

SOCIAL AND POLITICAL ISSUES ART KIT

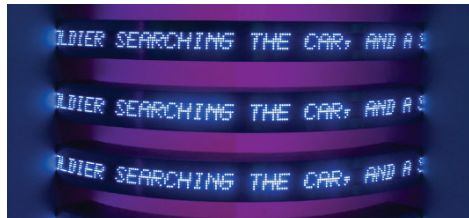
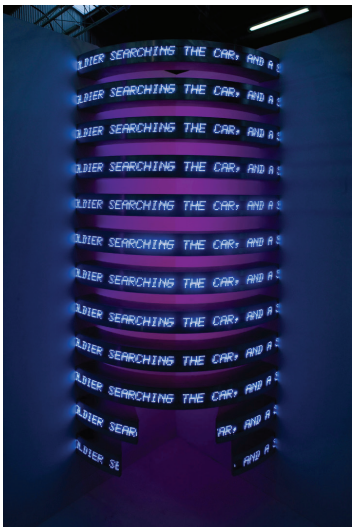
In this art kit, we will explore **social and political art**. Social and political art visually highlights issues in communities and the world. For example, art can call attention to unfair treatment of people, animals, and our environment. Think of the issues you may have seen on the news or issues that people are protesting about in your community. Sometimes artworks are calls to action for change. Artists use bold text, symbols, and images to clearly convey their messages. **Barbara Kruger, Jenny Holzer, and Shirin Neshat** are a few artists in the Broad collection known for creating social and political art.

LET'S BUILD OUR ART KNOWLEDGE! WORDS TO KNOW:

- ✓ **Political art**
Art made to share concerns about political issues, such as climate change, civil rights, and immigration
- ✓ **LED signs**
Signs made up of bright LED lights, usually used for store signs and billboards since they are visible even in the daylight
- ✓ **Social art**
Art created to promote change in a community
- ✓ **Mass media**
Technology made to reach a wide audience—including advertisements, newspapers, magazines, radio, television, and the Internet
- ✓ **Consumerism**
The focus on obtaining more and more clothes, toys, and other desirable items
- ✓ **Oppression**
Unfair, unjust, or cruel treatment
- ✓ **Exile**
Forced to leave one's country
- ✓ **Setting**
The area or surroundings where something takes place
- ✓ **Feminism**
The belief that women and men should have equal rights and opportunities
- ✓ **Subject**
A person or thing that is shown or described

In the late 1970s, **JENNY HOLZER** started making art in public spaces, outside of museums and art galleries, to get people to think about the world around them differently. Holzer creates art out of text. She has made flyers (which are handed out to people in the street), posters, billboards, T-shirts, and scrolling **LED signs**. Some of the topics she addresses in her artwork are **feminism** and anti-war beliefs. She uses poetry, public documents, and her own writing in her artwork. Holzer uses words to create powerful messages about issues in her community and the world.

- Have you seen LED signs like this before? Where? Why do you think Holzer uses them to display her text?
- Why do you think she repeats the text multiple times?
- Imagine you are an artist like Holzer. Who needs to see the message of your artwork?
- Think of the issues you came up with before. In what public space would you display your artwork?
- What format would you use for your art (for example, flyers, a billboard, a sign)?
- What would your artwork say? What kinds of words and text would you use?



Left Image: Jenny Holzer, *Thorax*, 2008. Twelve double-sided, curved LED signs (lower two signs with two elements each): white diodes on front; red and blue diodes. The Broad Art Foundation. ©2020 Jenny Holzer, member Artists Rights Society (ARS), New York. Photo by Christopher Burke

Top Image: Jenny Holzer, *Thorax* (detail), 2008.

BARBARA KRUGER is an artist whose work explores issues of women's rights, power, and **consumerism**. She is known for her style of black-and-white photos with red bars and bold text. Kruger knows how powerful words and images can be, especially together. She uses **mass media** and her experience working at magazines in her artwork. Kruger chooses phrases that speak directly to us. She uses phrases like "Your body is a battleground" or "You are a very special person."

- What do you think Kruger means by the phrase "Your body is a battleground"?
- How does viewing an artwork that directly addresses you make you feel? What would you say back to the artwork?
- What issue in your community or your school do you feel needs to change? Or what issue have you heard about in the news? Why are these issues important to you?
- Think of a word or phrase that expresses the importance of the issue or the way you feel about it.
- What image would you use to pair with your message? What colors would you use with the words or image?



Barbara Kruger, *Untitled (Your body is a battleground)*, 1989. Photographic silkscreen on vinyl. The Broad Art Foundation. © Barbara Kruger

SHIRIN NESHAT is an Iranian American artist. Neshat lives in **exile** from her home country of Iran. She uses photography and film to address identity, **oppression**, and exile. In her photographs, she chooses how her **subjects** are posed. Then she handwrites Persian texts and poetry on top of the photos. She also creates films in many **settings** to capture global issues such as immigration. Sometimes her work expresses her personal experiences of feeling like she does not quite belong in America or in Iran.

- Where do you think this picture was taken? Does it remind you of anywhere you know?
- How does this image make you feel and why?
- What do you think is the story of the solitary person in the image?
- What issue would you explore in a photograph or film? How would you represent your issue?
- Who would you choose to include in a photograph or film? Why?
- What setting would you choose? Why?



Shirin Neshat, *Soliloquy Series*, 2000. Cibachrome print. The Broad Art Foundation. © Shirin Neshat

CREATE YOUR OWN SOCIAL AND POLITICAL ARTWORK!

Artists often ask themselves questions about the world around them. They write or draw ideas in journals or sketchbooks as the first steps to creating their artworks. The journal in your kit can be used to write down the answers to the questions in the art cards.

**You can use the journal
to brainstorm ideas!**



WHAT issues are important to you?

WHAT is the message you want to get across?

WHAT materials will you use to convey your message?

**Use the materials in your box and
materials from home to create your
own social and political art!**



MATERIALS INCLUDED:

- | | |
|---|--|
| <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Journal | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Glue |
| <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Pencil | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Construction paper |
| <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Scissors | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Markers |
| <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Cardstock | |