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**MUSEUM OF FINE ARTS, BOSTON, IS THE ONLY EAST COAST VENUE FOR MAJOR FRANCES STARK EXHIBITION
Midcareer Survey Headlines #mfaNOW, Season Celebrating Contemporary Art and Artists**



Chorus Line, 2008, Frances Stark,
Museum of Modern Art, New York

BOSTON (August 12, 2016)—With both visual and written language at the heart of her practice, Frances Stark (born 1967) explores various modes of self-expression in the digital age. This fall, the Museum of Fine Arts, Boston (MFA), presents [UH-OH: Frances Stark 1991–2015](#), the sole East Coast venue for the most comprehensive survey to date of the Los Angeles-based artist and writer. Organized by the Hammer Museum in Los Angeles, *UH-OH* touches on a wide range of subjects that reflect Stark’s roles as an artist, mother, woman and teacher. Nearly 120 works—from early carbon-copy drawings and intricate collages, to more recent video installations and digital slide shows—provide an in-depth examination of her ongoing interest in communication. The exhibition title refers to the link between the mind and the body and that instinctual oral response, “uh-oh,” when we go beyond what’s acceptable, are faced with a complex problem or have shared too much information. The moment of reveal is seen again and again in Stark’s works, and the artist takes this spontaneous utterance as inspiration to go beyond our initial reactions and to look deeper, think harder and listen more carefully. *UH-OH* is on view from September 17, 2016–January 29, 2017 in the Linde Family Wing for Contemporary Art.

“UH-OH: Frances Stark 1991–2015” was organized by the Hammer Museum, Los Angeles.

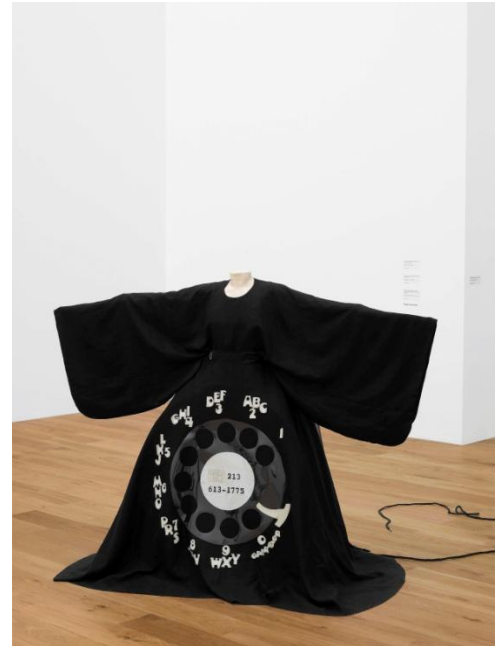
The exhibition is presented at the MFA with generous support from The Ruth and Carl J. Shapiro Fund for Education, Public Programs and Special Projects. Additional support from the Robert and Jane Burke Fund for Exhibitions, the Amy and Jonathan Poorvu Fund for the Exhibition of Contemporary Art and Sculpture, the Diane Krane Family and Jonathan and Gina Krane Family Fund, the Barbara Jane Anderson Fund, the Bruce and Laura Monrad Fund for Exhibitions, and the Susan G. Kohn and Harry Kohn, Jr. Fund for Contemporary Prints.

The exhibition was originated with support from Brenda Potter, along with generous support from Karyn Kohl and Maurice Marciano.

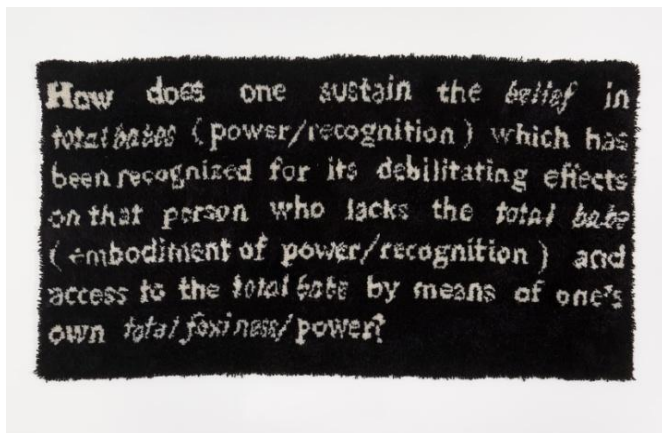
UH-OH was organized by Hammer Museum curator Ali Subotnick in close collaboration with the artist. The MFA's presentation of the exhibition was coordinated by Liz Munsell, Assistant Curator of Contemporary Art and Special Initiatives, a position supported by Lorraine Bressler.

