

# Dialogue by Design: Experimental Platforms for Intimate Conversations

A conversation and event series at Grand Arts

November 2010-March 2011

## Conversation Matter: An Open Forum

Organized by poet Lori Brack, with an installation response by artist May Tveit. Small group conversations on provocative and timely topics. Tveit's installation extended these conversations in the gallery.

### 1. In what ways does the theme and/or concept of "conversation" inform and shape your work?

I began thinking about the conversation 'space' and the manner in which a work would occupy space and potentially connect and intersect with people, furniture, walls, ceiling, floor- playing with the idea of a work moving inside and outside the gallery space- as a conversation would flow and move and change and morph. I thought about what materials conceptually and poetically represent the weight and weightlessness of thought, the back and forth of dialogue, and how a work might respond cumulatively to each conversation event as the dialogue series unfolded.

The resulting primary work consists of a metal structure holding multiple rolls of industrial scale white plastic ribbon. Metaphorically I see these rolls as 21st century banderoles or speech scrolls. A banderole is an illustrative device used to denote speech, song or in some cases sound in medieval and renaissance paintings and is the art historical precursor to the modern day iconic graphic thought/talk bubble. On the east wall of the gallery I merged three art historical references into/onto small sculptural dialogue bubbles. I gravitated toward the window niche in the gallery as a long rectangular volume and as a place where light is let in, and typically where a building breathes. A window is a communication space between the outside & inside and vice versa, and the blank rolls of ribbon signify conversations yet to be had....waiting to unwind, unfurl, happen.

### 2. As a visual artist, what was your process for collaborating with poet Lori Brack?

The process was very fluid and multi-faceted. I brought in a lot of research and readings about 'conversation' and 'dialogue' and had pages and pages of hi-lighted articles and text, images and notes and sketches connected to my findings and interests. I also loaded up my car with a variety of materials: latex and clear vinyl balloons, nylon rope of various thicknesses, string, colored ribbon, bricks, and a handful of compressed wood sculptural objects shaped like comic-book style thought-bubbles. Right before our afternoon meeting I inflated a white 5' diameter balloon at the gas station a few blocks away and drove it over (very slowly) as I held it outside my car window. I wanted to bring in materials, objects, physical things that metaphorically and conceptually would make the feeling and concept of conversation tangible. Stacy, Lori and I talked, walked through the space and emailed a few sketches and notes back and forth. Our meeting and discussion created both a common ground of understanding... and creative fuel to make out individual works.

### 3. In what ways has the Installation changed since the Conversation Matter event? Clearly, the conversations were activated and informed by the installation, did it work the other way around, too? Will the installation respond to the conversation? If so, in what ways?

At the end of the first and second conversation events, the participants were invited to leave a thought, a question, or a provocation in the space. They did this by writing on prepared, smaller scaled pieces of the plastic ribbon, and then unfurled and tossed them onto the walls of the gallery. These banderole/speech scrolls attached to the walls by static electricity, and over time, eventually fell to the perimeter of the floor. The ribbons were collected and the text transcribed to become part of the overall project archive, which is an ongoing event. The piece continues to evolve into smaller units- a pile of accumulating ribbon on the floor; mass units draped over metal saw horses; adding and subtracting rolls from the suspension apparatus; playing the nature of the thought-content; and I continue to imagine how the work might extend physically into the public realm. The work itself has been a catalyst for ongoing conversations with Stacy about what it is, and what it can become... and it is this spirit of experimentation, openness and risk that Stacy has infused in this series at Grand Arts that I love.