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Texts as Dinner Guests, or, Corresponding with Other Voices
Masterclass / Experiment-in-Conversation
Courtauld Institute of Art
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Description:

A dead letter is a letter that's undeliverable, or unclaimed, or somehow ineffectual. Something's wrong with its direction or its messy handwriting or readability. Already we've moved beyond the simple matter, or material, of postage. Or maybe we've moved closer to it. Correspondence can be intimate. Or serious, or gossipy, or tender, or confusing, or defensive. Maybe it claws something back. Maybe it forgets its addressee and plays with their words like clay, creating decals or transfers on a variable scale of proximity. Which we could call scholarship. Or translation. In this masterclass, we will not exactly write letters to specific authors, artists, or books as voices of the past but rather engage another text (or several) as if we were having a conversation with it, as if we had it (the text) over for dinner, or maybe we'll keep it at a safe distance, maybe we'll treat it as an occasion for a complaint. These imaginary correspondences can take any form: poetic, narrative, dramatic, and might also lead to performance. The masterclass will bring many voices into the room and think of ways we can speak to, with, or against them, caringly or recalcitrantly, or when we might not want to speak at all.

After signing up for the workshop, please pick one other person who you think might want to come along. Tell them to share this invitation with someone else, like a chain letter.

For the first issue of the important feminist magazine *Chain* (1994-2005), 'a conversational journal', edited by Juliana Spahr and Jena Osman, the editors invited poets within their community to start chain poems then send them on to other poets who would write in response and send the chain on etc., thus (hypothetically) expanding the community and (hypothetically) removing (some) editorial authority.