



**University
of Victoria**

Graduate Studies

Notice of the Final Oral Examination
for the Degree of Doctor of Philosophy

of

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MA (York University, 2001)

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**“Putting the Public Back into Public Art Galleries:
The Insurgent Curator and Visual Art as a Critical Form of Creative
Inquiry”**

Department of Curriculum and Instruction

Tuesday, December 1, 2015

12:00 P.M.

MacLaurin Building

Room D105

Supervisory Committee:

Dr. Michael J. Emme, Department of Curriculum and Instruction, University of Victoria (Supervisor)

Dr. Robert Dalton, Department of Curriculum and Instruction, UVic (Member)

Dr. Catherine McGregor, Department of Education Psychology & Leadership Studies, UVic (Outside Member)

External Examiner:

Dr. Harold Pearce, Faculty of Education, University of Alberta

Chair of Oral Examination:

Dr. Aleck Ostry, Department of Geography, UVic

Dr. David Capson, Dean, Faculty of Graduate Studies

Abstract

My research explores the concept of visual art as a form of critical inquiry and the gallery as a site for critical dialogue and social change. I argue that art galleries can be spaces of change and can be used to mount a critique of contemporary society's dominant narrative of neoliberalism that is being incorporated into our public and private lives. Art galleries are public spheres for civil society that offer citizens opportunities to engage in debate on contemporary issues, where we can expose ourselves to new ideas, stimulate our minds, and explore other ways of knowing and becoming agents of change.

My investigation takes the form of researching, developing, and presenting an exhibition of selected photographs as part of the exhibition, *Open Conversations*. This exhibition explored the art practice of Canadian photographers Carole Condé and Karl Beveridge, who have developed an artistic process that involves direct collaboration in the production of art employing a participatory, socially engaged framework.

I claim the role of "insurgent curator" (a person who challenges the current state of affairs) through my attempt to locate my inquiry within my current praxis as curator, that is, within a critical form of creative inquiry. As an insurgent curator, I attempt to insert alternative histories and perspectives in a public art gallery as a means of offering different ways of knowing contemporary society. The concept of critical inquiry and the use of dialogical aesthetics underlie my concept of insurgent curatorial practice. I propose that the use of dialogue has important implications in helping to situate art galleries as public spaces that invite participation, dialogue, and community, and thereby have a profound impact on visitors' meaning making. Through the use of critical creative inquiry, I ask how this research can generate individual transformation and help create progressive forms of social action.