

do you have a moment?

Works by Jody Servon from 2000-2014

Assembling over a decade of Jody Servon's work is like standing among a cacophony and chorus. The cacophony emerges from the many voices speaking through her work. Behind each object, image, artifact, and handwritten notation is the voice of a person sharing something personal about themselves. We hear these voices in the diverse and divergent media that Servon employs to tell their stories. The media, whether objects or documents, photographs or jars of paint, carry the form of a personal exchange, and with it, multiple personalities, visions, skin tones, and patterns of speech. Servon filters the multitude of voices into a chorus of images and objects reflecting the complexity of our interpersonal human relationships.

Servon's work fits within an artist history of exchange practices. The artworks are formed around prompted interactions between family, friends and strangers. By staging these conversations she shapes reality in the modes of reflection, inquiry, memory, and response. As an exhibition, the works frame their own conversation, exploring issues of desire, representation, remembrance and personality. The cacophony of voices is in all of the things. The chorus resounds in the ever-refined moments of reflection that Servon continues to request of both subject and audience.

“Do you have a moment?” The works pose this question, a call for response, a give for a take—more or less genuine, formal



Servon with dreamer on 14th Street, *Dreams for Free*, Art in Odd Places, New York City, 2013.

or informal, staged or spontaneous. The exhibition hinges on the questions posed and responses captured, between a cacophony and a chorus. As a collective chorus of works, they form a carefully composed and measured reflection. However, as an exhibition bringing together a decade of work it feels cacophonous, for within the incredible diversity of media we discover an artist whose practice focuses sharply on issues of concept and content while employing the most effective media for the message.

What ties the works together is Servon's request for something simultaneously personal and quotidian. She asks this of herself, her friends, acquaintances, total strangers, and of us, her audience. She requests that we pause a moment to consider the meaning of a name, an important song, the

skin tone of a loved one. She requests that her mother show her child how to bake scones, for friends to choose a most representative portrait of a friend, for passersby on the street to imagine for a moment that they are wealthy and to fantasize about how their lives would be different if they were. Each personal reflection reflects a precise moment of time and a way of thinking about another person. In the varied responses we see another's reflection, that of the artist, and undoubtedly ourselves. Each work in the exhibit, explicitly or not, is asking us if we have a moment to contribute to the cacophony or chorus.

The exhibition is anchored by *Saved* (2008-ongoing). An extensive body of photographs that capture the most important things people have saved from loved ones that died.

Accompanied by prose poems written by Lorene Delany-Ullman, extracted from the personal stories of owners, these pieces are reminders of what is lost as much as what is saved. In each is a portrait of an owner, who remains in possession of a remembrance of a loved one. The objects are often ordinary but they serve as repositories for conjuring memory and spirit.

Objects arranged in the display case are *Items matching [ART]* (2000). Each object was identified and purchased from eBay being sold under the search term [ART]. These things are Servon's first collection of other peoples' stuff. They serve in relation to the more refined collection of *Saved* as an early experiment into the embodied memory of things. They show Servon's first engagement with tactility, thingness and display in an exhibition setting. Unlike *Saved*, which poses the most personal question in a poignant fashion, *Items matching [ART]* poses a more poignant question—what do people value as art—and measures it in a most impersonal way. Even though these objects are isolated in a case and play with formal aesthetics of display, they amount to little more than an artifact of an online merchant exchange and the varied spectrum of 'things' that might be considered folk.

Likeness (2004), also one of Servon's earlier works, literally puts faces to the cacophony of voices present in the exhibit. The work is a simple collection of photographs that people would use if filing a missing persons report. Unlike *Saved*, the

faces of people, not their objects, are represented. In *Likeness* the image—one of thousands of snapshots that we maintain in shoeboxes and on hard drives—becomes the stand-in for those closest to us. Each likeness is both an approximation of how we view our friends, and a representation used to help other people know, recognize, and recover our loss.

Family Colors, (2005-2014) offers a different form of likeness by playing on the skin tones of family members. Here the challenges of representation are filtered through the vernacular of design, domestic furnishing, and colorant technologies. Presented in jars of latex house paint, Servon's efforts to approximate a color palette for her family reflects the way aesthetics and image production quickly scramble our concepts of personality, identity, genetics.

In *Dreams for Free* (2011-ongoing) Servon stages a public encounter by asking passersby to record what they would do if they suddenly won millions of dollars. It is from this work that the title of the show emerges. "Do you have a moment?" pertains to the latent potential tapped by the work's chance interruption of daily life. More than simply a record of impossible hopes, the work hinges on a moment of anticipation, expectation, and imagination that arises when strangers are given a lottery ticket. There is a curious exchange of labor and value, which is unique among Servon's works. In other works, the artistic framing of a personal item



Saved installation view, Bloomsburg University 2010.



Items matching [ART], installation view, University of Arizona Art Museum, 2000.



Angelo from the *Likeness* project, 2004.

or intimate engagement is the exchange value for personal reflections. In *Dreams for Free*, a stranger is offered a form of currency valued at a \$1 or \$12,000,000 in exchange for a hope and a document to exhibit.

In a way, all the works ask that we take a moment to respond personally to any number of questions that reflect the values of our interpersonal relationships. As we glance through pages of dreams, gaze back at the faces of *Likeness*, study the portraiture of *Saved* we are both viewers and respondents, captured by images and possessed by the artist's questioning. For the work to live we must interrupt our own viewership, defy the order of the exhibition, refuse the neat category of object-artwork, and allow for a moment the cacophony of voices to grow in volume and intensity. At that moment we might take a moment, and listen for our own voice responding in chorus.

—George Scheer, curator

George Scheer is the founding director of Elsewhere in Greensboro, North Carolina.



Video still from *Ten Minutes to Make, Ten Minutes to Bake*, 2011-2014.

List of Works

Items matching [ART], 2000

Collection of items sold as art and purchased from eBay.com with accompanying artist book.

Likeness, 2004

Collection of photographs that loved ones would use in the event that the person pictured went missing.

Family Colors, 2005-2014

Custom latex paint mixed to match distinctive colors on family members' bodies.

Saved, 2008-ongoing

A collaborative project with Lorene Delany-Ullman documenting objects people have saved from loved ones' that have died.

Dreams for Free, 2011-ongoing

Collection of people's written hopes and dreams for what they would do if they suddenly won millions of dollars.

Ten Minutes to Make, Ten Minutes to Bake, 2011-2014

Video of the artist's mother Lois teaching her granddaughter how to make her famous scone recipe.

Naming Stories, 2013-ongoing

Interactive website to collect stories about people's first names online at namingstories.com.

My Top 100, 2014

Poster and playlist of songs that trigger vivid visual memories from artist's life along with contributions from audience members.

Do you have a moment? is on view at the Gardiner Gallery at Oklahoma State University from August 25 through September 26, 2014. Special thanks to Lorene Delany-Ullman, Janie Ledford, Matt Meier, Kameron Neal, Alissa Nelson, Parker Seward and all the people who have shared in the creation of these projects.

All images are provided courtesy of the artist.