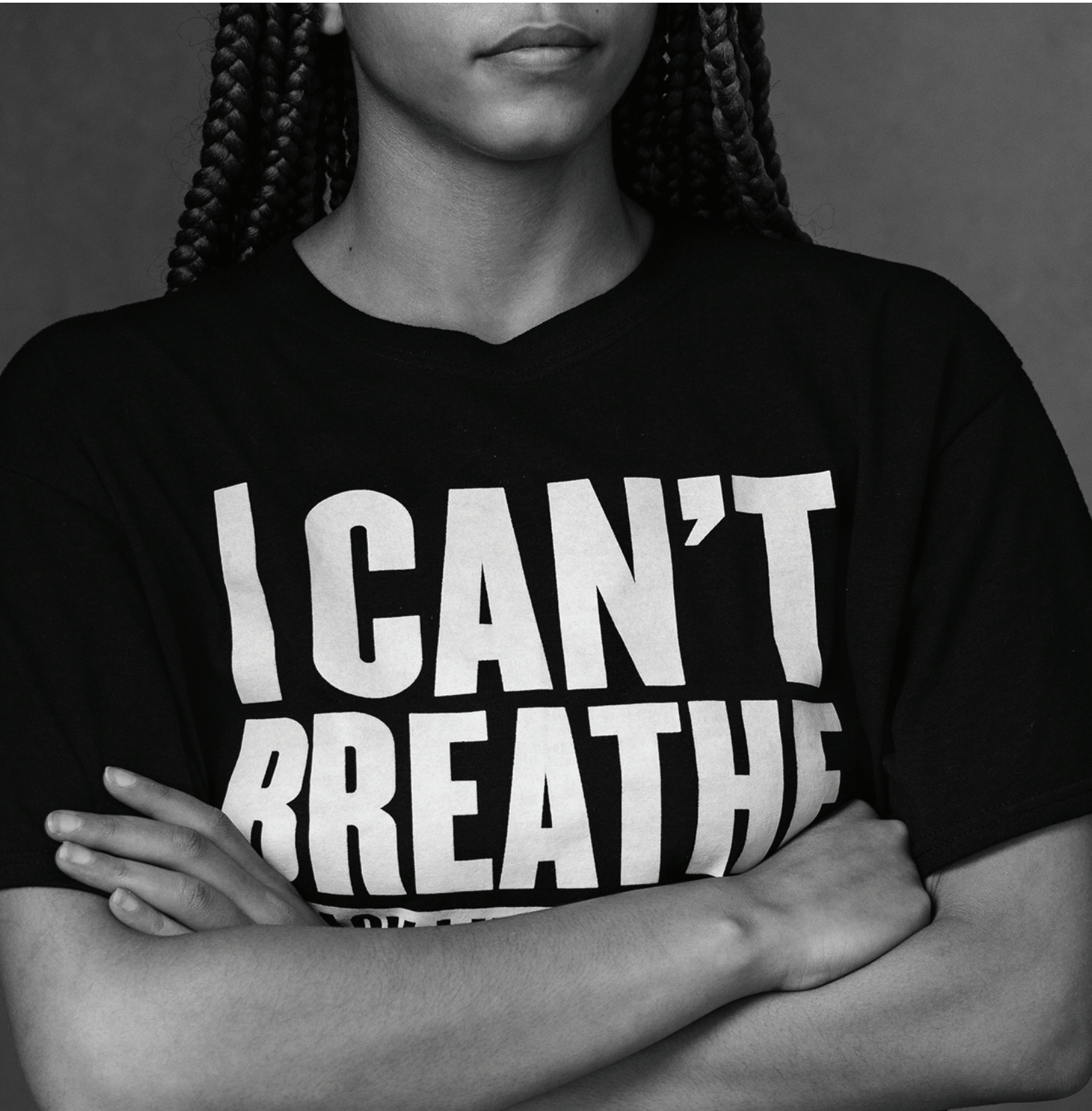


ARTLINES



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On The Cover
WCA member Maundy Mitchell's work titled, Nakiya, is featured cropped on the cover. See left image for full view. Cover image ©Maundy Mitchell