"Frances' unique voice has influenced artists, curators and other multidisciplinary thinkers locally in Los Angeles and across the world," said Munsell. "Throughout her career she has developed alternative modes of art education such as mentorships and, now, free-schooling. These methods bring up questions of access to higher education, and will provide important insights for Boston, a city centered on academic enterprise and intellectual exchange."

The daughter of a telephone operator and an electrical engineer who worked in the printing business, Stark has consistently shown interest in communication, merging her love of language with an urge to make things. *The Inchoate Incarnate: Bespoke Costume for the Artist* (2009, Valeria and Gregorio Napoleone Collection, London), a telephone dress worn by Stark in her 2010 performance *I've Had It! And I've Also Had It!*, is a direct nod to her mother and an embodiment of her insatiable urge to communicate.



The Inchoate Incarnate: Bespoke Costume for the Artist, 2009, Frances Stark, Valeria and Gregorio Napoleone Collection, London



How does one sustain the belief in total babes (power/recognition) which has been recognized for its debilitating effects on that person who lacks the total babe (embodiment of power/recognition) and access to the total babe by means of one's own total foxiness/power? 1991/2014, Frances Stark, Collection of Shelley Fox Aarons and Philip Aarons

Among Stark's earliest works is *How does one sustain the belief in total babes (power/recognition) which has been recognized for its debilitating effects on that person who lacks the total babe (embodiment of power/recognition) and access to the total babe by means of one's own total foxiness/power?* (1991/2014, Collection of Shelley Fox Aarons and Philip Aarons). The hooked rug, originally inspired by a note Stark wrote in her junior high school yearbook, both asks a question and makes a statement about how the self is expressed and perceived by others.

"Seeing so much of Frances' work together allows viewers a rare opportunity to draw out ideas that thread through her work over time, and transports us into her brilliant mind," said Subotnick.

“The more close reading she encourages in her work, the more viewers mirror her passion for learning, comprehending and interpreting art and life through a personal lens.”

In addition to being a prolific writer, Stark is also an avid reader—many of her artworks incorporate text drawn from literature. Six life-size “Chorus Girl” collages from the series *Torment of Follies* (2007–08, various lenders) are arranged throughout the exhibition, featuring showgirls whose dresses are made from spiral patterns with dizzying effects. Shown in various positions, they grasp pages displaying text from Witold Gombrowicz’s satirical novel *Ferdydurke*.



My Best Thing, 2011, Frances Stark, Hammer Museum

Alongside her analog methods of tracing and collage, Stark both embraces and manipulates technological advancements in modes of communication. The video installation *My Best Thing* (2011, Hammer Museum) is derived from the artist’s experiences with online sex chats—a new platform for Stark’s writing. Featuring animated characters set against a green screen backdrop, the 100-minute video presents intimate Skype exchanges and discussions about art, literature, history, music and politics with two online lovers whom Stark met through Chatroulette. The breakthrough work, showing Stark exploring both her artistic and literal promiscuity, debuted at the 54th Venice Biennale.

Over the past few years, social media has become an integral part of Stark’s storytelling. The slide show *What Goes on @therealstarkiller* (2014, courtesy of the artist and Galerie Buchholz, Berlin/Cologne) presents a selection of posts from her Instagram account, featuring images of her daily life—her artwork, her son, what she’s reading, what she sees when driving in Los Angeles.

