

Public Servants: Art and the Crisis of the Common Good (Critical Anthologies in Art and Culture)

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How should we understand the purpose of publicly engaged art in the twenty-first century, when the very term "public art" is largely insufficient to describe such practices? Concepts such as "new genre public art," "social practice," or "socially engaged art" may imply a synergy between the role of art and the role of government in providing social services. Yet the arts and social services differ crucially in terms of their methods and metrics. Socially engaged artists need not be aligned (and may often be opposed) to the public sector and to institutionalized systems. In many countries, structures of democratic governance and public responsibility are shifting, eroding, and being remade in profound ways -- driven by radical economic, political, and global forces. According to what terms and through what means can art engage with these changes? This volume gathers essays, dialogues, and art projects -- some previously published and some newly commissioned -- to illuminate the ways the arts shape and reshape a rapidly changing social and governmental landscape. An artist portfolio section presents original statements and projects by some of the key figures grappling with these ideas.



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Editorial Review

Review

Public Servants boldly reaffirms the necessity of talking about art and politics together. In it, everything we thought we knew about both becomes questionable. This bracing, passionate, thrilling collection shakes it all up and goes after the clichés and the taboos with unrelenting fervor. It doesn't tell us what to do, but it will certainly help us to figure that out for ourselves.

(Thomas Keenan, Human Rights Project, Bard College)

Extraordinary in its range and depth, *Public Servants* is an essential volume. It rigorously unpacks the intersectional, aesthetic, and real possibilities for art and culture to confront the social, economic, and environmental challenges of a globalized world.

(Laura Raicovich, President and Director, Queens Museum)

Encompassing sections on labor, the economy, biopolitics, education, and security, this anthology tackles urgent topics like the effectiveness of socially engaged art and offers readers an in-depth and critical understanding around artwork and ways of thinking too often simplified as 'social practice.'

(Saskia Bos, curator, art historian, and former Dean of The School of Art at The Cooper Union, New York)

About the Author

Johanna Burton is Keith Haring Director and Curator of Education and Public Engagement at the New Museum in New York and the series editor for the Critical Anthologies in Art and Culture. Her publications include the October Files collection *Cindy Sherman* (MIT Press). Shannon Jackson is Associate Vice Chancellor of the Arts and Design and the Cyrus and Michelle Hadidi Professor at the University of California, Berkeley. Her publications include *Social Works: Performing Art, Supporting Publics*. Dominic Willsdon is Leanne and George Roberts Curator of Education and Public Practice at the San Francisco Museum of Modern Art. His publications include *Public Intimacy: Art and Other Ordinary Acts in South Africa*.

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