

ARCLines *Drafting Artspeak*

Allison Collins



Artspeak was founded in 1986 when Jeff Derksen, a writer and instructor at the Kootenay School of Writing, approached Cate Rimmer and Keith Higgins with a proposition to turn a portion of the space occupied by the Kootenay School of Writing into a part-time gallery. At the time, Rimmer was a student at the Emily Carr College of Art and Design. As an emerging curator she paired up with Higgins, who is an artist, and the two ran the small gallery as volunteers. It was at this time part of the larger workings of the Kootenay School of Writing, which opened in 1984 with the closing of David Thompson University in Nelson, BC.

The name Artspeak grew out of the gallery's place amidst the writing community and has connotations that

refer to the gallery's mandate: to explore visual art at the intersection of text and language. The term consciously appropriates the pejorative term 'artspeak,' which refers to insular forms of language, and offers instead a space that welcomes critical experimentation and understanding. In its earliest days, Artspeak exhibitions were tied into KSW's activities, held in an 8'x 12' room on the second floor of a small wood-frame building that the two organizations shared at the base of Oak Street on Broadway. KSW used the space in the evenings to host classes, and the two communities mingled through openings, workshops, and talks that are remembered for generating intense debates.

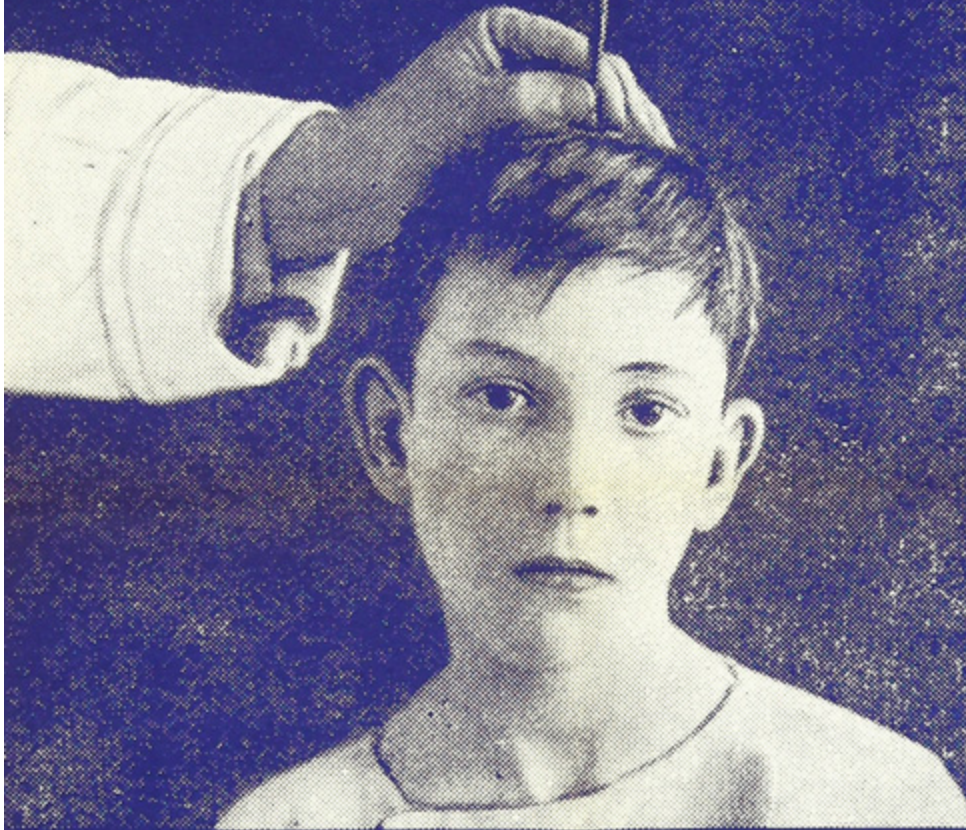


Artists/Writers/Talks was the title of one of the first series of events to come out of the collaborations between the gallery and the school. Early exhibitions dealt with artists books as objects, such the Vancouver Artists' Bookworks Exhibition, for which courses were held that pertained to the creation of artists book projects, including papermaking by hand, hand bookbinding, and one course that focused on the making of bookworks by artists.

Financial support for the gallery was derived from course tuition, cocktail sales, donations, and an occasional project grant from the Canada Council. Artspeak was a spare operation at this time, unable to pay curatorial or artist fees, but KSW paid the rent, and the gallery was sustained through volunteer efforts.

In 1987, the gallery moved to 311 West Hastings and the intimate relationship between Artspeak and the Kootenay School of Writing ended. The two organizations remained affiliated through their affiliated networks, and at their new location the gallery found new connections with Spartacus Books and a community of artists whose studios were located in this building.

BEHIND THE SIGN



Collaborations between:

Roy Arden and Jeff Derksen
Stan Douglas and Deanna Ferguson
Donna Leisen and Calvin Wharton
Sara Leydon and Peter Culley
Doug Munday and Kathryn MacLeod

SEPTEMBER 10 TO OCTOBER 1

Opening September 9, 8pm

Artspeak Gallery

#3-311 W. Hastings St., Vancouver, B.C.
V6B 1H6 Tel. (604)688-0051

A colour catalogue will be available, with texts by Miriam Nichols, Cate Rimmer and Scott Watson.
Artspeak gratefully acknowledges the financial assistance of the Province of British Columbia
and the Canada Council.

