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## NEWS RELEASE

MIT List Visual Arts Center presents

**Frances Stark:**  
*This could become a gimmick [sic]  
or an honest articulation of the workings of the mind*

October 22, 2010 – January 2, 2011  
Hayden and Reference Galleries

Opening Reception: October 21, 6-8PM  
Artist Talk: 5:30 PM, Bartos Theatre



Frances Stark, *Why should you not be able to assemble yourself and write?*, 2008

**Cambridge, MA-August 2010.** The MIT List Visual Arts Center is pleased to announce *Frances Stark: This could become a gimmick [sic] or an honest articulation of the workings of the mind*, the first U.S. museum survey of the work of Los Angeles artist and writer, Frances Stark (b. 1967, Newport Beach, California). Spanning two decades of the artist's work, the survey will feature more than forty drawings, collages, videos, and sculptures, including several new works produced for the exhibition.

Through both writing and visual art, Frances Stark addresses the conditions of creative labor, producing candid and affecting work about the nature of artistic practice and the corresponding yet integral banality of the everyday. The artist's body of work stands as a self-reflexive inquiry into the process of artistic production, and the often-elided demands of daily life. Parsing artistic labor in all its struggle, tedium, and enchantment, Stark wryly yet rigorously foregrounds notions of doubt, failure, and creative anxiety, as well as domesticity and autobiography.

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Language, as subject matter and material, has also been a central theme in Stark's work during the last two decades. The elliptical, digressive style that typifies her writing is also echoed in an often text-based artistic practice; her art frequently alludes to reading and writing, as well as the interrelation between art and literature, image and text. Stark incorporates language as a material in her work, whether through the visual use of graphic or typographical signs, such as clusters of typewritten letters, or her frequent use of literary fragments. Much of Stark's work appropriates passages of text from a wide variety of literary sources—including Emily Dickinson, John Keats, and Robert Musil—traced by hand using carbon paper.

Along with an articulated use of language and text, Stark's iconography also includes collaged elements drawn from the detritus of her personal and professional life. Fragments of correspondence, writings, junk mail, and exhibition announcements are collaged together in much of her work, reflecting an interest in the tactile and handmade, and in divisions of labor and studio practice. This self-disclosive investigation of the relationship between professional and domestic space, and the gender roles associated with them, was also the subject of Stark's influential text *The Architect and the Housewife* (1999).

In *Untitled (Sexus)* (1992), an edition of Henry Miller's eponymous novel is presented alongside Stark's carbon-copied version. This act of transcription suggests an abiding interest in quotation, performativity, and the "anxiety of influence" in the artist's body of work. *If conceited girls want to show they already have a seat...* (2008) takes its visual pun from Goya's 1799 etching *Ya tiene asiento* (*They Already have a Seat*) mocking female sexuality. Similarly, natural imagery of peacocks and birds is used to mock-heroic effect in many of the drawings, part of the artist's interest in the "performance" of the creative self.

Stark's pre-Youtube *Cat Videos* (1999–2002) are a collection of home movies of her cats, set to musical themes ranging from Black Flag to The Supremes. *In and In* (2005) is comprised of two strips of cut-up junk mail and flyers, as if piling up on a desk. For *Structures That Fit My Opening and Other Parts Considered in Relation to Their Whole* (2006), Stark appropriates the didactic format of the Powerpoint presentation to construct a visual essay from text, works of art, and personal photographs. While describing the attempt to free creativity from mundane clutter, the piece also reflects Stark's search for the "kind of 'liberation' I—as a woman, artist, teacher, mother, ex-wife—am really after."

**About the Artist:** Frances Stark is a Los Angeles-based artist and writer who completed her MFA at the Art Center College of Design, Pasadena, CA and currently teaches at the University of Southern California. She has been the subject of solo exhibitions at Nottingham Contemporary, Nottingham, U.K.; Portikus, Frankfurt am Main, Germany; Secession, Vienna, Austria; Van Abbemuseum, Eindhoven, The Netherlands; Fonds régional d'art contemporain de Bourgogne, Dijon, France; and UCLA Hammer Museum, Los Angeles, CA. Her work has been included in group exhibitions at CCA Wattis Institute for Contemporary Art, San Francisco, CA; San Francisco Museum of Modern Art, San Francisco; Museum of Modern Art, New York, NY; Tate Modern, London, U.K.; Los Angeles County Museum of Art, Los Angeles; The Museum of Contemporary Art, Los Angeles; and the 2008 Biennial, Whitney Museum of American Art, New York, NY. Stark is also the author of *The Architect and the Housewife* (Book Works, 1999) and *Collected Writings: 1993-2003* (Book Works, 2003) and has published widely in numerous magazines, journals, catalogues, and artist monographs. Her artworks are included in public collections of the Museum of Contemporary Art, Los Angeles; the Los Angeles County Museum of Art, Los Angeles; the San Francisco Museum of Modern Art, San Francisco; UCLA Hammer Museum, Los Angeles; and Fonds régional d'art contemporain, Champagne-Ardenne, Reims, France.

*Frances Stark: This could become a gimmick [sic] or an honest articulation of the workings of the mind* is organized by Joao Ribas, Curator, MIT List Visual Arts Center. An illustrated catalog will accompany the exhibition, with a selection of texts by the artist, and an essay by the exhibition curator.

Support for *Frances Stark: This could become a gimmick [sic] or an honest articulation of the workings of the mind* has been generously provided by The Andy Warhol Foundation for the Visual Arts, the Barbara Lee Family Foundation, David Teiger, the Council for the Arts at MIT, and the Massachusetts Cultural Council. Media Sponsor: Phoenix Communications Group.



**Directions:** The MIT List Visual Arts Center is located in the Wiesner Building, 20 Ames St., at the eastern edge of the MIT campus. It is in close proximity to Kendall Square, Memorial Drive, and the Longfellow Bridge.

By T, take the red line to the Kendall/MIT stop, follow Main St. west to Ames St., turn left, and walk one block to the cross walk. The MIT List Visual Arts Center housed in a building identifiable by its white gridded exterior, will be on your left. Signage is on the building.

By car, coming across the Longfellow Bridge or from Memorial Drive, follow signs for Kendall Square. Limited metered parking is available on Ames Street. A parking garage is located at the Cambridge Center complex (entrance on Ames between Main and Broadway) during business hours and on campus after business hours and on weekends.

**Gallery Hours:** Tuesday-Wednesday: 12-6PM; Friday-Sunday: 12-6PM; Thursday: 12-8PM; Closed Mondays and Major Holidays. Information: 617.253.4680 or <http://listart.mit.edu>

All exhibitions at the MIT List Visual Arts Center are free and open to the public.

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