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Living As Form: Socially Engaged Art From 1991-2011 (MIT Press)



Synopsis

Over the past twenty years, an abundance of art forms have emerged that use aesthetics to affect social dynamics. These works are often produced by collectives or come out of a community context; they emphasize participation, dialogue, and action, and appear in situations ranging from theater to activism to urban planning to visual art to health care. Engaged with the texture of living, these art works often blur the line between art and life. This book offers the first global portrait of a complex and exciting mode of cultural production--one that has virtually redefined contemporary art practice. *Living as Form* grew out of a major exhibition at Creative Time in New York City. Like the exhibition, the book is a landmark survey of more than 100 projects selected by a thirty-person curatorial advisory team; each project is documented by a selection of color images. The artists include the Danish collective Superflex, who empower communities to challenge corporate interest; Turner Prize nominee Jeremy Deller, creator of socially and politically charged performance works; Women on Waves, who provide abortion services and information to women in regions where the procedure is illegal; and Santiago Cirugeda, an architect who builds temporary structures to solve housing problems. *Living as Form* contains commissioned essays from noted critics and theorists who look at this phenomenon from a global perspective and broaden the range of what constitutes this form. Contributing authors Claire Bishop, Carol Becker, Teddy Cruz, Brian Holmes, Shannon Jackson, Maria Lind, Anne Pasternak, Nato Thompson

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

Living as Form is largely celebratory and expansive, preferring to pose enormous questions rather than suggesting how to answer them. Primarily it's a sourcebook, a starting point for further research, and a snapshot of critical conversation about the field. Its optimism can be infectious—look at how many different ways there are to do this stuff!—yet it's a compromised vehicle. Often we have to read between the lines to get a sense of what relations, or forms of living, come out of this work. —Sara Marcus

Nato Thompson is Chief Curator at the New York--based public arts institution Creative Time. He edited *The Interventionists: Users' Manual for the Creative Disruption of Everyday Life* and *Becoming Animal* (both published by the MIT Press) and curated the MASS MoCA exhibitions they accompanied.

Great resource for teaching socially engaged art course. Lots of diverse artists.

I attended this exhibition for the full 2 weeks. Nato Thompson's grasp of this material is complete. The show was brilliant. This book is essential reading for anyone interested in this most important work we call Social Practice.

Good Experience.

This is an extremely unique and informative book on an increasingly important part of visual culture--socially engaged art movement. Great images and interesting vignettes about the artists and their work. Highly recommend.

Nato Thompson has plenty of excerpts from artists, or descriptions of their work. Some are excellent (Claire Bishop), others I feel push the limit of what qualifies as "socially engaged art" (*Women on the Waves*). Nato Thompson tends to regard almost anything as SEA though.

It has a cover, pages, words, and pictures. Since it's required reading for college course, no editorial opinion is proffered since you gotta have it if it is a course requirement, right?

arrived on time and i didn't read it or anything but someone wanted it and the person liked it and it was for Bisexual BFA Student at Portland State University woman student.

Useful and inspiring: the 150+ pages of descriptions of projects by 100+ artists/organizations (including such as Ai Weiwei and Vic Muniz) exploring new ways of social engagement. Nicely done. The exploratory, thought-provoking, and knocking-down-walls aspect is enhanced by the inclusion of some entities/projects which would not normally even be thought of as "artistic" in nature. Possibly less useful for some readers: the approx 70 pages of essays, which contain a lot of rarefied and politicized art-crit-speak ("We need to move beyond the abstraction of the 'global' in order to engage with the particularities of the political inscribed within local geographies of conflict. It is within this specificity where contemporary artistic practice needs to reposition itself in order to expose the particularity of hidden institutional histories, revealing the missing information that can allow us to piece together a more accurate anticipatory urban research and intervention.")

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