

# SEASON TWO

UNIVERSITY OF WATERLOO

University of Waterloo Art Gallery

East Campus Hall 1239

Hours:

Tuesday to Saturday 12:00–5:00 pm

Driving:

263 Phillip Street, Waterloo, ON

[www.uwaterloo.ca/map/index.php](http://www.uwaterloo.ca/map/index.php)

Mailing:

200 University Avenue West

Waterloo, ON Canada N2L 3G1

Contact:

Ivan Jurakic, Director/Curator

[ijurakic@uwaterloo.ca](mailto:ijurakic@uwaterloo.ca)

519.888.4567 ext. 36741

[uwag.uwaterloo.ca](http://uwag.uwaterloo.ca)



**Synaesthesiac**

Colleen Wolstenholme’s artwork evokes the encroachment of prescription medicines into our daily lives. Appropriating prescription pills as her sculptural subject matter, Wolstenholme’s work suggests the potentially detrimental side of over medication in our culture.

*Spill* is a floor-based installation consisting of twenty-three pills, each a duplicate of the pharmaceuticals BuSpar and Amitriptyline. Commonly prescribed to women to combat anxiety and depression, the work is a condemnation of the way in which women have traditionally been misdiagnosed and overmedicated by a largely patriarchal medical establishment. Furthermore, by reproducing the same shape, proportion and logo of each pill, albeit at a greatly enlarged scale, the artist challenges the multinational drug companies that design and market their products to women, and men, using upbeat slogans and polished ad campaigns.

*Xanax* and *Dilaudid* takes things a step further, reproducing the respective anti-anxiety medication and opiod analgesic in bronze. Bronze is a sculptural material that has traditionally been associated with monuments and public sculpture produced by men in an intensely masculine environment. By having her art cast in bronze

**OFF-SITE**

Presented in conjunction with

**CAFKA.11: Survive. Resist.**

**Colleen Wolstenholme,**

**Xanax and Dilaudid**

School of Pharmacy, Lobby

10A Victoria Street South, Kitchener

Monday–Friday, 8:00 am–5:00 pm

Presented in conjunction with CAFKA.11: Survive. Resist., the Critical Media Lab and the 25th Annual Conference of the SLSA (Society for Literature, Science and the Arts) being held September 22–25 in Kitchener.

**Artist Biography**

Colleen Wolstenholme received her BFA from the Nova Scotia School of Art and Design and her MFA from the State University of New York at New Paltz. She has exhibited her work nationally and internationally at the National Gallery of Canada, Ottawa; Confederation Centre Art Gallery, Charlottetown; Art Gallery of Nova Scotia, Halifax; Art Gallery of Calgary, Calgary; Cambridge Galleries, Cambridge; Artspeak, Vancouver; Real Art Ways, Hartford; and the Museum

of Contemporary Canadian Art, Toronto. Her artwork has been featured in numerous magazines and journals including People, The London Sunday Times, Psychology Today, The Globe & Mail, C International, The Los Angeles Times and The New York Times. She is the recipient of numerous grants and was shortlisted for the Sobey Art Award in 2002. The artist lives and works in Hansport, Nova Scotia. Colleen Wolstenholme is represented by Art Mûr, Montréal. [www.colleenwolstenholme.com](http://www.colleenwolstenholme.com)

**List of Works**

*Synaesthesiac* (with Gillian McCain), 2011 wall-mounted photographs and found images, dimensions variable

*Spill*, 2003–ongoing hollow cast plaster pills, dimensions variable

*Dilaudid*, 2011 cast bronze, 41 x 41 x 22 cm

*Xanax*, 2010 cast bronze, 98 x 45 x 35 cm

Artworks courtesy of the artist and Art Mûr, Montréal



Wolstenholme insures the longevity of her work and pointedly positions herself within a largely patriarchal Western pantheon. She takes on the challenge of this historically loaded material while continuing to question the prescribed ideologies it has come to represent.

Her most recent project, *Synaesthesiac*, was developed in collaboration with New York based artist Gillian McCain. Co-mingling cut-outs of photographs and found images Wolstenholme creates a mural-sized collage directly on the walls of the gallery. Synaesthesia is a neurological condition in which the stimulation of one sensory pathway can lead to the involuntary stimulation of another sensory or cognitive pathway, resulting in the ability to see sound for instance. Composed out of hundreds of individual images that have been meticulously stitched together, the collage evokes both the complexity and connectivity of neural pathways and the metadata that can be found in an informational tag cloud. Wolstenholme’s seemingly random mapping of images uses free association and a non-hierarchical structure to draw a parallel distinction between our perceptions of healthy and traumatized states of mind.