ARTLINES

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WOMEN'S
CAUCUS
for ART

Mission

The mission of the Women's Caucus for Art is to create community through art, education, and social activism

Letters from our Co-Editors

*Hands up, don't shoot
I can't breathe*

*Say her name
Say his name*

*Black Lives Matter
No justice/No peace*

*These chanted phrases
punctuated the humid, op-
pressive summer air of 2020.*

Voices carried demands and

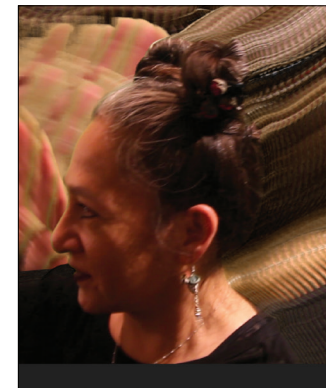
words conveyed pain. The marches for racial justice have subsided, but the hard work to achieve racial equality continues. Artlines winter issue addresses the methodology of art in tandem with socio-political turbulence. Feminist art writers assess some evolving factors in the march for social equity: community engagement, education, and historical critical analysis. An art historical perspective reminds us that power imbalances of colonialism and capitalism contribute to social inequities. Artists, acting as educational signposts, visually record history. In this issue authors, who are educators, consider reframing pedagogy to meet intersectionality; thereby responding to the multiplex issue of identity. Outside formal classrooms, education dons different modalities of social practice art to shed light upon socio-political inequities. A look at avenues of community engagement such as Instagram and murals reveal their ability to disseminate messages of social justice to broad and diverse audiences. Artists, struggling with a discordant world, suffused 2020 with images: memorial portraits, gestures of power, and body politic. The articles in the Artlines winter issue remind us that images and words matter; they can sway, provoke, and inspire activism. By concentrating on the broader implications of activist arts and social justice, Artlines ultimately offers the reader – hope.

*Transformation
Mentorship*

*Allyship
Self-advocacy*

*Inclusion
Intersection*

–Rosemary Meza-DesPlas



Dear 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. helps 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 art as a tool for social change existing not only in the U.S. but globally. By telling stories of people with disabilities who overcome the odds to explaining how capitalism oppresses and colonizes people, these authors make us think about how we may be complicit in the oppression of others. And once we understand our role in other's oppression, we 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

Transformative Arts/ Transformative Acts:

BLACK QUEER FEMINIST ART AND DESIGN PEDAGOGY

BY DR. MEL MICHELLE LEWIS

This tumultuous moment has called art and design institutions to grapple with racial justice, gender equity, and queer advocacy. The confluence of multiple crises, including the COVID-19 pandemic, strained budgets and furloughs, uprisings for racial justice on campus and beyond, and the reemergence of critical conversations about Title VII and Title VI, requires transformative acts. These are no longer minor “diversity” issues inconsequential to an art and design education; rather, they are challenges central to the very mission, vision, and survival of our institutions. What can art and design faculty do? The urgency of this question has motivated me to re-examine the dimensions of my own pedagogy, and my role in institutional transformation.

My first transformative act has been to engage in a self-study by assessing my alignment with the mission, vision, and tenants of the institution. Even when these are aspirational at best, there are ways in which we can enact these commitments in our own classrooms.

My second transformative act is grappling with “critique” as one of the central pedagogical practices at art and design institutions.

able, and joyful world, activated and enriched by artists, designers, and educators who are valued for their leadership and imagination.” With this in mind, I have reviewed my syllabi, learning outcomes, and assignments.

