



## The Weight We Share



The Weight We Share (in collaboration with Dr. Maya Eichler), 2016, Performance Stills. Prismatic Arts Festival 2016.

### Detailed Description of Project

The Mount Saint Vincent University's Network for Community-Engaged Research on War (NCERW) includes faculty and students across disciplines. They explore what stories of war and peace are being told, which stories are visible and which are not, and how war has impacted Nova Scotia's diverse communities.

In collaboration with the NCERW, Dr. Maya Eichler (MSVU) and I developed an interactive performance work presented as part of "The Talk" for the Prismatic Arts Festival 2016 located at the Halifax Central Library. Dialogue on war is difficult and uncomfortable, for both political and personal reasons, though it is essential to understanding the impact of war on local communities. Dr. Eichler and I modelled how to engage in difficult dialogue on war and conflict by asking one another vulnerable questions about our personal experiences of war and peace, while accepting the discomfort.

This interactive performance encouraged the audience to engage in dialogue on military conflict and experience with one another, stimulating broader public debate on military deployments. The lines of disagreement created opportunities for the audience to question and try to make sense of their individual beliefs and political opinions. The performance was not intended to make the audience take a specific side, rather to open up space for dialogue and allowed people to listen to others with different perspectives and beliefs. The performance and audience engagement highlighted that sharing the weight of our stories means not only that someone has to hand over the weight by speaking, but that someone also has to take on the weight by listening.

The audience was diverse and included academics, activists, artists, refugees, students, members of the military and veteran communities, and the public.

Published in the Critical Military Studies Journal, Dr. Eichler and I followed the performance by writing a paper based on our experiences of co-writing and co-performing The Weight We Share titled The art of discomfort: engaging in dialogue on war. Drawing inspiration from Sarah Bulmer and David Jackson's piece You do not live in my skin, we chose to reflect on our collaborative work to illustrate how art has helped both of us to sit with the discomfort of engaging in conversations that challenge deeply held beliefs and emotions about the military and war.

I strongly believe art is a critical tool to engage in difficult dialogue. This performance was a means to listen in order to better understand the complexities of war and conflict. Now we are more aware of, and think more deeply about, the responsibility in holding and sharing "weight" as human beings, artists, and scholars.

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