

Art for Social Change

Abstract:

The following resources present a sampling of sites and sources that engage artists, students, art educators, and the community in creating art for the purpose of social change. In lieu of the recent promotional campaign *Kony 2012*, I have chosen to focus around the issue of human rights, addressing violence against women, and promoting peace. The artists I have chosen use their artwork to raise awareness, engage the public, and propose solutions; they are effectively making activist art intended to make a difference in this world. The supporting resources will help art educators prepare lessons that will engage their students in making art for social change.

Artists Creating Work for Social Change:

Greenmuseum. (2010). *Ichi Ikeda*. Retrieved April 11, 2012 from http://www.greenmuseum.org/content/artist_index/artist_id-91.html

Born in 1943 in Osaka, Japan, artist Ichi Ikeda, produces WaterArt Projects to raise global awareness about the gap between water supply and water consumption. Site-specific works and performances like, *80 Liter Water Box (2003)* are intended to simply state that, "water must exist as the fundamental human right for all people." Through international conferences, community activism, and interactive WaterArt installations Ikeda aims to help restore the Earth's most precious resource and deliver our planet safely into the future.

Holzer, N. (2010). *Susan Plum, Syncretizing the Invisible Honoring Light*. Retrieved from <http://www.visualseen.net/untitled8.html>

Mexican-born, Susan Plum is an esoteric installation artist who has been producing weavings of glass and light since 1996. Her works embody fragility and complexity. She draws inspiration from the earthly elements (air, water, land, and fire) as well as ancient creation myths of indigenous spirituality. Plum's installation, *Luz y Solidaridad/Light and Solidarity, (2006)* was created to deeply honor the women of Juarez whose daughters were violently abused, murdered or missing. This piece was exhibited in 2008 in "The Missing Peace: Artists Consider the Dalai Lama" exhibition. This piece evolved out of her love for her native Mexico, her social activism, and her belief in art as a vehicle for transformation.

Nancy Hoffman Gallery. (2012). *Hung Liu*. Retrieved from <http://www.nancyhoffmangallery.com/artist/display/6/Hung-Liu>

Hung Liu was born in Changchun, China in 1948. She grew up in Beijing during the time of communist force and spent much of her childhood in the countryside. In

1972, when schools reopened in China, she was admitted to the Revolutionary Entertainment Department of Beijing's Teachers College to study art and education. She moved to the US in 1984 to pursue her MFA in painting at UC, San Diego. She is known for paintings drawn from Chinese historical photography and what she calls the "mythic poses" which represent elemental human activities such as laboring, eating, journeying, leaping, fighting, dreaming, and carrying one's burden. Her layered paintings superimpose traditional Chinese birds and natural motifs with contemporary concepts of gender, history and Chinese politics.

Roth, D. M. (2009). *Claudia Bernardi @ 40 Acres*. Retrieved on April 11, 2012 from <http://www.squarecylinder.com/tag/claudia-bernardi/>

Born in Buenos Aires, Claudia Bernardi immigrated to the U.S. in 1979 and earned an MA and MFA at U.C. Berkeley. After which she joined her sister as a member of the Argentine Forensic Anthropology Unit, which exhumed the remains of civilians who were murdered during the civil wars that tore apart El Salvador and Guatemala. During this time she taught art to children not far from the excavation site. Her multi-layered monoprints are a reflection of this experience. One might expect heavy violent imagery based on her experience, but instead her bright, luminous prints emphasize the persistence of hope among the survivors. Influenced by the abstract color fields of Mark Rothko and Paul Klee she aims to pull viewers into emotional and psychological states that are more about transcendence than violence.

TEDTalks. (2009). *Thelma Golden: Curator*. [Video file]. Retrieved from http://www.ted.com/talks/lang/en/thelma_golden_how_art_gives_shape_to_cultural_change.html

Curator Thelma Golden grew up in Queens, New York. Early on she knew that she wanted to become a curator. Passionate about issues of cultural identity and race she wanted to organize frame artists around themes of cross-cultural dialogues and expressions of identity. Between 1980 and 1987 she earned a BA in Art History and African-American Studies from Smith College. Golden's first curatorial position was at the Studio Museum in Harlem in 1987, she then worked as curator for the Whitney Museum of American Art from 1988 to 1998. Golden organized many notable exhibitions, including "*The Black Male*" in 1994. She keeps an eye on young and developing (*Post-Black*) artists who look back at history and actively redefine black-culture in a global 21st century context.

Web Resources for Educators:

Art Works for Change. (2012). *Art Works for Change*. [Online Newsletter]. Retrieved from <http://www.artworksforchange.org/>

This website features contemporary artworks and exhibitions, curated by founder Randy Rosenberg, that promote critical social change, raise global awareness of

environmental issues, and harness art's power to provoke conversation and inspire action. Randy Rosenberg is the Executive Director and Chief Curator for Art Works for Change, which has organized traveling exhibitions since 2005. Art Works for Change projects serve as both a forum and a catalyst to galvanize support and action around pressing issues like human rights, gender equality, social justice, and environmental sustainability.

Mutual Art. (2012). *Proactive Art: Addressing Violence Against Women*. Retrieved from <http://www.mutualart.com/OpenArticle/Proactive-Art--Addressing-Violence-again/1E33ED169C449E6F>

This article outlines the artists involved in the ongoing exhibition, *Proactive Art: Addressing Violence Against Women*. Randy Rosenberg curated this exhibition in collaboration with the nonprofit Art Works for Change. The participating artists are part of an international art community and represent geographically diverse regions. They were chosen for their capacity to engage their audience with content-driven artwork in a way that raises their awareness of the ongoing global concern of violence against women.

Russell, J. (March 5, 2012). *Kony 2012*. [Video file]. Retrieved from <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Y4MnpzG5Sqc>

This touching video has reached over 87 million viewers in just over a month and raised most of its viewers to action or *reaction*. Director Jason Russell and many contributors produced this film to raise public awareness of the actions of the Lords Resistance Army (LRA) in the D.R. Congo, Central African Republic and South Sudan over the last two decades. The film also raises a call to action that encourages young people to come together against these global atrocities by spreading the word through social media, participating in "Cover the Night" on April 20th and by pressuring the US government to take action in Africa.

The Dalai Lama Foundation. (2012). *The Missing Peace: Artists Consider the Dalai Lama*. [Online curriculum guide], Retrieved from <http://www.dalailamafoundation.org/programs/the-missing-peace/>

The Missing Peace: Artists Consider the Dalai Lama was a major art exhibition curated by Randy Rosenberg in 2006. The exhibition toured globally until 2011 and featured works from 88 artists representing more than 25 countries. In conjunction with the exhibition, The Dalai Lama Foundation developed a values-oriented curriculum for middle and high school age students. The curriculum presents art as a lens through which to see our common humanity and to move from inspiration to continued study and engagement.

Women Environmental Artists Directory. (2012). *Women Environmental Artists Directory*. Retrieved from <http://weadartists.org/>

Started in 1996, Women Environmental Artists Directory (WEAD) is a collaborative of 10 activist women artists (Board of Directors) who have become a

creative force through publications, outreach programs, and establishing this interactive resource guide. Their goal is to provide a platform for women environmental artists to put forth their own perspective, assert their own creative voice, and to further the field of ecological and social justice art. WEAD celebrates a spectrum of differences under the umbrella called *ecofeminist* art.