I take a “theory in the flesh” approach that centers the lived experiences and material realities of queer and trans people of color (QTPOC); my courses seek to foster MICA’s commitments, and perhaps, take them a step further. I believe that “transgressive” and “critical” pedagogies rooted in the humanities are adaptable and responsive to the interests and needs of socially engaged artists, designers, and makers. In her groundbreaking book, first published in 1994, *Teaching to Transgress: Education as the Practice of Freedom*, renowned Black feminist bell hooks writes, “Teaching is a performative act. And it is that aspect of our work that offers the space for change, invention, spontaneous shifts, that can serve as a catalyst drawing out the

unique elements in each classroom.” Faculty might further explore what an embodied and active investment in transformative teaching might mean. What changes to your pedagogical project may further serve your students and the broader community as they pertain to racial justice, gender equity, and queer advocacy?

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 “intersectionality” 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 “critique” 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 Adjepong invites ethnographers to develop a “reflexive practice that disrupts normative representations 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 silences 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.

For the Children, Say My Name

BY NOREEN DEAN DRESSER

The Summer of 2020 in New York, a Black Lives Matter mural commissioned by Nikoa Evans-Hendricks, the Executive Director of Harlem Park to Park, was painted on Adam Clayton Powell Avenue between 125th street and 127th street. The mural celebrates Black love as it ripples down the full length of the street. Omo Misha was selected as one of the eight artists for one side of the mural, community groups for the other. Misha supported the Black Lives Matter Movement prior to George Floyd’s murder.

Omo Misha’s (“Misha’s children” in Yoruba) led in the development of two letters of the mural – K and L. Misha’s letter K is colored with a rouge-tinged rose. Black letters inside the K read “I MATTER” with a bright red heart across a white background right above an image of a young concerned face. The text, “I CAN’T BREATHE,” pushes against an image of a caretaker and small child to its left. At the Top of the K, are the words “Silence is Violence.” Placed diagonally at the bottom of the letter are the words “United We Stand” with flowers beneath it.

The L pallet is sage green as more phrases edge the viewer into inquiry. “I CAN’T BREATHE”

America, why need I ask for a future and what again are we facing?

Harlem Park to Park continues the legacy of Black life in Harlem...

is composed of black letters outlined in white. A drawing of a young face recoils, resists, and ponders with the hairline of Lady Liberty. Across from it is a searching young face asking, “AM I NEXT?” A brilliant bold Black lettered “AM” ends and anchors the letter L. Misha commands the composition with simple lines that hold the gravity of hope as yet again we ask: “America, why need I ask for a future and what again are we facing?”

Misha’s motif of children is a compelling familiar decision in the tradition of African American Art. Charles White’s, *I Have a Dream* (1976), alerts the viewer to the future of a child as a positive affirmation in human endeavor. Misha’s color pallet recalls Adrienne W. Hoard *Le Phoenix* (1988). And like Misha, Hoard was a committed teacher of the community’s artistic wealth as was cited by Samella Lewis in *African American Art and Artists*. In Christie’s 2020 online exhibition, *Say it Loud*, curated by Destinee Ross-Sutton, children were featured in the art. Misha’s commitment to the youth is illustrated by inclusion and mentorship of her mural assistant, Kia Andalina Rogers,

who worked alongside her mixing paint, pouring, and following outlines.

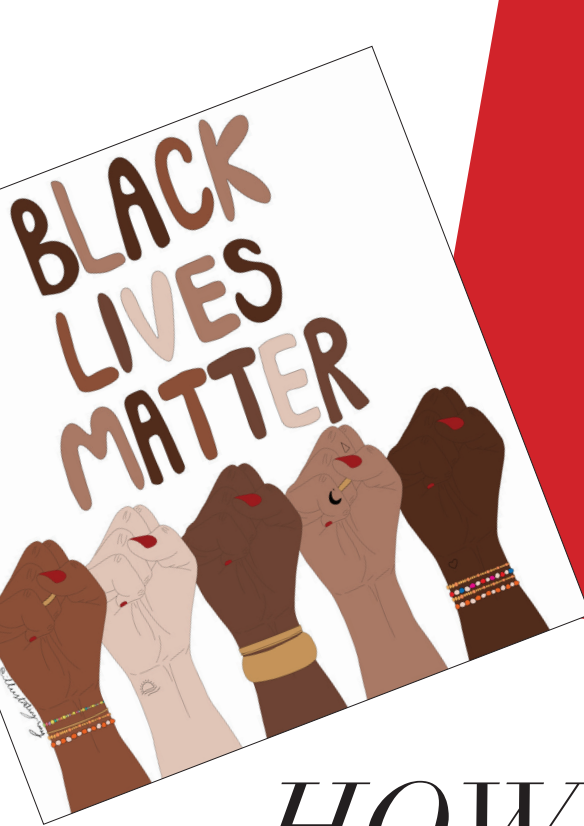
Harlem Park to Park continues the legacy of Black life in Harlem through politics, music, literature, drama, and the visual arts.

