

fort gondo
compound
for the arts

[press release](#)

Mary Jo Bang & Buzz Spector

“Otherwise”

January 18 – February 8, 2014
Opening reception Saturday, January 18, 7-10 PM



L to R: Mary Jo Bang, “Self-Portrait as Youthful Demureness,” 2013;
(selection of) Buzz Spector, “Authors (Head to Hands #5),” 1999.
Artwork courtesy of the artists

(more)

fort gondo compound for the arts is pleased to present **Otherwise**, a two-person exhibition of assemblage-based work by acclaimed St. Louis-based artists and writers **Mary Jo Bang** and **Buzz Spector**. The exhibition will open with a free public reception **Saturday, January 18, 2014 from 7 to 10 p.m. and will remain on view through Saturday, February 8, 2014 at beverly, fort gondo's new project and exhibition space.**

"After that, of course, he could write no more. Green in nature is one thing, green in literature another. Nature and letters seem to have a natural antipathy; bring them together and they tear each other to pieces."

- Virginia Woolf, from *Orlando: A Biography*

Other people are interested in this exhibition statement. It is not for myself or you or the artists involved, but a vast expanse of others. These others have perfectly round faces with small circular holes for eyes and mouths. Some of them are buried in the ground up to their necks. A strong breeze blows, and they roll away to reveal an empty clearing. Otherwise, your view would be obscured. Otherwise is a contingent colloquialism. Otherwise is a combine composed of two familiar parts: "other" and "wise." Think about it.

Mary Jo Bang is a celebrated poet who, for most of her life, has secretly made artwork. **Buzz Spector** is a celebrated artist who, for most of his life, has secretly written poetry. Both of their secret practices often trade in cutting things up that signify otherwise -- other selves, other personas, other disorders or other people's terms. Images become language and language a tangle of many fragmentary lines. Assemblage is the operative medium for its capacity to craft vocabularies: a vocabulary of collective fragments, for instance, that remember other ways of being, and together may piece together new syntaxes.

Mary Jo Bang's artworks are all self-portraits, but anyone would be lying if they said they physically resembled her. **Buzz Spector's** artworks often utilize portraits of authors in a criminologist-like pursuit of the physiognomy of the authorial impulse.

Who is other and who is true? Mouths gape, and no sound emits. Arms are bound, so failure could await. **Otherwise**, it's all an ecstatic pleasure.



Buzz Spector, "Beautiful Scenes," 1999
Artwork courtesy the artist
(more)



Mary Jo Bang, "Self-Portrait: The Punishment Chair:2013
Artwork courtesy the artist

about the artists

Mary Jo Bang is the author of six books of poems, including *Louise in Love*, *The Bride of E*, and *Elegy*, which received the National Book Critics Circle Award. Individual poems have appeared in the *New Yorker*, *The New Republic*, *Paris Review*, *Fence*, *Best American Poetry* and elsewhere. She's been the recipient of a Guggenheim Fellowship and a Hodder Fellowship from Princeton University. She has a BA and an MA degree in Sociology from Northwestern University, a BA in Photography from the Polytechnic of Central London (now Westminster University), and an MFA in poetry from Columbia University. From 1995-2005, she was a poetry editor at *Boston Review* magazine. She's currently a Professor of English at Washington University in St. Louis. Her translation of Dante's *Inferno*, with illustrations by Henrik Drescher, was published by Graywolf Press in 2012. Bang is also a visual artist whose collage work and drawings investigate notions about the self, time, and American culture.

Buzz Spector's artwork has been the focus of exhibitions in such museums and galleries as the Art Institute of Chicago, Museum of Contemporary Art, Chicago, Corcoran Gallery of Art, Washington, DC, and Mattress Factory, Pittsburgh, PA. His work makes frequent use of the book, both as subject and object, and is concerned with relationships between public history, individual memory, and perception. Spector's poetry and experimental writing has been published in various journals and reviews since the 1970s, including *Benzene*, *Café Solo*, and *River Styx*. He was a co-founder of *WhiteWalls*, a magazine of writings by artists, in Chicago in 1978, and served as editor until 1987. Since then Spector has written extensively on topics in contemporary art and culture for *American Craft*, *Artforum*, *Art on Paper*, *Dialogue*, *Exposure*, and *New Art Examiner*, among other publications. *Buzzwords*, a book of interviews with Spector, plus new page art, was published in 2012 by Sara Ranchouse Publishing, Chicago. Spector holds degrees from the University of Chicago and Southern Illinois University, Carbondale. He is the Jane Reuter Hitzeman and Herbert F. Hitzeman Jr. Professor of Art and Dean of the College and Graduate School of Art in the Sam Fox School of Design & Visual Arts at Washington University in St. Louis.

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beverly (of the fort gondo compound)

3155 Cherokee Street

St. Louis, MO 63118

All events are free and open to the public.

Hours: Thursdays & Saturdays, 12-4 PM and by appointment.

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fort gondo compound for the arts is a 501(c)(3) nonprofit arts forum founded in 2002.