

CLUBS PROJECT FEEDBACK SESSIONS!



BACKGROUND

CLUBfeedback is a service for cultural practitioners that provides structured and impartial critical response to a presented work. Artists, writers, performers or curators are able to request feedback by approaching the co-ordinators, who then assemble a group of peers and experts to provide feedback. The service is auspiced by CLUBSproject Melbourne.

The focus of these sessions is to explore, through conversation, the 'work' of an artwork: to investigate how an artwork functions, and how it operates within, and in relation to, its context. Attention is placed on the relationships internal to the artwork, as well as the relations that the artwork produces. A focus is placed upon the connections generated by the work in terms of conceptual, speculative, theoretical, imaginative, metaphoric, political and social (etc) lines of inquiry. The aims of the session are to draw these out and extend them through extended conversation.

The starting point for CLUBfeedback is the 'material evidence' of the work of art in its situation. The artist is not expected to provide an account of the work at this stage. Feedback is a service that we offer to the artist and it is an opportunity for the artist to listen, rather than being in the position of defending or explaining their work. At the end of the session, questions, which develop from the dialogue, are put to the artist and it is at this point that they join the conversation in its collective and extended sense.

This is an important aspect of feedback, in that it positions the *work as a productive force which has effects*. The aim is to produce a space for encountering the work in which the artwork is allowed to frame *itself*, instead of being informed on the basis of any particular authority of what the work 'is about'.

CLUBfeedback aims to develop a supportive and critical dialogue about the artwork and art practice in general, and is in no way structured as a critique of the artist and their practice. The people involved in the feedback session are active contributors in the dialogue. Rather than developing a definitive single account of the work in question, an aim of feedback is to generate an open-ended dialogue based in diversity and difference, in relation to the possibilities that have been opened, or sparked by the artwork.



HOW TO: A MANUAL

NUMBERS

CLUBS has found that between 6 and 10 people are a productive number to work with for a feedback session as it allows a generous discussion between all involved. Any more tends to become unruly and makes it difficult to develop a conversation beyond a superficial level.

WHO TO ASK or CONSTITUTION OF FEEDBACK GROUP

Who is invited to attend is worked out in consultation with the artist and generally includes immediate peers known by the artist or CLUBS and/or the facilitator, to specifically invited who through their knowledge of a complimentary discipline or practice may bring an interesting focus to the discussion. CLUBS has also attempted to include a diverse range of practitioners from related fields and from various positions within the art world, as well as those with an informed general interest in art.

LOCATION

Feedback sessions *always* take place where the work is located be that in a studio, exhibition context, outdoors etc. It's important to be present with the work and to have it visible as a constant reference for the discussion.

TIME REQUIRED

The session takes about 1.5-2 hours, factoring in a longer discussion between participants and the artist afterwards.

RECORD

CLUBS has made an effort to, and recommends, recording these sessions as we feel they are an invaluable resource not only for the artist but for anyone interested in their practice or the discussion in general now or in the future. Some artists have also found it useful to take notes during the discussion of their work in order to respond later to particular observations or for their own record.

PROCESS

Sessions commence with one person being asked to give an *OBJECTIVE* description of the artwork. During this stage comments are restricted to giving as full account as possible of what is materially present or activated by the artwork in order to draw everyone's focus to the work in the fullest sense and particularly to details that might be overlooked by a more cursory observation. All other participants listen to this description and at its conclusion are asked if they think something has been overlooked or needs to be added.

Once everyone agrees that the objective description is complete, participants are asked to comment on the work from a more *SUBJECTIVE* perspective. [The transition from the objective to the subjective analysis often happens in the course of the conversation and it is usually the case that the facilitator simply acknowledges this transition]. Initially it can be useful if the subjective comments respond to, or seek clarification of, the objective description. However at this stage, in general, participants freely offer their observations and comments. After considerable discussion it usually becomes apparent that most aspects of the artwork have been covered in the conversation, often leaving points of disagreement between participants or unresolved questions raised by the artwork. At this stage the facilitator asks for 3 or so questions to be framed individually or collectively, which are then put to the artist.

The artist is invited to respond to these questions and any other aspects of the discussion. A dialogue may or may not develop at this point between the participants and the artist.

FACILITATOR

The feedback session needs to be managed by someone who takes on the role of facilitator. This person usually works with the artist to set up the session contacting all those participating. On the day it is his or her role to introduce everyone, outline the process and most importantly to manage the conversation.

Besides nominating someone to provide the Objective description the facilitator's role is to ask questions of clarification both during the Objective and Subjective descriptions. Often tentative remarks are made in relation to the artwork that when probed further open up interesting lines of conversation. The facilitator can also suggest connections or conflicts between the comments of various participants in order to push the conversation to further clarification.

It is the facilitator's role to bring the conversation to a conclusion: initially in order to frame the questions put to the artist that bring them into the conversation, and finally to wrap up the discussion when the conversation or the participants starts to run out of energy.