ARTLINES WINTER 2021

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Letters from our Co-Editors

Dearest Readers,

This issue of Artlines celebrates a change in our culture – one where the public is becoming more cognizant of racial inequities. 2020 was a pivotal time for the Black Lives Matter Movement, as the year’s protests were the largest with its inclusion of a significant number of allies. In an effort to support the movement, I thought creating an Artlines issue highlighting the socio-political power of art would extend the conversation into 2021. The Black Lives Matter murals that have been painted on streets in cities across the U.S. help the energy that was present this summer live on after all the protestors retreated back to their homes. The murals are a reminder to the protestors that their work was not in vain and to the opposition, this work will continue.

The work the authors in this issue have done allows readers to see varied kinds of injustices that happen and approaches to social justice there are. These women are writing about justice in the form of ableism and capitalism. They are thinking about how we may be complicit in the oppression of others. Oppresses and colonizes people, these authors make us think about how the public can change the way we interact with the world.

The most common way people give up their power is by thinking they don’t have any.” – Alice Walker

My best,
Shantay Robinson
My second transformative act is grappling with "critique" as one of the central pedagogical practices at art and design institutions. Students of color from many of our colleges have offered testimonies: they speak directly to the ways in which silence about racism has impacted their learning. When engaging with "unconventional" frameworks in my classes, student report that this silence is intensified for those who embody and/or examine race and queer genders or sexualities in their work. Although "critical" may take on a different methodology in the humanities classroom, the premise remains the same. As faculty, we seek to support the growth of our students through dialogue, investigation, and interpretation. How could we be reflexive, practice cultural humility, and allow students to feel heard, and their work seen? How can we use a Black queer feminist lens to become more cognizant about our own implicit bias, power, and privilege; in addition, make critical choices about supporting our own learning to better serve our students?

In their 2019 article, “Invading Ethnography: A queer of color reflexive practice,” Anima Adeyeye invites ethnographers to develop a “reflexive practice that disrupts normative representation of gender and sexuality.” How might this approach change critique as teaching practice? Rather than centering a western colonial viewpoint that privileges aesthetic worldviews aligned with whiteness, how do we approach critique with the understanding that we as faculty are implicated in a whiteness project due to the legacies of our fields and institutions? Acknowledging this legacy may lead to a change of strategy when addressing student work and possibly alleviate silence rooted in “discomfort,” “exoticism,” or an unwillingness to “see” race/racialization, engage gender identity/expression, or address sexuality/sexual orientation. I conclude this article with an invitation for all art and design faculty to assess their praxis and design their own liberatory pedagogies that support students, and shape the future as our institutions emerge into a new moment of opportunity.
Protest art on Instagram educates many people about different socio-political issues, and it actively challenges traditional boundaries, hierarchies and roles imposed by those in power.

Being an artist and activist usually goes hand in hand; therefore, it is not unusual for artists to be outspoken about issues such as racism, ableism, classism, ageism, sexism, homophobia, xenophobia, etc. (e.g., Barbara Kruger’s iconic art Untitled for the Women’s March on Washington or the Guerrilla Girls). Protest art is more tangible for everyone due to Instagram.

Yet, some people still consider Instagram the ‘enemy of all cultural things.’ Instagram and social media, in general, make artists and issues more visible for a diverse and international audience. It can be seen as a new channel of communication: carefully curated like an exhibition itself, Instagram is simultaneously more inclusive in terms of who is allowed to show their art and more visible. But many people still underestimate Instagram. While on the surface these images can appear rather simple, there is a powerful message behind them. Instagram should be understood as more than random pictures. With this article, I want to suggest that we should consider Instagram a ‘new form’ of museum because it gives people, whose art is often overlooked, a platform to show their art, introduce socio-political content, and educate people.

Protest art on Instagram educates many people about different socio-political issues, and it actively challenges traditional boundaries, hierarchies and roles imposed by those in power.

Hence, a discussion about protest art should not be reduced to simple aesthetic issues: through visuality and an open-ended poignancy, protest art engages with viewers and is shared across millions of Instagram accounts. Protest art can simply provide aesthetic joy for some Instagram users; however, for the artists, protest art means they can spread their message about injustice and inequality all the while standing up for the voiceless and marginalized. Protest art is powerful and goes beyond the concept of beautiful. It is sometimes open to interpretation, delivered in a direct and explicit manner, and always pushing against traditional boundaries.

