

Minneapolis Institute of Art

Art and Activism

Mia

Art and Activism: Tour Description

Discover how art focuses on issues, communicates multiple perspectives, and asks challenging questions. Learn how artists use their voices and imagery to inspire activism and bring about social change. Examine how artists invoke empathy, which involves looking outside ourselves and trying to identify with the experiences of others.

Ask teachers to describe the impact they hope to have on their students, and most will say something like:

I want my students to grow into responsible citizens. I want my students to participate in society in an active, productive way.

And maybe: I want my students to change the world.

But how many of us know how to make that happen? Can we teach students how to change the world? If this question has been in the back of your mind, the resources in this collection will help.

<https://www.cultofpedagogy.com/social-justice-resources/>

Things to keep in mind when exploring social justice issues:

Encourage students to examine their own backgrounds, biases, and beliefs (and also examine your own) as an essential component of any social justice discussion. We view every social justice issue through the lens of our own experience, and these different lenses can block our growth and learning if we aren't aware of them. If we fine-tune our self-awareness, our individual lenses can richly inform conversations and help us understand issues on a much deeper level, promoting learning directly from each other.

Things to keep in mind when exploring social justice issues:

Know that not all students feel the same way about these issues. Many artists/activists speak from a liberal, progressive viewpoint. That doesn't mean you can't talk about controversial issues; in fact, teaching students how to respectfully discuss an issue with people who don't see things the same way is a lesson that will serve them for the rest of their lives.

Learning for Justice*: Standards for Action

*formerly Teaching Tolerance, founded 30 years ago by the Southern Poverty Law Center

- Students will express empathy when people are excluded or mistreated because of their identities and concern when they themselves experience bias.
- Students will recognize their own responsibility to stand up to exclusion, prejudice and injustice.
- Students will speak up with courage and respect when they or someone else has been hurt or wronged by bias.

Learning for Justice: Standards for Action

- Students will make principled decisions about when and how to take a stand against bias and injustice in their everyday lives and will do so despite negative peer or group pressure.
- Students will plan and carry out collective action against bias and injustice in the world and will evaluate what strategies are most effective.

<https://www.learningforjustice.org/frameworks/social-justice-standards>

Today we will explore works of art that:

- focus on societal and cultural issues
- communicate multiple perspectives
- ask challenging questions
- center artists' voices and imagery to inspire activism and bring about social change
- invoke empathy, which involves looking outside ourselves and trying to identify with the experiences of others

We'll look at works of art through four lenses that help us focus on principles of social justice:

- Equity
- Access
- Participation
- Human rights



Morris Topchevsky

Topchevsky created art to forthrightly protest discrimination, oppression, poverty, and intolerance, conveying his conviction of the power of art to improve society.

shwartzcollection.com/artist/morris-topchevsky/

Undated photograph, Morris Topchevsky Papers,
University of Illinois at Chicago, Richard J. Daley Library

Morris Topchevsky, *Strike Breakers*
(*Company Violence*), 1937, Oil on
canvas, 2018.69.2
Gallery 377







