

Art of Protest, Propaganda & Politics



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Art is often a witness to history, either explicitly or obliquely; it may goad, provoke, condemn, and generally engage political power. Artists have used their creative talents to express dissent, protest injustice and oppression, and to object to actions of the power structure. Visual art, whether high art or simple posters, broadsides or fliers, cartoons, murals, or graffiti have been used effectively to protest inequality and discrimination, to push for change and bring about a more just society. Political cartoons always were an influential method of expressing dissent, both nationally and internationally and had considerable impact on shaping public opinion. Similarly, posters have been widely used by both authorities and protesters to persuade people. Political protest posters are part of a rich tradition of using graphic art to express and propagate dissenting opinions. Cartoonists in newspapers and periodicals expose the idiosyncrasies and corruption of politicians, and protest about everything, especially authority. Other forms of visual dissent are murals and graffiti. Artists often inserted social commentary messages in their work.

Europe, during the first part of the 19th century leading to and following World War I and during the Spanish Civil war, experienced much unrest and calamity, which was reflected in their art. Up to and during World War II both the Axis powers and the Allies made extensive use of graphic art to indoctrinate and mobilize the public.

The 1960s spawned a host of dissent movements: civil rights, Chicano rights, gay rights, Native American rights, a veritable mobilization of minorities. In addition, women's rights, definitely not a minority issue, has come to the fore. The murders of JFK and Medgar Evers in 1963, Malcolm X in 1965, and Martin Luther King and Robert F. Kennedy in 1968 plunged the US in a spiral of violence and political instability. More recently a plague of police killings of unarmed black citizens, especially the murder of George Floyd that was captured on video, and a spate of school shootings have torn apart America's social fabric. Practically all these events and movements stimulated visual art to advance their cause. Is political art protest art? Is it propaganda? Is it activism? Is all art political? You decide. Some of this art is iconic; works like Goya's May 3rd 1808, Kollwitz's The Survivors 1923, Picasso's Guernica 1937, Schneider's Anti-Vietnam War poster 1968, and Haeberle's photo "and babies?" 1969, come to mind when thinking of protest art. Other images were chosen based on artistic merit, originality and personal bias. They are primarily arranged in chronological order, somewhat thematically, and partly by artists. Enjoy!

References

Hughes, Robert, *Goya*, Knopf, 2003

Johnson, Haynes, & Katz, Harry, *Herblock: The Life and Work of the Greatest Political Cartoonist*, W.W. Norton & Co., 2009

Kalir, Jane, *Sue Coe It can happen here*, Galerie St. Etienne, Sept-Dec 2020

Kollwitz, Käthe, & Zigrosser, Carl, *Prints and Drawings of Käthe Kollwitz*, Dover Publications, New York, 1969

Mesch, Claudia, *Art and Politics a small history of art for social change since 1945*, I.B. Tauris, 2013

Minear, Richard H., *Dr. Seuss Goes to War*, The New Press, N.Y. 1999

Rippon, Jo, *The Art of Protest: A Visual History of Dissent and Resistance*, 2020

Siegler, Bonnie, *Signs of Resistance: A Visual History of Protest in America*, Artisan, 2018

Ungar, Irving, Edit., *Arthur Syzk Soldier in Art*, Historicana, 2017

Viveros-Faune, C. *Social Forms: A Short History of Political Art*, David Zwirner Books, 2018

Young, Ralph, *Make Art Not War Political Protest Posters from the Twentieth Century*, NYU Press, 2016

<https://www.nytimes.com/2021/02/11/arts/design/goya-met-museum.html?smid=em-share>

<https://www.loc.gov/exhibits/herblocks-history/one.html>

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Course Schedule

Fall Quarter 2021

- Sept 23 **Introduction:** Course outline, references; Goya & The Disasters of War (Iberian). ~1808-1814
- Sept 30 Votes for Women, Käthe Kollwitz: Never war again! George Grosz New Objectivity. ~1897-1928
- Oct 7 Europe & US between WW I & WW II. Otto Dix, Theodore Geisel (Dr. Seuss). ~1920-1942
- Oct 14 Soldier in art: Arthur Szyk leading up to & including WWII, Spanish Civil war, Mexican independence, Picasso, Orozco, Rivera. ~1937-1954
- Oct 21 Women's liberation, Anti-Vietnam war, Civil Rights, various artists. ~1975-1986
- Oct 28 No class Prof. Al Johnson memorial service
- Nov 4 Immigration, gun control, tobacco lobby, from Nixon to Obama, Herb Block. ~1969-2008
- Nov 11 Sexual harassment, Environment, Police Excesses, Black Lives Matter, from Obama to Trump, Sue Coe. ~2016-2020

All classes will be presented via Zoom each Thursday from 1:00 -2:40 PM with breaks for questions and recess. Slides will be posted by Fromm staff after each week's lecture.