



## SocialSocial

A project by SexEd (Liz Slagus & Norene Leddy)

Commissioned by The Vera List Center for Art and Politics and A Blade of Grass

[www.thesocialsocial.com](http://www.thesocialsocial.com)

### AGENDA

#### Introduction to us/our work, SexEd, and Social Practice

We recently received a grant from A Blade of Grass (ABOG) for our project, SexEd ([www.sexedproject.org](http://www.sexedproject.org)), which is considered “social practice.” What is that? An emerging art form: socially engaged art projects that create meaningful interactions, exchanges and collaborations with different publics -- usually outside of the art world. These projects explore co-creation; working with people and communities rather than creating work “for” or “about” them.

This work is difficult to define. There is no definitive vocabulary. Why is vocabulary important? In order for anything to become an established part of our culture and society, there needs to be a way to describe and/or talk about said practice. There is a distinct need for this to help build awareness, understanding, and ultimately funding for this kind of work to continue and evolve.

#### Our Thesis

Because the intention of social practice is to create meaningful interactions, exchanges and collaborations with different publics, and to reach beyond the bubble of the art world (art studios, galleries and museums), this art form could benefit from the voices and perspectives of those who work outside of these confines, but who engage with the public in other meaningful ways.

#### Why you?

All of you regularly engage with the public and, in fact, hold a special expertise in engaging different publics, but you don't necessarily have any formal training and/or investment in the art world. You work in education, healthcare, food service, security, social justice, advocacy, and more. We want to see how you perceive the tenets of this artwork and how we can start to define, together, an art form that is about being in and amongst the public.

#### Social Practice History & Context

Where does social practice come from?

Artists we will discuss to contextualize its history: The Futurists; Marcel Duchamp; Joseph Beuys

\*For more background, we recommend *What We Made* by Tom Finkelpearl and *Artificial Hells* by Claire Bishop.

Social practice: What is it now?

Socially engaged art

Art that merges life and art

Art that is co-created, that generates exchanges and/or meaningful interactions

Artists seeking a way to connect with and collaborate with the world outside of their studios and the artworld

Identified issues:

- Credit-Who's work is it?
- Evaluation/assessment
- Connections outside of the art world
- Recognition from the art world

- Aesthetics
- Lack of vocabulary or language to fully explain or foster understanding or have elevated conversations

Examples of work that has been placed under the label of social practice:

- *Touch Sanitation*, 1977-1980, Mierle Laderman Ukeles  
[http://www.brooklynmuseum.org/eascfa/feminist\\_art\\_base/gallery/mierle\\_laderman\\_ukeles.php?i=1111](http://www.brooklynmuseum.org/eascfa/feminist_art_base/gallery/mierle_laderman_ukeles.php?i=1111)
- *Gramsci Monument*, 2013, Thomas Hirschorn <http://www.diaart.org/exhibitions/main/125>
- Abounaddara, ongoing (anonymous filmmaking collective based in Syria)  
<https://www.facebook.com/pages/Abounaddara-Films/128084573918925>
- *The Sniper* <http://vimeo.com/92318539>
- *I am what I will be Part 1* <http://vimeo.com/107265713>
- *Conflict Kitchen*, ongoing, Jon Rubin and Dawn Weleski <http://conflictkitchen.org>

## Break for food and drinks

### Regroup to discuss Tenets and Key Words

We are looking for a list of tenets: core concepts embedded in this work and from those, for ways to describe the work to larger publics that are accurate and accessible.

What are some of the things these artists are considering?

What the key elements?

Is social justice a common thread in all of these projects?

How would you explain this work to the people you work with?

What would your 'elevator pitch' for this work be...and in thinking of that...what are the main words you would use to describe, succinctly but in-depth, the thinking behind this work.

### Definitions (in groups of 3-4)

As a group, please select up to two of these words to focus on for the next 40 min.

Collaboratively create definitions of the words using language (for example: when you use the word "community" in social practice it means ...)

We also want visual definitions.

We're looking for simple (think stick figures!) or complex...

- drawings
- maps
- links/urls to work/project samples that demonstrate what these words mean to your group in relation to this work

At the end of this period, we're looking to have a group of fairly complex words, written definitions, and visuals that we've co-created to be able to use to talk about social practice to larger publics outside of the art world.

## Presentations

### Closing

What is social practice to you?

Do you think social justice plays a role in this work?