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Socially Engaged Practice: Three Artists

Susan Ashbrook

Lesley University, ashbrook@lesley.edu

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Susan Ashbrook, Associate Professor
LUCAD
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Socially Engaged Practice: Three Artists

In recent years many artists have turned to 'socially engaged practice,' striving to effect social or political change through community-based or participatory projects outside of traditional gallery spaces. In my presentation I will review projects by three contemporary artists who work with underserved communities to develop creative responses to social injustices they face and to help them develop powerful tools to impact their lives

Suzanne Lacy, one of the original California feminists of the 1970s, is well-known for her performance pieces and installations that engage with social issues through conversation within communities. Rape and violence against women have been a constant theme, as well as issues of aging, poverty, racism and more.

Sculptor **Theaster Gates** has rehabilitated a series of dilapidated buildings on the South Side of Chicago to serve as community centers for creative production. He finances his projects through sale of his sculptures which repurpose materials stripped from the rehabilitated buildings, creating a virtuous circle between fine art and social progress.

Pseudonymous French street artist and photographer **JR** travels internationally, setting up photo booths in regions of the world torn by strife to photograph residents, publically posting the giant black and white portraits on buildings and rooftops as well as on social media platforms. His projects bring people together on equal footing to celebrate their individuality and commonalities.

All three offer leadership to stimulate grassroots communities to tackle their own problems through creativity and cooperation.

Abstract

To address challenges of the contemporary world, increasing numbers of artists are investigating 'socially engaged practice': striving to create social or political change through community-based or participatory art projects outside of traditional gallery spaces. My presentation highlights collaborative projects by Suzanne Lacy, Theaster Gates and JR, who provide leadership to stimulate grassroots communities to address their own problems through creativity and cooperation.