An important factor to consider is protest art on Instagram is ‘consumed’ unconsciously. Meaning, many people see art on their feed and are not aware they are seeing protest art, yet they still engage with it. By being able to actively share, communicate, and interchange, protest art on Instagram bypasses international borders; thereby, showing it has the capacity to cut across language barriers. Especially now in the times of a pandemic and a social justice movement, Instagram protest art helps us to understand the injustice as well as the call for action. Instagram serves as a museum full of protest art. It is no longer limited to a place or city but seen by millions of people all over the world.

A great example of protest art on Instagram is the artwork of Amy Purfield-Clark (@illuminating_amy). Amy is an artist and ally who shares many of her illustrations about topics, such as Black Lives Matter, LGBTQIA+, womenhood, etc. She shows the intersectionality of LGBTQIA+, Black Lives Matter movement, and Women’s rights by depicting a Black woman with the slogan “Trans Women Are Real Women!” consequently, projecting that it does not matter what sex you were born with, but it is what you identify as that matters. Acknowledging that transgender women are, first of all, ‘real’ Women, Purfield-Clark goes further to recognize that Black transgender women are one of the most oppressed groups by specifically showing the intersection of race, gender and sexuality. Her illustration ‘the hug’ beautifully summarizes these thoughts. Amy shares her Black Lives Matter art to show support for the movement. She educates people about allyship by including a short explanatory paragraph underneath her art.

The aforementioned shows protest art, shared via Instagram, can connect several issues in the movements, such as the Women’s March and the Black Lives Matter movement. Thus, Instagram as ‘the new embodiment’ of a museum creates new forms of allyship: it provides a network for artists and an affiliation for people who have the same struggles and goals.

I should mention that museums like the MoMA or Tate Modern are slowly starting to use social media, such as Instagram, for virtual exhibitions. While being more inclusive on social media, most museums still stay within the realm of what they would show in the actual physical museum spaces; accordingly, they exclude more radical, direct and simple, understandable protest art. Profit still plays a role in museum programming even during an ongoing pandemic. In the end it feels like Instagram is serving museums as a tool for marketing strategy rather than a place to make art by marginalized groups more visible or create space for allyship. This poses and leaves me with the question ‘is the museum, as a public space, the right venue for protest art?’

By Algen Prestler

Museums are often still particular about whose art gets to be seen in ‘the big halls.’ While the field of art may not be as white and male dominated as it used to be, it is far from perfect. Even today, the art of women, BIPOC and LGBTQIA+ is frequently rendered invisible. It is difficult for marginalized groups to gain exhibition opportunities in a museum space. Social media, especially Instagram, can offer a whole new platform for protest art to connect and engage viewers. With more than 500 million daily users – compared to the roughly 7 million visitors in 2019 reported by The Metropolitan Museum of Art – protest art on Instagram can reach a new, larger and younger audience of 18–24-year-olds. The Metropolitan Museum of Art – protest art on Instagram can offer a whole new platform for protest art to connect and engage viewers. With more than 500 million daily users – compared to the roughly 7 million visitors in 2019 reported by The Metropolitan Museum of Art – protest art on Instagram can reach a new, larger and younger audience of 18–24-year-olds.

To be clear, my aim here is not to discuss what ‘real’ art is: I strongly believe that somehow art can challenge the status quo by simply existing and is thus always political. Moreover, art is often simply defined through taste. Protest art is more fluid with no simple or fixed definition; art produced art is more fluid with no simple or fixed definition; art produced by those in power.

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Immediately after World War II, the U.S. occupied Japan with the intention of transforming the nation into a democratic capitalist ally. Although Japan regained its sovereignty in 1952 (the Ryukus islands not until 1972), the U.S. continues a pseudo-occupation to this day, enabled by the ANPO security treaty which placed U.S. naval bases in Okinawa, Yokosuka, Sasebo, and Atsugi. In the same year, Puerto Rico, a U.S. colony, gained a semblance of self-governance with the introduction of a Puerto Rican constitution. By this time, a U.S. naval base in Vieques, Puerto Rico was under full operation. In both archipelagos, public protests have addressed land ownership conflicts, environmental impacts, and other issues relating to U.S. occupation. This article will examine just a few artworks by contemporary women artists of both Japan and Puerto Rico that critique the U.S. grip on these island nations, drawing attention to the detrimental impacts of the U.S.’ neo-imperial project.

After years of protest, the decision to close the Vieques base was reached in 2001 and the U.S. military completed its withdrawal in 2003. In an interview, artist Jennifer Allora, of duo Allora & Calzadilla, references this withdrawal in relation to their video, Under Discussion: “the land [previously held by the military] has been designated as a federal wildlife refuge, a zone of natural processes in need of protection from humans after years of violent bombardment. This designation entails its own violence, marginalizing island residents who demand that the land be fully decontaminated and turned over to municipal management so that its future can be democratically debated.”

