

Social Practice Art

From Art to Social Practice Art

REVIEW_

Last week we looked at some art through Western history to see ways art has always addressed social issues of some kind.

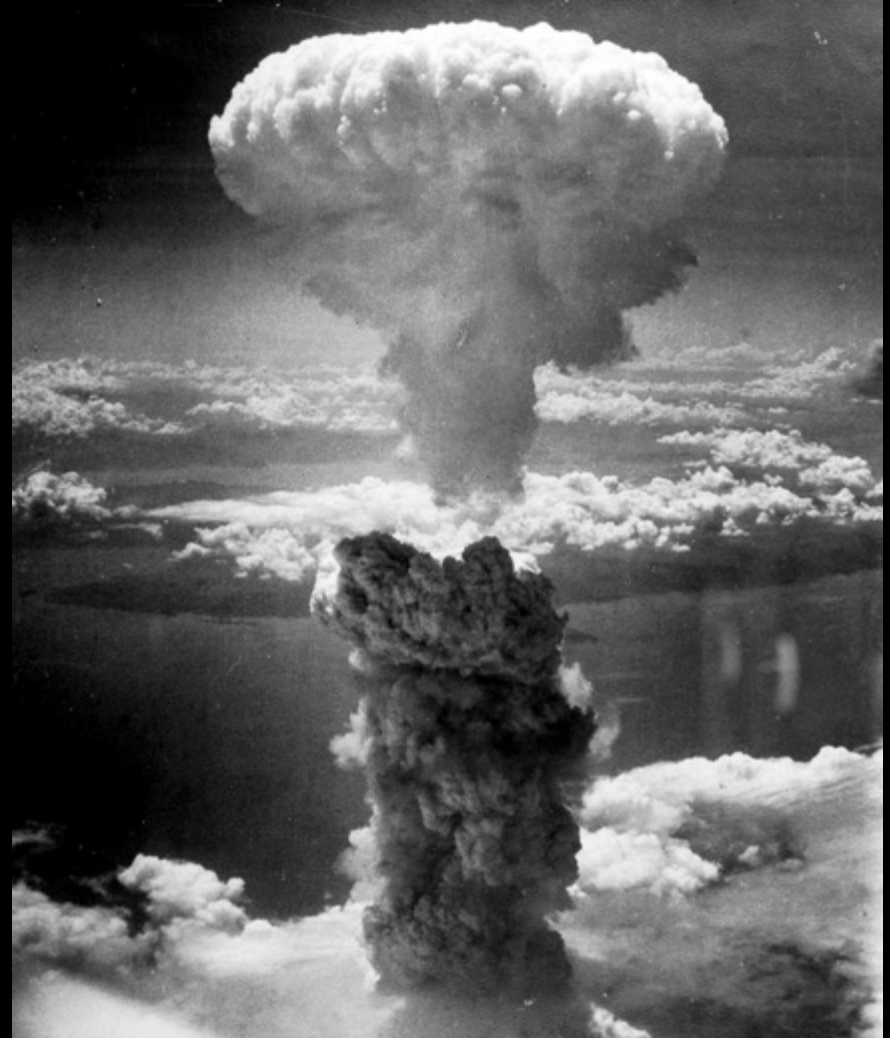
This week we move quickly through the 20th Century into the 21st to see how Art continues to address social issues and eventually is thought of as a vehicle for social change.

ART AFTER WWII

Many things changed after **the Second World War**, including **the atom bomb** and the horrors of the **Nazi Holocaust**. America becomes the most important country in the Western world because all European countries are destroyed.

Television and advertising becomes pervasive and by the middle of the century, we have the Civil Rights, Women's Rights and Gay Rights movements.

While the first real American Art movement to have international influence was Abstract Expressionism, it is Pop where we start our investigation.



ART AFTER WWII

There were several art styles after the war that had social implications. However, they were not really discussed that way at the time. If we were in another Art History class, we would most likely be discussing the works, artists and movements differently. But for our purposes, here's a way of thinking of these styles.

An early drawing by Jackson Pollock, entitled, "War" shows the influence of images seen in popular media.



This later painting by Pollock, *Number One, 1950 (Lavender Mist)* 1947 and 1950 is an example of the work he became famous for.



Pop originated in post-War Britain, using irony and parody. It focused on the dynamic and paradoxical imagery of American popular culture as powerful, manipulative symbolic devices that were affecting whole patterns of life, supposedly improving prosperity of American society.

