



# TX★13

## COMMISSIONED ARTIST PROJECT

Co-presented with **BALLROOM MARFA**

September 14 – November 9, 2013

*Open Studio:  
Every Person Is A Special Kind of Artist,  
with Baggage*

### THE DALLAS COLLECTIVE

Soraya Abtahi  
Braeden Bailey  
Jenna Barrois  
William Binnie  
Michael Corris  
Nina Davis  
Michael Deleon  
Kelly Kroener  
Elainy Lopez  
Alexandra Monroe  
Michael Morris  
Rhyanna Odom  
Ellen Smith  
Travis LaMothe  
Melissa Tran  
Hannah Tyler  
Dylan Wignall

*Open Studio* is co-presented with Ballroom Marfa as the Texas Biennial's first commissioned artist project.

The tote bags produced as part of the *Open Studio* project were created as a limited edition of 50. Proceeds from the sale of the bags are being donated to a charity designated by The Dallas Collective.

#### ABOUT THE DALLAS COLLECTIVE

The Dallas Collective was formed in the context of a studio art course taught by Michael Corris, Professor at the Meadows School of Art, Southern Methodist University. In addition to Corris, the group includes M.F.A. students William Binnie, Travis LaMothe ('13) and Melissa Tran, Dallas artists Kelly Kroener and Michael Morris, and undergraduate students Soraya Abtahi, Braeden Bailey, Jenna Barrois, Nina Davis, Michael Deleon, Elainy Lopez, Alexandra Monroe, Rhyanna Odom, Ellen Smith, Hannah Tyler and Dylan Wignall.

**Michael Corris** is an artist and writer on art whose work is most closely identified with the critical practices and attitudes of Conceptual art; specifically, with the work of the collective, *Art & Language*.

The Dallas Collective is a collaborative practice that developed out of a studio art course held for the first time during the 2013 spring semester at the Meadows School of the Arts, Southern Methodist University, in Dallas. As one of four core introductory courses for art students in the Division of Art, "Systems" aims to introduce students to a way of making and thinking about art that is conscious of the networks in which contemporary art is embedded. In this setting, emphasis is placed on understanding art media in terms of their technical and historical nature. The essential quality of the studio experience is collective, discursive, and reflective. By bringing to light the way art is embedded in the various networks of display, representation, meaning, and control, we raise the question, "what is creativity?"

The current project conceived and produced by The Dallas Collective—*Open Studio: Every Person Is A Special Kind of Artist, with Baggage*—references the historically unstable notion of studio practice in visual art, from the scriptorium to the workshop, the garret to the barricades, the Bauhaus to The Factory, and the enthusiast's kitchen table to the street and the city.

*Open Studio* also riffs on contemporary notions of open source and commons culture, and incorporates as well ideas found in Ad Reinhardt's 1943 manuscript, "Paintings and Pictures". There, Reinhardt challenges the artist to consider how contemporary communication media impacts the making of art that seeks to address the public at large and presents an impassioned plea for an appreciation of the various kinds of creativity we encounter in everyday life.

During the late 1960s/early 1970s, numerous Conceptual artists used forms found readymade in the public sphere: billboards, advertising hoardings, the advertising spaces of newspapers and magazines, mass produced commodities such as Coca-Cola bottles, or even negotiable currencies. These forms of communication or address defined the boundaries of the public sphere, which was imagined to be the property of the citizen rather than the property of a corporation or the State. The use of banners and banner-like graphics has been extended in more recent practice to become paradigmatic of the work of other artists, such as Ken Lum, Barbara Kruger, Sylvie Fleury and Karen Carson.

The system that animates *Open Studio* defines the conditions of work for the participants in the project. One way to picture *Open Studio* is as a system that translates one form of visual cultural expression into another. As the system is enacted, a specific form of display—the archive, the banner, and the ubiquitous trademark-ridden tote bag—emerges to redescribe and destabilize the previous medium.

The process that defined the work of The Dallas Collective was relatively uncomplicated:

- We began by assembling an archive of original visual and textual material created by each the members of the collective. All the images in the archive were scanned and were made available as digital files.
- Each member of the collective selected a fixed number of images from the archive, half of which had to be images made by another member of the collective.
- Every time an archive image was selected it was removed from the archive and replaced with another image. In this way, every member of the collective was confronted with a slightly different resource of visual images from which to make his or her selection.

- The digital files of the selected images were compiled into a grid composition, which was then transmitted to banners.com and reproduced as a 4 x 8' vinyl banner.

- The banners were utilized as the raw material from which tote bags were constructed. The patterns used to make the bags were randomly distributed across the banners, so as to fragment the totality of any one composition.

The archive—a collection of material ordinarily inaccessible to the public and fixed in its content—is thereby continuously altered and eventually transformed into a banner. The banner—a format intended for continuous public display and also a familiar artifact appropriated by contemporary artists—is transformed into a semi-public object: the tote bag. As the bag meanders through a day of shopping and errands, it takes on another character as an unpredictable odyssey of display.

– *The Dallas Collective*



Stills from *Open Studio: Every Person Is A Special Kind of Artist, with Baggage*, an 8 minute video documenting the project created by Melissa Tran and Michael Morris. (Available at [www.texasbiennial.org](http://www.texasbiennial.org).)

#### ABOUT THE TEXAS BIENNIAL

The Texas Biennial is an independent survey of contemporary art in Texas, founded to create an exhibition opportunity for all artists living and working in the state. In the fall of 2013, the Biennial celebrates its 5th anniversary with a range of exhibitions and other programming at venues in Austin, Dallas, Houston, Marfa and San Antonio. [www.texasbiennial.org](http://www.texasbiennial.org)

The Texas Biennial is a program of Big Medium, a 501(c)(3) nonprofit organization dedicated to promoting contemporary art throughout Texas, funded in part by the City of Austin through the Cultural Arts Division. The Biennial is also supported by the Texas Commission on the Arts and generous contributions from Suzanne Deal Booth and David G. Booth and other private donors, as well as grants from the Susan Vaughan Foundation, the Elizabeth Firestone Graham Foundation and the Houston Arts Alliance.

#### ABOUT BALLROOM MARFA

Ballroom Marfa is a dynamic, contemporary cultural arts space that provides a lively intellectual environment where varied perspectives and issues are explored through visual arts, film, music, and performance. As an advocate for the freedom of artistic expression, Ballroom Marfa's mission is to serve international, national, regional, and local arts communities and support the work of both emerging and recognized artists working in all media. [www.ballroommarfa.org](http://www.ballroommarfa.org)

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