

Evaluation Report

Shaun Leonardo: *Primitive Games*



Prepared for the
Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum, New York
Guggenheim Social Practice, 2018

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Project Description

In *Primitive Games*, Shaun Leonardo asks, “What might happen when four seemingly divided groups are invited to debate one another without using words?” Loosely based on the Renaissance-era Italian sport calcio storico, this live performance culminates a series of movement-based workshops led by Leonardo and involving four communities, each with a unique relationship to a single social issue. For an hour, the museum’s rotunda is transformed into an arena for a sport-like competition generated by and bringing together workshop participants.

The Guggenheim Museum hosted the premiere performance of *Primitive Games*, a new work by artist Shaun Leonardo, on June 21, 2018. Commissioned as part of the Guggenheim Social Practice initiative, *Primitive Games* is followed on June 22 by a symposium investigating how artists and organizations can come together to forge unexpected and revelatory experiences for the public.

“By witnessing the dynamics of these groups against the backdrop of an increasingly divisive national political climate, performers and audience members alike are given an opportunity to reconsider their own place within the debates pervading society today.”

May 23, 2018 Guggenheim press release, “Shaun Leonardo’s *Primitive Games* Premieres in the Guggenheim Museum’s Rotunda on June 21, 2018”

These links contain interviews by the Guggenheim with Shaun Leonardo:

<https://tinyurl.com/y8e7lgw9>

<https://tinyurl.com/yalpojpf>

<https://tinyurl.com/y83qn6pg>

In this one-minute video, Leonardo explains the project:

<https://tinyurl.com/y7zoahdz>

This 14-minute video captures the essence of the performance event:

<https://tinyurl.com/ybqskc9y>

For more on the artist: <http://elcleonardo.com/>

For more about Guggenheim Social Practice:

<https://tinyurl.com/ybcmzj6eg>

Executive Summary



Executive Summary

The degrees to which each entity (the artist; the participants; the audience; the Museum staff; the institution; the field of museums in general) felt the impact of *Primitive Games* varied proportionally to their involvement in the project. Those most directly involved—the artist, participants, Museum staff—expressed the most profound changes in their self-perception and their perception of others. This depth of involvement suggests that this Social Practice Art initiative works best with emphasis on the process (workshops and activities to engage on a personal level) over the product (culminating performance).

The artist came to the realization that “the workshop is where the real work happened.” Leonardo expressed surprise regarding the impact of the workshops on him personally, noting:

“There were moments after a workshop—emotionally intense moments ... in which I had to be completely poised as a vessel for all of these narratives and immediately following the workshop I had to think and collect myself on a random corner before I went home.”

The artist sees *Primitive Games* as a model that could be replicated, but with more emphasis on the process of working within the groups than the actual “debate” performance for an audience.

Data from participants from each of the four group affiliations in *Primitive Games* showed a shift in their views after the workshops and performance (see Fig. 1). Data suggests that the experience of *Primitive Games* for participants most influenced their views on their own and others’ communication through body language; how the sides in the debate about gun violence are more connected than opposed; and that the country is less polarized than they originally thought.

Comments from participants included:

“What changed is that I have an open mind—why [others with different opinions on gun violence] feel, how they feel, what their stance may be.”

Audience members keenly focused on the visual effects of the performance. Data showed that audiences commented more often on the “Guggenheim as an arena” and “the timing of the music” than on the larger questions of communication without words and debate on contentious subjects. Some audience members expressed confusion over what was happening during the performance and what it meant, suggesting that those more intimately involved in the process (participants, the artist, Museum staff) were more deeply impacted by the messaging and nuances behind the artists’ premise.

67% of the staff commented on how *Primitive Games* specifically and the Social Practice Art initiative in general have had effects on working relationships within the museum. Staff suggested that the unique division of responsibilities and shifting/expanding roles that are part of Social Practice Art led to positive changes in how staff worked with and alongside each other. 78% of staff interviewed noted that the museum’s role as a community organization expanded in taking on Social Practice Art initiatives:

“I think it’s a clear indication that museums are accepting responsibility that they are not just guarding masterworks.”

This data suggests that Social Practice Art has the potential in the wider museum field to expand audiences, broaden the museum’s role in the community, and change relationships between departments, transforming the culture of a museum’s internal working relationships and external relationship with its visiting public.

Evaluation Purpose

Guggenheim Museum wanted to assess any shifts or progression of participants’ ideas on debate and/or the issue of gun violence; and the impact of the project on institutional practice and the field of Social Practice Art in general.

Shaun Leonardo (the artist) wanted to evaluate shifts in how people might physically interact and engage another person; if any of the methods learned carry over

to everyday life; and how people might now engage with someone with differing opinions.

Data Sources

Participants and the artist submitted post-workshop reflections; participated in interviews; and filled out a post-performance Likert Scale-style evaluation. Audience members completed post-performance comment cards and an online survey. Museum staff were interviewed post-performance.

Background & Methodology



Background & Methodology

Participant selection and workshops were already underway when the Guggenheim met with Museum Partners Consulting, LLC (MPC) to explore methodology for the evaluation of *Primitive Games*. MPC also met with the artist, Shaun Leonardo (“the artist” or “Leonardo”), to determine evaluation questions and discuss his evaluation goals, potential collection dates, and data collection strategies.

Guggenheim staff articulated their evaluation goals as:

- Assess the commissioned project proper beginning with the recruitment, workshops through the performance, and follow up panel debrief;
- Measure the shift or progression (if any) of participants’ perspectives on the issue of debate and/or gun violence;
- Assess the impact/significance, if any, of the project on institutional practice, the field of social practice art in general.

Leonardo’s evaluation questions included:

- Have you noticed any shifts in the ways you might physically interact and engage another person;
- Are there ways in which these physical tools can be utilized in your everyday interactions?
- After this process, what are the learned ways in which you might engage with someone with differing opinions?

In previous social practice projects undertaken by the Guggenheim, the evaluator determined that “The value of social practice art is real, but it does not easily lend itself to measurement.”¹ The developmental nature of this project, “shaped by an artistic vision and by how that vision manifested itself through interactions among individuals, situations, and organizations” meant that specific outcomes, audiences and activities are not always fully defined.² Therefore MPC determined that reflective and transparent assessments would be the best way to measure the goals/questions expressed by Guggenheim staff and the artist.

Methodology for Participants’ Evaluation

MPC attended the second of two workshops for each group observing behavior of participants and the artist.³ MPC did not speak to participants during the workshop and sat to the side of

There were three main groups of people to engage in *Primitive Games* evaluation: participants, audience, and project staff.

the space so as not to be intrusive. While no two workshops were exactly alike due to the diverse dynamics of the participants and the backgrounds of the groups, generally the artist followed the same procedure for each group, so they received the same “training” in preparation for the public performance on June 21. Notes taken during the observations were used to better understand group dynamics and to compare the process and progress of the workshops across groups.

