

I am not an academic nor attached to any institution (and never have been); for the last fourteen years I have lived rurally as a freelance writer, so many of these questions simply do not apply.

There is no question that there is less art activism in opposition to the Iraq War than there was during the Vietnam War period, although there was a broad and strong attempt to stop the war before it started, invisible for the most part in the mass media. We live under a virtual dictatorship masquerading as a democracy and the corporate war machine has become infinitely powerful and profitable.

The absence of the draft is the major cause; the poor are fighting this war and few others give a rat's ass. But additional causes are the higher cost of living, the fact that so many artists now are academics (they weren't in the late 1960s and early '70s) and in the current political climate they may be more afraid to take risks. The stakes are higher now. And globalization diffuses the issues for those who haven't kept up with events and the literature. Artists fall for the Right's successful anti-Islamic campaigns as much as everyone else. The insidious Patriot Act makes it impossible to support anything but "our troops" or face prosecution.

It was always hard to drag artists out of their studios into the streets, but during the Vietnam period, the draft, the counterculture, the movement, and other factors made antiwar activism popular and even fun. It was easy to be against the war. Now only the deeply committed are active. The "me generation" has never stepped up to the plate and us old folks are tired.

Some of this can be blamed on academics, who do not seem to be firing up their students the way they used to. There is nothing inherently political about art as it is taught and disseminated in this country. Nobody buys antiwar art, especially if it names names rather than relying on ambiguity and irony to get its makers off the hook.

The Internet may be good for organizing on the horizontal level (it can reach a lot of people cheaply and easily), but it has not been a substitute for face-to-face organizing, for meetings that are exciting and educational and contagious; for the communal brainstorming and arguments, the "let's go out tonight and wheatpaste" or "whose studio shall we make the demo stuff in?" All very old-fashioned in this "sophisticated" high-tech era, but more effective vertically. Of course, if there is an across-the-board agreement that the media will not cover activism, it's mostly for nought, which has discouraged a lot of activists.

Artists Against the War, with its "We Will Not Be Silent" T-shirts and three-screen video *Disarming Images* that has been shown all over the country, is the most effective art group I know about. They have done performance events in museums and in the streets, like the Art Workers Coalition, Guerrilla Art Action Group, PADD, Artists Call Against US Intervention in Central America, WAC, and endless other groups since the '70s. I have a huge archive of reports and images of art and

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events against the Iraq War from across the country that I've been keeping since pre-Day One. I wish I had the time to go through it now and make some more image-based generalizations. Veterans for Peace, for instance, is doing public installations in New Mexico.

A lot is going on, but it's obviously not enough.

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