IMAGES © DONN THOMPSON



IMAGE © ADELA C. LICONA





The Art of a Movement: Protest Art

HOW INSTAGRAM CAN SERVE AS A MUSEUM

BY AILEEN PRIESTER

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. Even the searches for protest art, such as inequality icons, on Instagram went up by 465 percent in 2020.

To be clear, my aim here is not to discuss what ‘real’ art is: I strongly believe that somehow *all* 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 for demonstrations, such as posters, costumes, billboards, simple illustrations, performances, and issue-oriented campaign art, can function as protest art.

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 aesthetics: through visually and an open-ended poignant message, protest art resonates 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.

Protest art is powerful and goes beyond the concept of beautiful.

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 (@illustrating_amy). Amy is an artist and ally who shares many of her illustrations about topics, such as Black Lives Matter, LGBTQIA+, wom-

anhood, 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 and multiple 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 start-

TRANS WOMEN
ARE REAL
WOMEN!



ing to use social media, such as Instagram, for virtual exhibitions. While being more inclusive on social media, most museums 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?’

Works Cited: ¹Jenn Chen, “Important Instagram Stats You Need to Know for 2020,” SproutSocial, August 5, 2020. www.sproutsocial.com/insights/instagram-stats. ²“The Met Welcomed More Than 7 Million Visitors in Fiscal Year 2019.” Last modified July 10, 2019, Accessed November 23, 2020. www.metmuseum.org/press/news/2019/fy-2019-attendance. ³Chen, SproutSocial. ⁴Michela Zingone. “Instagram as a Digital Communication Tool for the Museums: A Reflection on Prospective and Opportunities through the Analysis of the Profiles of Louvre Museum and Metropolitan Museum of New York,” *European Journal of Social Science* 6, no. 3 (September–December 2019): 56.



IMAGES © AMY PURFIELD-CLARK



On and Under U.S. Occupation

WOMEN ARTISTS IN JAPAN AND PUERTO RICO

BY GABRIELLE TILLENBURG

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 Ryuku 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 with-

drawal 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

IMAGE © CHIKAKO YAMASHIRO
Yamashiro portrays the main
character in the film *Seaweed
Woman*.

the boat. Aerial shots survey the boat's wake through the water, bomb testing site craters, and leftover military structures. A close up of De la Cruz Gaitan connects his gaze to the land and sea surveyed by the camera.

For a moment in the film, he stands on top of the boat floating in the ocean, silhouetted by the bright sun. He evokes power and ownership, but his position is rendered absurd: on top of a floating table. The metaphor for the table is quite evident when considering the conference table as a site of discussion and negotiation, frequently referred to in discussions of equity and inclusion. As a rhetorical device, the table acts as a line between a binary: who is and is not "at the table" - who is and is not holding power. The character is a stand-in for the Viequeses in this extended metaphor: he is not at or away from the table, he is under/over it. Under the table and on top of the boat: he is under discussion. Under the boat and on top of the table: water is under discussion. This dual reversal indicates

"As a rhetorical device, the table acts as a line between a binary..."

the absurdity of placing importance on property over people and the systematic exclusion of Viequeses in the development of land/water use policies before and after

the Navy's departure. The fisherman's occupation as both on and under speaks to the many ways in which fishermen are dually involved and ignored in conversations on land/water use and sovereignty.