Each group of participants, following the completion of their second workshop, were requested to complete a reflection about their time spent to date in the workshops. This reflection, which could be audio-recorded, video-recorded, or written was sent to Guggenheim project manager Anna Harsanyi was then shared with MPC in a secure Dropbox folder; other participants and the artist did not see or hear the responses. Both the project manager and the artist sent email and text reminders to participants to complete the evaluation prompt. The artist also audio-recorded his own reflections during the workshop process, uploading them to a Google Drive folder and sharing that folder with MPC. These responses were transcribed and coded for analysis.

Immediately after the performance, MPC captured participant responses with a retrospective-pre/post evaluation.⁴ This method was chosen to measure the shift in participants’ attitudes—and consequently, the impact of the project on participants. Participants received paper versions of the evaluation (see Appendix) with self-addressed, stamped envelopes for return to MPC offices following the performance. About a week later, participants also received a reminder email from the artist with a link to an online version of the retrospective-pre/post evaluation. MPC transcribed (as needed) and coded these responses for analysis.

Four participants—one from each of the four affinity groups (Leonardo refers to them as “Team Captains”)—participated

1 Munley, Mary Ellen, in Guggenheim Social Practice, 148.

2 Ibid., 145-146.

3 With one exception: MPC was unable to attend one group’s second workshop and observed it on video.

4 For more on this methodology, see <https://aea365.org/blog/starting-at-the-end-measuring-learning-using-retrospective-pre-post-evaluations-by-debi-lang-and-judy-savageau/>

Background & Methodology

the following day (June 22, 2018) in a public symposium, *Imagining the Social in Artistic and Museum Practices*. MPC attended and recorded the responses of these participants to questions asked by the artist. These public reflections, while only representing four of the individuals in the participant group, were also used in the analysis of data for this evaluation report. MPC transcribed participants' answers and coded them for analysis.

In addition to these short-term summative measures, MPC joined a dinner (proposed by a participant) attended by some of the participants, Leonardo, and some project staff two months post-performance (August 2018). While partially a social gathering, the shared meal also served as a chance to a) show the 14-minute video created from the project⁵ and b) allow participants to voluntarily share their thoughts to questions posed by Leonardo. MPC also distributed an Authentic Reflection Prompt (see Appendix) for completion to assess longer-term impact of the experience. Responses were coded and analyzed.

MPC plans to complete another long-term evaluation of participants in October 2018 (four months post-performance); the data from that evaluation is added as a supplement to this report.

Methodology for Audience Evaluation

MPC gathered data on the audience by observing the audience during the performance as well as distributing an audience response card (see Appendix) post-performance. As the performance ended, Visitor Services Staff stood at the museum exit and at the entrance to the Café (where a reception was being held) to hand out and collect response cards and pencils. Staff took advantage of the long line to enter the reception and handed out/collected response cards for audience members to complete as they waited. Responses were tabulated and coded.

Additionally, several questions were added to the Guggenheim's online survey (see Appendix) which is automatically sent out to ticket holders via email after events and programs. All responses from online surveys are anonymous. MPC received summative reports from the Guggenheim of the CVent questionnaires which were analyzed and coded as needed.

Methodology for Staff Evaluation

MPC individually interviewed nine staff members chosen by the Education Department about their role in the project and its effect on their work and views between June and August 2018. Out of the nine, five were intimately involved in the project (having direct responsibility or oversight for an aspect of the project) and four were tangentially involved, having limited contact at a particular point in time with the project. Questions (see Appendix) were vetted by Education Department staff prior to the phone interviews taking place. Responses to interview questions were transcribed and coded.

Methodology for Artist Evaluation

Leonardo initially envisioned he would be "directing" the performance of *Primitive Games*. He entered the project with his own goals and thoughts about what he wanted to evaluate. When it became apparent to him that his intimate work with participants during workshops meant he had to also be a participant in the performance, MPC included elements of both the participant and the staff evaluation methodology in his evaluation. The artist completed three audio reflections, shared with MPC. MPC interviewed Leonardo (for questions, see Appendix) by phone in August. Responses were transcribed and coded. Comments made by Leonardo during the August gathering of participants and during the symposium were also transcribed as part of the evaluation.

5 <https://www.guggenheim.org/video/performance-of-shaun-leonardos-primitive-games>

Findings/Artist



Findings/Artist

In his initial proposal for the project, Shaun Leonardo articulated that the goal of debate is to reach consensus—not to debilitate the other side into compliance—to enact change.⁶ Leonardo argued his belief that “...to dislodge people from their entrenched positions it may be necessary to remove words.”⁷ The artist did not stray from this vision in developing his artwork; some details of the project (i.e. number of participants; the divisive issue; the exact questions used to divide into two teams; the identities of the four groups; the use of a ball and the scoring of goals) became more nuanced and refined or completely eliminated as the project developed. For the most part, the artist’s overall vision of the project carried through to the performance. Leonardo’s reflections suggest this evolution in himself personally and in the details of his work.

The artist articulated a goal of the project in an early post-workshop reflection:

“What I want to get us to is a place where we can read each other so we understand that the ways that we interpret body language has everything to do with how we understand ourselves.”

Shaun Leonardo, post-workshop reflection, June 2018

Leonardo did not express the concept of “understanding ourselves” in the initial proposal. In fact, the initial proposal makes no mention of workshops for *Primitive Games*, instead focusing on the product (the debate, or performance) over the process. Data suggests that Leonardo realized the importance of the workshops and the preparation for *Primitive Games* as central to the project in reflections during and after the performance; he even suggested adding one more workshop with each group as part of the process.

“The workshop is where the real work happened.”

Shaun Leonardo, interview with MPC, August 2018

Leonardo noted differences amongst groups in the degree of difficulty some activities held for participants (see p.9). Differences amongst groups required him to shift how he presented material and responded to it during workshops, which he aptly described as “maneuvering between communities as an artist” and “code switching.” In participating so fully and intimately he became immersed in the project to the point that he articulated both in the workshops and in

reflections that his role changed from “director” to “participant” in the performance.

In reflecting on his participation, Leonardo admitted that he became caught up in the moment. “I also lost track of who was who [during the performance].” In a post-workshop reflection, he seemed surprised at the intensity the workshops and its effect on him personally:

“There were moments after a workshop—emotionally intense moments ... in which I had to be completely poised as a vessel for all of these narratives and immediately following the workshop I had to think and collect myself on a random corner before I went home.”

