

Study Resource for In the Studio: Phyllida Barlow

What is the book about?

Written by Francis Morris, a key voice on modern and contemporary sculpture and a champion of women artists, *In the Studio: Phyllida Barlow* gives readers a behind-the-scenes view into the vibrant world of the renowned British artist. Phyllida Barlow is celebrated for constantly pushing the boundaries of contemporary sculpture, and challenging the spaces her work occupied, leaving a profound impact on students, the art world and generations of artists to come.

Readers will be transported into Barlow's universe with an inside look at materials and making processes, plus many never-before-seen images of her personal life and practice in the studio. Barlow's creative influences from films and books to artists like Eve Hesse and Marcel Duchamp are outlined as well as key insights from the artist herself via excerpts of her written work, diary entries and inspiring quotes. A full chronology of Barlow's life, which includes her key moments as a student, artist and academic is displayed along with additional print and digital resources for readers to reference.

Who is it for?

This resource is a guide for educators, students and anyone who would like to gain a deeper insight into the artist's thought processes, sources of inspiration and studio life – all of which contributed to how Phyllida Barlow saw her work, herself and the world around her. The publication's main purpose is to inspire readers and provide a digestible network of creative sources that influenced Phyllida Barlow's work, materials and techniques the artist utilized in her practice, and philosophies that she lived and worked by.

Why is it great for learners?

Students would greatly benefit from this book because it offers a comprehensive overview of Phyllida Barlow's key work and her creative practice. Furthermore, the artist's life, philosophies, advice and creative influences including artists, books and films, may be of great interest to students during any stage of their learning journey. Barlow continuously pushes 'failure' and 'making mistakes' as key foundations to sculpture, and creativity more broadly - students will find solace in this wisdom as it relates to their own ambitions and feel energized by how Phyllida Barlow questioned the world around her.

What will you learn?

This book will allow you to hear Phyllida Barlow's profound voice. Towards the beginning of the book, readers will understand three major roles that Barlow occupied and was influenced by throughout her life – being an artist, teacher and mother. Readers will also learn about groundbreaking installations and exhibitions such as *folly* (2017) and *dock* (2014). Additionally, readers will learn about the artist's key materials and process of drawing, sculpting and painting.

Discussion Questions

Art and the Everyday

- Refer to page 61. Many materials Barlow used for her sculptures are found, everyday objects such as tape, trash bags, paper and cardboard. Take inventory of the unused, recycled items in your home. Are you inspired by any? Why, or why not? Can you think of creative ways to recycle and manipulate them?
- Refer to pages 78-80. Barlow often created and used DIY lists to obtain materials and thought that sculpture has the 'freedom to associate with pretty much anything at all, in art and in life.' (Morris, 80). Do you think there is a difference between art and everyday life? Why, or why not?
- Do any everyday objects inspire you? What kinds of objects are these and why are they inspiring in your life?

Materiality and Space

- Refer to pages 76 – 87 which outline the artist's exhibition 'dock' at Tate Britain. Barlow's sculptures and installations often hang, spill out and overflow from the galleries and she called this an 'argument with the space'. How do you understand the relationship between her work and the gallery space? Is it possible to imagine your own creativity taking up large amounts of an enclosed space, and would this evoke a sense of freedom?
- Read pages 70– 72. Barlow creates a distinction between the 'enlightened studio' and the 'grim studio' – the first referring to an ideal studio environment where a sense of freedom is cultivated, and the second connected to guardrails and protocols. How would you go about creating your ideal studio or working space? What would it look like and feel like? How would you push the boundaries of a space? Why?
- Refer to page 26-33. Work within Barlow's 'Objects for' series inhabited, or as the artist puts it, were 'uninvited guests' in familiar spaces, either at home or on the street. How do you view familiar and everyday places? How would you feel encountering one of the works on the street or in your personal space? Could some of your own work 'insert' itself into unconventional environments? How and where?

Anti-monumental

- Barlow's sculptural practice is grounded in an anti-monumental tradition. What do you think the differences are between monuments and sculptures?
- Looking through the images of Barlow's sculptures, which one(s) speaks to you first? How do you think they differ from a traditional monument? Why do you think this is?
- Refer to page 48. Barlow believed that 'sculpture as a fundamentalist activity which could only tell the truth, the whole truth and nothing but the truth became tedious and irrelevant. Released from its history of permanency and absolute materiality, sculpture could fragment space...and could fib and lie itself into its own reality' (Barlow, 48). In relation to your practice, do you think your own work creates its own reality? How so? What impact does this have on you and the world around you?