

Gorett Amaral Reis, Coreen Gilligan - Taking Our Stories to the Streets - A Mobile Public Art Installation, Silent Performance & Invitation to Dialogue

We created an art installation and performance piece to encourage public dialogue as a consciousness-raising strategy to highlight: 1) pathologizing and labeling of common human experience and suffering, 2) psychiatric drugs and electro-shock as forms of social control, and 3) DSM as a pseudo-scientific tool to perpetuate the social construct of mental illness. The project had three inter-related elements that combined are critical to its effectiveness. The first was the material representations of us and others through silhouettes combined with elements of our psychiatry story as part of our installation. The second was the silent, live performance piece critiquing the DSM and diagnostic labeling. The third was the interactive component our installation and performance will produce by being an entry point for the public and students to engage in dialogue. Our installation, performance and anti-psychiatry materials and artifacts on a table were intended to draw people in a non-confrontational manner to engage in dialogue. We installed 15 - 20 black foam-core silhouettes of life size figures inscribed with, or accompanied by, hand written text of our personal experiences and friends and family's experiences we drew upon. The text was carefully selected to raise critical questions and to provide collective identification. Installations were done twice in April and documented (video / photo) to present at the conference. The project was also installed during the conference in a nearby outdoor space. The figures and text was used in the Mother's day ban electroshock event.