Abstract Expressionism, or the New York School focused on individual expression of the artist. At the same time, many historians see the connection to bombings, bodies from the holocaust and other things in these abstract works by Jackson Pollock.



Richard Hamilton, *Just what is it today that makes today's homes so different, so appealing*, 1956

POP ART

Andy Warhol is the person most associated with Pop. Warhol recognized that with advertising and fame, all images were viewed and related to in the same way. A can of soup was sold the same way a personality was sold. People became one dimensional, superficial, conspicuous, consumed.

No matter if it is a can of soup or a person, media images are presented in the same way and viewers consume them the same way.

His work, while wildly popular among audiences, was critiquing American taste, the cult of fame and ways imagery is used.



Warhol, *Campbell Soup Cans*, 1964, Synthetic polymer paint on thirty-two canvases.
Warhol realized that advertising soup and people had become virtually the same.



CONTEXT_Civil Rights

In the 1950s, African Americans in Southern states still experienced a unequal world of segregation and various forms of oppression, including race-inspired violence.

In the turbulent decade and a half that followed, civil rights activists used nonviolent protest and civil disobedience to bring about change, and the federal government made legislative headway with initiatives such as the Voting Rights Act of 1965 and the Civil Rights Act of 1968.

The riots at Birmingham, Alabama, in the spring of 1963 were notorious across America, and with this wide publicity the event was one of the climaxes of the Civil Rights Movement. Peaceful demonstrators were attacked by police dogs and water hoses, Martin Luther King was arrested. All was televised.



1963 March on Washington for Civil Rights and High Pressure water hose dispersing people in a civil rights protest.



Memphis, Tn. Dr. Martin Luther King memorial 1968



Parker High School Student peacefully protesting. Attached by Police dogs, 1963, Birmingham, Alabama. This image was in the newspaper.



Andy Warhol, *Race Riot*, 1963. Silkscreen of newspaper images.

Supporters of Martin Luther King, protesting segregation at lunch counters, were attacked by the police with dogs and water hoses, and King himself was arrested. Most people don't think of Warhol as being socially or politically motivated but Warhol contributed this print to a portfolio of work by ten artists, published the year after the riot. The image is changed only in size and status from a newspaper photograph. Newspaper photos are removed from their context, silkscreened and repeated to emphasize the reality (or surreal) nature of the image.



The Civil Rights Movement provided a model for protests against the Vietnam War, and then Feminist and Gay Rights protests.

A crowd of demonstrators protest in NYC (top) and at the Washington Monument for a rally to protest the Vietnam War, 1969. March for equal rights for women in 1970 and Gay Liberation march in Times Square, 1969

PERFORMANCE ART



Protestors, using non-violent means, used their bodies to create disruption in social situations.

Civil Rights Protest March, University of Washington.

You may have already noticed that in some definitions of Social Practice art, the word, Performance, is included.

Growing out of social realities, social protest of Feminist Movement, Gay Rights and most especially, Civil Rights, artists began recognizing the potential of creating art with their own bodies in real space in front, or in connection with others.

Two social events framed the Performance Art movement.

1. Social protests where people used their bodies in physical action.
2. An interest in making art that was not a commodity. It could not be bought or sold

In *Cut Piece*, Ono sat on a stage fully clothed with a pair of scissors nearby. She invited audience members to come up and cut off her clothes. She, the artist, simply set something in motion without knowing what would happen.

Marina Abramovic did a similar work a few years later.

Yoko Ono, *Cut Piece* 1965 & Marina Abramovic, *Rhythm O*, 1974





The 1960s was a decade of social protests around the western world. Artists were looking for more politically engaged ways of working with art.

The Situationist International emerged from a fusion of several artistic groups. The result was a group that sought to redefine revolutionary action.

The Situationists believed the cultural shift from individual expression to those mediated through various commodities (TV, Magazines, Movies, etc.) seriously damaged human life.

So they constructed events designed to reawaken authentic desire through the liberation of everyday life.

