

# Week 12 – Publicity, Publics, and Curatorial Communicatio

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This week, the most important issue for me was communication. Looking back at our collective exhibition, OurShell, I realized that one of its weaker parts was publicity. We put a great deal of energy into selecting works, installation, and display, but our communication with the public was very limited. The exhibition had only a small impact. Apart from people who already knew about the project or who were already inside Summerhall, we did not attract many other viewers. This made me realize that publicity is an important part of how a project truly becomes public.

This strengthened my thinking about communication in my own curatorial project. I can no longer assume that simply placing works in the city will naturally create meaningful public engagement. Although the project takes place in public space and may appear open by nature, visibility does not automatically mean accessibility. Claire Bishop's discussion of participatory art was especially helpful for me here. She reminds us that the key issue is not only whether people are physically present, but how they are addressed, invited, and drawn into the project. For this reason, I can no longer assume that a public location alone is enough.

In curatorial practice, publicity needs to be deliberately designed. This is especially true for a project that takes place in an outdoor public space, because an exhibition does not automatically become understandable or noticeable simply because it is placed in the city.

First, as an outdoor project, I need to create more than one "entry point" that can trigger attention and understanding.

Rather than relying only on accidental encounter, I want to build a clearer set of communication routes, such as a project map, short introductory texts, and clear on-site prompts. These should allow viewers to quickly recognize what kind of "invisible boundary" each location is exploring. In this way, even if audiences do not enter the project from a single starting point, they can still gain a basic framework for understanding it.

Second, the form of publicity must match the non-linear structure of the project. Since many viewers may only encounter one or two sites rather than the whole exhibition, each communication element must be able to function independently, instead of relying on the complete route to make sense. Different sites, therefore, need different forms of communication and prompting. In highly mobile areas such as Princes Street and Waverley Bridge, viewers are likely to stop only briefly, so concise and direct short texts are more suitable. These can quickly signal what kind of boundary is being discussed. Royal Mile is shaped more strongly by tourist attention, so clearer on-site prompts can help viewers recognize that this street is not only a cultural image, but also a public space constantly reshaped by consumption, performance, and the tourist economy. Holyrood Park has a slower rhythm, and audiences may stay longer, so it can support a more reflective form of interpretation. Slightly longer texts or prompts that emphasize the relationship between landscape and public use would be more appropriate there. Leith Walk and Ocean Terminal are closer to everyday community life, so the communication there needs to connect more directly with residents and regular passers-by, and to highlight differences in the way space is used.

Third, I need to think more carefully about who the project is actually for. Nina Simon argues that the relevance of a cultural project depends on how it connects with the lived experience and real concerns of its intended publics. For me,

this means I can no longer treat “the public” as one vague category. I need to distinguish more clearly between residents, passers-by, commuters, and visitors. Residents are more likely to feel how tourism, commercial use, and spatial control gradually affect their sense of belonging, so the project needs to create stronger forms of recognition and emotional connection for them. Passers-by may only stop for a short moment, so the sites need immediate and clear visual or textual points of entry. Commuters are often under time pressure, which means the project must also allow for fragmented and brief engagement. Visitors, meanwhile, may be more willing to explore, but they often experience Edinburgh through familiar routes and accepted city images, so the project also needs to interrupt and reorganize those ways of seeing. Seen in this way, publicity is not simply about helping more people “see” the exhibition, but about allowing different publics to enter the project in different ways.

## **References**

Bishop, Claire. *Artificial Hells: Participatory Art and the Politics of Spectatorship*. London: Verso, 2012.

Cardoso, Kristen. Review of Book Review: *The Art of Relevance*, Written by Nina Simon. *Weave* (Ann Arbor, Mich.) 1, no. 6 (April 2017). <https://doi.org/10.3998/weave.12535642.0001.605>.