Fishermen are among the most impacted by the U.S. naval bases in Puerto Rico and Japan. In Vieques, cancer rates are 27% higher than that of mainland Puerto Rico, speculated as due to residual carcinogenic weapons materials. Fishermen exposed to the polluted water are most at risk. In Japan, the infamous Bikini Atoll Lucky Dragon Incident of 1954 brought awareness to the harmful effects of bomb fallout when U.S. of the Lucky Dragon boat were irradiated. With a long history of anti-base resistance, fishermen on Okinawa continue to protest the presence of American bases today. As recently as this past summer, demonstrators occupied waters surrounding the Henoko base, facing confrontation from the Japanese Coast Guard.

This sort of confrontation makes an appearance in *Seaweed Woman* (2008) by Chikako Yamashiro. A native Okinawan, Yamashiro explores themes relating to Okinawa's history as a colony of Japan and its status now as a pseudo-colony of the U.S. The video component of *Seaweed Woman* is filmed from the perspective of a body floating, its head just above water. The camera, as Seaweed Woman, continuously dips underwater and re-emerges with the force and rhythm of the waves. In succession, the waves hit the camera from a forward direction, then from the left, the right, and above, the artist dipping under the water after each directional force is applied. Implied is the multidirectional force on the Okinawan people: Japan as colonizer, the U.S. as military occupier, and the current conservative Japanese government catering to the desires of the U.S. The waves push Seaweed Woman underwater.



Image description: "Rodriguez uses YouTube videos and a reading of an article recounting Spain's withdrawal from Puerto Rico.

The camera emerges from the water to find a Japanese Coast Guard boat - boats that are used to enforce U.S. Marine exclusion zones in Okinawan waters. After the Coast Guard is seen confronting anti-base protestors, the artist's gaze then turns to the seafloor, where what should be covered in coral reefs and sea life is barren. The camera finds and focuses on a tread, or piece of equipment, long and stretched across the seafloor like a barrier or border, covered in sediment. The soundscape, a continued rhythm of water splash and troubled breath, carries throughout the film, and implies that the artist, the Okinawan body, is barely managing to keep alive against the force of the waves.

The accompanying photographs in which the artist portrays the character of Seaweed Woman were taken in the waters of Henoko. Yamashiro notes that she imagined the character of Seaweed Woman donning a beard of seaweed from the moment she dreamed up her image. Just as Seaweed Woman exists between feminine and masculine, Okinawa and Okinawans occupy a position in-between such binaries: fishermen who rely on the sea as their livelihood expose themselves to waters now toxic from U.S. military experiments; land and waters are Okinawan yet occupied by an external force. The position in-between reveals the absurdity of borders such as those drawn in Okinawa to separate the U.S. occupied areas.

As the surreal and mythical Seaweed Woman, the artist occupies a fluid space. While a border is drawn to separate U.S. occupied areas, water as a property cannot be divided, simultaneously occupying both sides, the in-between, moving from one side to the other with no way of distinguishing one part from the whole. The Seaweed Woman's breath, consistent and indicative of survival, yet strained and indicative of drowning, furthers the tension between the binary, revealing a state of liminality, between life and death. The water pushes and pulls Seaweed Woman between the overwhelming forces of the Japanese government and U.S. Occupation. As a creature tied to the water and as a stand-in for the Okinawan, Seaweed Woman dually threatens the binary system of borders and is subject to its devastating effects.

