

Politics of Learning in Collective Art Activist Practices in the Public Sphere

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Abstract

Artistic activism as a form of cultural production is inherently pedagogical. It is a site that actively works to ignite our radical imagination in the service of human freedom and liberation. In this presentation, I think through, with, and around the sites of public art, activism, and education. My students and I became an art collective for a semester, in order to design and implement a tactical art intervention based on a current social issue in the public realm. Our collective, called the NYU Flash Collective, was part of the “Flash Collective” social practice project developed by artist Avram Finkelstein, a new paradigm for rethinking activist art and social engagement within the public sphere. This exercise in political art-making is based on collaborative decision-making processes that mirror the experiences encountered when forming and working within art and political collectives. It involves a surgical and fast-paced format intended to break through the overwhelming nature of communicating complex ideas. In so doing, it employs a series of result-oriented exercises aimed at what is the very core of social engagement: collective action. This experience in collective art making as pedagogy provides an opportunity

for me to explore what a politics of learning means when we connect public art to activism and what notions of the public we invoke in such interventionist work.

Keywords

Artistic activism, Collective practice, Public sphere, Pedagogy.