Engaging Civic Conversation in Art Spaces: An Innovation in Practice

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Deliberative Pedagogy

“...[deliberative pedagogy] encourages students to encounter and consider multiple perspectives, weigh trade-offs and tensions, and move toward action through informed judgement. It is simultaneously a way of teaching that is itself deliberative and a process for developing the skills, behaviors, and values that support deliberative practice. Perhaps most important, the work of deliberative pedagogy is about space-making: creating and holding space for authentic and productive dialogue, conversations that can ultimately be not only educational but transformative” (Longo, Manosevitch, & Shaffer, 2017, p. xvi).
Collaborations

+ 3S Community Art Space: post-performance/viewing dialogues
  + *Becoming American* documentary film series
  + *We Are Pussy Riot* play

+ UNH Theater & Dance: post-performance dialogue
  + “We the People” devised performance

+ UNH’s Museum of Art: exhibition dialogues
  + Yoav Horesh – *Aftermath* (photography: sites of violence and destruction in Israel)
  + *For Freedoms* (collaborative installation of yard signs: contemporary meanings of freedom)
  + Dan Mills – *Human Topographies* (collage painting: migration and postcolonial legacies)
  + Enrico Riley – *The Blues in Me: Witnessing Love* (paintings: African American experiences)
  + *Nobody/Somebody* (photography: race/ethnicity; gender/identity; immigration/migration; ability)
Innovation-in-Practice

- Opening questions
- Generative questions
- Reflective questions
Framework for Innovation

+ Opening Question(s): invite participants to share impressions, surface common responses to the show/exhibit.

+ What were your first impressions of the exhibit?"
+ “What did you notice while viewing the paintings?”
Framework for Innovation

- Generative Questions:
  - exploring themes from the exhibition/performance;
  - allowing participants to develop shared meanings;
  - questions move towards connecting art to real-world issues

- How does the performance invite us to consider our common experiences of these social and political issues in new ways?
- How does this play represent conflicts or tensions over these issues in our own communities?
- How does this art lead you to reflect on the history of racism in our country?
- How do these paintings illustrate past and present injustice?
Framework for Innovation

+ Reflective Questions: considering the role of art in engaging contemporary issues

+ “What role does art play in how we relate to the social issues reflected after experiencing this performance (or the exhibition) together?”
Contributions: Flipping the script on engagement in the art space

+ Default forms of public engagement also employed in art spaces
+ Developing a process that incorporates museum/art space and makes it both the subject and site of deliberation and dialogue
+ Adding dimension to the experience of the visual/performative
+ Leveraging art spaces to engage students, with possibilities for diverse/under-heard communities
We look forward to further conversation...