Gordon Parks

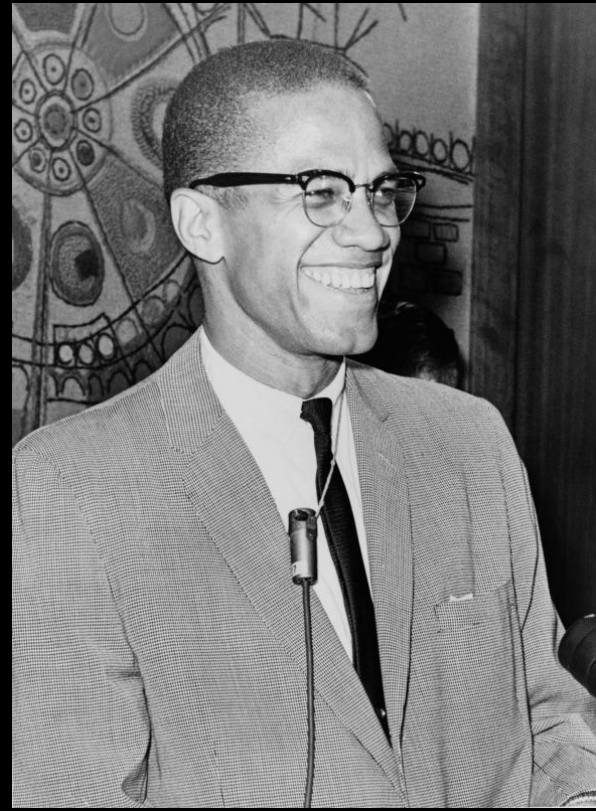
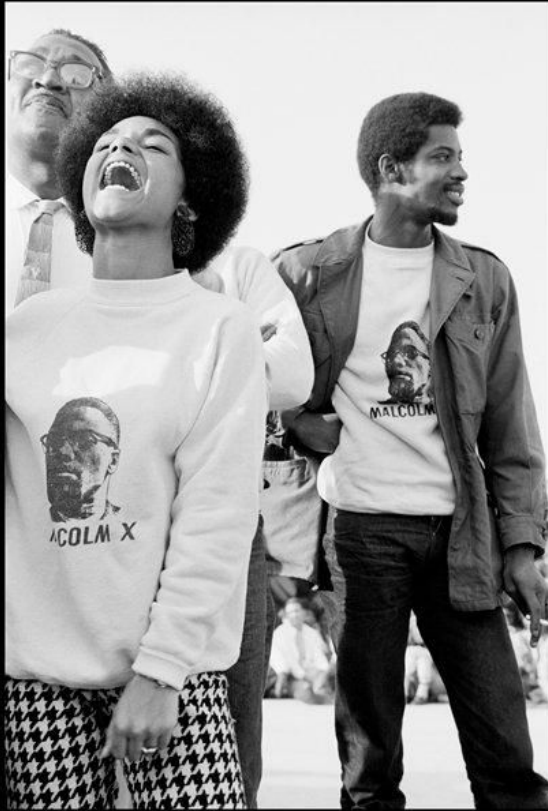
“I saw that the camera could be a weapon against poverty, against racism, against all sorts of social wrongs. I knew at that point I had to have a camera.”



Gordon Parks, *Untitled, Harlem, New York, 1963* (printed 2020)
Gordon Parks, Archival pigment print, 2020.55.3
© The Gordon Parks Foundation
Gallery 365



Gordon Parks, *Untitled (Watts, California)*, 1967 (printed 2020)
Gelatin silver print, 2020.55.2
© The Gordon Parks Foundation
Gallery 365



https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Malcolm_X

Cy Thao

Thao's intent in "The Hmong Migration" series was to expose the difficulties, menaces, and effects of any migration process.

"I want the series to educate the younger generation, to have some closure with the generation that went through the war, and hopefully become a historical document for generations to come."



Activist in the Hmong community who used art to express his perspective on participation in American life and politics. He served in MN House of Representatives from 2002-2010.



#48: “While there are negative effects there are also positive ones. The young are grasping and learning American ideas fast. Many are using their skills and knowledge to help and speak for our community.”

Cy Thao, #48, 1993–2001, Oil on canvas, 2010.55.48, © Cy Thao

Kevin Pourier



<https://usfws.medium.com/american-indians-and-conservation-artist-series-featuring-kevin-pourier-eea54dca3e59>

Minneapolis Institute of Art



Sitting Bull, 1883

<https://www.kevinpourier.com/about-artists>



“Looking at . . . a time when we were having everything taken from us; our way of life, our land, our buffalo, spirituality and our people were being killed, one has to understand what kind of turmoil a leader would be going through, but yet he had the awareness and understanding of all things even the little things like butterflies.”

“One of the main influences in my life has been the monarch butterfly. It came to me during one of our Sacred Ceremonies. Ever since then, I have had an enhanced awareness of their presence wherever I go. . . I have educated many people who have seen my work about the struggles these things have endured because of the behaviors of people.

We have to commit to conservation for the survival of nature. My whole life as an artist has been committed to studying and paying attention to everything they do in their lives. . . I have changed peoples’ minds about these small and large beings and made them see the importance of their part in the whole scheme of things.”



Kevin Pourier, *Mixed Blood Guy*,
2009, Buffalo horn, colored
minerals, 2011.49

Gallery 259





Bisa Butler

2022 Recipient of Gordon Parks Foundation Fellowship in Art

We still struggle with social ills that we want to address. But not “Oh, poor them; . . . I’m more interested in seeing “look what we can do. . . [We] are a reflection of our times. . . and after you’re gone all that’s left is that reflection.”



