

Courageous Activism: Arts-Based Methods and Decolonizing Approaches

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Call for Papers and Contributions

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This stream aims at investigating decolonized approaches to arts-based methods as a way of articulating what constitutes courageous art. Our underlying premise is that art history, interpretations, and practices are most often recognized and adjudicated from the viewpoint of Western canons of art making. Our purpose is to explore the multiplicity of decolonized approaches by presenting perspectives, not solely from the viewpoint of formal institutions such as schools, universities, academies, and colleges but also non-formal ones, such as cultural institutions, libraries, museums, theatres, orchestras, archives, organizations, work-places, alongside informal ones, such as play and games, community projects, amateur art, clubs, technology hubs, and maker spaces. A pluralistic view on the arts—indeed, arts as a plural—is embraced by including artistic expressions from all genres and artistic encounters at all levels, including the technological, design-driven, arts-based, artist-led, arts-inspired, arts-integrated approaches. We encourage contributions from all over the world in order to challenge the well-established Western-centred understanding of creativity and the arts. This stream will strongly support global perspectives, cross-cultural studies, critical theories, creative dissemination and a broader re-framing of the role of the arts for learning and for society.

Why look to the arts/artists for insight into courageous activism? The context of society is changing as divides deepen and polarization intensifies. These widespread global dynamics have created echo chambers with deep ruts in the talk tracks, which prevents the flourishing of diverse perspectives and opportunities for dialogue. The arts can and must provide a springboard to transform discourses about society and education. When we engage our senses beyond the written word, a multiplicity of interpretations appear and engagement with others is facilitated in new ways.

W.E.B. DuBois famously advised the curious intellectual to: “begin with art, because art tries to take us outside ourselves. It is a matter of trying to create an atmosphere and context, so conversation can flow back and forth and we can be influenced by each other.” It is in the interest of maintaining this simple flow of mutuality and empathy that activist artists reach out to their worldwide audiences. They engage, provoke, incite, agitate, and in the end, they build jobs in communities, invoke respect among diverse groups of people, and nurture harmony in the natural order of things. Their ability to perform, enact, engage, lead, create, and catalyse speak to their role as entrepreneur/activist/artist/leader—roles into which they fit uncannily and naturally. For them, art-making is synonymous with creating a better world in measurable ways, involving all of us together. The arts erode boundary lines between the artist and audience through measured and interrogated interaction. By closing the gap between art and life, artist/leaders often champion political art—that engages with the physical world and the social issues that lie dormant within it. This art, though sometimes sensational, is most often a radically calibrated provocation that serves as a call to action (Strauss 2017).

In the name of art that speaks of a larger purpose, whose actions bring “theory into being” (McKenzie, 2006 and Callon , 2007), we invite contributions that are multi-disciplinary, cutting edge, and infused with the idea that ‘anything is possible.’ This context will serve as a springboard for our experiential stream, which we envision as a deep dialogue that will have and leave performative traces. These dialogues can potentially produce a proposal to the book series at Brill/Sense: *The arts, creativities, and learning environments in global perspectives*.

Abstracts of no more than 500 words, in word.doc format, should be submitted as an email attachment by **2nd December 2019** to aomo2020liverpool@gmail.com and to Anu Mitra Anu.Mitra.10@gmail.com, Anu.Mitra@myunion.edu, Fredricka Joyner Fredricka.joyner@gmail.com and Tatiana Chemi tc@learning.aau.dk as stream conveners. All decisions will be made on the basis of the abstracts submitted. For those in need of a fully refereed conference paper, a deadline for submission will be communicated a little closer to the conference.

References

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