

## Art is Too Powerful to Stay in One Place

Natasha Lardera (September 28, 2017)



The Blue Bus Project: Making Socially Conscious Art on the Streets. This school bus doesn't take you to a classroom, but it comes to you. It comes to your neighborhood to provide a safe space for artists and communities to merge, while cultivating self-worth, social expression, imagination and creativity.

"I wanted to create a movement of change thought art. After creating my installation "2nd Amendment" (an anti gun violence art piece and the T-shirts inspired by it), I had the need to do more. I believe in the artistic process and its ability to bring social awareness. Our most powerful weapon to express what we are going through, and/or what society is experiencing, is Art! And, as Nina Simone once said "An artist's duty, as far as I'm concerned, is to reflect the times."



Inspired by her community and her engagement with the social environment, NYC- based mixed media public artist, Annalisa Iadicicco, created the Blue Bus Project, a living, breathing mobile art gallery that takes this conversation to the streets of NYC and beyond. This is her speaking.

“In times where our art funds are being cut, our governments are poisoning us with lies, putting our children’s future into jeopardy, and our technology of the “eternally connected” is actually, if not used properly, disconnecting us from our selves, I wanted to create a platform, a safe space for artists and communities to merge, interact, explore and stimulate discussion that will lead them to action and social change. And what a better place than the streets! A venue suited for artistic intervention, where people don’t expect to find art but they are organically drawn to it.

With all these ideas brewing in mind, one day I saw this school bus parked a few blocks from my house. At the time, I was working for a sculptor, whose project was mobile; seeing the effect that his artwork was bringing to people, I decided that a bus, a school bus, would be perfect for my BIG idea to change the World!

So day after day I kept biking there just to check if this bus was moving and/or functioning but I would always see it parked in the same spot. One day I put a note on the window that said: 'If you are selling the bus, give me a call,' and after 9 months I got the auspicious call.

Suddenly I found myself with this big bus, an insurance to pay, a mechanic to deal with, and a colossal dream waiting to become reality. With the help of some of my patrons, I was able to fix it up and put it on the road. I’m now driving around NYC, with the desire to reach different parts of the world and, one day, to end up in my hometown; Naples.”

Founded in May 2016, the Blue Bus Project is a platform for participants - neighborhoods, artists, students of all ages - to contribute to their community while enhancing its beauty and cultural identity. Since its inception, The Blue Bus Project has reached out to several communities, held different programs and was commissioned workshops for the youth in public parks and neighborhoods, in Harlem, Governors Island, Socrates Sculptor Park, Williamsburg, Jamaica Ave, and Rockaway. Said workshops were ranging from the creations of sculptures, painting, and dance performances to Food&Clothing drives for the needy.

This past summer, the Citizen Committee for New York City gave the Blue Bus Project a Neighborhood Grant for its series of workshops called RE(F)USE ME! Held in the Rockaway, the workshops focused on the three R’s of the environment: Reduce, Reuse, Recycle. The goal was to help broaden the ability to value discarded objects while cultivating self-worth, self-expression, imagination, and creativity, but mostly, while being socially conscious (in this particular case by keeping the ocean and the beaches clean). Participating artists, Iadicicco herself with visual artist/educator Maria Liebana, sculptor Daniel Valle, writer Natasha Lardera and musician Ivan Dalia, mingled with local kids and made art together. For example, you can craft your empty plastic bottles into something awesome, instead of just leaving them on the sand. The PET plastic that most beverage bottles are made of is a fairly useful material – it’s resilient, flexible, transparent and food safe. You just need some paint, scissors and imagination. Sculptor Daniel Valle showed kids how to turn these bottles into colorful fish, a cute sculpture for any room or classroom.

“To wrap things up, we are a collective of artists driving our own mobile art gallery into any community. With our white walls, hardwood floors, and gas in our tank, our bus is a fully equipped alternative art space that crosses all barriers. The bright blue color of the bus’s exterior cultivates curiosity, creativity, and joy and serves as a bridge to connect people with their community. All the antiwar, civil rights, and feminist movements of the past, have showed us that together we have strong power and together we can do a lot. And we need to get to the streets, that’s a real powerful place: the streets!”

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