Shaun Leonardo, August 2018

Leonardo also shared in an August 2018 gathering of participants and staff that he “didn’t show emotion during workshops... after working with the videographer on editing the footage, I broke down.” His reflections on the process and the product all suggest the power of the workshops on participants and the artist alike. Future versions of *Primitive Games* could therefore be more focused on the workshop aspect over the performance aspect (i.e. process over product).

When asked what he viewed as shortcomings of the project, the artist explained:

“I fell short pushing a moment of reckoning in which there might be an intensity around their [the groups’/individual’s] opposing world views. In the performance itself what I had been expecting is that they would really see into each other’s’ opposing advances, to promote physical intensity in piece, [but it was] not there.”

Shaun Leonardo, August 2018

6 Shaun Leonardo, proposal for *Primitive Games* submitted to the Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum on September 5, 2017 and shared with MPC

7 Ibid.

Findings/Artist

Before participating, I... felt that group affiliations would meet each other with opposition when performance came.

...because... of similarities of narratives during workshop process there might be a commonality that I didn't perceive.

Now I... feel confident and positive that there are models that might disrupt our current form of debate and there are commonalities yet to be found.

Leonardo affirmed that he believes the process leading to *Primitive Games* could bring communities together.

“If I can teach this as a model what will be needed is for all of us to slow down and look into each other’s stories more closely. That forces the pace and rhythm of our ‘headline culture’ where one sentence leads to exclusion and separation. That is the most necessary component of this model—to slow down.”

Shaun Leonardo, August 2018

His Authentic Reflection Prompt reiterates his confidence that there is a path forward with the project.

The artist has the beginnings of a working model for teaching a method—and perhaps, the overall point—of debate using non-verbal communication. As such he is probably the best person to do the current work. For the artist’s vision of the project to have a wider social impact however this model has to be scalable and replicable.⁸

8 Elizabeth Grady articulates the spectrum of Social Practice art ranging from “a stationary installation or a sculpture that is participatory or responsive...to a full-blown social engagement where almost nothing material remains once the project is completed (Guggenheim Social

Practice, 2018, 134-135).” Leonardo’s work falls in the latter end of the spectrum. For the museum, the project’s impact is felt as an artwork with social practice, where being scalable and replicable does not apply.

Findings/Participants



Findings/Participants

Groups exhibited some clear similarities during the workshops. As observed at the second workshop, group members seemed comfortable with each other (within the group). Their eyes were riveted on the artist as he led them through activities. These behaviors could be attributed to the artist picking group members and already having established rapport with participants, creating a sense of ease amongst the group. Participants affirmed this relationship during the August gathering, noting

“You allowed us a comfort level in the workshops to talk about things we’d never spoken about, ever.”

“As soon as you [Leonardo] asked me to do the workshop, I said yes, because it was you.”

For participants, working with someone they knew⁹ on this Social Practice project reflects lessons learned by project staff; in previous projects, artists came from out of state and had limited local connections. The level of trust gained by the artist early in the process may have allowed participants to gain deeper insights exploring a difficult topic.

Half of the groups (50%) were slightly more reticent to speak and share stories during the second workshop. Two groups hesitated to speak and when they spoke, often had to be prompted by the artist to include details. Leonardo noticed this reluctance during one of his reflections and analyzed why it may have happened: “[One of the groups]—have not been asked to be in a space where they see ‘others’... [this could explain their] incapability of accessing [others] because they have not had to do this... [they] exist in their zone.” Both groups expressed issues with the public perception of their affiliation, which could also have led to their hesitancy to speak.

Two of the groups expressed some fear about the performance during the second workshop. Members of these groups asked the artist during the explanation of the performance, “What if someone takes it the wrong way?” While it may not be surprising that these group members had these fears, what is interesting is that they expressed them; if the other groups had those fears, they did not bring them up during the workshops. This suggests that these two felt more comfortable talking about and discussing issues, perhaps again related to the public perception of their group identity. Leonardo noted in his reflections that “Veterans and Street Violence [groups] have

done the work of introspection. Vets dialing into PTSD... some of Street Violence group have been incarcerated... forces you upon yourself, [to be] introspective.”

One of the groups in particular had a strong need to debrief after the workshop activities. These participants were most willing to talk about how they felt, and their eagerness to speak and share after an intense exercise emphasized the importance of the “debriefing” led by the artist. This suggests that for future iterations of *Primitive Games*, the debrief is an important part of the process and should be structured enough to allow introspection for those not used to doing it, and loose enough for those who are comfortable reflecting to share and express their insights.

The response rate on audio/written responses to the reflection prompt after each group’s second workshop was 26% (n=7). When asked to reflect on “How could you apply something from this workshop to your everyday life?” responses showed evidence of the workshops affecting their interactions with people and their self-awareness.

“...I am more mindful of my physical space... I’m not the first to talk anymore... [I have] respect for how others approach debate.”

“...I’m more present, less passive... I observe more.”

“...[the workshops] changed my interaction with people...[I learned] not to judge others.”

These comments suggest that in the short-term, the workshops opened an internal dialogue for participants about perceptions of themselves and others.

The four team captains who participated in the symposium *Imagining the Social in Artistic and Museum Practices* (held at

43% of participants in audio reflections indicated that after two workshops they were more aware of how they presented themselves and their bodies.

⁹ The artist shared complex relationships with participants, knowing many of them through his work with young offenders, or as relatives by marriage.

Findings/Participants

the Guggenheim June 22, 2018) reiterated some of what the reflection prompts expressed. At the Symposium, when asked by the artist “How did the workshop influence your experience of the performance?” replies included more about not jumping to conclusions and zeroing in on body language, for example: “Not to judge people for whatever they bring in front of me. Take time to understand their struggle” and “Words are just words. Movement and body tell a whole lot more.”

In reflecting on the performance, team captains expressed surprise at the physical and emotional toll of the event:

“Eye contact was so strong because that was the initial response, when everyone focused. Like a tablecloth pulled out from under you, you had to pause and reflect.”

“None of us knew the subject and how emotionally intense it was. How I felt that in my body, I always remembered the filters [Leonardo] gave us. [I] carried that through the evening. Surprised at how I felt physically.”

