

Sarah Beth Woods is a Chicago-based multidisciplinary artist. Woods' background as a critical cultural worker led to an interest in the aesthetics and political implications of modern surfaces and the body: skin and hair, saturated color and shine; specifically, the contradictory nature of surface-material tensions that are often neglected in scholarly works because of their positioning and connections to the feminine, the superfluous, and excess.

Cultural influences derived from formative years spent living and teaching on the South West side of Chicago manifest in the content and aesthetics of Woods' work, specifically Black material culture, and women's conceptual spaces as sites of possibility and transformation. Woods' process and modes of research are informed by music, and music-making phenomena that cross time and cultures, stem from the body, evolve communally and collaboratively, diverse in influences, exchange, and shared histories. Woods' work often includes elements of social practice, "an artistic approach that emphasizes collaboration, shared authorship, public participation, site-specificity, and interdisciplinarity, is often presented in non-art locations, and has no media or formal boundaries." (Harrell Fletcher) Simple forms, shapes, and materials associated with the body are inherent in the formal qualities of Wood's work.

Woods' earned her BFA at Northern Illinois University and MFA at the University of Illinois at Urbana Champaign. Woods studied with self-taught, avant-garde filmmaker Ernie Gehr at the San Francisco Art Institute. Select exhibitions include shows at the University of Michigan's Work: Detroit space, UICA, Grand Rapids, MI, Kent State University Museum, Girls Club, Fort Lauderdale, Florida, A.I.R gallery in Brooklyn, New York, University of Massachusetts, Boston, the Bob & Roberta Smith Kunstverein at Coventry University, Coventry England, NYU Florence, Florence Italy, Genesis Cinema, London, CICA Museum, Gimpo-si South Korea, Galerie Bei Koc, Hannover Germany, and in Chicago at the Museum of Contemporary Art, Western Exhibitions, Hyde Park Art Center, The Franklin, Jane Addams Hull House Museum, South Side Community Art Center, Threewalls, Arts Incubator, Design Museum of Chicago, and Woman Made Gallery.

Woods currently sits on the College Art Association board, the Committee on Women in the Arts. She presented a paper for the annual CAA conference, "Medusa: Sensing With and Thinking With the World," for the panel "Transhistorical Feminist Agency: A Matter of Gender, Race, Time and Place, February 17, 2022.

Woods' and Fatimata Traore, a professional hair braider are the recipients of the 2015/2016 Crossing Boundaries Prize through Arts+Public Life & Center for the Study of Race, Politics and Culture at the University of Chicago for their collaboration, BRAID/WORK. Woods is a 2017 3arts 3AP Awardee, which supports Hear the Glow of Electric Lights, a collaborative film and performance project based out of Prosser High School on the west side of Chicago, investigating 1960s American music groups featuring teenage girls and young women.

Land by the Sea, Woods' current ancestral research project brings her to Szczecin, Poland, formerly occupied by Pomeranians. Woods is collaborating with scholars, curators, and archeology groups, as well as a detective specializing in the reacquisition of stolen art and artifacts. This process involves collecting and transcribing the difficult and often intangible histories relating to mass expulsion, cultural erasure, and immigration specifically related to Baltic history. Woods' juxtaposes archives with current Polish archeological finds and excavating equipment, as direct metaphors for cultural and ancestral searching, and for tasks ordinarily undertaken by the human body: digging, scraping, lifting, and pulling.