While heavily influenced by avant-garde artistic movements and Marxist theory, the Situationist International renounced artistic bohemianism and traditional Marxist-Leninist parties, proposing instead a critique of capitalism that weighted heavily in favor of the spontaneous realization of the revolutionary potential of everyday life. (1957-1972)



In the 1970s the Art workers Coalition protested the war in Vietnam with a **Demonstration in MOMA (Museum of Modern Art)**—they displayed copies of the poster showing Vietnam people killed in front of Guernica



THE ADVANTAGES OF BEING A WOMAN ARTIST:

Working without the pressure of success.
 Not having to be in shows with men.
 Having an escape from the art world in your 4 free-lance jobs.
 Knowing your career might pick up after you're eighty.
 Being reassured that whatever kind of art you make it will be labeled feminine.
 Not being stuck in a tenured teaching position.
 Seeing your ideas live on in the work of others.
 Having the opportunity to choose between career and motherhood.
 Not having to choke on those big cigars or paint in Italian suits.
 Having more time to work when your mate dumps you for someone younger.
 Being included in revised versions of art history.
 Not having to undergo the embarrassment of being called a genius.
 Getting your picture in the art magazines wearing a gorilla suit.

A PUBLIC SERVICE MESSAGE FROM **GUERRILLA GIRLS** CONSCIENCE OF THE ART WORLD
 532 LAGUARDIA PLACE, P237, NY, NY 10012
 WWW.GUERRILLAGIRLS.COM

Then in the 1980s, women artists protested the disparity between male and female artists. By using posters and other inexpensive means, the Guerrilla Girls posted billboards in Humorous protest.

The GUERRILLA GIRLS, The Advantages of Being A Woman Artist, 1988. Poster.

Aids Crisis

On June 5, 1981 the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) published a Morbidity and Mortality Weekly Report describing cases of a rare lung infection, *Pneumocystis carinii* pneumonia, in five young, previously healthy, gay men in Los Angeles.

All the men have other unusual infections as well, indicating that their immune systems are not working: two have already died by the time the report is published. This edition of the MMWR marks the first official reporting of what will become known as the AIDS epidemic.



A poster with the names and faces of some men who died of aids in the 1980s.

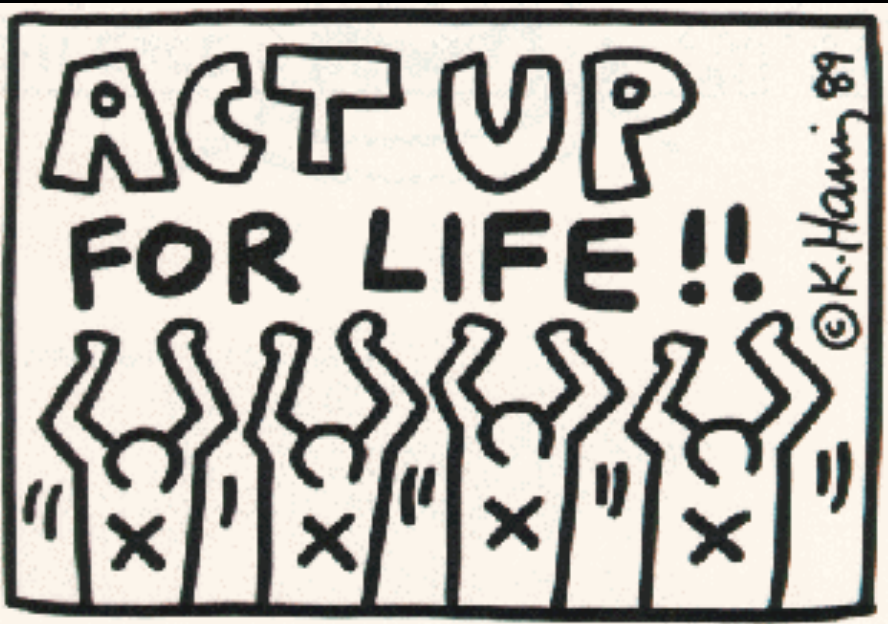
There were many artists making art about this serious crisis as they were dying across the country.



ACT UP

ACT UP is a diverse, non-partisan group of individuals united in anger and committed to direct action to end the AIDS crisis. We advise and inform. We demonstrate. WE ARE NOT SILENT

Notice the poster with Keith Haring Art.



Keith Haring

Keith Haring, perhaps the most famous graffiti artist, was diagnosed with AIDS in 1988. In 1989, he established the Keith Haring Foundation, to provide funding and imagery to AIDS organizations and children's programs.

Haring enlisted his imagery during the last years of his life to speak about his own illness and generate activism and awareness about AIDS.



Artwork and posters to bring attention to AIDS
Keith Haring died in February, 1990.



This is the last slide in the section creating a foundation for our topic. Bring awareness of this history with you to the next section.

Art in Prison Lecture 2

Contemporary Social Artists

This lecture addresses the general definition of Socially Engaged Art.

Contemporary Artists working in this form are discussed as examples.

