**Introduction**

Good afternoon and welcome to Creative Counterpoints: Women, Difference, and the Arts. My name is Marika Preziuso, I am Assistant Professor in the Department of Liberal Arts at the Massachusetts College of Arts and Design, and I am the organizer of today’s symposium.

I’d like to start with a quote by renowned cellist *Yo Yo Ma*: *performance is hospitality*. This is how I envisioned this day we are spending together: a platform for a range of intersecting presentations and conversations that are hospitable toward each-other, and towards you all; a space that is carved out of creative - and thus generous - counterpoints.

A process of both widening and deepening of questions and ideas take place when differences intersect, when borders are experienced as porous, when we are hospitable to contradictions.

I am thinking of Differences not only between disciplines and media, but also between critical *and* creative thinking, between what is deemed as the purview of rationality and logic, and what is capriciously emotional, between ethical responsibilities and personal desires.

In Creative Counterpoints, by exploring what we provocatively define as “female” and “feminine” in various fields of arts and culture, we want to consider its implication for women’s creative processes. By exploring a range of emotional, we want to validate them as the objects of critical inquiry and creative labor.

By exploring beauty in its transnational trajectories of production and consumption, we wish to expand our experiences of it, in our studios, our workspace, our lives.

Above all, by weaving our lived experiences and creative practices into our conversations, we wish to draw attention to the intersecting elements that make up the fabric out of which our thinking, feeling, art making, and politics arise.

The secret ingredient for the conversations we are offering this afternoon, I believe, is vulnerability. Most of our guest speakers have never met each other, and some probably until today were unfamiliar with each other’s’ work, and certainly each other’s lives. I thank them for the trust that they demonstrated by readily accepting my ‘call’, and for embracing the vulnerability that comes with weaving deeply felt “counterpoints” in a public space.

I, for one, have not prepared any concluding remarks because, as my students realize early in my classes, I care more deeply about the questions that are being asked than about any rushed answer that fills up the space of tension whenever we see a huge question mark hovering above us.

In the spirit of hospitality, Creative Counterpoints has been possible thanks to a full cohort of in-house resources – MassArt creative human capital. I must give credit to all the supporters of this event: The MassArt Foundation, which in 2014 awarded me a Fellowship toward the realization of what was an idea of a symposium on women and creativity cross-culturally.

The Department of Liberal Arts; the Department of Academic Affairs, the Department of Graphic Design, the Office of Civil Rights Compliance and Diversity, Elena White and Ceci Mendez in the Center for Art and Community Partnership (CACP), the Graduate Programs Office, and last but not least the office of Student Development.

At the heart of Creative Counterpoints are two integrated events – today’s symposium, and the student exhibition on display at the Arnheim Gallery this week. The realization of both of these events has been possible thanks to the talent, professionality and generosity of the following MassArt students: Jeremy DuPoint, junior in graphic design, who is responsible for all the visuals and the designs component of CCs: the logo, flyers, program cover, and wonderful bookmarks that are available today.

The student artists in the Women’s literature/Global perspective class of Spring and Fall 2015, whose artwork you will see later today; Liz Carre, first year graduate student in the Dynamic Media Institute, who curated the exhibition, MassArt alumna Carly Blais, Manager of the Arnheim Gallery, Julian and Maddie and the Community Exhibition Team, who did an amazing job installing the exhibition last Sunday, Yukiko Nishino, 2nd year graduate student in Film and Video, who is filming the symposium, Marissa Iamartino, senior in the Photography Department, CCs resident photographer, and Esther Moon, event technician and MassArt alumna.

Finally, two of the guest speakers today are also MassArt graduate students: Christina Wang, second year Photography Dept, and Anne Sisto, third year Dynamic Media Institute (DMI).