

Scott Marsden

INSURGENT CURATING. CREATIVE FORMS OF CRITICAL INQUIRY and the use of dialogue underlie my concept of insurgent curatorial practice. By insurgent, I refer to how dialogue-based social art practices simultaneously reveal conflicting and contradictory voices found within the dominant cultural narrative of neoliberalism and mainstream galleries and the voices of those who have been excluded, marginalized, and who are outside of these dominant discourses. Dialogue-based social art practices encourage the disruption of mainstream, elite, curator-driven exhibition programs and instead explore new definitions of community engagement, connectivity, and the role artists and art galleries play within contemporary communities.

My role as an insurgent curator has been to examine how art galleries operate, what they exhibit, and how the authority of the art gallery is a contested space that critiques dominate narratives, proposes the concept of critical artistic dialogue, and engages the public in meaning-making processes. My curatorial approach to working with artists, curatorial collaborators, art galleries, museums, and viewers is process oriented: it uses collaboration and participation to create dialogue and explore inter-subjectivities that are downplayed by neoliberalism in its privileging of individualized self-expression. This strategy challenges the traditional display of objects in the art gallery as a sacred space for quiet contemplation and recreates a space where diverse dialogues and multiple voices are heard, and where members of the public can reimagine themselves through the voices of others, thus giving voice to working-class, marginalized, and disfranchised peoples as a means for community transformation.

The use of dialogue has important implications in helping to situate art galleries and museums as public spaces that invite participation, dialogue, exchange of community knowledge, and provide opportunities that can have a profound impact on visitors' meaning-making and informal learning. My work explores how exhibitions can help to situate the viewer as a central part of the meaning-making process and how this can lead to a change in consciousness, creating a greater capacity for compassion and responsibility to communities and community ways of knowing and alternative meaning-making. ¶

Scott Marsden holds a PhD from the Faculty of Education (Art Education) at the University of Victoria, an MFA from York University, and is an Associate of COAD University.

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Carole Condé and Karl Beveridge,
Public Matters, 2012. Courtesy of the
artists.