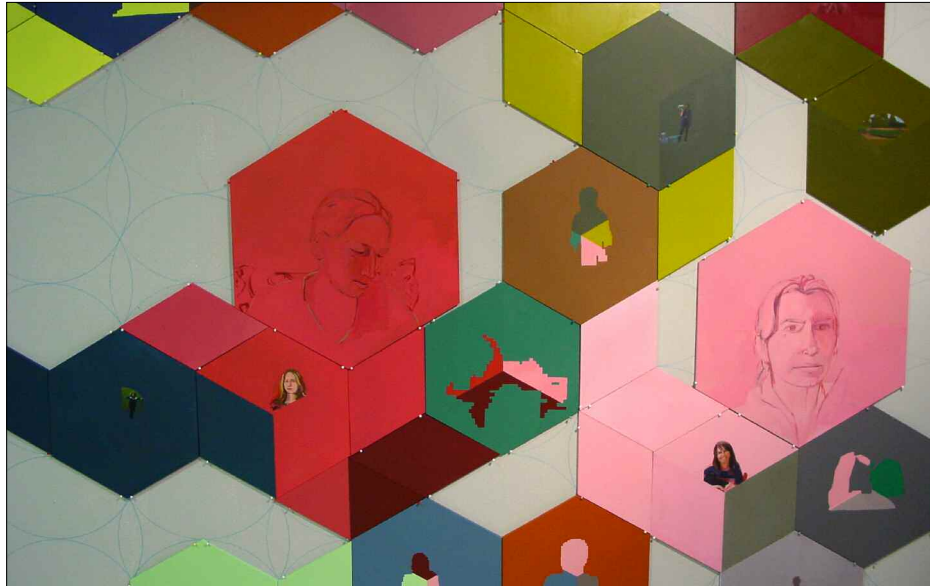


NETWORK

An Installation by Dana Clancy

November 23, 2008–February 22, 2009



Network (installation detail) 2008, graphite, colored pencil, and acrylic on masonite panel.

BOSTON-BASED PAINTER DANA CLANCY has repeatedly investigated the portrait genre with intelligent and whimsical images that subvert the usual relationship between the portrait subject and the viewer in the gallery. In both her oil on canvas paintings and her delicate pencil and gouache drawings from past years, Clancy's figures often peer out of irregular forms and bright shapes as if the surface of the image is a portal through which viewer and portrait subject exchange gazes. Less interested in the static identity of her sitters than in the shifting relationships formed between painted subject, artist, and viewer, Clancy challenges the one-way viewing experience that traditionally makes viewers the active presence in the room, offering instead portraits that call into question just who is doing the looking.

With social networking websites becoming one of the most active environments for "looking" in our digital age, Clancy turned to Facebook to create a group portrait for her new installation, *Network*. A short time after joining Facebook in summer 2008, she had been "friended" by

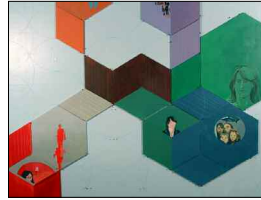
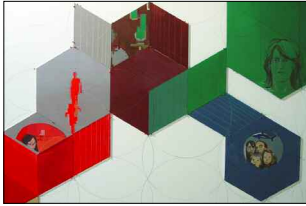
numerous individuals. For *Network* she included only artists who had "friended" her, and did not actively seek connections herself. Subjects include curator James Hull, painters Kim Beck and Nataliya Bregel, sculptors August Ventimiglia and Danielle Krcmar, and many others connected to the art world in the Boston area.

In the largest hexagonal shapes, Clancy depicts her closest friends, who sat for their portraits and whom she painted from a combination of life drawings and digital photographs. The loose, sketchy quality of these portraits implies the immediacy of these individuals' real presence in the room with the artist. The figures in the smaller panels represent friends whom Clancy knows less well, or who live too far away to sit for their portraits. She drew these silhouetted figures and carefully modeled individuals from digital sources, such as the subjects' own Facebook photos—in effect embedding small acts of others' self-portraiture throughout the work.

Clancy uses color to articulate the subnetworks of relationships among members of the larger group. The

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Work in progress, as Dana Clancy designed *Network*, her new installation for BMAC, in her studio (2008).

bright, jewel-like tones of one large hexagon extend outward over adjacent smaller diamond shapes to connect with the next bright color, representing personal connections mediated through other individuals. The arrangement of the shapes across the wall describes a pathway of social contacts between these people—and many other variations might be possible. The irregular shape of the overall installation and the open spaces throughout the work suggest the variable and constantly additive nature of social networks. Behind and across the panels, a lattice of pencil-drawn circles covering the wall provides a delicate armature for the whole composition. At the same time, it reinforces the idea of interconnectedness among people who participate in the virtual space of social networking sites.

Network might be understood as a group portrait of an art scene based in Boston that extends outward to include colleagues across the nation. Choosing not to depict herself, the artist offers no specific access point, and we as viewers are left to enter this network at random and explore the relationships she has portrayed. Perhaps most significantly, we as viewers may even choose to become part of this network literally by joining Facebook and “friending” Dana Clancy or one of her sitters.

The contrast between live subjects and digital sources for Clancy’s portraits points up the tension between the illusion of familiarity created by social networking websites and the immediacy of genuine human presence. In the environment of Facebook, one can know up-to-the-minute details about a friend’s life (such as what restaurant she went to for dinner, or what costume his child wore for Halloween) without ever seeing or speaking to that friend in person for months at a time. Moreover, in the online space of Facebook, individuals can present a carefully constructed version of themselves. Clancy’s combination of portraits drawn from life and portraits made from digital sources metaphorically speaks to how crafted and elusive one’s identity can be in these virtual environments. It makes *Network* a rich and complicated representation of the ways in which we give others access to our personal and professional selves.



Dana Clancy, *Network*, 2008; graphite, colored pencil, and acrylic on masonite panel. Installation on loan courtesy of the artist.

Clancy’s work as a portraitist may be understood in the tradition of artists such as Alice Neel, Florine Stettheimer, Edouard Manet, or Andy Warhol, who often represented their own milieu. With *Network*, Clancy both embraces and updates the tradition of artists painting artists, by turning a keen eye to the new form of social networks through which we see and are seen.

Rachael Arauz, Guest Curator



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Network was produced by the Brattleboro Museum & Art Center, Danny Lichtenfeld, director; Mara Williams, chief curator; Rachael Arauz, guest curator. The brochure was edited and designed by Judith Bellamy Editorial Services. Copyright November 2008 by the Brattleboro Museum & Art Center. Printing courtesy of C&S Wholesale Print Shop.

Major support for the Brattleboro Museum & Art Center’s 2008–2009 season is provided by



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Closed Labor Day, Thanksgiving Day
The Museum is wheelchair accessible.
An ASL interpreter for the hearing impaired will be provided if requested two weeks in advance of tours or programs.

Admission and Parking

BMAC members free
Adults \$
Seniors \$3
Students \$2
Children 6 and under free
Parking is available in front of the Museum.

Museum Shop

The Museum Gift Shop, free to the public during regular Museum hours, features an assortment of cards, games, books, prints, educational and gift items, including work of many local artists.

Group Tours

Docent-led tours of the Museum for groups are available by appointment. Call the Museum for information.