

5-14-2011

Climate Change, MFA on Ice

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Recommended Citation

Roberts, Christy, "Climate Change, MFA on Ice" (2011). *CGU MFA Theses*. Paper 21.
http://scholarship.claremont.edu/cgu_mfatheses/21

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CLIMATE CHANGE

MFA ON ICE

CHRISTY ROBERTS

Within the confines of the body there is a longing to connect. I believe that this is a longing to connect to place and often to the others who occupy it. When this longing is not satisfied, either by place or people, tension arises. I create experiences, images, and objects that explore the tension between the body and its social, physical, and natural environment.

My most recent series uses the vernacular of recreation and the “outdoors” to explore this idea, in relation to global Climate Crisis and Climate Justice. Historically, landscapes are public and private, nationalistic and personal. There is a public responsibility and a personal connection to landscape that is complicated by both class and power structures.

Recreation and leisure generally imply joy. Philosopher Baruch Spinoza described joy as a holistic experience. When an action is done with joy it is inspiring. Consequently, Immanuel Kant explains the difference between a moral action and “beautiful action”. A moral action is an action you perform because it is “right” or “ethical”. A “beautiful action”, on the other hand, is both ethical and there is a *desire* to perform the action. This desire is often inspired by joy.

Spinoza’s *acquiescentia in se ipso*, or lack of self-acceptance, can help explain much of the passivity people exhibit towards issues such as pollution. Climate scholars explain that the general public’s response to climate change is that it is beyond their control and they, instead, choose to focus on their everyday lives.

The amount of “free time” people have, in correlation with the influences that govern how they spend that time, enables the playing of various roles in Climate Crisis. We move dynamically from participant to onlooker, but we are all affected. *Climate Change, MFA on Ice* is a social experiment that explores these positions, through ice-skating, as both an activity and a metaphor.

While figuratively “skating on thin ice” visitors play a number of roles. First and foremost, they are the performers, blurring the lines of authorship and collaboration. Second, some will skate and while skating it may become more

difficult for them to be fully aware of the synthetic ice and video-projected landscape/climate around them. The onlookers will not be participating in the action of skating, but will see the skaters in their changing environments. Some may be unaware, some may be occupied with their personal needs, and some may look on at the situation while climate continues to change. The dazzle of novelty and spectacle allows attendees to momentarily escape from the impending reality of Climate Crisis, while still engaged in the figurative process of it in the gallery.

“If I can’t dance, I don’t want to be a part of your revolution,” stated Emma Goldman. Joy allows us to inspire and activate in a way that frustration does not. There is solidarity in joy. For my thesis exhibition, I would like to bring you a spectacle, in which you can play every role joyfully, while you become more aware of your environment.