

DOES ART HAVE A PUBLIC FUNCTION?

*Faculty of Fine Arts, MSU
Baroda*

18th August, 2016- 2nd September, 2016

For two weeks between the 18th of August, 2016- 2nd September, 2016, students from the Faculty of Fine Arts, MSU, Baroda intensively engaged with the idea of art in the public realm. What does it mean to allow your artwork to be encountered in the public realm? To an audience that does not entirely consist of art practitioners, art critics, art historians, curators and those associated with the making, supporting and exhibiting of artwork in different capacities. Instead, an audience that enthusiastically aspires to understand it.

The MVA and final year BVA students were invited to engage an online questionnaire and participate in a public intervention project that would developed as part of the Students' Biennale 2016, via means of the workshop. The questionnaire hoped to become a starting point or trigger for the exercise and to gauge options from the participants on what exhibiting to the *artworld* and exhibiting to the audience outside the *artworld* means to them.

1. The word "artworld" was coined by Arthur Danto who said that the term referred to ideas, theory and history that allowed an object to be perceived as an object of art. George Dickie, an eminent theoretician, later added that the "artworld" also consisted of of people related to creative practices. This could mean art practitioners, students and teachers, art historians, writers and critics; museums, galleries, institutions, cultural bodies and funders and those associated with the production and exhibition of art in different capacities. All of whom played some role in deciding what art is and what isn't. Do you think an "artworld" exists?
2. Danto also says that the "artworld" decides what art is. For example, he says that it is the "artworld" that decides that Andy Warhol's Brillo Boxes are art, where as the original Brillo Boxes at the supermarket remain mere objects. Do you agree or disagree with Danto's statement? Why?
3. If the "artworld" decides what art is, does it mean that the art we make has a tendency to cater to this "artworld"?
4. What does an "artworld" mean to you?
5. One of the ideas behind the Art Fair at the Faculty of Fine Arts, Baroda was to reach out to the local community. Alternatively, with the same idea as the base, what do you think would happen if you took your work outside into the city, to a space and

audience that has not encountered your work before?

6. In an interview in 2014, K.G. Subramanyan speaks about a "more inclusive way of creativity" that draws from experiences from outside the confines of a studio. How do you interpret this in context to your own practice?
7. What kind of audience do you prefer to engage with as an artist?
8. What are the reasons you make art?
9. The Kerala Radicals, as part of their ideology, argued that art emerged from and belonged to people, especially the working class. Do you agree?
10. Is it essential for your viewer to be familiar with fine art practices?
11. Is it possible to create art for a wider public and as an artist, still retain the integrity and complexity of your thoughts?

In the course of the two week workshop, two projects emerged— one being a long term engagement with the Machhi Peeth community that would continue into mid-January. And the second, a shorter intervention at the Vadodara Railway waiting room.

The intervention in the Vadodara Railway waiting room was titled *Displaced*. Students explored the possibilities of what happens when an object more closely related to a private space is introduced into a public space? This became a rough premise for their artistic intervention— at the waiting room space of a railway station at Baroda. The project was thoroughly documented in videos and stills, as the students articulated how people engage with what are deemed as more personal objects (a bed, in this case) in what is also largely perceived as a public space. The recce for the workshop involved conversations with people waiting in the room— including dialogues related to what art practices meant to different people who were not familiar with the contemporary visual arts; drawing and mapping out these spaces and then executing the intervention by making minor changes in the space— including the introduction of a bed. The workshop has been represented in the Students' Biennale by re-creating the intervention in the context of an exhibition space at Fadi Hall (Mattancherry), and also presented with the documentation of its earlier context in Baroda. It places a bed into what is perceived as a public domain, in an attempt to blur the division between how the public and private are conventionally perceived.

Report submitted by: Faiza Hasan
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