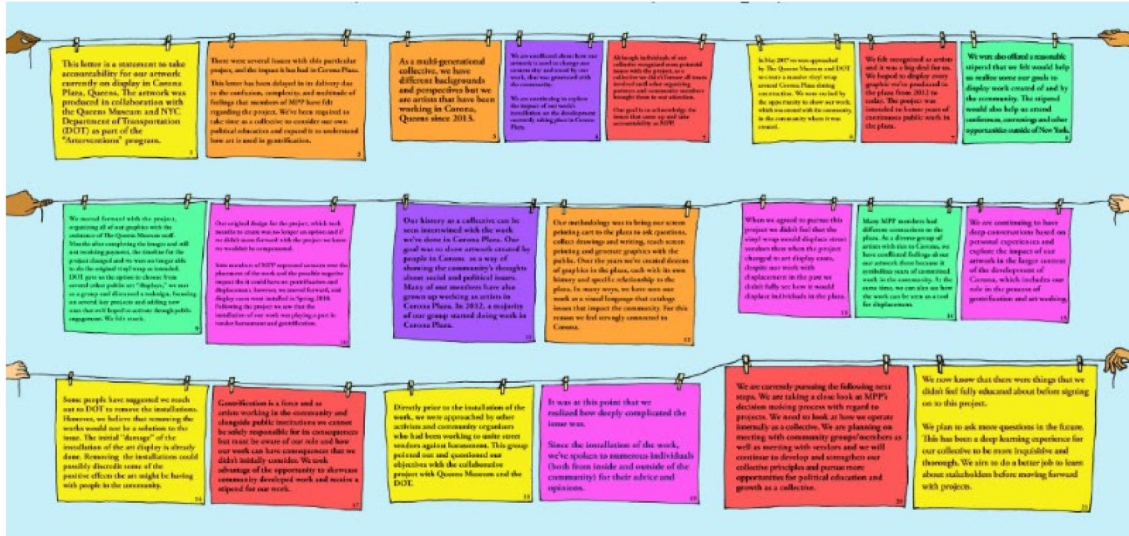


LETTER FROM MOBILE PRINT POWER

Statement of accountability for our artwork currently on display in Corona Plaza, Queens



This letter is a statement to take accountability for our artwork currently on display in Corona Plaza, Queens.

The artwork was produced in collaboration with the Queens Museum and NYC Department of Transportation (DOT) as part of the “Arterventions” program. There were several issues with this particular project, and the impact it has had in Corona Plaza. This letter has been delayed in its delivery due to the confusion, complexity, and multitude of feelings that members of MPP have felt regarding the project. We’ve been required to take time as a collective to consider our own political education and expand it to understand how art is used in gentrification.

As a multi-generational collective, we have different backgrounds and perspectives but we are artists that have been working in Corona, Queens since 2013. We are conflicted about how our artwork is used to change our community and stand by our work, that was generated with the community. We are continuing to explore the impact of our work’s installation on the development currently taking place in Corona

Plaza. Although individuals of our collective recognized some potential issues with a project, as a collective we didn’t foresee all issues involved until other organizing partners and community members brought them to our attention. Our goal is to acknowledge the issues that came up and take accountability as MPP.

In May 2017 we were approached by The Queens Museum and DOT to create a massive vinyl wrap around Corona Plaza during construction. We were excited by the opportunity to show our work, which was created with the community, in the community where it was created. We felt recognized as artists and it was a big deal for us. We hoped to display every graphic we've produced in the plaza from 2012 to today. The project was intended to honor years of continuous public work in the plaza. We were also offered a reasonable stipend that we felt would help us realize some our goals to display work created of and by the community. The stipend would also help us attend conferences, convenings and other opportunities outside of New York.

We moved forward with the project, organizing all of our graphics with the assistance of The Queens Museum staff. Months after completing the images and still not receiving payment, the timeline for the project changed and we were no longer able to do the original vinyl wrap as intended. DOT gave us the option to choose from several other public art "displays." We met as a group and discussed a redesign, focusing on several key projects and adding new ones that we'd hoped to activate through public engagement. We felt stuck. Our original design for the project, which took months to create was no longer an option and if we didn't move forward with the project we knew we wouldn't be compensated. Some members of MPP expressed concern over the placement of the work and the possible negative impact the it could have on gentrification and displacement, however, we moved forward, and the display cases were installed in Spring 2018. Following the project we saw that the installation of our work was playing a part in vendor harassment and gentrification.

Our history as a collective can be seen intertwined with the work we've done in Corona Plaza. Our goal was to show artwork created by people in Corona as a way of showing the community's involvement and engagement in art. Many of our members have also grown up working as artists in Corona Plaza. In 2012, a majority of our group started doing work in Corona Plaza. Our methodology was to bring our screen printing cart to the plaza to ask questions, collect drawings and writing, teach screen printing and generate graphics with the public. Over the years we've created dozens of graphics in the plaza, each with its own history and specific relationship to the plaza. In many ways, we have seen our work as a visual language that catalogs issues that impact the community. For this reason we feel strongly connected to Corona.

When we agreed to pursue this project we didn't feel that the vinyl wrap would displace street vendors then when the project changed to art display cases, despite our work with displacement in the past we didn't fully see how it would displace

individuals in the plaza. Many MPP members had different connections to the plaza. As a diverse group of artists with ties to Corona, we have conflicted feelings about our artwork there because it symbolizes years of committed work in the community. At the same time, we can also see how the work can be seen as a tool for displacement. We are continuing to have deep conversations based on personal experiences and explore the impact of our artwork in the larger context of the development of Corona, which includes our role in the process of gentrification and art washing.

Some people have suggested we reach out to DOT to remove the installations. However, we believe that removing the works would not be a solution to the issue. The initial “damage” of the installation of the art display is already done. Removing the installations could possibly discredit some of the positive effects the art might be having with people in the community. Gentrification is a force and as artists working in the community and alongside public institutions we cannot be solely responsible for its consequences but must be aware of our role and how our work can have consequences that we didn’t initially consider. We took advantage of the opportunity to showcase community developed work and receive a stipend for our work.

Directly prior to the installation of the work, we were approached by other activists and community organizers who had been working to unite street vendors against harassment. This group pointed out and questioned our objectives with the collaborative project with Queens Museum and the DOT. It was at this point that we realized how deeply complicated the issue was. Since the installation of the work, we’ve spoken to numerous individuals (both from inside and outside of the community) for their advice and opinions.

We are currently pursuing the following next steps. We are taking a close look at MPP’s decision making process with regard to projects. We need to look at how we operate internally as a collective. We are planning on meeting with community groups/members as well as meeting with vendors and we will continue to develop and strengthen our collective principles and pursue more opportunities for political education and growth as a collective. We now know that there were things that we didn’t feel fully educated about before signing on to this project. We plan to ask more questions in the future. This has been a deep learning experience for our collective to be more inquisitive and thorough. We aim to do a better job to learn about stakeholders before moving forward with projects.

In Love and Solidarity,

MOBILE PRINT POWER



Above is a sample of what the updated design was meant to look like when installed in the plaza.