— Ivan Jurakic

Images (from left to right): *Synaesthesiac* (detail) 2011; *Xanax*, 2010.

September 15–October 29, 2011

Gallery One

**Laurel Woodcock**

**Jump Cuts**

Gallery Two

**Colleen Wolstenholme**

**Synaesthesiac**





## Jump Cuts

Laurel Woodcock’s work is funny.

Not laugh out loud funny mind you, humour is complicated after all, more like a sly grin that tells you most of what you need to know without giving away too much. Woodcock’s work involves the idiosyncratic juxtaposition of meanings. She makes smart, intellectually stimulating artworks that share an affinity with Conceptual art but approaches it with a wholly contemporary sensibility.

Conceptual art prioritized the use of ideas over craft. It appropriated scientific methods to analyze the meaning of art. Conceptual artists set out to challenge and liberate common perceptions of art, often using language as a means to create new avenues of production. Thus Conceptual art was multidisciplinary, eschewing traditional artmaking practices in favour of multiples and time-based media.

Woodcock’s work effortlessly incorporates a broad range of media: from video to installation to fabrication. Noted curator Nicholas Bourriaud observes that artists today increasingly *program forms more than they compose them: rather than transfigure a raw element (blank canvas, clay, etc.), they remix available forms and make use of data.*<sup>1</sup> This is an apt description of Woodcock’s approach. Appropriating everyday items and phrases as subject matter, she investigates the elasticity of meaning by using subtle and at other times obvious shifts in scale, composition and circumstance.

*location shoot* (2003) and *conditions* (2005) are short, single channel videos that modestly deflate their subject matter. The first, documents a selection of empty chairs found in residences, offices, alleyways and hotels. The chairs are ubiquitous. The occasional wagging tail or falling banner punctuates the static cinematography and quirky soundtrack. The end result succinctly questions the narrative structure of commercial film production, while paying homage to the coincidental link between location scouting and the custom of artist’s site visits to various locales for research. The second feature is a short document of a lawn chair tied to 100 helium-filled balloons that is reminiscent of the legend of Wan Hu, a Chinese nobleman who in the 16th century attempted to fly by tying rockets to a chair. Instead of taking-off into the wild heavens the flimsy folding chair is merely knocked to the ground by the breeze.

The use of the chair as a conceptual prop is evocative of *One and Three Chairs* (1965), a significant work by Joseph Kosuth, an early proponent of Conceptual art. The installation features a chair displayed alongside a photograph of the same chair and a dictionary definition of the word chair.<sup>2</sup> The first generation of conceptual artists set out to interrogate language as a structure and a form. Woodcock mines language in a similar manner but with a lighter, less didactic touch. In her questioning of prescribed narratives she unpacks common words, syntax and catchphrases, before translating them back into content.

*untitled (quotation) highlighter orange* (2005) is one of a series of laser-cut quotation marks. Used to delineate speech as well as proper names and titles, quotes are a grammatical device that frames meaning. The act of placing things in quotations is also an action that many of us perform unconsciously, gesturing with our fingers to place “quotes” around an idea or punchline. The quotations similarly frame the gallery staff that diligently monitors the front desk. Making the staff a part of the artwork suggests that they too share in the process and are an integral part of the exhibition.

*done* (2008) is a large red checkmark mounted to the wall, an instantly recognizable symbol familiar to anyone who has ever attended school or been graded on their homework. Yet another exaggeration of syntax and a dig perhaps at Woodcock’s employment as an instructor, it succeeds in elevating expectations to such a ridiculous degree that it conversely invokes the potential for a spectacular failure. We all want to do well, but can any of us measure up to this level of excellence?

*wish you were here* (2003/2004/2011) takes a familiar saying typically found on postcards and enlarges it exponentially. Transferring the sentiment onto a commercial advertising banner trailing behind a chartered plane, Woodcock’s aspiration is at once enormous and unattainable. The banner invitingly reads WISH YOU WERE HERE but is only legible in flight for short one-hour durations. Inside the gallery, the large red banner letters hang idly from the wall like so much crumpled drapery. By taking a sentimental slogan and turning it into a Barnumesque spectacle, Woodcock transports the mythical “here” to wherever the show happens to be and suggests a longing that cannot be fulfilled.

Neon is a medium that Woodcock uses in several works. Composed of noble gasses charged by high-voltage electricity in a vacuum tube, neon is an ethereal and enigmatic

material with a history of use by conceptual artists ranging from Bruce Nauman to Kelly Mark.<sup>3</sup> In *two love songs* (2008) the text alternately flashes between lovelorn passages: *tell me everything/don’t tell me*. At its core the artist uses the cliché of heartbreak to suggest denial but perhaps more importantly an imminent breakdown of communication.