Readings on the website expand the discussion.

A list of artists is provided for additional research.

ART AS SOCIAL PRACTICE: A Socially Engaged Art

Moves beyond dominant discipline-based art and expressive and visual culture programs, by offering examples of art and education that are engaged with:

1. **context** (teacher and students' surroundings),
2. **contemporary** art (current forms and perspectives)
3. **critical social issues** (the 'going' world and abiding justice-related concerns).

Art and Social Justice Education: Culture as Commons

Inasmuch as all art is created to communicate or be experienced by others, all art is social.

The term 'social practice' denotes the critical detachment of other forms of art-making (primarily centered and built on the personality of the artist and/or making of objects).

This is inherent to socially engaged art, which, by definition, is dependent on the involvement (or action) of others besides the instigator of the artwork.

All art invites social interaction;
yet in the case of Socially Engaged Art, it is the
process itself—the fabrication of the work—that
is social.

While Socially Engaged Art practices are not Social
Work, they may subscribe to the same values. But
artists may make work that ironizes,
problematizes, and even enhances tensions
around those subjects in order to provoke
reflection.

SEA has a double function in that when we make socially engaged artwork, we are not just offering a service to a community, we are proposing our action as a symbolic statement in the context of our cultural history (and art history) and entering into a larger artistic debate.

What and who is art for?

What can art do?

Let's look at a few artists working now in what we might call Social Practice.

Thomas Hirshorn--In the 1980s, Hirschhorn worked in Paris as a graphic artist. He was part of the group of Communist graphic designers called Grapus. These artists were concerned with politics and culture, displaying impromptu creations and posters on the street mostly using the language of advertisement. He left Grapus to create the hypersaturated installations he is known for today, using common materials such as cardboard, foil, duct tape, and plastic wrap, not materials commonly found in art.





Commissioned by Dia Art Foundation, Gramsci Monument was a new artwork by Thomas Hirschhorn, taking place on the grounds of Forest Houses, a New York City Housing Authority development in the Morrisania neighborhood of the Bronx, New York.

This project operated like a temporary community center with radio station, computer room, library, art and activities space, etc. all made of cheap and discarded materials.



<http://www.diaart.org/gramsci-monument/index.php>

The Gramsci Monument opened on July 1 and ran through September 15, 2013. It was open seven days a week, from 10 am to 7 pm. People in the housing project and community were welcome to participate.

<http://www.diaart.org/gramsci-monument/index.php>



Mel Chin believes art can provoke greater social awareness and responsibility so he finds ways to integrate art into people's lives.

Chin was asked by the city of New Orleans to see what an artist might do to help rebuild after Katrina. After Analyzing the soil in the 8th Ward he began, OPERATION PAYDIRT, a massive art/science project to take on lead pollution in the city where soil lead levels are as much as five times the level considered hazardous by the EPA.



Chin created the “Fundred Dollar Bill Project” to raise awareness and encourage Congress to provide necessary funding for the clean up of the lead contamination since the estimated cost is \$300,000,000.

The Fundred Dollar Bill Project is designed to involve 3 million school children and teachers from across the country that creates art for change. Participating children draw or color on specially designed \$100 bill worksheets to create



Rick Lowe—Project Row Houses

Beginning as neighborhood clean up in a condemned neighborhood in Houston, Rick Lowe (artist) soon saw these two blocks of condemned row houses as part of a community that spoke to the African American experience. He began the process to rebuild the neighborhood as an art project.



<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=JHkdQaWt7H8>



Lowe's problem was how do you create that in a place that is regarded by society as having no value.