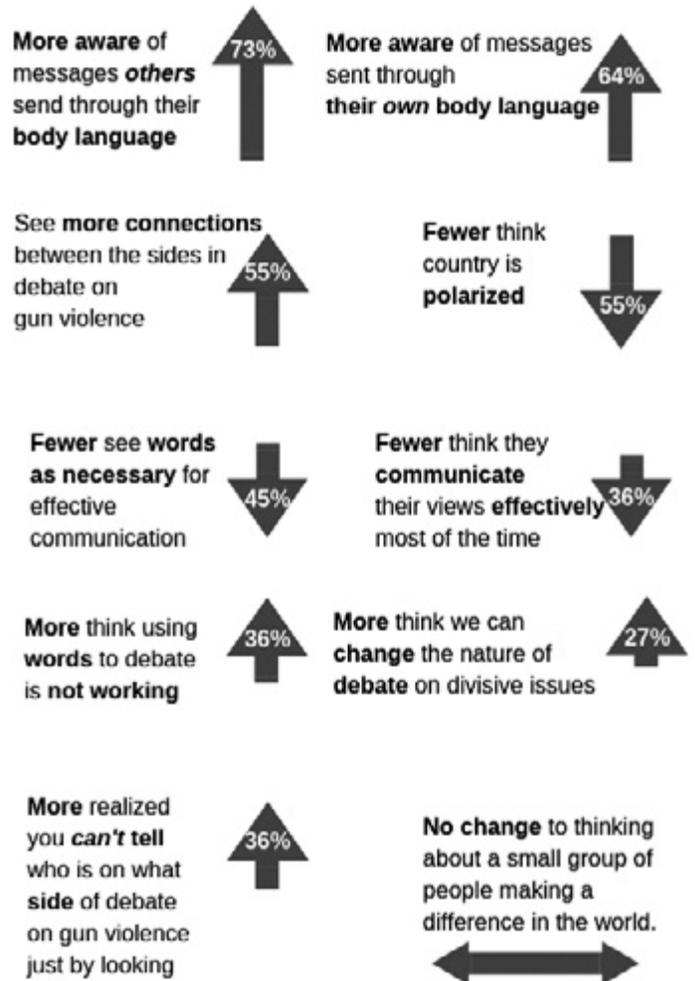
Evidence of a shift in participants’ perspectives (on issues/ ideas) and suggestions of changes in behavior manifested in responses to the retrospective-pre evaluation. This evaluation method, measuring conative learning, was administered after the performance and had a higher response rate (44%, n=11) than other methods used for participants.

This data suggests that the experience of *Primitive Games* for these participants most influenced their views on:

- Their own and others’ communication through body language;
- How the sides (in the debate on gun violence) are more connected than opposed.
- The polarization of the country (fewer think it is polarized).

Leonardo wondered if participants would be able to tell who was in which group during the performance, despite everyone being dressed nearly identically. The data suggests that more people realized they were unable to tell which person was on which side after participating in *Primitive Games*.¹⁰

How participants' views/opinions changed after participating in *Primitive Games*



Conative Learning

Conative learning explores where people are at a given moment, and where they move to in their learning. Conation joins affect and cognition as one of the three components of the mind. Conation connects factual intelligence (cognition) with emotions (affect), critical to motivation and action. Conation is the intentional and personal motivation of behavior.

¹⁰ During the August gathering, several participants stated that they identified who was in the Law Enforcement group by their body language during the performance.

Findings/Participants

Two months post-performance, participants echoed how *Primitive Games* changed them personally in both the Authentic Reflection Prompts...

Before participating, I... was not aware of the importance of body language

...because... I simply was not in touch with my inner self... or at least not enough

Now I... I'm aware of how much we judge, and how pointless that is, and I feel we should just respect and understand one another and love and appreciate our differences.

Before participating, I... was missing out on a vital part of my essential story

...because... I gravitated towards contemporary modalities of self-discovery and storytelling

Now I... am more whole, for myself and those with whom I interact. Whole people beget whole people.

...and in their comments during the debriefing led by the artist at the August gathering:

“I know I judged people. Doing this project made me realize how much.”

“The workshops left me with an impact that was going away with me for days.”

Two of the nine participants who returned Authentic Reflection Prompts (22%) noted specific actions they are/would be taking after having participated in the project:

Before participating, I... assumed what people said was their truth

...because... that's what I do (or thought I do)

Now I... look to see if what I see jives with what I hear.

Before participating, I... was slightly desensitized toward the feeling and experience of certain individuals

...because... some of the situations started blending in and I felt it all before

step back and observe more, and remind myself to treat each person as if I'm hearing the problem for the first time.

Three of the nine Authentic Reflection Prompts (33%) expressed concrete feelings that the experience provided them:

“I am more hopeful about confronting those with opposing views.”

“I am relieved that we as individuals can connect on a personal level and work on the same life outcomes.”

Findings/Participants



(L-R) “Team Captains,” Artist Shaun Leonardo, and Project Manager Anna Harsanyi at the Symposium, June 22, 2018

Data suggests that the process leading up to and including the performance of *Primitive Games* broadened the perspective of participants with regard to gun violence. Leonardo asserted during the symposium “It has never been my objective to ask anyone to abandon their beliefs.” Leonardo asked the “Team Captains”¹¹ from *Primitive Games* at the symposium if they felt a shift in their relationship to gun violence. Participants responded:

“I have a wider view of the subject. It’s not black or white, there are lots of grays, not even just one shade of gray. It put before us the full spectrum.”

“Didn’t change my perception of gun violence; it was hard not to get into your group. Helped me out of my head and to focus on who the person is; trying to tone down myself and how I retreat on my positions—especially on social media.”

“What changed is that I have an open mind—why [others with different opinion on gun violence] feel, how they feel, what their stance may be.”

This indicates that while none of the “Team Captains” changed their group affiliations or beliefs, the process in some way changed their behavior regarding their interactions with others. It will be interesting to further explore at the four- to five-month point with participants if the impacts and conative learning continued.

Limitations: Because the data is so qualitative in nature, there could be evaluator bias in categorizing responses. Low response rates and low confidence level limit the validity of findings based on the data.

¹¹ Leonardo referred to them with this terminology, as there was one representative from each group – but did not identify to which group they belonged to the audience at the symposium.

Findings/Audience



Findings/Audience

MPC observed the audience (n=375) as they entered the space. The ramps quickly filled up with audience members of a spectrum of ages and backgrounds. Some had elected to get their face painted with a red or blue stripe by Guggenheim Visitor Services Staff at the entrance. On the ramps, guests could be seen waving and talking on cell phones and taking pictures of the empty arena. When the whistle sounded to start the program, the audience fell silent and became enraptured, standing either with their hands on their chin and elbows on the ledge of the ramps, or with arms crossed, eyes focused on the action. Very little audience noise and very few photographs ensued throughout the performance. The air held an intensity, both among the crowd and the participants, with very little talking and pointing among the audience members for most of the hour-long performance. The audience's focus on the action suggests that they intently viewed *Primitive Games* and had a deep interest in what was unfolding in the arena below them.