*on a clear day* (2010) is purposefully incomplete, the anticipated conclusion to the thought being: *on a clear day you can see forever*. The missing portion of the sentence is paralleled by the negative space left behind by large sans serif letters that have been cut away. The excised text forms an absence, a gap that creates the opportunity for new interpretations. On a clear day you can do lots of things. Walk your dog. Listen to music. Write a letter. Furthermore, the manner in which the four monolithic sky-blue aluminum sheets lean in contrast to the white walls surrounding them suggests the gallery itself as a frame or a conceptual horizon.

*cloud* (2011), another work in neon, is seemingly straightforward, the sort of cartoon cloud one might absent-mindedly draw in a sketchbook. More recently, clouds have come to be associated with the cloud-computing platform, a network that shares electronic data, archives and MP3s. Once redolent of daydreaming, clouds have come to represent a vast system of virtual data management and storage.

*cloud* also underscores the connection between *on a clear day*, *wish you were here* and *conditions*. Woodcock’s repeated use of the sky as a metaphoric backdrop suggests a desire to fly or escape. However comical or futile these attempts may be, each marries the artist’s conceptual concerns with a sense of unfulfilled longing that defines and differentiates Woodcock’s work from that of her conceptual predecessors. Her investigations may be literate and meticulous but they are purposefully grounded in the familiar language of love songs, postcards and screenplays. Woodcock’s work demonstrates a sense of clarity, brevity and wit that connects on both a conceptual and conversational level.

— Ivan Jurakic

1. Nicolas Bourriaud, *Postproduction*, Lukas & Sternberg, New York, 2002, p. 11.

2. Ursula Meyers, *Conceptual Art*, E.P. Dutton & Co., Inc., New York, 1972, p. 152.

3. Thanks to Orest Tataryn for clarifying the composition and use of neon.

## OFF-SITE

Presented in conjunction with  
**CAFKA.11: Survive. Resist.**

**Laurel Woodcock**  
**wish you were here**

Campus Flight Times:

**Saturdays, September 17, 4:00–5:00 pm**  
**& September 24, 11:55 am–12:55 pm**

**Rain Dates: Sept. 20/27, 12:00–1:00 pm**



This project is being presented in partnership with CAFKA.11: Survive. Resist. and REUNION 2011. *wish you were here* has been made possible by the generous support of the Waterloo Region Arts Fund.

## Artist Biography

Laurel Woodcock is a Toronto based artist whose work has been exhibited nationally and internationally. She has had solo exhibitions at the Art Gallery of Ontario, Toronto; Museum of Contemporary Canadian Art, Toronto; Art Gallery of Greater Victoria, Victoria; Mount Saint Vincent University Art Gallery, Halifax; Macdonald Stewart Art Centre, Guelph; and Agnes Etherington Art Centre, Kingston; and has participated in group exhibitions at Susan Hobbs Gallery, Toronto; Artists Space, New York; and the Contemporary Art Gallery, Vancouver. Her video work has been screened in festivals in Paris, Berlin, New York, Barcelona, Cairo and Glasgow. Her work is in several public and private collections and she has received grants from the Canada Council for the Arts, the Ontario Arts Council and the Toronto Arts Council. An upcoming monograph will be published in 2012. Laurel Woodcock is represented by MKG127, Toronto.

[www.laurelwoodcock.ca](http://www.laurelwoodcock.ca)

## List of Works

*cloud*, 2011  
white neon, 43 x 76 cm, edition of 3 + 1 A/P

*stickies*, 2011  
steel, yellow car paint, screws, magnets  
dimensions variable, edition of 15

*on a clear day*, 2010  
aluminum, car paint, four panels: 71 x 244 cm  
48 x 244 cm, 154 x 244 cm, 96 x 244 cm

*two love songs*, 2008,  
white neon, alternating circuit device, 12 x 142 cm

*done*, 2008  
laser cut Plexiglas, red adhesive vinyl  
61 x 61 x 2.5 cm, edition of 6 + 1 A/P

*walkthrough 3.0* (edit), 2007  
adhesive silver vinyl, dimensions variable

*untitled (playlist for Bas Jan Ader)*, 2007  
limited edition print, 61 x 79 cm (framed)

*untitled (quotation) highlighter orange*, 2005  
aluminum, powder coating, magnets, four units:  
15 x 7.5 cm each, edition of 10

*conditions*, 2005, single channel video

*location shoot*, 2003, single channel video

*wish you were here*, 2003/2004/2011  
aviation banner letters, single channel video,  
dimensions variable

*untitled (production still from operetta)*, 2003  
lightjet print, 76 x 76 cm, edition of 3 plus 1 A/P

All artworks courtesy of the artist and MKG127, Toronto