Other highlights of the exhibition include three salon-style hangs of primarily works on paper, among them collages and landscapes of letters that transform words into imagery. The series *If conceited girls want to show they have a seat* (2008)—directly inspired by a Goya etching—showcases Stark’s engagement with art history, and the large mixed-media collages *Push* (2006, Whitney Museum of American Art), *Pull After “Push”* (2010, Collection Nancy and Joachim Bechtle) and *Push After “Pull After Push”* (2010, Hammer Museum) capture the artist’s studio and its array of contents, such as junk mail and exhibition announcements. Additionally, *UH-OH* features Stark’s



Pull After “Push,” 2010, Frances Stark, Collection Nancy and Joachim Bechtle

Cat Videos (1991–2002, courtesy of the artist and Gavin Brown's enterprise, New York), produced long before the genre became a staple on YouTube.



Bobby Jesus's Alma Mater b/w Reading the Book of David and/or Paying Attention Is Free, 2013, Frances Stark, purchased jointly by Museum of Contemporary Art Chicago with funds provided by Marshall Field's exchange and Hammer Museum

UH-OH culminates in one of Stark's most ambitious and provocative works to date—*Bobby Jesus's Alma Mater b/w Reading the Book of David and/or Paying Attention Is Free* (2013, Museum of Contemporary Art Chicago and Hammer Museum). The large-scale video installation is inspired by her relationship with her studio apprentice, muse and friend Bobby Jesus. A mural with a black-and-white checkerboard floor is populated with images of political and religious figures, hip-hop legends, Bobby Jesus, Renaissance paintings, as well as Stark herself. Text based on conversations with Bobby Jesus, as well as lyrics from Prince, DJ Quik, the Fall and the Beatles, scrolls one line at a time above the photo collage. Music by DJ Quik provides the soundtrack, and takeaway posters and an illustrated key that decodes all the images on the checkerboard are available for visitors to peruse.

Publication

The exhibition is accompanied by a fully illustrated catalogue, *UH-OH Frances Stark 1991–2015*, which offers the first comprehensive overview of Stark's work. It features newly commissioned essays by Ali Subotnick and Howard Singerman, Phyllis and Josef Caroff Professor of Fine Arts, Dept. Chair, Hunter College, New York. The monograph also includes a special section of texts by various artists and writers in which they revisit previous discussions with Stark about specific concepts in her work.

#mfaNOW

This fall, the MFA presents #mfaNOW, a season celebrating contemporary art and artists, with a variety of exhibitions, events and programs. Exhibitions include *UH-OH: Frances Stark 1991–2015*; *Christian Marclay: The Clock* and *Terry Winters: The Structure of Things*. Two installations, *Political Intent* and *Beyond Limits*, present key works and recent acquisitions from the MFA's collection. On four occasions, the Linde Family Wing for Contemporary Art will stay open after the rest of the Museum is closed for free "mfaNOW Overnight" parties, connecting visitors to art, culture and community in new and unexpected ways. On social media, #mfaNOW will encourage fans and followers to share their experiences and get the word out about what's happening in real time—from film and theater festivals to panel discussions and lectures with leading artists, activists and change-makers.

The Museum of Fine Arts, Boston (MFA), is recognized for the quality and scope of its collection, representing all cultures and time periods. The Museum has more than 140 galleries displaying its encyclopedic collection, which includes Art of the Americas; Art of Europe; Contemporary Art; Art of Asia, Oceania, and Africa; Art of the Ancient World; Prints, Drawings, and Photographs; Textile and Fashion Arts; and Musical Instruments. Open seven days a week, the MFA's hours are Saturday through Tuesday, 10 am–5 pm; and Wednesday through Friday, 10 am–10 pm. Admission (which includes one repeat visit within 10 days) is \$25 for adults and \$23 for seniors and students age 18 and older, and includes entry to all galleries and special exhibitions. Admission is free for University Members and individual youths age 17 and younger. Wednesday nights after 4 pm admission is by voluntary contribution (suggested donation \$25). MFA Members are always admitted for free. The Museum's mobile MFA Guide is available at ticket desks and the Sharf Visitor Center for \$5, members; \$6, non-members; and \$4, youths. The Museum is closed on New Year's Day, Patriots' Day, Independence Day, Thanksgiving, and Christmas. For more information, visit mfa.org or call 617.267.9300. The MFA is located on the Avenue of the Arts at 465 Huntington Avenue, Boston, MA 02115.

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