As the performance ended, Visitor Experience Staff stood at the museum exit and at the entrance to the Café (where a reception was being held) to hand out and collect Response Cards and pencils. Staff took advantage of the long line to enter the Café and handed out/collected response cards to audience members as they waited. This action resulted in 110 completed response cards (n=110, 29% response rate with 95% confidence rating, +/- 8%).

These responses suggest that the artist's desire to "blur the distinctions" for the audience between the four participants' groups succeeded.

Open-ended responses from the audience response cards blurred the questions of "what was memorable" and "what thoughts came to mind while watching the performance." Sample responses types are listed in the chart to left, in order of frequency.

This data suggests that the most memorable parts of the performance and what came to mind for audience members was more concrete and less abstract. The fact that the visual appearance of the performance elicited more comments than bigger questions and comments indicating they understood the meaning behind the performance implies that the audience was more focused on the visual effects of the performance and less on the meaning behind it. While some of the premise and meaning was explained by the artist as part of the introduction, it appears to have gotten lost to a portion of the audience.

The online survey sent out to people (n=267) who bought tickets in advance for *Primitive Games* included a few additional questions (see Appendix) related to the performance. The response rate for the survey was 13% (n=36); at a confidence

level of 80%, +/-10%. While this is not a representative sample of the audience, the return rate is in keeping with norms for online post-event surveys.

Responses to the survey questions revealed more clearly that some of the audience "understood" larger messages in the work. They commented "that some things could be expressed without words" and how "this type of debate should happen more often and with different demographics."

"How do you handle extremely subjective and explosive subjects without an all out confrontation? How can you make sure that what you say is heard as you intended?"

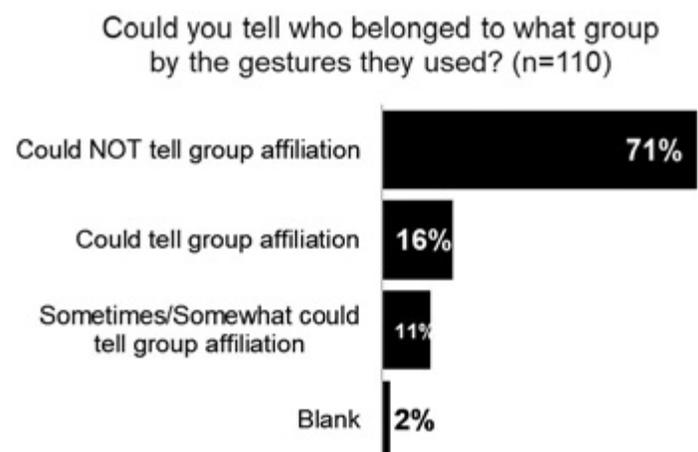
"I thought a lot about power and communication, about the stories our bodies tell when our mouths aren't moving, about what we fail to see when focus too long one thing, about how we can miss beauty when we pay all our attention to conflict."

"How can this idea of conversation without words be applied to every-day life"

Some audience members expressed optimism, "...that despite our different views, with perseverance we can find a middle ground..."

...while some audience members expressed confusion about what was happening, what the point was, or what the audience members should take away from the process.

"It seems that there could have been more clarification with the various elements. Why was the face paint for the viewers relevant? How does it tie into the issues concerned?"



Findings/Audience

“...it would have been helpful to get more information on the process, which I felt the performance couldn’t (or didn’t aim to?) illuminate too much.”

Audience members indicated they could tell there was a “loose narrative” but the “dispersed movement” was too hard to follow, and that much of the clarifying information was provided the following day during the symposium.

Audience survey respondents were almost evenly split when asked if the performance caused them to reconsider their thoughts about the current state of political debate.

In explaining why the performance didn’t cause them to reconsider their thoughts about non-verbal communication, a common theme was lack of understanding what was going on:

“I didn’t understand how the movements of the participants were meant to represent debate.”

“I knew that the performers were trying to communicate something but couldn’t track what.”

“I thought it was an interesting exercise to begin with a spoken narration and then just utilize movement. But that set us up to believe that the piece was about something specific or was positing a specific viewpoint. And it was not possible to track what that was.”

While the online survey data is not the strongest sample of the audience’s experience, coupled with the response card data it does suggest that the impact on the audience was felt but less strongly than on the participants. The biggest impact seems to have been rethinking non-verbal communication.

Overall, audience data suggests that their response to the event was mixed; at times confusing, at times thought-provoking, and in some ways, entertaining. The depth of the impact on the audience is less than the depth on the participants, perhaps due to some confusion on the audience’s part of some of the meaning, gestures, and background of the project.

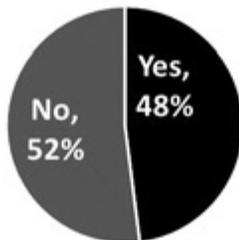
Some audience members may have gotten their requested context and explanations in both the New York Times article published a day after the performance¹² and the Guggenheim’s symposium, *Imagining the Social in Artistic and Museum*



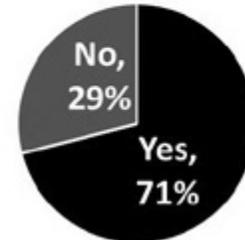
¹² <https://www.nytimes.com/2018/06/22/arts/design/shaun-leonardo-guggenheim-gun-control.html>

Findings/Audience

Did the performance cause you to reconsider thoughts about the current state of political debate? (n=21)



Did the performance cause you to reconsider thoughts about non-verbal communication? (n=11)



Practices.¹³ The Times article author observed the workshops and performance and interviewed the artist (and several participants), providing some of the background to the performance. While the symposium explored several different Social Practice Art projects and a broader definition of the art form, audience members got to hear from four participants as well as the artist, in a “debriefing” on the experience. This opportunity provided insights into what the performers felt and their experience in the process.

A CVent survey with additional questions regarding *Primitive Games* (see Appendix) was sent to those attending the symposium (n=105) which yielded a 14% response rate (80% confidence level, +/- 19%). While this is not a strong sample, 80% of respondents indicated that attending the symposium influenced their response to/thoughts about/understanding of the performance, noting that in some way it helped clarify the performance and the artists’ intentions better:

“The symposium shed so much more light on the purpose of the performance and more importantly, the artist’s process of arriving at those moments during live performance. Without the symposium, I most likely would not have come away from the experience with such a feeling of profound connection to the artist’s intention and vision.”

“It helped me to understand the performance better and gave me background on the process. Nevertheless, I believe the performance could stand on its own.”

“The [Panel] clarified information left unsaid”

This data underscores the need for more explanation for the audience in order for the performance to have a bigger impact.

