

# MUSEUM OF NON PARTICIPATION

From 2007 to 2016, The Museum of Non Participation situated itself as a museum without walls, looking at the problem of participating versus not participating in a globalized neoliberal reality. This museum took form as interventions, newspapers, wall chalking, reading groups, language exchange, performance lectures, films, audioworks, walks, political theatre, and Speech acts. The Museum launched in London in a space behind a barber's shop on Bethnal Green Road where Mirza and Butler hosted a space for language exchange between Urdu and English Speakers, and culminated in 2016 in a solo exhibition at the Sydney Biennale: *The Embassy of Non Participation*.

# ORIGINAL MANIFESTO

The Museum of Non Participation confronts (non) participation and the socio-political in art works. Non Participation is not a negation, it is a threshold, a political plastic that expands and contracts that is both unstable and malleable. This is an international neoliberal life condition, frequently (un)consciously exercised in the excess of one's own society, often gained at the expense of another's nameless plight elsewhere. Whilst locally it can be witnessed, for example, in the moment urgent social issues are both recognized and simultaneously ignored or rejected. It is also a structure including, in the UK, the filtering of government and corporate policies and agendas through the arts and arts funding.

Museums interrelate hierarchy and exclusion, social critique and (post) colonization. So The Museum of Non Participation embeds its institutional critique in its very title yet it releases itself from being an actual museum. Instead it travels as a place, a slogan, a banner, a performance, a newspaper, a film, an intervention, an occupation situation that enable this museum to act. Thus the Museum of Non Participation does not disavow art objects, but it is driven to dislodge them from their central position within the field of art. To choose to look past the art object to the etymology of object, from the Latin *obicere*, meaning to present, oppose, or cast or throw in the way of.

This Museum explores *obicere* through multiple, ephemeral processes: artworks as well as events and actions that neither the founding artists nor museums possess through sole authorship. In a similar vein, The Museum of Non

Participation approaches collecting as not merely assembling objects, but as an act that assembles and ushers forth action and agency and does so through disruption. It asks how withdrawal can be made visible? How can non participation be active and critical?

The Museum of Non Participation is one aspect of Noorafshan Mirza and Brad Butler's wider artistic practice, an investigation of the terms and conditions of images, objects, collaboration, dialogue and the social.

# YOU ARE THE PRIME MINISTER



Upon entering, the viewer is prompted to answer an exam question in which they must imagine themselves as the prime minister and write an argument explaining that the use of military force against protestors is both moral and necessary. This fictive world, decorated with red curtains and blue neon lights, is based on a real question once included in a scholarship exam of Eton College, an elite school in Britain where 19 of Britain's prime ministers have been educated.

# HOW TO PROTEST INTELLIGENTLY



Shoes that facilitate rapid movement. A scarf that protect from tear gas. Diagrams that translate Arabic phonemes into choreographic scores. This series layers reality and fiction while presenting challenges to consider when participating or not participating in a demonstration.

# ACT 02084, 2016



Appropriating the visual form of airline safety cards to recount a story about collective resistance, *ACT 02084* underlines the interdependent nature of human life, illustrating both the individual's and collective's capacity for action. The ouroboros reproduced on the wallpaper, an archetypical representation of the pre-ego state, draws focus to the connections between renewal and withdrawal.