

# MUSEUM OF ART

RHODE ISLAND SCHOOL OF DESIGN

PRESS CONTACTS:

Lani Stack  
401 454-6506  
lstack@risd.edu

Donna Desrochers  
401 454-6793  
ddesroch@risd.edu

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## 'WENDY RICHMOND: NAVIGATING THE PERSONAL BUBBLE' OPENS AT THE RISD MUSEUM OF ART

May 25 - November 4, 2012

PROVIDENCE, RI — The Museum of Art Rhode Island School of Design announces the upcoming exhibition *Wendy Richmond: Navigating the Personal Bubble*, featuring new works by multimedia artist Wendy Richmond. *Navigating the Personal Bubble* opens to the public on Friday, May 25, 2012.

"Wendy Richmond's exploration of 'public privacy' is surprisingly revealing of the ways in which we interact and communicate in this digital age," says Museum Director John W. Smith. "We're excited to share her observations and discoveries in this video installation created specifically for the RISD Museum's Spalter New Media Gallery."

Richmond documents and exposes how portable digital technology creates mobile zones of privacy—what the artist calls "personal bubbles"—that change the social experience of being in public. "A primary aspect of public privacy is how we use personal technology to create a cocoon when we're in public spaces," Richmond explains.



Installation view of *Wendy Richmond: Navigating the Personal Bubble*, May 25-November 4, 2012. Photography by Erik Gould.

Earlier this year, Richmond investigated the notion of public privacy in a six-week winter session course with RISD graduate students. The progression of ideas developed in the class became the starting point for her three-channel video installation, *Alone in Public* (2012), created for the RISD Museum exhibition.

*Alone in Public* is a compilation of short video portraits depicting Richmond's friends and acquaintances working on their laptops alone in cafés, libraries, and other public settings, with footage captured by their computers' built-in cameras. The individual portraits were submitted to the artist upon request, forming the source material she combined and edited into three looped video projections. Building on observations made in *Alone in Public* and inspired by Richmond's background in dance, a vinyl wall text component piece, *Gestures* (2012), conveys a taxonomy of behaviors specific to the personal bubble. The choreography of gestures listed on the wall and seen concomitantly in the videos reflects the artist's desire to find "commonality and mutual awareness through physical movements."

Richmond says she first noticed the personal bubble phenomenon in 2004, while commuting between coasts and waiting in airports. She observed fellow travelers carve out their personal zones in these public spaces by talking on cell phones, working on laptops, reading e-books, and playing video games.

“We were all engaged in our own internal worlds, temporarily oblivious to what was going on around us,” she recalls. She soon began surreptitiously documenting these personal zones, taking notice of how individual behaviors might change depending on the setting or whether they seem to stay constant across locales. She also became aware of how age, gender, urban environments, and the larger culture shape personal bubbles. Much of her work since that time has explored these issues of public privacy and the use of personal technology in contemporary culture.

## ABOUT THE ARTIST

Wendy Richmond is a visual artist, author and educator. After graduating from Wesleyan University in 1975 with a background in dance, fine art, and graphic design, Richmond began mixing traditional media with new technology while collaborating with programmers at MIT. She later co-founded the Design Lab at WGBH, Boston, and developed courses in expression and media at Harvard University. Richmond is a contributing editor for *Communication Arts* magazine, where her column *Design Culture* has appeared regularly since 1984. She received her master’s degree in art from New York University in 1999 and is the recipient of a Rockefeller Foundation Bellagio Center residency, a National Endowment for the Arts grant, an LEF Foundation grant, and the Hatch Award for Creative Excellence. Her books include *Design & Technology: Erasing the Boundaries* (1990), *overneath* (2002), and *Art Without Compromise\** (2009). Her recent exhibitions include *Public Privacy: Wendy Richmond’s Surreptitious Cellphone* (Museum of Photographic Arts, San Diego, 2007); *Public Privacy* (Carroll & Sons, Boston, 2009); and *Overheard* (gallery@calit2, University of California, San Diego, 2010).

## ABOUT THE MUSEUM OF ART RHODE ISLAND SCHOOL OF DESIGN

Southeastern New England’s only comprehensive art museum, the Museum of Art Rhode Island School of Design—also known as the RISD Museum of Art—was established in 1877. Its permanent collection of more than 86,000 objects includes paintings, sculpture, decorative arts, costume, furniture, and other works of art from every part of the world—including objects from ancient Egypt, Greece, and Rome, and art of all periods from Asia, Europe, and the Americas, up to the latest in contemporary art. The RISD Museum also offers a wide array of educational and public programs to more than 100,000 visitors annually.

The RISD Museum of Art, with entrances at 224 Benefit Street and 20 North Main Street in Providence, RI, is open Tuesdays through Sundays, 10 am-5 pm, and 10 am-9 pm every Thursday. Free admission 5-9 pm on third Thursdays and all day the last Saturday of each month; pay-what-you-wish every Sunday, 10 am-1 pm. Closed January 1, July 4, Thanksgiving Day, and December 25. Admission is \$10 adults; \$7 seniors (age 62+); \$3 college students with valid ID and youths (ages 5-18); and free for Museum members, RISD and Brown University students and staff, and children under 5. For more information, call 401 454-6500 or visit [risdmuseum.org](http://risdmuseum.org).

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**REPORTERS:** Please contact Lani Stack at [lstack@risd.edu](mailto:lstack@risd.edu) or 401 454-6506 to arrange a visit to the exhibition or an interview with the curator, or for press images.