

Art

Engagement

Economy

The Working Practice of
Caroline Woolard

Experience
Study
Commitment
Inquiry
Timeframe
Experiment
Idea in Public
Reflect

Readers will notice words on the edges of each page of the book. This is a navigation system that Woolard has created with designer Angela Lorenzo that aims to take readers through Woolard's working process (on the right and left edges of the book's pages) and to note whether the endeavor is collectively-initiated or is an institutional invitation (on the bottom of the page).

Institutional
Invitation

Collectively-
Initiated

Making

Managing

Mediating

Title of Project/
Platform/Practice

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Foreword

Patricia C. Phillips, Chief Academic Officer and Academic Dean of Moore College of Art & Design, May 2020.

My work celebrates collective capacities for [care and critique](#).—Caroline Woolard, 2018

Patricia C. Phillips is Chief Academic Officer at Moore College of Art & Design and an independent writer and curator. Phillips is the author of *City Speculations*, *It is Difficult: Alfredo Jaar*, and *Ursula von Rydingsvard: Working*. Phillips's curatorial projects include a one-person exhibition on the artist Mierle Laderman Ukeles at the Queens Museum in Flushing, Queens and *Making Sense: Five Artists' Installations on Sensation* at the Katonah Museum of Art, Katonah, New York.

In spring 2018, Moore College of Art & Design launched the Jane and David Walentas Endowed Fellowship to bring a significant artist, designer, or scholar to engage with the Moore community and Philadelphia organizations on special projects and initiatives during a two-year appointment. The expectation for the Fellowship is open exploration through high-impact initiatives. Embedded in a historic art and design college founded in 1848 by Sarah Worthington Peter to educate, empower, and prepare women to work in new nineteenth century industries, there is an intrinsic (or inevitable) engagement of contemporary art and design pedagogy, yet it is not a teaching fellowship. Instead, the Walentas Fellow was conceived by the donors, with leadership at Moore, as a creative and generative participant, [collaborator](#), and lively “interventionist” in Moore and the expanded urban and cultural environment.

Following a panel review of many nominees, artist Caroline Woolard was selected as the inaugural Walentas Fellow. She nimbly navigates different sites and conditions of contemporary art and design. She has created striking forms in [glass](#) and in 3D-printed ceramic and metal that act as objects for [facilitation](#). She is active and facile with networks and open source environments around the world, as well as studios and sites of design, fabrication, and production that bring global reach, organizational theory, and tactile immersion to work that is authentically interdisciplinary, economically based, and centered on justice and equity, including [OurGoods.org](#) see chapter 3 (non-monetary artist exchange); [TradeSchool.coop](#) see chapter 3 (an alternative peer-learning site); [BFAMFAPhD.com](#) see chapter 5 (that focuses on cultural access and equity); and The NYC Real Estate Cooperative (that organizes and incentivizes artists to share resources to create stable and shareable work spaces).

It is often exciting and occasionally daunting to be “the first,” yet she embraced the elasticity and novelty of the fellowship at Moore and applied dynamic vision to develop a two-year

prospectus of initiatives, including workshops with students and Moore faculty on inclusive critique [practices](#), participation in programming at The Free Library of Philadelphia's new Robert and Eileen Kennedy Heim Center for Civic and Cultural Engagement, and work with Esteban Kelly, Director of the United States Federation of [Worker Cooperatives](#) on conflict transformation tactics and strategies.

As a self-determined artist and indefatigable organizer (and analyst) of established and emergent forms of cooperation and collaboration within creative communities, Woolard is a striking example of the evolving priorities, passions, and critical [practices](#) of contemporary artists. Art and justice, work and life, critical introspection and organizational theory are consistently (re)formed through speculative research and inquisitive future-mindedness. She notates and performs a continuing and scalable choreography animated by questions of work, purpose, and values of community and critique.

a vivid example of artists' [practice](#)
that transcends boundaries
of creative work and social justice,
independent art and organizations,
work and life — based and
formed by both historic research
and future speculations

Caroline asks:

"What does a [culture of reflection and listening](#) look like?"

This is a question that motivates Caroline's work, especially at this time. As organizer and [collaborator](#), she has witnessed how creative coalitions dynamically advance or slowly fail. She is committed to bring art process and art objects into spaces and situations where they are often unexpected. The exhibition we invited Woolard to install in The Galleries at Moore in the summer of 2019 is now a

traveling exhibition and publication. The book includes ephemera and eclectic evidence of creative and collaborative processes. In the exhibition format, Woolard's participatory installation, *The Meeting*^{see chapter 1}, is central, presenting a large conference table and discursive space to convene, examine, and critique **meetings** as the unexamined anatomy of organizational (and educational) cultures. She created a series of facilitating and **listening** objects—artifacts and interventions to reveal the dynamics, **power** inequities, and challenges of communication and (as she writes) the “unavoidable antagonisms of working together” frequently in numbingly unimaginative spaces.

She is committed to bring art
process and art objects into spaces
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often unexpected.

Caroline asks:

“What if the **tables** and objects in our spaces were as imaginative as the conversations we are having?”

Based on work she has developed over the past two years, she will launch a new and ambitious chapter of this work to insert compelling sculptural objects into spaces, circumstances, **meetings**, and other quotidian **events** and encounters. These intervening objects are **beautiful** objects for **facilitation** settings, **meetings**, and other group settings. Some of these once migrated throughout Moore and now (with other new additions) become a visceral part of The Free Library of Philadelphia's extraordinary loanable collection of resources. While animating the Free Library as a center for contemporary art and collaborative cross-sector initiatives, Caroline's objects will be checked out, like books and videos, to support community organizations and artist-led workshops that create and sustain Philadelphia's dynamic cultural and collaborative communities.

This book is a vivid, summative representation of her dynamic engagements as the first Walentas Fellow at Moore.