One of Yamashiro's earlier works, *OKINAWA TOURIST* (2004), consisting of three videos, interrogates the strange duality of the island as host to both U.S. armed forces and tourists. Similarly, Puerto Rican artist Monica Rodriguez calls attention to the power dynamics at play between Puerto Rico and its visiting tourists from the mainland U.S. In *La Evacuación* (2018), Rodriguez compiles video travel blog footage found on YouTube and overlays a reading of journalist William Dinwiddie's 1898 article for *Harper's Weekly* in which he recounts Spain's withdrawal

from the island and the power transfer to the U.S. Army. As a tropical island accessible without a passport, Puerto Rico has been a popular destination for U.S. citizens since the early 1900s. Most recently, Puerto Rico has been visited by thousands of tourists during the Covid-19 pandemic, attracting popular protest by Puerto Ricans calling attention to the lack of re-

"The imperial effects of capitalism are not new."

sources and ability to handle the massive infection rates on the island. In *La Evacuación*, American travelers use the Spanish-style homes in San Juan and 16th century military fort as backdrops for selfies and photo shoots. In their behaviors, accompanied by the imperialist words of Dinwiddie, one can read a cavalier sense of ownership and an ignorance of the violence caused by the colonialism of yesterday, and the pseudo-colonialism of today: the island is their playground, a paradise won as a spoil of war.

resources and ability to handle the massive infection rates on the island. In *La Evacuación*, American travelers use the Spanish-style homes in San Juan and 16th century military

Tourism redoubles a traumatic double colonization: Okinawa and Puerto Rico have been colonized by Japan and Spain respectively, then by the U.S., and now they are beholden to tourism that, after all other forms of self-sustaining economic support have been destroyed by U.S. colonial-capitalist projects, is one of the few industries available to islanders. Emboldened by tax breaks and the fruits of disaster capitalism, crypto-currency venture capitalists have bought up land in Puerto Rico at an alarming rate. Their intention is to establish a city-sized resort for wealthy non-natives. The imperial effects of capitalism are not new. One of the major objectives of the U.S. Occupation in Japan was to establish a democratic society under Cold War capitalist ideology. Much of Japan's subsequent economic success was due to the U.S. military industrial complex, earning income from U.S. bases during the Korean and Vietnam wars.

It is the colonizing force of capitalism that artist Sachiko Kazama explores in her print series, *McColoniald* (2003). Her detailed woodblock prints feature Christopher Columbus online shopping in *McColoniald (World Shopping)*; conquistadors carrying a large McDonald's M alongside a cross in *McColoniald (New Continent Discovery)* - Kazama's version of Theodore de Bry's 1592 engraving depicting Columbus' landing in Hispaniola; and the same M-shape, out of two sets of teeth, overlaid on a stereotypical scene of hula dancers in *McColoniald (Something Hawaiian)*. The works call attention to the voracious global appetite of colonialism and capitalism, relating their histories of world domination and consumption (of goods, resources, labor, and cultures).

Kazama's attention to the colonial ideology, particularly de Bry's vision of a "holy conquest," parallel Rodriguez's use of Dinwiddie's words, read by a male voice with a U.S. accent. The two works position capitalism (and tourism as a capitalist enterprise) as a form of new colonialism. Read collectively, all four works demonstrate how this holy conquest has continued under a new power - U.S. imperialism. The artists offer critical perspectives on the many forms of U.S. occupations (militaristic and economic) in Japan and Puerto Rico, only two of many nations impacted by U.S. interests. Artists such as Allora & Calzadilla, Yamashiro, Rodriguez, and Kazama ask us to question the global effects of a nation maintaining its global power.

¹Jennifer Allora, Sculpture, June 1, 2011, p. 25. ²Valeria Pelet, "There's a Health Crisis on This Puerto Rican Island, but It's Impossible to Prove Why It's Happening," *The Atlantic* (Atlantic Media Company, September 3, 2016), <https://www.theatlantic.com/politics/archive/2016/09/vieques-invisible-health-crisis/498428/>. ³Hoaglund, Linda, "Protest Art in 1950s Japan: The Forgotten Reportage Painters," *The Asia-Pacific Journal* Vol.12, Issue 43, No.1 (2014)



(L) Image description: "Rodriguez uses YouTube videos and a reading of an article recounting Spain's withdrawal from Puerto Rico.

