



"If you are reading (or hearing) this, you are part of its public. So first let me say: Welcome."

—Michael Warner, *Publics and Counterpublics*

What constitutes a public? How is a public formed? Where is the public in public art? Who is affected in socially engaged art? Who is engaged? Who is excluded? Who benefits? Who is your public(s)? In this line of programming we are investigating the concept of publics (communities, audiences, organizations, strangers, participants, consumers) and the issues relating to working in the public sphere (public art, civic engagement, education, journalism and more).



The tenor of a conversation, the demographic of a neighborhood, the unwritten rules of a profession. What exactly do we mean when we speak about the “context” of a socially engaged artwork? The choices that practitioners make when speaking about the frame around their work have become virtually as important as the work itself. Context is firmly established as a site for creative activity and sensitive response. It must be negotiated, reported on, and occasionally sought out.



The Institutions line of programming investigates the role of the socially engaged artist within the structure of formal organizations such as museums, governments, corporations, non-profit organizations, and schools. It asks:

What are the dichotomies and tensions for artists working with institutions? How do socially engaged artists (and the institutions who seek to support them) find balance between freedom and compromise; credibility and experimentation; engaging new publics and maintaining old audiences? Sometimes the institution itself becomes a medium. Who are the leading sculptors of institutions in art and social practice? What is it like to build a new program, organization, idea within an existing institutional context? When does the institution itself become art?