Bisa Butler, *I Know Why the Caged Bird Sings*, 2019, Cotton, wool, and chiffon, quilted and appliquéd, 55 × 120-1/2 in, promised gift on long-term loan to Mia L2021.199
G373





<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=dCkNMK2QtUY&t=26s>

Shahzia Sikander



Recipient of 2006 MacArthur
Foundation Fellowship

Photo credit: John D. and Catherine T.
MacArthur Foundation

Shahzia Sikander, *Arose*, 2020,
Glass mosaic with patinated
brass frame, 2021.10
G243

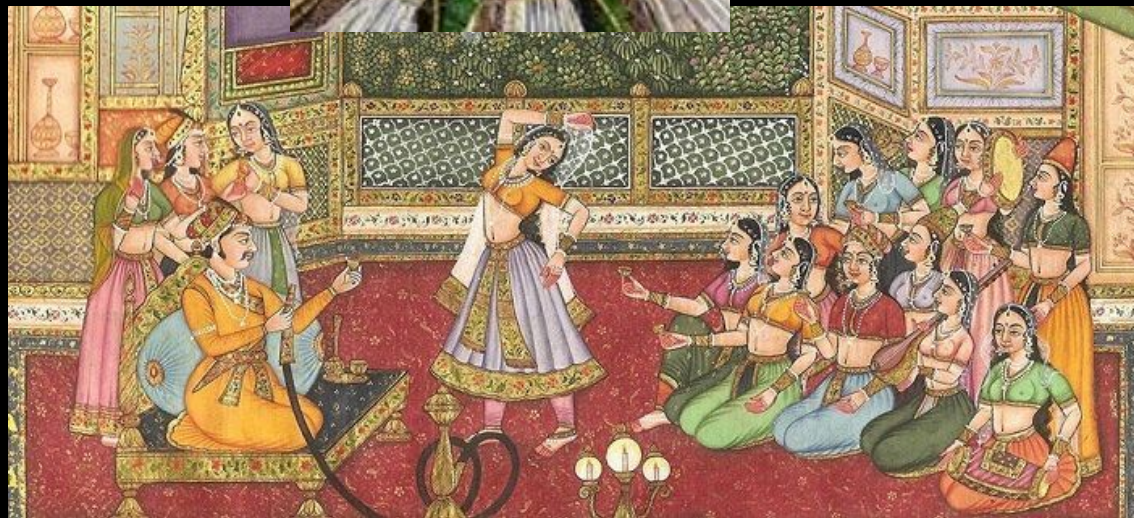




L: www.thompson-morgan.com

R: pbs.org





www.culturalindia.net/indian-art/paintings/miniature.html

Margarete Schütte-Lihotzky



Lihotzky, the first female architect in Austria, constantly and tirelessly pioneered change through her works. In this way, she truly broke the many gender stereotypes that were prevalent in her time and even today.

–rethinking the future.com

https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Margarete_Sch%C3%BCtte-Lihotzky

Margarete Schütte-Lihotzky,
Frankfurt Kitchen, 1926-1930,
Kitchen cabinetry and stove,
2004.19, Gallery 378



Christi Belcourt



“Everything—the plants, insects, winds, stars, rocks, animals, us—is a giant web of pure spirit. . . .The spirit world surrounds us at all moments and is present in all things. . . .The mystery of this planet and this universe is too vast and too powerful to even begin to understand. All I know is that all life, even the rocks, need to be treated with respect.”

“The sacred laws of this world are of respect and reciprocity. When we stop following them, we as a species are out of balance with the rest of the world.”

<https://www.cbc.ca/news/canada/sudbury/m%C3%A9tis-artist-christi-belcourt-s-work-featured-in-valentino-fashions-1.3136219>

Christi Belcourt, *It's a
Delicate Balance*, 2021,
Acrylic and oil on canvas,
2021.30

Gallery 259





Belcourt uses beautiful imagery as a starting point for examining issues related to the environment, climate change, and potential species extinction.

How would you use her work to discuss how humans impact these issues?

Monks of the Gyuto Tantric
University, *Yamantaka Mandala*,
1991, Colored silicate and adhesive
on wood, 92.44, Gallery 277