A Way of Working*

Gabrielle Lavin Suzenski began her career in the Fabric Workshop and Museum's post-college apprenticeship program, which led to a full-time position working with the founder/artistic director in coordinating the museum's relocation in 2006. She has an MBA in Entrepreneurship & Innovation and a BFA in Sculpture and Printmaking, both from Penn State University.

*

Adapted from the exhibition wall text at The Galleries at Moore, September 2019.

1

Marcos Arruda, "[Solidarity Economy](#) and the Rebirth of a Matristic Human Society," (Towards People's Economy: Realities and Strategies from Local to Global, World Social Forum, Mumbai, India, January 2004), available, http://base.socioeco.org/docs/doc-7390_en.pdf, 2.

Gabrielle Lavin Suzenski, Rochelle F. Levy Director of The Galleries at Moore College of Art & Design.

This book presents a selection of imagery, critical essays, commentary, and ephemera from socially engaged and collective projects by New York-based artist Caroline Woolard (b. 1984, Rhode Island) produced over the past decade. While Woolard's multi-year, immersive installations are meant to be experienced in person and in [site-sensitive](#) contexts, the artist wanted to share her working process here so readers could get a sense of the [skills](#) that are required to make socially engaged projects. The photographs in this book act as visual reference points for an artistic [practice](#) that resists a single image or encounter. The documentation, correspondence, technical drawings, budgets, and writing included here reveal the ways in which Woolard balances making, managing, and mediating her projects. For Woolard, the process—a way of working—is as important as the result.

In running the online [barter](#) networks OurGoods.org and TradeSchool.coop ^{see chapter 3}, creating a café at MoMA that circulated the desires of visitors as currency ^{see chapter 4}, and studying collective [practices](#) in the visual arts in The Study Center for Group Work ^{see chapter 2}, Woolard asks viewers and participants alike to reconsider daily activities of exchange. The [Community Economies Collective](#), which informs Woolard's [practice](#), writes, "How we imagine, frame and talk about our economy influences how we act. Contemporary economic politics confronts the economy as a bounded object separated from other social processes. In order to remake the economy we need different representations and framings that enable new modes of calculation and materialization." If the economy is not a "bounded object," what role do artists play in representing and remaking economies? Woolard's [practice](#) encourages open-ended conversation around that question.

Woolard writes that she "employs sculpture, installation, and online networks to imagine and enact the solidarity economy in the arts." The term "[solidarity economy](#)" emerged in the Global South (as "economía solidaria") in the 1990s and spread globally as an interdependent movement after the first annual World Social Forum in Brazil in 2001, which popularized the slogan "another world is possible."¹ The

[solidarity economy](#) is recognized as a way to value people and the planet over profits and to unite grassroots [practices](#) like lending [circles](#), credit unions, [worker cooperatives](#), and community [land trusts](#) to form a base of political [power](#).

What is unusual about Woolard’s approach to art and design is that she makes objects as well as multi-year, public initiatives using both online networks and sculptural environments. Woolard co-creates open-source Web 2.0 technology while hand-building objects that compose larger, immersive installations. From a real estate investment cooperative to [tables](#) shaped like a pack of she-wolves, Woolard offers unconventional spaces for [reflection](#) about exchange and collective agency. Woolard’s [aesthetic](#) infrastructure—textual, digital, and physical—asks art audiences to consider that “the economy” is not separate from their daily actions.

Woolard’s daily actions are made visible in this book, as heated email negotiations and mundane budgets are presented alongside documentation of finished gallery installations. Readers are invited to follow the behind-the-scenes work that is required to produce interdisciplinary art projects, from a commission at MoMA to a self-organized, international [barter](#) network with over 20,000 participants. The book in your hands proposes a politics of transparent production in the arts. It suggests that artists can bring studio-based sculptural techniques to interdisciplinary collaboration and dialogue.

The first two chapters of this book present Woolard’s most recent endeavors: a short-term project called *The Meeting* ^{see chapter 1} and a multi-year initiative called The Study Center for Group Work ^{see chapter 2}. From there, the chapters are organized chronologically and demonstrate Woolard’s persistence as she develops multi-year, collectively initiated platforms alongside short-term projects produced at the invitation of institutions like Moore College of Art & Design. Readers will notice that Woolard’s research and [practice](#) centers upon the following [practices](#) within the [solidarity economy](#): [barter](#) and [mutual aid](#) ^{see chapter 3}, [community currencies](#) ^{see chapter 4}, [collectives](#) ^{see chapter 5}, [worker cooperatives](#) ^{see chapter 6 and chapter 2}, and a deepened emphasis on group communication and collective governance ^{see chapters 1, 2, 7, 8}.

The [solidarity economy](#) framework is explained at length by Woolard in the next section. On those pages, and the pages that follow, readers will notice words on the edges of each page of the book. This is a navigation system that Woolard has created with designer Angela Lorenzo that aims to take readers through her working process (on the right and left edges of the book's pages) and to note whether the endeavor is collectively-initiated or is an institutional invitation (on the bottom of the page).

The correspondence, grants, applications, budgets, and ephemera shown in this book have been reproduced with the consent of Woolard's [collaborators](#) and the partner organizations and institutions she has worked with. The photographs in this book have been carefully chosen by Woolard in order to emphasize the sculptures, objects, and installations that she has created that invite collective dialogue. Woolard insisted that the book would not document and circulate images of people that she does not know personally. The pages in each chapter that read simply "imagine a group gathering" were placed there by Woolard to remind readers of the limitations of photographic documentation of socially engaged and collective [practices](#), as these images are often indistinct from gallery openings or images of everyday life. The ephemera presented in this book will continue to be annotated and adapted in future exhibitions, as they were in the exhibition from which this book emerged.