The main character in Under Discussion, played by Diego Andres De la Cruz Gaitan, steers an upside-down table equipped with a boat motor in Viequense waters. Sitting on the boat’s underside, the four table legs protruding upwards like strange masts, De la Cruz Gaitan activates the rumbling motor, driving the makeshift boat along historical fishing routes. One shot depicts De la Cruz Gaitan’s point of view, through the table legs, but most of the video is shot from a distance, alternating between shots of the land, the water, and De la Cruz Gaitan on
As a rhetorical device, the table acts as a line between a binary...
Strengths Based Identity Development Through Dance in Special Education

BY CHELSEA GREENE, TARA MILES, ALIDA ANDERSON

Arts-in-education approaches can counter false hierarchies of knowing and being by liberating students with exceptionalities to express their intersecting identities and to authentically engage as learners. Tara Miles explains how dance arts can support antiracist and culturally responsive pedagogies that dismantle prevailing, “ontological stances on culture” by: embracing culture as dynamic and intersectional; debunking normalcy; valuing humans with disabilities as culture; and embodying disability. Miles exemplifies each of these tenets in her experience, celebrating her identities in and through dance arts and supporting self-advocacy, as well as access to inclusive education. She explains, “I identify as a Deaf Black woman. I identify first as Black because that’s the first thing you see. I’m gonna follow that. I’m gonna follow that with accepting who they are as people.” Miles uses her creativity to help her students have pride and comfort in their growing self-awareness.

Miles explains how many Deaf people go through challenges in terms of inclusivity in educational workplaces. In recalling her school experiences, “They didn’t really have full access or understand what full access meant.” Miles spent part of her college time advocating for access and interpreters in the classroom to support her learning and growth. Even in places where a Deaf person’s resume, expertise, and ability should shine, Miles finds that her hearing peers may not trust her leadership or may undervalue her skills.

Miles’ experience and advocacy shows the need for inclusive arts-in-education approaches for students with intersectional identities, emphasizing questions of who has access to the arts and underscoring the importance of arts especially for students with exceptionalities, who may experience marginalization from the start of their school experiences. The arts allow us to transform our education systems and practices to become fully inclusive through culturally responsive and antiracist identity development and expression.

PAGE 5: Title: For the Children, Say My Name Noreen Dean Dresser focuses on ethics and human agency as a curator, artist activist, and writer. Her current work is fire escape drawings using the Psalms as a compositional reference with the problems of global climate, autistic impulsion, economic disparity and human will as undertones of the ancient text. Federal Service, as in the post Sandy work, afforded her art practice a unique observation between government, social and scientific interests. She has exhibited in the tri-state, California, and Europe. And she is the Director of Parlour 153, a visual and performing arts salon in Harlem.

PAGE 12: Title: Strengths-based Identity Development through Dance in special education Chelsea Greene (she/her) is a Student at American University’s MA program in Special Education: Learning Disabilities. Chelsea’s special education passion was ignited by her grandmother, Principal of a school for the Deaf and Blind in Jamaica. Chelsea incorporates dance and arts with her teaching to engage her students. Tara J. Miles is a Manager of Family Education Programs at the Laurent Clerc Center at Gallaudet University, Washington DC. She is Adjunct Professor of Social Work at Gallaudet and is focused on family partnerships, Deaf education, and school collaboration. Alida Anderson (she/her) is Associate Professor in the School of Education at American University with background and interest in visual and performing arts approaches to support students’ language and literacy/ies development.

PAGE 6: Title: The Art of a Movement: Protest Art How Instagram can serve as a Museum Aileen Priester (she/her) is a zine documenting visual arts in the tri-state, California, and Europe. And she is the Director of Parlour 153, a visual and performing arts salon in Harlem.

PAGE 8: Title: On and Under U.S. Occupation Women Artists in Japan and Puerto Rico Gabrielle Tillenburg (she/her) is a first-year MA/PhD student studying modern and contemporary Caribbean and diasporic art. Her interests include artist activism in independence movements, interpretations of time in photographic media, and contemporary use of craft materials. Prior to enrolling at University of Maryland, she worked as the Exhibitions Coordinator at Strathmore from 2015-2020. Her curatorial projects have included Soft Serve Willow Street Gallery, public art installations at Torpedo Factory, and Past Process at Strathmore. As a 2019–2020 Faith Flanaigan Fellow with Art Table DC, she co-authored In Defense of Art, a zine documenting visual arts in the Washington, DC area.