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 intersectional identities and to authentically engage as learners. Tara Miles explains how dance arts can support antiracist and culturally responsive pedagogies that represent and include students. Miles is a Black, Woman, who is Deaf and is a Dancer, Educator, and Advocate who reflects culturally responsive special education principles that dismantle prevailing, “ontological stances on culture” by: embracing culture as dynamic and intersectional¹; debunking normalcy and dismantling racism and ableism²; and embodying disability as culture³. 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. Second my identity is Woman and third is Deaf. Deaf is a bigger part of my identity. It’s a big part of it because it is who I am; it’s how people see me.”

Miles was diagnosed as Deaf in the second grade and grew up struggling to place her new Deaf identity, as is common especially close to the diagnosis. She explains how it changed her: “They [peers] would tease me and immediately I became very shy because now I’m Deaf and I didn’t want to be any different. I wanted to be the same.”

Based on her parents’ suggestion, Miles attended Howard University: “I followed because I’m a Black woman and I identify myself with Black women. I’m gonna follow that of course, naturally.” She continued to push aside her Deaf identity leaving her to struggle in the predominantly hearing popu-

lation at Howard. She explains, “I was just completely lost. And there was a part of myself that started thinking where I wanted to go, what I wanted to do.” This feeling motivated Miles to transfer to Gallaudet University where she found acceptance in her Deafness.

Throughout her journey, Miles developed her identity as a dancer both at Howard University and at Gallaudet University. Now, Miles is a professional Hip Hop dancer and teacher of mainly Black Indigenous People of Color (BIPOC) and supports their journeys to discover their identities. “I teach a lot of different things: my Black identity, who I am, I would show my culture. Some Deaf students have a lot of struggles 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 and workspaces. 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 anti-racist identity development and expression.

¹Alida Anderson, *Arts Integration and Special Education: An Inclusive Theory of Action for Student Engagement*. New York: Routledge, 2015. ²Kathleen A. King Thorius, Federico R. Waitoller, Mercedes A. Cannon, and Tammera S. Moore, “Responsive to What?: Conceptualizations of ‘Culture’ and ‘Culturally Responsive’ in Multiple Voices,” *Multiple Voices for Ethnically Diverse Exceptional Learners*, 18, no. 13. ³Kathryn P. Meadows-Orlans, Donna M. Mertens, and Marilyn Sass-Lehrer, *Parents and their Deaf Children: The Early Years*. Washington: Gallaudet University Press, 2003.



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WRITERS & CONTRIBUTORS

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, autocratic impulses, 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 4 Title: **Transformative Arts/Transformative Acts: Black Queer Feminist Art and Design Pedagogy**

Dr. Mel Michelle Lewis is Associate Professor of Gender/Sexuality & Black/Ethnic Studies, Chair of Studio and Humanistic Studies, and Founding Co-Director of The Space for Creative Black Imagination at Maryland Institute College of Art. Their personal, professional, and political commitments are to overlapping and interlocking queer, trans, nonbinary, intersex, and feminist communities of color. Originally from Bayou la Batre, Alabama, their creative work explores rural coastal queer themes. Dr. Lewis completed their M.A. and Ph.D. in Women’s Studies at the University of Maryland, College Park; they hold an M.S. in Women and Gender Studies from Towson University.

PAGE 6 Title: **The Art of a Movement: Protest Art How Instagram can serve as a Museum**

Aileen Priester (she/her) is a white queer PhD candidate and research assistant at the American Studies Department at the Eberhard Karls University of Tübingen, Germany. She completed her master’s degree in American Studies at the University of Tübingen in November 2019. Her dissertation project “Re-Painting History” focuses on minority female landscape painters of the nineteenth century and their influence on history as well as on today’s America. Her research interests include the nineteenth century, Art, Black Lives Matter, Quakers, and Women Studies.

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 at Willow Street Gallery, public art installations at Torpedo Factory, and Past Process at Strathmore. As a 2019-2020 Faith Flanagan Fellow with Art Table DC, she co-authored *In Defense of Art*, a zine documenting visual arts in the Washington, DC area



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