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The New Audience Theory

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The New Audience Theory
Artist's Statement
Isabel Bump

According to The New Audience Theory, audience members take information from the media and use their own identity and experiences to make sense of that information. Interpretations will always be slightly different from person to person; everyone has different experiences and cannot think in the same way as another. I know that truly understanding another person by seeing the world as they do is completely impossible. But, I want to try.

I have spoken to Annie for hours. The words you hear in this installation are such a small percentage of the conversations that I have had with her over the past year, but I hope they can in some way represent her internal voice.

You are invited to interact (or not) with this piece however you wish. You are invited to interact with this performance by changing your demeanor (or not) when you catch Annie watching and writing about you. You are invited to explore, discover, and observe (or not), in whatever manner you would like to portray yourself.

I want my audience to listen to Annie's story, to think of her as a person whose life has value and perhaps connection to theirs. I want them to read Annie's observations of the world around her and think about how they form opinions about others. I want them to share a part of themselves with the work, with Annie, with me, and come to peace with that act of sharing. I want them to become aware of their actions and bodies, aware that every move they make is a performance for the outside world, a presentation that shows those around them who they are and what they value. I want them to embrace and celebrate that performance, and even surprise me in their contribution to this work. I want them to understand that every person they come into contact with interprets those contributions differently. And I want them to read Annie's descriptions, laugh, and move on, recognizing that while we all have value and we are all connected to one another, we shouldn't necessarily take our performances too seriously. We are all watching one another, and at the same time watching no one but ourselves.

A thousand thank yous to:

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(for sharing so much with me, and making this project possible)

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(for helping with filming and video)

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All of my lovely friends and fellow Studio Art seniors for lending a hand and keeping me sane throughout the past few weeks.

Everyone who came to see the installation on the day of its performance.
The life of this piece owes everything to you.

Thank you so much, this piece would not exist without you!

The following is a transcript from recorded conversation between Annie and I. I didn't feel it fit in the audio component, but I consider it importantly as an artist's or performer's statement from her point of view:

“I do a lot of theater. Um, I don't do much, like, studio art stuff, but I am now, and...I guess I'm a performer? Because I'm sitting here, in front of people, and I'm like, part of the show. But I'm also watching you. Which makes you the subject, and I'm your audience, a little bit. I mean, anyone and everyone is an audience member. The idea of people watching each other on stage or in an exhibit or in a piece of art, um...I mean it's something that, at least when making theater, which you can decide if this is or not, um...I mean, I—I always think about the audience. Like, you have to.

I think with this piece, you people who are in here watching are as much part of the performance, or of the piece, or the installation, as you let yourself be or as you want to be...and I think...I don't think I get...I mean, I'm writing stuff about you, I am watching you, I'm judging you a little bit, but I don't think that my opinion about whether you are being “active” or being “part of the piece” is the one that counts. I don't think that I get to determine right now whether you are subject or audience. 'Cause you're kinda both. And you can...you can be whatever you want! [laughs] That sounded really sarcastic, but I did kinda mean it.

I don't know what you're actually gonna be like, I don't know if you're gonna talk in the space or if you're gonna silently stare and be like “oh, yes, art,” I don't know if you're going to, like, get up in my face or stay far away from me...so...you're free!
[laughs]”

- Annie

The New
Audience







