

Mining Life - An exploration in three acts into the potential of socially engaged art practices to instigate social change

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DOCTORAL DISSERTATION

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<p>Abstract</p> <p><i>Mining Life: An Exploration in Three Acts into the Potential of Socially Engaged Art Practices to Instigate Social Change</i> investigates the intersection of art, activism, and social change through three major artistic research projects. Emerging from a critical shift in my own artistic practice, this thesis questions the role of socially engaged art within post-colonial structures, challenging the field's inclination toward performative social awareness.</p> <p>The research unfolds across multiple sites, notably the illegal gold mining regions in Peru and the contested terrain of cultural heritage repatriation. Drawing on experimental theatre methodologies, including Augusto Boal's <i>Theatre of the Oppressed</i>, the projects explore new methods for empowering marginalized communities, focusing on street comedy and participatory art practices.</p> <p>The first act examines how to invert colonial power dynamics through the <i>Within Heritage Movements</i> project, which engaged Swedish textile workers in replicating looted pre-Columbian textiles from Peru. By staging this act of replication, the project interrogated the ethics of cultural appropriation and raised questions about ownership and artistic intervention in post-colonial contexts.</p> <p>The second act, <i>Searching for Power on the Collective Laugh</i>, involves collaboration with Peruvian street comedians in a transdisciplinary encounter with professionals from anthropology, biology, and art therapy. Together, we address the social and environmental degradation linked to illegal gold mining. The project employs humour as a tool for social critique, aiming to raise awareness and foster engagement in ways that bypass conventional political discourse.</p> <p>The third act, <i>Preventive Custody</i>, centers on human trafficking survivors in Peru, who co-authored a theatrical script that was later performed in Sweden. This project emphasized the redistribution of creative agency, allowing the participants to reclaim their narratives and resist victimization through collective storytelling.</p> <p>Together, these three projects explore the potential of art to challenge structural injustices without reproducing NGO models or confrontational activism. The PhD contributes to the fields of socially engaged art, participatory practice, and decolonial methodologies, proposing new, dynamic formats for social transformation.</p>		
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