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~~NEW SCHOOL~~
~~or~~
~~SOCIAL~~
~~RESEARCH~~

~~THE NEW SCHOOL FOR GENERAL STUDIES~~

~~NEW SCHOOL FOR SOCIAL RESEARCH~~

BY ANY NAME

THE VERA LIST CENTER FOR POLITICAL SCIENCE AND POLITICS
AND PARTS & LABOR GALLERY
"BY ANY NAME" -
AN INSTALLATION
INSTITUTIONAL
AT THE NEW SCHOOL FOR SOCIAL RESEARCH

OCTOBER 10 - 11, 2009
66 W. 122ND ST. NEW YORK

A TINY ARCHIVE
OF CRITICAL VIEWPOINTS
ON THE NEW SCHOOL

2009

**By Any Name: A Tiny Archive of
Critical Viewpoints on The New School
2009**

The desire to collect, organize, and store artifacts for posterity constitutes a principal mode in the social production of knowledge. *Archive* is the metaphor that we use to describe this process as well as its physical result. It is a catalog of desires, awash in the presence of the past but also haunted by absent voices.

The archive is at once an epistemology—a way of viewing the world—and at the same time it is a material fixture, comprising texts, objects, points of access, rituals of circulation, and designed spaces. Whether open source or closed to prying eyes, the archive is a mentality that conditions its material form.

–Joseph Heathcott, “Archive/City”
Chair, Urban Studies
Eugene Lang College The New School for Liberal Arts

Preface

Sly, provocative, gentle and true – *By Any Name* celebrates The New School’s 90th anniversary at a time when the university contends with a highly publicized period of internal criticism and activism. The voices assembled in this publication examine the school’s legacy of progressive pedagogy and institutional policy, and ask that it remain a catalyst for social transformation in the future. The booklet complements an exhibition by the same title – with workshops, classes, lectures, and séances with psychics – and feeds into a yearlong series of programs on “Speculating on Change,” the Vera List Center’s program theme for 2009-2010.

–Carin Kuoni,
Director, Vera List Center for Art and Politics
The New School

Introduction

This slim volume in the guise of an exam book contains responses submitted by members of the university community to questions about institutional identity and memory posed by the “By Any Name” team: the Vera List Center, internal to The New School, and Parts & Labor, an external entity whose staff consists of three New School alumni. These statements were solicited as part of a larger exhibition, an examination of the art of preservation at an institution with a profound legacy worthy of preservation. Renowned for its commitment to progressive adult education and socially-minded scholarship, The New School will always have a lot to live up to—recording its identity, over time, is an essential part of its responsibility to its own future, and to a general posterity.

The writings herein were sought in several ways—first, through a brief questionnaire disseminated to New School addresses in a mass e-mail, and hand-delivered to as many faculty mailboxes as could be found by the Vera List Center’s hard-working interns; second, through one-on-one conversations with members of The New School community in the form of an impromptu missive, a passing chat, a scheduled class visit or staff meeting, etc. Since beginning work on this project in May 2009, we estimate over 500 individuals among The New School population were invited to participate in this publication, which was our attempt to archive a moment in time in The New School’s history, as articulated by the voices of those who constitute its community.

And so, with the exhibition a mere three days away, we ask ourselves: Given the range of personalities, backgrounds, talents, areas of expertise, and given the not-few numbers of divisions, faculty, staff, students, and resources at The New School, why is this publication pocket-size? Why did we not receive a flood of responses, or a few waves, or even a steady trickle? Certainly, we could have been more diligent with our outreach, more strategic with our approach; but there are wider implications. For every response received, there are countless ones which never materialized—and not because this silent majority has nothing to say about their institution.

As it turns out, the signature requirement, applied to both the free-form and survey responses included in this booklet, was a factor which prevented some from committing to participate. Many times were we given a reply of: “I wish I could, but I wouldn’t feel comfortable putting my name on it...” The fear inherent in this decision is understandable, as in most cases it stemmed from a fear of offending the institution, thereby courting retaliation. Yet this vague sense of fear begs a very simple question: Why, at an institution founded on the basis of academic freedom, does such a fear exist? The size of this volume says something about this institution, as does the high quality of those insights we *did* receive.

Art has the ability to express what cannot be communicated otherwise. Yet this process we attempted to start with “By Any Name”—the process of making meaning and constructing an identity which cannot be named—occurs in every aspect of life. In a sense, we are all charged with creating and defining the things around us which cannot be named, and name them. If John Cage enabled us to hear silence, surely we can hear sound. It is loud; we simply have to listen.

--Brooke Chroman & Meghan Roe, Parts & Labor Gallery