Limitations: Because the data is so qualitative in nature, there could be evaluator bias in categorizing responses. Low response rates and low confidence level limit the validity of findings based on the data.

¹³ <https://youtu.be/QueZUc-hBoyY>

Findings/Staff



Findings/Staff

While staff noted that they are used to a collaborative work environment, differences for this project included “...it was a curator and educator managing the project together,” and “making decisions collectively about what the project would be.”

“[The project] continued to deepen working relations with and for me as an art museum educator, and my knowledge and appreciation of the curatorial process as well as ways to work across the institution.

“This is a different balance of understanding, asking a lot of questions [of my colleagues], being sensitive to needs and ultimate goals...takes more attention to different sensibilities...”

Some comments suggested that the symposium on the Social Practice Art initiative also effected how staff thought about power structures and staff relationships within the Guggenheim. The overall staff data suggests that the unique division of responsibilities and shifting/expanding roles that are part of Social Practice Art led to changes in how staff worked with and alongside each other.

Staff commented that they saw how the museum could “take risks” to engage with topical issues, create a “safe space” for dialogue “in ways that are more dynamic” than an exhibition. For some, the Social Practice Art initiative proved that the museum is “accepting responsibility that they are not just guarding masterworks.”

“Museums are quite structured, bureaucratic... [social practice art] makes the museum more permeable, asks museum to be more elastic, flexible regarding where their boundaries are.”

“I saw a broader expansion of the way museums can engage with very topical, socially/politically engaged issues, and that you can create a space—a safe space—provide a platform for discussion and dialogue around these issues in ways that are more dynamic than an exhibition of still objects and ideas.”

“I would like to see us remain committed and not just dip in and out [of Social Practice Art projects]—the Guggenheim should now be looking for the next project. They should continue this work.”

The data suggests that the Social Practice Art initiative encouraged Guggenheim staff see the museum’s potential as more than a repository, allowing it a more active role in the community.

67% of staff interviewed commented on how **Primitive Games** specifically and the Social Practice Art initiative in general have had effects on working relationships within the museum.

78% of staff interviewed noted that the museum’s role expanded in taking on Social Practice Art initiatives.

33% of staff responses to interview questions noted an expanded audience was a result of Social Practice Art initiatives.

44% of responses from interviewees showed an interest in the audience response to the project.

100% of staff interviewed stated some form of personal insight that the project allowed them.

In addition to the museum’s expanded role, the staff noted that—perhaps as a consequence of this expanded role—there is “a desire to incorporate a wider audience into the activity” as this type of initiative “works so hard to break down boundaries and undermine boundaries that institutions are based on.”

“...it can educate an institution to grow and change to respond to different creative practices and different audiences and think about how art can impact their existing audiences or new audiences.”

“...I was thinking that I had more info than others who were watching...I was impressed at how positive the comments [on the audience response cards] were and how people were willing to suspend the need to interpret everything...”

“I want to follow up to understand what the audience experienced... would like to know more what people felt and how it impacted them...”

“...it’s hard to witness what people are getting out of it, sometimes, especially when you are working on it.”

This data suggests that staff- both education department staff and others—are viewing the initiative with more of a focus on audience than on personal or professional or artistic/museum-centered emphasis. Audience focus is important to building relevant, sustainable programs.

Findings/Staff

These insights ranged from insights on working styles (“... how things can change from what you originally thought...”) to how they view others (“...what you think you know, is not necessarily what it is...people have wildly different views and experiences...”) to insights on their work and the broader work of others in the art and museum fields:

“...now I’m not just working with an artist to deliver a project, I am commissioning them to do art that has significant audience engagement. Really aligning my work with work of contemporary artists.”

“[This project] confirmed my enthusiasm for working in the museum world.”

“[I’ve acquired] more awareness of other museums who are engaging in these types of projects; more awareness of other artists who are social practice artists or expressing their interest in social practice; more awareness of issues raised by these artists, and how other artist are addressing the same topic in different media.”

The interview data suggests that *Primitive Games* specifically and the Guggenheim Social Practice initiative generally had a personal and professional impact on staff working directly and indirectly on the project. This impact has the potential to transform the culture of a museum’s internal working relationships and external relationship with its visiting public.

10 staff also responded to the Cvent survey sent out after the performance of *Primitive Games*.¹⁴ It is uncertain, due to the anonymity of the survey platform, if any of the staff that responded to the survey are the same staff that were interviewed. It is notable that what came to mind as they viewed the performance echoes some other audience responses noted previously (p 17). Coded categories are listed in the chart above, in order of frequency and with sample responses.

This data suggests that staff were less taken by the physical aspects of the performance (setting, music, etc), most likely due to the fact that they work in the space daily and are used to seeing events take place in the rotunda.

Compared to the “general” audience who said that the performance didn’t cause them to change their thoughts



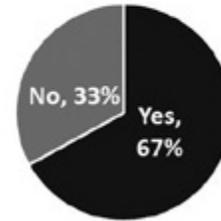
¹⁴ This was the same survey with the additional questions added in sent to general audience members.

Findings/Staff

Did the performance cause you to reconsider thoughts about the current state of political debate? (n=10)



Did the performance cause you to reconsider thoughts about non-verbal communication? (n=10)



about non-verbal communication (p16), staff responses to this question were more concrete:

“I always knew there are ways to communicate besides verbal communication.”

“Nonverbal communication has more of a fixed meaning and understanding; it’s not subjective in my opinion.”

Half of the staff responses (50%) noted that the audience may have wanted more clarification from the artist about what was happening.

“I wish the artist had been a little more clear about the divisions within the participants—not only in their beliefs but in the blatant fact that many of them had never met prior to the performance.”

“...I did sense that members of the audience did not understand [the performance] or connect with it. That needs to be explored and better understood.”

This data suggests that Guggenheim staff are insightful about audience response and often reflective about the meaning behind performances.

Limitations: Because the data is so qualitative in nature, there could be evaluator bias in categorizing responses. Low response rates and low confidence level limit the validity of findings based on the data.

Supplement

Shaun Leonardo: *Primitive Games*

Four-month follow-up evaluation



Background & Methodology

Background

This supplemental report provides some long-term data on participants in *Primitive Games*. The main evaluation report provided mostly immediate feedback on the project, while this supplement explores what, if any response the participants had four months after the performance.

Methodology

Participants (including the artist) were contacted via email four months post-performance (October 2018) and invited to participate in a brief phone interview scheduled at their convenience. Interview questions were vetted by Guggenheim staff. Responses (n=8=32% response rate) to interview questions were simultaneously transcribed. Data was coded for analysis.

Four-month post-performance interview questions:

Have any of the skills you learned in the workshops and/or your experience of the *Primitive Games* project continued to affect the way in which you communicate or think about communication?