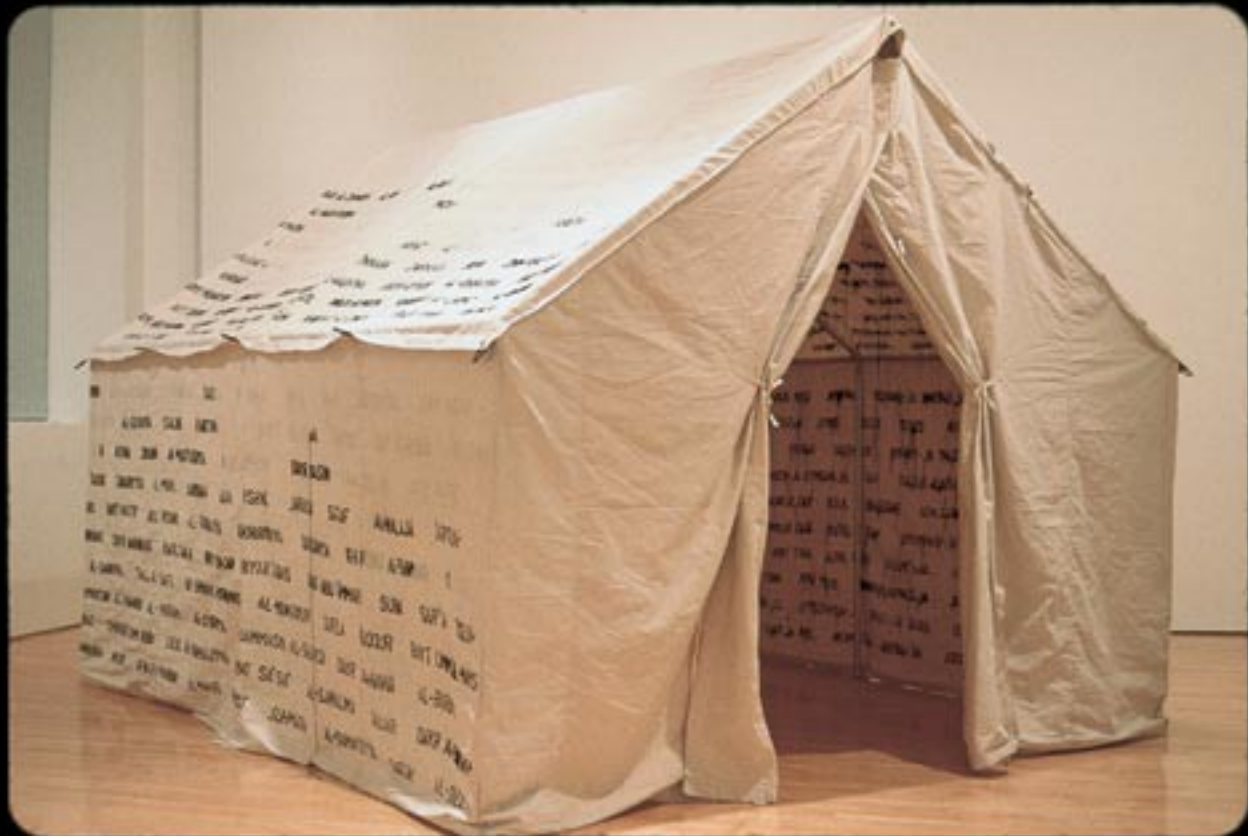
Realizing he needed social services, educators, architects and lots of volunteers, a network was established.

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=JHkdQaWt7H8>



Emily Jakar—

Asks what is it like for a Palestinian-American artist to make art when each day Palestinians are suffering at home because of the Israeli occupation and the current political situation? How can art help bridge borders and open peoples' eyes to the realities of the Palestinians?

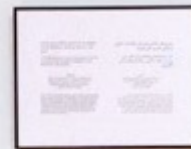


“Memorial to 418 Palestinian Villages which were Destroyed, Depopulated and Occupied by Israel in 1948.” Refugee tent and embroidery thread, 2000.

Jacir asked dozens of Palestinians unable to return to their homeland a simple question: "If I could do anything for you, anywhere in Palestine, what would it be?" She then acted on their requests and documented her actions, including kissing one person's aging mother, walking the streets of Nazareth and eating a favorite dish at a restaurant.



"Go to my mother's house and kiss her for me."



"Go to my mother's grave in Jerusalem on her birthday and place flowers and pray."

Krzysztof Wodiczko

has addressed timely political, social, and psychological issues through his work as an artist for 30 years.

His, *The Homeless Projection*, 1986–1987. is an outdoor slide projection at the Soldiers and Sailors Civil War Memorial, Boston, organized by First Night, Boston. Homeless individuals were interviewed and video taped so their voices could be heard. Audio and video was projected on famous monuments in the city.

<https://www.artsy.net/artwork/krzysztof-wodiczko-the-homeless-projection-soldiers-and-sailors-civil-war-memorial-boston>



“What are our cities? Are they environments that are trying to say something to us? Are they environments in which we communicate with each other? Or are they perhaps the environments of things that we don’t see, of silences, of the voices which we don’t, or would rather not, hear. The places of all of those back alleys where perhaps the real public space is, where the experiences of which we should be speaking, where voices that we should be listening to, are hidden in the shadows of monuments and memorials. ... One of the objectives behind my projections is to bring to light all of those voices and experiences, and to animate public space with them in a kind of inspiring and provocative way—maybe in a way of protest”.