In 1988, an important exhibition for Artspeak occurred with a project called [Behind the Sign](#) in which writers

and visual artists were asked to collaborate in order to create new works. Behind the Sign played off semiotics and addressed a strong local interest in language and conceptual practice in the visual arts. Through an ambitious catalogue, the exhibition worked to investigate underlying structures and modes of expression common to writers and artists.

The intersection of written text and language is a focus that has stayed with Artspeak from these early years. The gallery, which eventually purchased its gallery site, maintains a publication as well as an exhibition program and has continue to be a gathering place for readings and talks that explore this area of practice.

The Founders

Cate Rimmer
Keith Higgins

First Board of Directors

Kati Campbell
Rodney Graham
Robert Sherrin
Jeff Wall
Donna Zapf

First Location

105-1045 West Broadway, Vancouver BC

Original Mandate

To exhibit contemporary art and to encourage a dialogue between visual art and writing. Of particular interest is work that crosses the boundaries between the two disciplines, exploring their common areas of praxis.

Available Archives

Artspeak houses a set of binders related to exhibition and organizational history that can be viewed at the gallery by appointment. The gallery maintains an archive of publications available for purchase, and there is an extensive history of exhibitions online at <http://artspeak.ca/exhibitions/history.html>

Artspeak also has a tumblr of archival ephemera, with items being released throughout their 25th anniversary year

Gallery Profile

ARTSPEAK

101-1045 West Broadway-second floor (a half block west of Oak, across from Van City)

Telephone: (732-1013)

Hours: 10-4 Monday to Thursday

10-6 Friday

12-6 Saturday

: Artspeak is a small Gallery 10' x 18' with a 7' ceiling. The walls are white, the floor is brown tile, one wall has a large window and there is track lighting. The gallery is also used for classes in the evening so large three dimensional works are not feasible here.

: The exhibits are 3 weeks long- from Saturday to Saturday; with a one week break between shows.

: Openings are the Friday Night before an exhibit opens and start at 8:p.m.

: Cate Rimmer is the Curator of Artspeak

: To submit for an exhibition call Cate at the Gallery. She will either make a studio visit or you can bring in slides and discuss your work with her.

: Artspeak does not charge artists to exhibit but neither can they pay artist's fees. No commission is taken on sales.

: The mandate of Artspeak Gallery is to exhibit quality contemporary visual art and to encourage a dialogue between the visual and language arts. The gallery is also intended to act as a a centre for ongoing critical reseach and support of work that crosses the boundaries between visual art and writing.

: Artspeak Gallery and The Kootenay School of Writing (KSW) are together an artist run centre for the visual and language arts. It was started three years ago when David Thompson University in Nelson was closed down, and offers courses, workshops and readings in the theory and practise of the language arts. Last May KSW opened Artspeak Gallery in the office next door to their centre.

: The work Artspeak is most (but not exclusively) interested in showing crosses the visual and writing disciplines, such as work involving text, or delving into critical investigation, or say in the form of journals or bookworks.

: As well as an exhibition space artspeak offers talks and courses about common concerns of artists and writers. A series of evening discussions by artists and writers about their work called "Artists/Writers/Talks" is in progress and continues with : April 12,-Laiwan (mixed media artist)

May 3, -Jeff Derksen (writer).

: Artspeak has an annual bookworks competition and gives ongoing classes on producing bookworks and journals. The up-coming workshop is as follows: " "Book Binding by Hand" by Donna Leisen (Thursday nights from April 9-30). These talks are \$2. and the courses are \$35-55. In the future Artspeak hopes to put together an archive of



: As far as money goes Artspeak and K.S.W. barely get by with the tuition from courses, opening cocktail sales, donations, and the occasional special project grant from the government.

: There are eight core people who run the place on a totally volunteer basis and Cate Rimmer is responsible for Artspeak.

Future plans for Artspeak (read tentative) include expanding the gallery space into a number of small rooms, less emphasis on extended courses and more one shot artist's talks and workshops as well as a planned publication by Group K

: The Gallery is an intimate space something like the old non-commercial. Just right for a small concise

show. While street traffic is heavy, a large number of people attend the talks hang around K.S.W. and the gallery. The talks are cheap and popular with the arts, Vancouver. So call about them-or better yet visit the gallery on Broadway and Oak, Drop in for a talk or photograph by Bill Rennie 3 to 25.

Bill Rennie

APRIL 20 - MAY 9

12 MIDNITE
Prints Painting Sculpture

MICHAEL HORNSBY
Portraits

B.L.T. THEATRE
3 New Gay Plays

MAY 11 - 30

BRUCE HUTTON
Paintings

Relevant Publications

Vancouver Art and Economies



[Contact Artspeak](#)

About the Author:

Allison Collins is a Contributing Editor for ArcPost. She is an independent curator and writer based in Vancouver.