Can you point to any changes in your thoughts, attitudes, or actions as a result of your participation in *Primitive Games*?

What areas of your thinking, attitudes, or actions remain unchanged by your participation in *Primitive Games*?

Anything else you'd like to share about yourself in relation to your participating in *Primitive Games*?

Findings/Artist

The data overall indicates that the experience of *Primitive Games* continued to resonate with participants months later. Respondents pointed to specific ways their participation changed their actions and encouraged self-awareness, changed their communication patterns, and fostered perspective on the issue of gun violence as well as supporting unforeseen realizations about themselves and society.

Shaun Leonardo (“the artist”) stated four months post-performance that he has changed his actions and attitudes, articulating:

“[when confronted with an individual I don’t agree with, I cultivated within myself] the ability to really just slow down and observe and listen... and read their intentionality through body language and still be present and find a space where we can have a conversation.”

In contrast, during the same interview (four months post-performance), Leonardo said “I feel more firmly entrenched in my own belief systems. There needs to be strict restrictions on gun ownership. The culture of guns and violence in the US has to be completely eradicated.”

The artists’ realization of his development and the strong response may also have been influenced by his travel outside the country where gun violence was not an issue. Leonardo also noted that:

“...talking and finding common ground is not enough. Something has to change. People in power need to mobilize to be forced to enact change.”

Four months post-performance, the data suggests that Leonardo has realized that while the process of teaching non-verbal debate to the community is a step towards finding consensus, it is not enough for a change to occur in society around the issue of gun violence... but that:

“...Consensus was always the point of the project—it’s a shortcoming, needs to be addressed more.”

Two aspects of Leonardo’s thinking and attitude that remain unchanged four months later are his view that the group affiliations are “a shield, a way to protect ourselves” and that the process of workshops he developed works to “rattle [participants] out of their positions, aware of their own experiences more acutely.” While Leonardo stated that he still believes in his work, his reflections suggest that his next iteration of the project could involve working with people who have more “power” (he specifically mentioned politicians) for the issue of gun violence to be directly addressed. For the artist, distance and personal experience months later have allowed for more insight on who the stakeholders/participants might be in order for change on the issue to occur.

Findings/Participants



Data suggests that the internal dialogue opened up within participants post-workshops continued four months post-performance. 38% of interviewees noted that their communication style changed since participating.

“I find myself now giving a call instead of texting... you can misconstrue so much through a text...”

“[the experience] made me listen in a different way.”

“...showed me different ways to get my point across without being aggressive or upset...”

63% of respondents noted a new awareness: about themselves...

“Motivated me to become better within myself...was more about reflection on me, what I can do, or say, to help others.”

“[The experience] gave me a sense of trying to be mindful of my humility and patience for not having to drive a point...”

...about their interactions with others...

“My takeaway was that people have stereotypes when they think about going into groups... the stereotypes melt away as you get to know people.”

“... opened my eyes on how I can interact with police officers, detectives...”

... and around the broader issue of gun violence.

“I think about the topic [gun violence] a lot and often.”

“Now I’m even more conscious about gun safety in my hunting practice.”

These strongly articulated impacts suggest that the experience of *Primitive Games* resonated with participants several months beyond the immediacy of the workshops and performance. 88% of respondents pointed to other changes in their thoughts, attitudes, and actions as a result of participating in *Primitive Games*:

Findings/Participants

“I’ve learned from that whole process how to further welcome people I wouldn’t have welcomed a long time ago.”

“...the experience augmented my tolerance.”

“My attitude is definitely more positive, more focused on doing better for youth, myself and my family.”

50% of interviewees noted that their beliefs, views, and opinions on the issue of gun violence remained unchanged.¹⁵ These categories showing lack of change are consistent with the Team Captains’ reflections at the Symposium (see Final Evaluation Report p14-15). This is also in keeping with the artist’s statement during the symposium, “It has never been my objective to ask anyone to abandon their beliefs.” 12% of interviewees however noted that “nothing is ever unchanged.”

Participants who responded to this four-month evaluation request also noted a few “unintended” consequences of the experience of *Primitive Games*:

“...made me more open to the idea of performing...”

“...heightened my awareness of non-verbal interaction between myself as a mid-30-year-old white male and younger New Yorkers of various colors... I think about it on the subway and the streets from time to time...what might be that person’s perspective, opinion, or who I am or who I think they are, based on the visuals...”

“...[the realization that] the street violence group was brown or black, that’s a bigger picture of our society.”

Half of respondents commented on how much they enjoyed the experience and gave praise and thanks to the Guggenheim and the artist. Another respondent noted that “I just miss everyone I did the performance with!” This data suggests that the project and participants left a positive impression on each other, even four months post-performance.

One interviewee enthusiastically noted that this experience/process should be taught in schools and how it would be beneficial to children. “This should be part of a curriculum about behavior and how you can judge someone really quickly—if you start [teaching it] in middle school, we’d have more decent people in the world.” Another interviewee mentioned several times how “interesting” and “instructive” the process was of answering the 13 questions at the beginning of the performance. These references to the learning potential in the project support the artist’s desire to develop *Primitive Games* as a model to be replicated.

Limitations: Because the data is so qualitative in nature, there could be evaluator bias in categorizing responses. Low response rate limits the validity of findings based on the data. Respondents did not evenly represent all four groups of participants (citizens impacted by street violence, military veterans, police officers, and recreational users of firearms).

¹⁵ This does not mean that the other 50% changed their views, opinions or beliefs on gun violence; they simply did not comment upon that topic when asked about changes in their thoughts, attitudes, or actions post-*Primitive Games*.

Evaluator's Notes

The notes that follow are suggestions by the evaluator for the next iteration of the project for the artist, audience, participants, and museums that would be involved.

Emphasize the workshops over the performance. As noted by the artist, “the workshop is where the work happened.” If a performance takes place in the next iteration, there should be more of an opportunity for audience involvement and engagement through workshops. This could also increase the potential impact a performance has on audience members.

Consider training and scalability in order to make a replicable model. While the artist is definitely key in moving the project ahead, a replicable model needs to consider scale (large groups, different settings) and a method to train others to lead workshops.

Provide a structure for the “debriefs” for participants (and possibly the audience). Since many may not be familiar with introspection or self-reflection, consider a structured debrief, i.e. a scaffolded series of questions to guide participants to understanding how the work benefitted them. A form of mini-symposium, or moderated discussion with the audience post-performance, could help both participants and the audience come to terms with the messages and ideas exchanged during the process.

