

FIELDWORK BASICS

OUR VALUES

Initiated in 1986, Fieldwork is The Field's longest running program.

The goal of Fieldwork is to give artists an accurate reflection of their work as it is developing. In addition to learning how their work is coming across to others, artists develop their ability to give feedback, build a community of artistic peers, benefit from a deadline structure within which to continue creating, find collaborators and performers with whom to work, and witness other artists' struggles to achieve artistic clarity and career goals.

In order to accomplish these goals, The Field and its cohort of facilitators believe in:

- An artist's right to free expression of ideas, opinions and ideals;
- Honoring and upholding the integrity of each individual artist and their creative work;
- Ensuring that Fieldwork occurs in a co-created space that is as responsive, supportive and "safe" a space as possible;
- Working towards and maintaining a respectful atmosphere that aims to support and uplift racial and cultural equity so that all artists have access to the skills, opportunities and experiences that will help them to reach their full potential and achieve their definition(s) of success;
- Checking in with ones-self before, during and after the Fieldwork process to embrace and push through discomfort and ambiguity in the creation and viewing of new work.

The Field, being an artist services organization, endeavors to remain critically engaged and responsive to the needs and issues affecting 21st century artists.

ABOUT THE PROGRAM

Fieldwork is a place for artists to learn about their work, develop their ability to give feedback, and build a community of artistic peers. The primary goal of Fieldwork is to provide structure and support for an artist's process and to give artists meaningful feedback for their work. Fieldwork has been honed over 30 years by artists across the country. It continues to be a powerful tool in the artistic process.

Artists tell The Field that the reasons they do Fieldwork are: to show work and get feedback consistently, to perform, to develop their abilities to see work deeply and comment via feedback, to have a weekly deadline structure, and to meet other artists. The Fieldwork facilitator empowers all participants to give and receive feedback that respectfully and intentionally values diverse identities and artistic visions. The facilitator strives to center the artist in the feedback and to ensure that the artist receives feedback that meaningfully and respectfully speaks to their work.

Fieldwork is open to artists of all artistic disciplines and career stages. It is not curated by work samples or application process.

STRUCTURE OF WORKSHOP

- **Show work**
- **Gather in a circle**
- **Give feedback about each piece in the order it was shown**
- **If time allows, open discussions**

TIPS FOR GIVING FEEDBACK

The goal is to give honest, immediate, specific feedback about your experience of each piece. Part of the rigor required here is in the ability to enter into a variety of different works with equal generosity. The core of this is to reflect back to the artist what you saw. This can include:

- What struck you, surprised you, distanced you, and/or confused you
- The structure and its relationship to the work as a whole
- The social, political, and/or the historical context of the piece
- Your emotional responses and gut reactions
- Comments related to your understanding of the work's intent
- Specific examples that support your comments
- Stating the obvious; which is sometimes very helpful to artists
- Accepting the premise of the piece - its world, its aesthetic, its racial, cultural or social perspective - and then giving feedback from within that model.

It is important for each participant to consider how their own race, gender, cultural background etc. might help or hinder their understanding of the work.

TIPS FOR SHOWING WORK AND RECEIVING FEEDBACK

The goal is to receive specific information about how your work is coming across to different viewers. To facilitate this:

- Show your work without any preambles or explanations (unless the group decides to provide necessary context (for instance race, culture or other identifiers) that clarify the lens through which the work should be viewed
- If you like, provide any information that would be in the program (e.g. title)
- Remember your role is to receive the feedback and retain your autonomy over the work. To do this, absorb the feedback by refraining from responding to comments or defending your work. If you feel like the feedback is too much or is biased by race, gender, culture or other isms, the facilitator will lead the group to ensure that the artist's work and vision is centered authentically and respectfully.
- Ask for clarification on a specific comment if you didn't understand what was said - comments can often be understood (or misunderstood) in many ways
- Consider after all the feedback is given whether you want to ask about a neglected aspect of the work, such as the music or the costume
- Revel in the amount of information you've received and use it to help your work to further your vision

If you have any concerns, please tell the facilitator and/or The Field staff contact. We are here to support the process.

ABOUT CLAPPING, SUGGESTIONS AND THE FACILITATOR

- Clapping can dissipate the immediate response to the piece and make it hard to stay objective. We try to provide recognition for the work people are doing via attention and feedback, rather than clapping.
- Suggestions and directorial comments are avoided in Fieldwork because they can short-circuit the artist's role as creator and problem solver. Much more information will be conveyed if we ask ourselves why we wanted to make a suggestion and explain that to the artist.
- Finally, the facilitator is not a teacher, but a peer artist who acts as a guide to the Fieldwork process, making sure the environment remains supportive and challenging, and also keeping track of time. The facilitator is also a peer who is managing their own identity, needs, emotional labor and artistic practice.

Fieldwork was created by many artists in 1986 and has been honed over many years by many brilliant minds. For more information on facilitation please find us at thefield.org. Thank you!