monday and Tuesday. General admission: \$18. Full-time students and visitors ages 19–25 and 62 & over: \$12. Visitors 18 & under and Whitney members: FREE. Admission is pay-what-you-wish on Fridays, 6–9 p.m. For general information, please call (212) 570-3600 or visit [whitney.org](http://whitney.org).*

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