

Mentor's Introduction to Allison Rowe

Tyler Denmead

University of Cambridge,
Cambridge, UK

Visual art and its museums have always played a pedagogic role in social life. What is perhaps different today is the emphasis on pedagogic practices that resemble what most art educationalists would consider to be best educational practice—mutual and emergent discovery, complex and multi-voiced dialogue, the performance-based application of knowledge, and so forth. As a result, socially engaged art has become a productive site of research for art educationalists. Allison Rowe, an exhibited socially engaged artist and art education researcher, contributes to this scholarly conversation by illuminating how socially engaged art intersects with the participatory aims of new museological practice. Through engaging with numerous examples of socially engaged art, Rowe wrestles with the aesthetic and ethical complexities of teaching in and through art at the museum, while highlighting the fraught and ongoing tensions between museum mandates and artists' aims. Her conceptual analysis of socially engaged art as service, dialog, education, entertainment, and performance will be most useful for art education scholars who are contributing to pedagogic innovation in museum education.