

POLITE CONVERSATIONS:  
Provoking Dialogue through Community Interaction

Robert S. Hartzell

Dr. Josephine Stealey, Thesis Supervisor

ABSTRACT

This creative research investigated my role as artist in the community and the effect of my activities on both individuals and groups. This work took the form of a series of silk-screened and folded books that were mass produced by hand and given away for free. The books were distributed to both acquaintances and strangers. The intent behind the project was to provoke dialogue through community interaction with the book forms and their content.

The book series evolved through experimentation with text, image, and texture to eventually elicit conversation among diverse groups, hoping that through a series of “Polite Conversations” viewers could find a common ground of mutual experience. My goal was to take my work out of the gallery setting and to bring people into the artistic process, through both conceptual and tactile means.

The later work invited the viewer to interact with the work and to participate in the thesis show through postcards attached to the book meant to be cut out, mailed out, and displayed.