

February 21, 2009

To the Sculpture Search Committee:

It is truly a pleasure to recommend Ms. Shelley Cook-Contreras as an educator and an artist of high caliber.

Over the course of two graduate seminars and two semesters of tutorials I closely observed her dedication to her work and her capacity to challenge herself as well as her fellow students through her art and her critique. From the outset she proceeded with passion and integrity, willing to take risks, rather than find a safe path through the degree program. She attacked the difficult problems accruing to artists with exceptional insight and energy, handling complex aesthetic problems with clarity and ease.

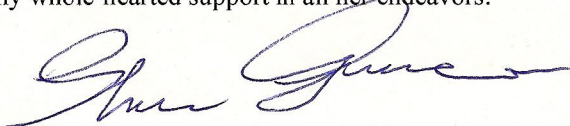
I have followed her career with interest. She has visited my classes as a guest lecturer many times over the years, and I have always been impressed with her continued development, particularly her evolving use of video as a conduit for research and community interaction. The recorded dialogues in her research become a source of distinct content in her work engendering powerful installation and sculptural forms that blur the boundaries between life and art. This art is tough, but often reveals a playful edge that draws the viewer like an uncontrolled force.

She is stubborn and driven, which at times leads her into a blind alley, but she can digest criticism, respond and make use of it. She has a strong intellect and unremitting honesty in regard to her responsibilities as an artist and a teacher, which will not allow her to accept halfway measures.

As instructor of Experimental Video and Installation in both the Continuing Education Program and the Young Artist's Program, Cook was an inspired and thorough teacher. Several students inquired as to her whereabouts long after she had gone on to other work. I believe her keen sensitivity toward the needs of her students as individuals makes her an exceptionally effective teacher.

I give her my whole-hearted support in all her endeavors.

Sincerely,



Sharon Grace, MFA
Professor of Art, Department of New Genres
San Francisco Art Institute
800 Chestnut St., San Francisco, CA 94133
grace@sirius.com
paci7@aol.com
ph. 415-543-3685