Study how—if at all—this translates to verbal communication for participants and audience alike. While the emphasis is on non-verbal forms of debate, is there potential methods introduced to participants to transfer to written (i.e. social media) and verbal exchanges?

Build evaluation tools into *Primitive Games* for participants (and audience members, staff) at various stages of the process. Having front-end, formative, and summative evaluation, both short- and long-term, will help refine the project and measure its impact on those involved.

Leverage the impact to the museum provided by the project. How can staff collaborations carry to other projects? How can new audience who attended feel comfortable at other museum programs/exhibitions?

About Museum Partners Consulting, LLC

Museum Partners Consulting, LLC, (MPC) offers creative solutions for museums in the areas of evaluation, exhibition research and development, education programs, and issues of accessibility.

Led by a museum professional with over 25 years' experience, MPC believes in working collaboratively in partnership with clients. MPC takes an audience-centered approach to exhibitions, education programs, access, and evaluation, while empowering museum staff to assume ownership of the project once it is complete.

MPC's clients include art museums, history organizations and museums, historical societies, and public libraries.

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Appendix

Data collection tools

Retrospective-Pre Evaluation

Authentic Reflection Prompt

Audience Response Card

Questions added to online survey

Interview questions for staff

Interview questions for the artist

Four-month post-performance interview questions for participants/the artist)

Retrospective-Pre Evaluation

How much do you agree with each statement?

Think about how you felt **BEFORE** participating in this project and circle a number in the scale on the left side of the row. Consider how you are feeling **NOW** and circle a number in the scale on the right side of the row.

BEFORE WORKSHOPS & PERFORMANCE Not at all... Completely		AFTER WORKSHOPS & PERFORMANCE Not at all... Completely
<u>1</u> 2 3 4 5 6 7	I communicate my views effectively most of the time.	<u>1</u> 2 3 4 5 6 7
<u>1</u> 2 3 4 5 6 7	I'm aware of the messages I send through my body language.	<u>1</u> 2 3 4 5 6 7
<u>1</u> 2 3 4 5 6 7	I'm aware of the messages <i>others</i> send through their body language.	<u>1</u> 2 3 4 5 6 7
<u>1</u> 2 3 4 5 6 7	Words are necessary for effective communication.	<u>1</u> 2 3 4 5 6 7
<u>1</u> 2 3 4 5 6 7	Our country is polarized.	<u>1</u> 2 3 4 5 6 7
<u>1</u> 2 3 4 5 6 7	Using words to debate is not working.	<u>1</u> 2 3 4 5 6 7
<u>1</u> 2 3 4 5 6 7	There is not much we can do to change the nature of debate on divisive issues.	<u>1</u> 2 3 4 5 6 7
<u>1</u> 2 3 4 5 6 7	You can tell who is on which side of the debate on gun violence by looking at them.	<u>1</u> 2 3 4 5 6 7
<u>1</u> 2 3 4 5 6 7	Connections exist between the sides in the debate on gun violence.	<u>1</u> 2 3 4 5 6 7
<u>1</u> 2 3 4 5 6 7	A small group of people can't make a difference in the world.	<u>1</u> 2 3 4 5 6 7

Authentic Reflection Prompt

Before Participating, I...

...because...

Now, I...

Audience Response Card

**Thank you
for sharing your
experience.**

**Please take a few
minutes to write your
response to these
questions.**

GUGGENHEIM

What questions, if any, did viewing the performance raise for you?

What did you find memorable or interesting?

What thoughts and/or ideas came to mind as you viewed this performance?

Could you tell who belonged to what group by the gestures they used?

Yes No

Please use the back of the card if you would like to add anything else.

Questions added to online survey

Post-performance (June 21, 2018)

What thoughts and/or ideas came to mind as you viewed the performance of *Primitive Games* on June 21, 2018?

Did this performance cause you to review your thoughts about the current state of public debate?

Yes or No

Use skip logic—if “yes,” goes to this question (open-ended):

How did this performance cause you to review your thoughts about communication through and interpretation of body language? Please elaborate:

If “no,” goes to this question (open-ended):

Why do you think the performance didn't cause you to review your thoughts about communication through and interpretation of body language? Please elaborate:

Post-Symposium (June 22, 2018)

Did you attend (check only one):

_____ ONLY the June 22 Symposium, Imagining the Social in Artistic and Museum Practices

_____ BOTH the June 22 Symposium, Imagining the Social in Artistic and Museum Practices AND the performance of Shaun Leonardo's *Primitive Games* on June 21

Use skip logic—if “BOTH,” goes to this question (open-ended):

Did attending the symposium influence your response to thoughts about/understanding of the performance?

Yes or No

Use skip logic—if “yes,” goes to this question (open-ended):

How did attending the symposium influence your response to thoughts about/understanding of the performance? Please elaborate:

If “no,” goes to this question (open-ended):

Why do you think the symposium didn't influence your response to thoughts about/understanding of the performance? Please elaborate:

If “ONLY,” goes to this question (open-ended):

What thoughts and ideas came to mind during the symposium?

Interview questions for staff

What role did you play in the project?

How was working on *Primitive Games* similar to or different from other Guggenheim projects you have contributed to (in social practice realm or otherwise)?

Did this project change your view of your work in the museum field in general? How?

What do you think it means to the museum world to commission social practice art projects?

Do you notice any other shifts or changes in your thinking/work since the project began?

What is your biggest takeaway from the project?

Anything else about your participation in this project that you'd like to share?

Interview Questions for the artist

Complete this phrase:
Before I started this project...
...because...
Now I...

How did the project meet, fall short, and exceed your expectations?

What is your biggest takeaway from the project?

In hindsight, what would you do differently if you were beginning this project

How has creating this project had an impact on your work as an artist?

What impact did you perceive the work had on the performers?

On the Guggenheim staff?

On the museum/art world?

What do you think it means to the museum world to commission art like this when it can't be collected (or as easily collected)?

Respond to this if-then statement about the project:

If I teach and present a model of non-verbal debate, in what ways, if any, will the experience of teaching, participating, and observing lead to changes in how I, the participants and the audience think about and communicate around difficult and polarizing issues in society today?

Four-month post-performance interview questions for participants and the artist:

It's been four months since *Primitive Games* took place. I'm curious to know your thoughts about its impact on you now that you've had some time and distance from the workshops and performance.

Have any of the skills you learned in the workshops and/or your experience of the *Primitive Games* project continued to affect the way in which you communicate or think about communication?

Can you point to any changes in your thoughts, attitudes, or actions as a result of your participation in *Primitive Games*?

What areas of your thinking, attitudes, or actions remain unchanged by your participation in *Primitive Games*?

Anything else you'd like to share about yourself in relation to your participating in *Primitive Games*?