

How to make Political Art that Empowers Social Movements

**A publication & poster
about how to make
impactful political art.**

USING POLITICAL ART TO EMPOWER SOCIAL MOVEMENTS

ideas adapted from
academic studies
on political art, social
movements, and power.

studies referenced: Art in Social Movements: Shantytown Women's Protest in Pinochet's Chile by Jacqueline Adams, Collective Identity and Social Movements by Francesca Polletta and James M. Jasper, The Framing Function of Movement Tactics: Strategic Dramaturgy in the American Civil Rights Movement by Doug McAdam, New Power by Jeremy Heimans & Henry Timms.

Political art can serve as a rallying cry for a social movement.

One of the most obvious ways political art can influence a social movement is by serving as a symbol or rallying cry for people to unite around. This gives people a concrete image, word, or idea, to represent a shared feeling or goal. Simple, easily communicable ideas with an unambiguous, concrete meaning will be most easily recognized, have the largest immediate impact, will most easily be reproduced and remixed. Things that are unexpected are more likely to spark curiosity.

Social movements are often a collection of smaller movements that share a mutual interest.

Different groups often band together to speak with a louder, shared voice. In these situations, it is important to encourage representation of each group's individual interests. While a collective identity can be very powerful, it is important to support each subgroup's voice, and not try to control any group's speech or message. Ideas, images and messages that can be easily customized, remixed, and claimed by others are well suited for spreading through a movement.

Sharing & making art can build community and sustain morale among engaged citizens.

Keeping people engaged and motivated is essential to furthering a movement. The process of collaboratively making or experiencing art—whether it be protest signs, performances, murals, concerts, demonstrations, or anything else, can build community, sustain morale, and raise money for a social movement. Promoting connection through shared values will bring people closer together.

Political art can inspire people to participate in a social movement and take action.

Encouraging action and attracting new active supporters is essential to the success of a social movement. A two pronged approach can work well here:

- 1.** Use credible, emotional messages that tell an unambiguous story that appeals to peoples' sense of right and wrong.
- 2.** Make your rallying cry actionable. Tell people exactly what they can and should do to help (protesting, sharing, donating, voting, etc), and try to make it as simple as possible for them to start doing it.

WHAT WILL YOU DO?

find and share rallying cries

- + things that are easily identifiable & concrete
- + things that are easily reproducible & shareable
- + things that have cultural or emotional significance
- + things that are unexpected & spark curiosity

encourage representation for all

- + encourage representation of all communities
- + use a shared voice to elevate quieter voices, not to overshadow them
- + create things that are remixable so they can be adopted and owned by other communities

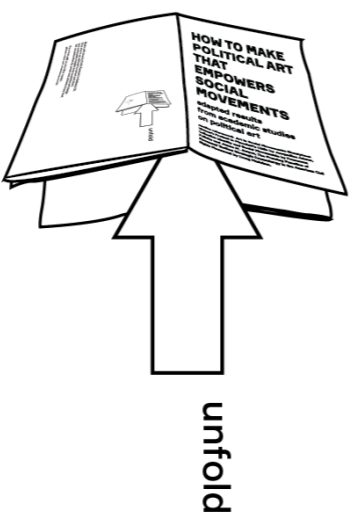
engage with your community

- + build community through making space and holding events for sharing and making art
- + participate in and support community art events and spaces, even ones outside your social circle
- + use art and music as a way to raise money

inspire participation and action

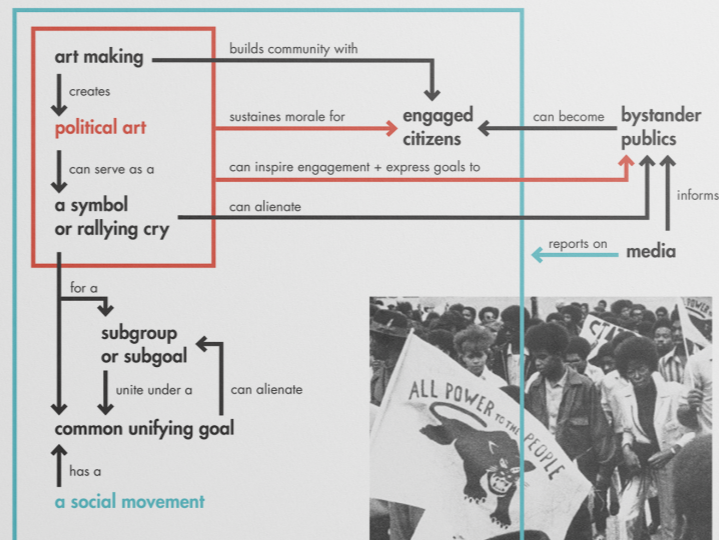
- + share messages and images that inspire an emotional, empathetic response
- + appeal to peoples' sense of right and wrong, share things that are factual and unambiguous
- + Tell people exactly what they should do to help, and make it as easy as possible to get started





Made with love by Fern in Oakland, CA.
This zine extracts key actionable insights from academia and design
for consideration by artists and activists of any level.

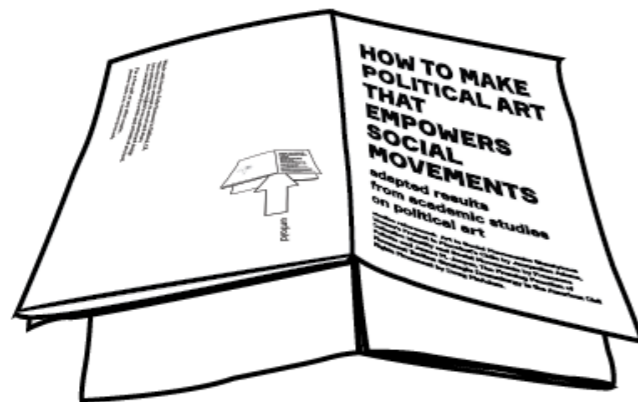
For a free pdf, or any other reason,
please reach out: colin@fern.website
or visit www.fern.website/politicalartzine



HOW POLITICAL ART CAN INFLUENCE A SOCIAL MOVEMENT







contact colin@fern.website for a free printable pdf, to share any questions or comments, or be notified when we have more print copies.