ABSTRACT

Panel: POWER, COLLABORATION, AND LIES

Chair: Kathryn Behar, Baruch College

“Power, Collaboration & Lies” begins by acknowledging how hegemonic systems structure contemporary co-production. The panel addresses forms of collectivity not only among individuals, but also modalities of “collaboration” or “working together” with institutions and systems. By focusing on the labor in collaboration, the panel diverges from the usual utopic art historical presentation of 1960s grassroots feminist art collectives as inherently democratic. Collaboration is no longer, if it was ever, simply a currency for working among peers; one is more often co-laboring in the shadow of unequal power distribution. Thus “Power, Collaboration & Lies” seeks to engage a critical question with broad implications beyond the art world: How can people collaborate toward justice, in undemocratic conditions, with powerful institutions, when systemic and personal interests are not aligned? This panel also poses the additional question of whether, despite its art world popularity, collaboration is the right form to strive for given political and power structures today. At a moment when the most paradigmatic widespread collaborative projects may be corporate social media entities, we can see how collaboration can be complicit with and even progress inequality. For companies like Facebook, the collective labor in this type of co-labor-ation is exponentially easier to exploit while remaining unrenumerated. When this kind of collaboration is such a dominant contemporary model, why is the art world pursuing more misty-eyed antiquated versions? This dystopic idea of collaboration ties in with another, older meaning of the word: being a collaborator as opposed to being a member of the resistance.

Panelists
Stephanie Rothenberg, University of Buffalo; Jeff Crouse, Odd Division/NEW INC, New Museum; Larisa Mann, New York University; Sydette Harry, Body Ecology Performance Ensemble; and Liz Flyntz, Smack Mellon/Extracurricular.