Violence Transformed

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**Violence Transformed** is a visual and performing arts initiative founded in 2006 as a community effort of the Victims of Violence Program of the Cambridge Health Alliance. Its vision is to draw attention “to the social potency and **transformative possibilities of art**, artists and art making” with a specific goal “to amplify the voices of creative individuals and organizations at work in our community and to foster creative action **to address, prevent and overcome violence** and the risk of violence in our homes, in our communities, and at regional, national and international levels.” Three vital aspects of the organization are diversity, generating a broad audience, and to raise the voices of creative individuals all to use forms of art to prevent violence in homes and their communities.

To accomplish this goal, Violence Transformed hosts a series of exhibitions, performances and collaborative art making held in the greater Boston area. It is composed of “professionals from a wide range of backgrounds and disciplines, including art historians, studio artists, and specialists from the museum world.” The exhibitions come together with the collaboration of social workers, community service providers, clinical psychologists, art therapists, victims’ rights advocates and social activists. These exhibitions are scheduled year round and are hosted at partner organizations or university campuses. Every year the initiative culminates with an exhibition of the visual works displayed at the Massachusetts State House during the National Crime Victims Rights Awareness Week and the Annual conference of the Massachusetts Office for Victim Assistance (MOVA).
Exhibitions in their website include the **Ubuntu Arts Projects** with an aim “to facilitate collaborative art-making projects by youth, a process by which people can work together creatively, identify issues, and imagine solutions.” This project included a creative video of artmaking and expression of incarcerated young women in Boston where they work together to answer the question “**How does violence affect each of us, and what transforms violence?**” This video is currently featured on a Youtube channel under the Violence Transformed. Another project is the **Combat Paper Project**, which focuses on art making workshops “to assist veterans in reconciling and sharing their personal experiences as **broadening the traditional narrative** surrounding service and the military culture.” Through this project, uniforms were transformed into pulp and then into sheets of paper. The paper was used to create journals, paintings and sculptures. Leaders of the project explained, “there is power to the ritual… each act is highly personal and liberating. It is called liberating rag. It is the first step in recognizing the story held within the fiber.” In the same way, artists contribute art pieces into regular exhibitions. **Brenda Steinberg**, a local artists expresses “My work expresses these concerns both because my emotional response is inevitably translated into art and because I believe that it is my responsibility as an artist to share my concerns about violence and injustice.” The projects and exhibitions explore various aspects and definitions of violence. Violence Transformed adopts a broad definition of violence which includes “political, domestic, racial and sexual violence in their myriad forms.” These exhibitions are held in different venues and are open to the public at no charge.
Violence Transformed 2013: The Artist’s Voice

Ubuntu Arts: Living Ubuntu – The Youth Speaks

Marsha Nouritza Odebashian “Greatness Has Passed”
Children = Hope: Violence Transformed (May 8 – September 18, 2011)

What About War? (August 1 – September 12, 2014)
Violence Transformed allows for various forms of violence to be explored without a specific definition or types of violence. These forms are rooted with the aim to alleviate sources of suffering that result from inequality, discrimination, alienation, traumatic experiences. The work is open to everyone and encourages participation from different sectors to explore solutions through a creative lens. Something surprising that we found in our exploration was the ability for anyone to participate and pose solutions through the exploration of alternative creative solutions to violence. This allows open participation for anyone to become an expert in their situation and explore through creative expression deeper understanding and solutions to violence. This approach serves as an open space for conversation and discussion about issues not always spoken about. It also involves multiple actors in society who work together and imagine new techniques for effective spaces of creativity and expression. The various forms of exhibitions allows deeper awareness at the community level and also at the municipal level through their exhibition at the State house.

The work of Violence Transformed could be described through the principles of moral imagination. The organization creates spaces for creativity, dialogue, and emphasizes on centrality of relationships and collaboration from different sectors in society. It also deeply rooted in the exploration of creative ways and continuous inquiry of alternative ways to alleviate violence. Their work also involves risk taking by encouraging and exposing often hidden or unspoken realities in a community.

Conditions that would strengthen their work could be increasing the depth of information of projects, events, artists, and exhibits, providing more ways to engage with projects more than just attending workshops, and posting statistics on the type of people who participate with the
organization. In our exploration, information about this event was limited to the Violence Transformed web page and some exhibitions had partial information. For example, the organization did not include detailed background information on projects and artists, or any publication and archive on other platforms besides their website, and social media presence outside of Facebook. While doing research, we concluded that it was very difficult in finding information about the organization and their projects outside of their own website. We also noticed their facebook page has about 460 followers which is very few compared to other organizations in the area. Awareness of their work and their exhibitions could further allow participation and recognition of their yearly projects and exhibitions. Adding descriptions for artists would be helpful for future collaborative projects. Violence Transformed is one of its kind in utilising art as a medium to confront and imagine alternatives to violence at various reaching levels in society.

The information and our reflections of the work are based on the information gathered from the organization’s website and social media accounts. There were several attempts to get in contact but there was no response from the organization.

Sources:
http://www.violencetransformed.com/about/