

## **Susan Ann Schellenberg, Rosemary Ann Barnes - Committed to the Sane Asylum: Art as Political Action**

An artist who is a former psychiatric patient and a psychologist discussed how art can be used as a resistance against psychiatry and conventional mental health care. Art can generate and convey a new vision of how to understand and respond to the emotional crises and disturbance, experiences that are currently constructed and discussed publically largely in medical model, psychiatric terms. Unlike the media that can trigger feelings of being small and helpless to make a difference in the world, dream and art carry the potential to emphasize our oneness and ability to create change by changing ourselves. When she entered into her first romantic relationship with a woman in 1969, the psychologist recalled that her life experience was either invisible within the arts or portrayed as psychiatrically disturbed and morally repugnant. She explained how the lesbian-feminist literature, music and visual arts of the 1970s enabled her to name her experiences differently and to contribute to a movement that changed social attitudes, practices and laws. She saw her co-presenter's art as offering similar possibilities. She explained how the lesbian-feminist literature, music and visual arts of the 1970s enabled her to name her experiences differently and thus contributed to a movement that profoundly changed laws, practices and attitudes. The Public Hospitals Act was discussed as an example of a law that entrenches medical model care, blocks the development of new possibilities, and could be a target for change. After a 1969 psychotic break that was treated for eleven years solely with anti-psychotic drugs years, the artist committed to healing and to painting a record of her dreams as her mind and body healed. Through Suzi Gablick's, *The Reenchantment of Art*, she became interested in socially engaged art, and took steps that led to her paintings being exhibited first at a general hospital and later at a major university-affiliated psychiatric hospital where they remain on permanent display. The artist described these projects as radical individual offerings to world-making that Gandhi described as, "Be the change you want to see in the world."