

Introductory catalog essay for the exhibition *Intersections*, which brought together collaborative projects of fourteen teams of artists comprising women art department chairs from the Twin Cities area and their students or alumni. The exhibition was held at the Minneapolis College of Art and Design in 2012. The exhibition was conceived and curated by Karen Wirth as the culminating project for a year-long sabbatical that included a Bush Leadership Fellowship and an American Council on Education Leadership Fellowship. The full catalog is available print-on-demand at:

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Intersections

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Intersections is the evidence of multiple crossing points: collaborative studio projects between teachers and students and alumni, discussions among women leaders in the arts, and interrelationships among eleven art departments in the greater Twin Cities area.

The idea for this exhibition began with fourteen women who are current or recent studio art department chairs, engaged in very similar institutional activities, often in isolation. The traditional academic leadership model that creates that isolation begs to be challenged. Contemporary studio practice, on the other hand, has developed increasingly sophisticated collaborative models. The challenge is to discover how these practices might inform teaching and learning. And in turn, how does pedagogy inform leadership? The reciprocity among the practices of teaching, leading, and making speaks to the challenge, fostering open discussion and encouraging flexible process.

For *Intersections*, each woman invited students or alumni to engage in a collaborative project that would include dialogue about art and process. Established artists/teachers let go of their set practices, and students and recent alumni explored unfamiliar directions. As the relationship between teacher and student intertwined, collaboration dissipated hierarchical roles. The process of creating work became a form of joint mentoring, reversing normal relationships of power through mutual learning. These collaborations had an element of risk taking, with a public exposition of work not readily couched in the artists' usual studio practices.

With team participants at differing points in their careers and having vastly different life experiences, each of them is a reminder and a projection in the continuum of what it means to be an artist. Talking and making, questioning and challenging are the essential elements common to all of the projects presented. The open exchange and shifting boundaries among those elements are also essential to leadership. It is my hope that *Intersections* is just the beginning of many more exchanges.

Collaboration means "to work together," and there were many institutions and individuals, beyond the studio artists, who worked together to make this exhibition possible. The project is an extension of two leadership fellowships I was fortunate to receive during my sabbatical at the Minneapolis College of Art and Design (MCAD): a Bush Leadership Fellowship and an American Council on Education Fellowship. I thank Kerry Morgan, director of MCAD Gallery, for her ability to envision this show long before the work was completed; Patricia Briggs for her essay that frames the ideas and the work in a larger context; Nicole Summers of MCAD DesignWorks for the smart and gorgeous design of this catalog; Kristine Wyant, director of corporate and foundation relations at MCAD, for her clarifying questions and assistance. I especially thank the artists/leaders/teachers/students—all one and the same—who participated in this project.