Krzysztof Wodiczko



<http://cwmemory.com/2013/01/02/abraham-lincoln-war-veteran-projection-2012/>

Abraham Lincoln War Veteran Projection, new York, 2012

The public art piece, which gives a voice to soldiers who have served in Iraq, Afghanistan and Vietnam to talk about their experience of war as a projection on the bronze statue of Abraham Lincoln, erected in 1870.

Ashley Hunt—Corrections Documentary Project

We will look more at this project by Ashley Hunt a bit later in the semester. It centers around the growth of the institution of the prison and its centrality to economic and power restructuring and the politics of race. Originally consisting of 10 videos, examining the US prison system and its rapid expansion. The project has grown to include the website, maps projects, additional short videos and written documents (including study materials), including public events, all designed to speak to a variety of different audiences and communities.



But in *9 Scripts from a Nation at War*, Hunt collaborated with Andrea Geyer, Katya Sander and David Thorne. This piece was originally commissioned for Documenta 12 (2007), has since been exhibited at the Tate Modern, and was recently purchased and exhibited at MOMA (January-August, 2012).

It consists of a 10 channel video installation that responds to conditions and questions that have arisen since March 2003, the beginning of the invasion of Iraq by U. S. military forces. Different people affected by the invasion of Iraq tell their varied stories.

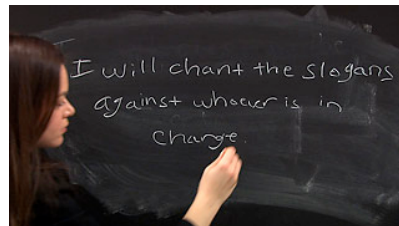


Actors and non-actors who speak a script perform each of the videos: some re-speaking their own words and some reading the words of others. Each is identified as a veteran, a student, a citizen, an actor, a blogger, an interviewer, and a lawyer. 9 Scripts from a Nation at War considers the processes by which we are positioned as 'individuals' in relation to war.

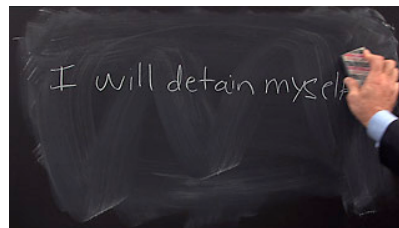
9 Scripts from a Nation at War

Script: Citizen: 248 predictions about what I will do when democracy comes.

[previous](#) • [next](#)



[pics](#) • [video](#)



An empty chalkboard fills the screen. From the left, an arm appears and writes a short promise about the future, in the form of a claim: "I will be a hotbed of insurgency." Another arm enters from the right to erase the statement, and immediately another arm enters from the left to write a new one: "I will ignore the dim whispers of the missing"; and so on. The statements pile up, contradict, collapse, and yet each stands as a valid statement of desire and possibility.

Running Time: 1 hour, 15 minutes, 14 seconds

Performers: Hardhi Harris, Jack Hayflick, James Kaliardos, Carol Neiman, Sangeeta Parekh, Tammy Tunyavongs

[home](#)

[installation views](#)

[project description](#)

[artist bios](#)

[credits](#)

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9 Scripts from a Nation at War • 9 Scripts from a Nation at War • 9 Scripts from a Nation at War • 9 Scripts from a Nation at War •



<http://correctionsproject.com/wordpress/portfolio/notes-on-the-emptying-of-a-city/>
Hunt also created this piece called, *Notes on the Emptying of a City*, about the situation of residents of New Orleans after Hurricane Katrina. Using film footage of the city, discussions with residents and documentation of their resistance, Hunt performed it as a lecture.





<https://vimeo.com/20591681>

Notes on the Emptying of a City is a type of storytelling as Hunt gives his account of experiences in New Orleans while showing video of individuals in the city as they come to terms with their reality.

Listen to his introduction in this vimeo link. It might help you think about your own story.

The art world has never been socially or politically neutral. Given this, many artists are recognizing the ability and responsibility to construct socially conscious practices.

There are many more artists working in social areas, working with communities, collaborating and using their creativity as artists for the social good.

Look at the artists listed on the website. You can link some or just Google them for more information. Also use the links in the lecture to learn more about the artists.

We will look at other contemporary artists and social practice artists later in the semester. This is just a beginning.

Next week we shift over to discussing Prison History and Theory.