

The Renaissance Society
Nine Lives
Sep 12—Nov 15, 2020

Exhibition description

Nine Lives takes shape around a diverse set of protagonists, as if this exhibition were a collection of short stories or personal essays told from different points of view. These figures—whether real or imagined—come forward in the artworks, which offer intimate but imperfect access to their respective lives. Each work holds the residual impression of a moment, a journey, an effort, or a thought, with varying degrees of legibility. As these individuals quietly occupy everyday settings or navigate more extraordinary circumstances, larger dimensions also begin to emerge. While a notion of the self remains central to the exhibition, this self always moves in relation to society and history, with an ongoing tension between public and private experience. Everyone is the main character in their own life story, but any single story overlaps with those being written or maintained by other people.

Motifs of reading, writing, and translating appear throughout the exhibition. These take familiar forms, such as books, newspapers, and documents from archives, but the artists are also thinking about these kinds of activities in more expansive ways: how textiles can also be texts, for example, or how a musical score is waiting to be enacted. In bringing the work of eleven artists together, *Nine Lives* is weighing how stories are told, where they can be found, and what their effects might be, both on a collective scale and within individual lives. Not all stories are told in the present tense and many follow us from the past, infusing daily life, as they are carried on through language and held in our bodies. As such, some of the artists in *Nine Lives*, or their protagonists, also consider how traces of the past are interpreted or understood; they are developing new appraisals of history, as it is felt here and now, and how it can be re-examined or rewritten.

This exhibition is part of the Feminist Art Coalition, an expansive platform for projects inspired by feminist thought, experience, and action that will unfold at dozens of museums around the country beginning in the fall of 2020. Informed by this backdrop, *Nine Lives* echoes various feminist legacies, especially artists and filmmakers who have explored what it is for women to tell their own stories or to make space for narratives otherwise obstructed or unwritten. As feminist dialogues continue to evolve, *Nine Lives* embraces how these efforts have expanded to include greater multiplicities, geographies, and gender identities.

Curated by Karsten Lund and Caroline Picard.