

PRESENTATION OISE CONFERENCE
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My work as an educator has spanned a range of media and contexts. Over the past fifteen years I have directed the Women's Labour History Project, an organization committed to the research and presentation of history about working class women in the province of British Columbia. Beginning by excavating historical records and oral narratives, with the goal of indicating an important and valid set of past experiences, my work increasingly questioned the documents and methodologies with which that history was represented and interpreted. Working within a framework that supposes the value of historical narrative within the present, I acknowledge the changeability of meanings through which to speak that past. My practice as an historian has been reshaped dramatically by my studies and practice in art criticism and post-structuralist theory.

The Women's Labour History Project has published a bibliography, curated and travelled an extensive photographic exhibition, which concentrates on the history of photography about and of working class women; we have written texts and made a series of videotapes. These latter employ a variety of forms, from the experimental to the narrative, in order to simultaneously explore particular historical instances and readings. The videos speak both to the issue of the representation of women's lives by others as to an actual remembered past. This formal historical work doubles over into my personal practice as an artist: I have completed a series of works about my family and the territory of memory, both literally and figuratively.

What perhaps sets my practice apart from many other contemporary artists are the choices of contexts in which the work is given a space to speak. The videotapes, installation and photographic exhibitions circulate in the labour movement, the secondary and post-secondary school systems, in major international museums, artist-run centers and now mainstream broadcast. The audiences range from carpenters, to teachers, to teens, to art critics, etc. Each work attempts to hold within it systems and levels of language which cross over these audiences, pulling them together and apart, creating meanings and identifications that are both specific and more culturally general.

This diversity of context is also present in my teaching career. I have taught both at Capilano College in the Labour Studies Program, at the Emily Carr College of Art and Design in Vancouver and most recently in Los Angeles at the California Institute of the Arts. At E.C.C.A.D. I pioneered courses in feminist theory and curriculum and helped to design the Feminist, Gender and Cultural Studies Program at that school.

In speaking at the conference, I hope to concentrate on my work as an artist, to speak to the idea of making art works which "communicate" at a time when post-modern theory has decried the ability of representations to interact. As a feminist, it is difficult to align myself with the tradition of an "enlightenment project", but nonetheless, the works of the Women's Labour History Project speak for an instrumental consciousness on the part of women, not matter how fragmented and specific to race, class and sexual identity. I will try to link some of my methodologies in my art work with issues in feminist pedagogy in general.