

Aesthetics and Ethics of Working in Public

We might say, with slight exaggeration, that we are experiencing an “ethical turn” in aesthetics and an “aesthetic turn” in ethics.

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The Philosophical Status of Aesthetics

<http://www.aesthetics-online.org/ideas/devereaux.html>

Ethics

Ethics guide social interaction, through a shared sense of good and bad behavioural guidelines.

When we work ‘in relationship’ do we need guidelines to encounter and manage difference?

Is encountering difference an opportunity for self interest or an opportunity for changing/interrogating how we think about ‘self’?

If conflict is a condition of dominant and subordinate interests; are there ethical guidelines that could move conflict towards creative resolution? Or, is conflict an a priori condition of public life?

What kinds of ethical issues arise within practices that are focused by relationship more than authorship?

If consensus is the ideal outcome of public life; what moral and ethical guidelines do we need? Can consensus (relationship) and creativity (authorship) coexist?

Where and when do sensitive ethical issues arise in relation to work that is concerned directly with the social/cultural sphere?

If our life in the public realm is defined by the oppositional forces of conflict and consensus; is there an aesthetic condition that we might seek in that discursive relationship? Do complex relationship (familial, social, political) have an experiential and conceptual quality that you would define as aesthetic?

Aesthetics

Aesthetics is no longer defined as a material/formal condition that is intrinsic to the material/physical world. As the artists approach to the process of meaning making and engagement with the world changes: does aesthetics become more discursive and contingent? Is the formal material aesthetic displaced by the other; a discursive relational aesthetic?

A concept of empathetic insight is a necessary component of a dialogic aesthetics.

G. Kester 2004 p 115

If we once understood aesthetics as a formal order that was ‘beauty’ or an overwhelming power that was sublime - what is it that we share across art, culture and nature when enter into empathetic relationship? Or, inter-relationship?

What elements need to be present for an experience to be describable as aesthetic?

Have you experience beautiful and moving moments of conversation? What were the formal characteristics of that exchange?

Do we mean principles of art, semantic systems of art making?

Can you have aesthetic inter-relationship without empathy? Can you have an aesthetics without form? Do we focus our critical eye on the dialogue, or the setting in which that dialogue is occurring?

If the public sphere has alternating moments of conflict and conviviality (like any relationship!) do adjectives like utopian/distopian, ideal/pragmatic, discourse or lecture indicate hierarchical value?

What qualities/expectations emerge from aesthetics in contemporary practices/projects in the public sphere: utopian/distopian, ideal/pragmatic or discursive?

What is relationship between aesthetics and the everyday?

How do ethical issues shape a different sense of aesthetics?

Do ethical considerations limit aesthetic potential?

When is it appropriate for the artist/or art project to test thresholds?

What is the relation between art and aesthetics in working in public? For whom is the relationship relevant? And what for?

In an art practice that is based upon relationship - what is the focal point of aesthetic/critical analysis? How do we know when to look, do we look at all? Or are other senses involved?

When does art cross over into something else? What becomes of aesthetics in work that happens across time and within dialogue?

If we can consider aesthetics as a condition of a narrative, a play, or a symphony, is it possible to define an aesthetic of human inter-relationship where the outcome is mutual transcendence?

After watching Suzanne's DVD documentation of "The Roof is on fire" and "Code 33" I have questions. We all could think about Suzanne's project as case studies and we can compare with our own projects.

What does it mean to listen? In Suzanne's case what was the empathetic link to her speakers? How do we understand who 'they are' and prepare ourselves to listen well? Following that if a person doesn't speak is there still potential for listening?

In the documentation of "The Roof is on fire", a high school drama teacher said, "I don't want to see them (young people) made into an anthropological experiment..." The question was a moral and ethical one, about using community versus engaging with the intent to affect change. What does this mean to an artist who works within community?

In the documentation of "The Roof is on fire", there are also audience comments such as "There are many difficult issues." Is their sense of difficulty the same as our sense of difficulty when watching the documentation? How might we discuss this gap?