

A.R.T. MOBILE LAB



Laurel Woodcock

BANFF CENTRE, BANFF

Encountering Laurel Woodcock's *walkthrough* wall texts at the Banff Centre was akin to seeing fragments of an invisible narrative surfacing from the surrounding architecture. The artist selected excerpts of dialogue and stage direction from movie scripts, fashioned the words in adhesive lettering and installed them onto interior walls and doors. She matched her selections to ordinary locations such as hallways, stairwells and conference rooms—sites whose design and purpose facilitate temporary, fragmented experiences. The discreet instructions and dialogue resembled official signage, yet also alluded to the theatricality of institutional spaces and the roles that their occupants perform. Reflecting back on their architectural moorings, the script fragments implicated viewers in a narrative of disparate sites and situational cues.

Woodcock's intervention drew viewers into moments of self-conscious awareness. While ascending an enclosed stairwell one glimpsed the scripted instruction "[mumbling]" on a curved wall; negotiating a walkway connecting two buildings, one passed through doors that bore the script instruction "(CONT'D)"; elevator doors slid shut to reveal the scripted actions "[kissing]" or "[laughing]." Some of Woodcock's inscriptions acted as coy triggers of

awareness; others engaged in a wry dialogue with the institutional context. High upon two facing walls in a conference room, the artist installed identical lines of dialogue: "What we have here is...failure to communicate." Credited to two different characters from the movie *Cool Hand Luke*, the lines mirrored each other over the room's occupants in a farcical loop.

For more than a decade, Woodcock has explored language's capacity to convey conflicting texts and subtexts simultaneously. In a 1990 work, *interval*, she used a pair of sculpted quotation marks to transform a blank wall into a quotation of space or a challenge, while the 2003 series *wish you were here* featured an airplane flying above Toronto, towing a trail of red letters that pronounced the title's sentiment to the city below.

With *walkthrough* we see a similar play of deadpan sensibility coloured by emotional undercurrents. Woodcock's integration of text and architecture brings to mind the observation of the architect and scholar Miwon Kwon: "...spatial experience, like the broken temporality of language, is discontinuous and creepily disembodied." Given that "walk-through" is a term used to describe a rehearsal in an early stage of production, Woodcock's inscriptions suggest that both our subjectivity and our relationship to our surroundings are works in progress. JOHN MARRIOTT

Installation view of Laurel Woodcock's *walkthrough (CONT'D)* 2006 Adhesive silver metallic vinyl text PHOTO TOMÁS GIRAUDO FEENER