Come!Unity Press logo

The unique challenges for women entering this traditionally male trade were huge, but many found the rewards to be worth the effort. Here is one contemporaneous assessment of the situation by Jean Engle, co-owner of Ink Well Press in Youngstown, Ohio:

Who are the lesbian and feminist printers? We range in our politics from lesbian-separatist to commercial job shops. We are organized as collectives, cooperatives, partnerships, and proprietorships. Some lesbian and feminist printers work in relatively large collectively owned shops such as Iowa City Women's Press; others of us run small enterprises singly or with other feminists. Some are part of "movement" press collectives that specialize in printing for liberation and social movements. And a great number of lesbian and feminist printers struggle to maintain their politics in the varying climates of male-owned commercial shops. We are not only press operators—we are engaged in all aspects of print and "print prep" from typesetting and layout, to camera and stripping, to binding. [11]

Like all other lesbians and feminists, our work comes into conflict with patriarchal, consumer values. For example, feminist-owned shops are usually working with "outdated" equipment that slows our production and restricts the range of what we can produce. Why don't we do as the male-owned shops do—borrow money and purchase new, better equipment? There are several reasons. First in importance is that most of us have chosen, by the very act of being lesbians and/or feminists, to seek alternatives to the capitalist, patriarchal business institution. We are looking to focus more of our energy on the process of production, not the product itself. That means taking time to discuss, work out hassles, reach consensus: it means trying to integrate our "work" lives with our "personal/political" lives. If we refuse to let money and production run our lives, we are going to be very wary of tying ourselves to enormous debt (and printing equipment is expensive). It is a choice about values.[12]

THE FUTURE OF MOVEMENT SHOPS

From the 1980s on, new shops continued to appear with decreasing frequency. Some carved out a niche, such as letterpress work or Latin American poetry books, but the trade was fundamentally changing. Personal computers and "desktop publishing" replaced skilled typographers; inexpensive flatbed scanners and Photoshop now accomplish in seconds what used to take hours and cost a fortune. Printing on paper itself is an endangered craft, although it's far from dead. Scale matters. The Web can't compete with a simple flyer to get local citizens fired up about a neighborhood struggle. Tangibility matters. People will still pay something for a nice booklet or poster to take home and keep. New to the trade is Lantz Arroyo, pulling together the brand-new (2010) Radix Media print shop in Portland, Oregon. He describes his rationale:

Learning to print on an offset press has been really empowering. It's really old technology. When I load a plate onto the press and start running it, I'm doing the same thing as someone a hundred years ago was doing. There are differences, sure, but the technique is the same, and that's really exciting to me. My main goal with Radix, from the very beginning, has been to make beautiful propaganda. I consider it a form of activism, but it's a factor that many times gets overlooked. Humans are very visual; if something doesn't look good, people just aren't going to pick it up, and they're definitely not going to digest whatever message you're trying to send.[13]

Yes, as sister Engle put it, it's all about values. The primary reason anyone engaged in the craziness of running a community print shop was to *serve the people.* Peace Press, and all the others who chose that humble path, did so for the most noble of reasons—to support an informed and active citizenry.

Not Cool Enough to Catalog

Gregory Sholette

Fig. 1. John Heartfield "Mimicry," photomontage for cover of AIZ, June 1934

Social Movement Culture and its Phantom Archive

"Not Cool Enough to Catalog": Social Movement Culture and Its Phantom Archives

Gregory Sholette

Radical social movements are vibrant, dynamic forces that generate copious amounts of visual and material culture. Yet the gatekeepers of the mainstream art world typically find this productivity lacking in some vital way. Such work is too ephemeral, too topical, or simply not sexy enough to enter through the gates of high art. When two independent researchers visited a noted archive of social and political art located in a major New York museum, they made a telling discovery that offers some insight into the relationship between high art and "radical" materials. As they examined a collection of political posters they noticed a series of Post-It® Notes attached to certain graphics with the instructions, "not cool enough to catalog."[1] The revelation offers a lesson about what I sometimes refer to as artistic dark matter. Think of this missing mass as the other ninety-nine percent of cultural activity that fails to achieve sustained visibility within the dominant structures of the art world, while the maintenance of institutional authority requires the its invisible presence. I will expand on this thesis below, but for the moment it is the voluminous productivity of social movements that calls our attention. For in their search for political transformation, bottom-up, grassroots movements are forced to compete for public attention by confronting the considerable resources of their opponents: government agencies, big business, wealthy elites, even the art world itself in some instances. This means taking advantage of whatever means of communication are available, including street graffiti and inexpensive printing technologies, but also sometimes sophisticated, multilayered graphics, and of course a growing array of digital media. Historically speaking, the most ubiquitous form of dissident culture has involved ephemera: flyers, pamphlets, books, and posters made with cost-effective materials and unambiguous images. As archivist Lincoln Cushing points out in his essay for this catalog, "Ever since Gutenberg systematized the concept of movable type, radicals have put ink to paper to create multiple copies of documents supporting their causes." He goes on to add that what really democratized publishing was "the advent of relatively low-cost office spirit duplicators and mimeograph machines." Thus small unions, progressive churches, political activists, and similar undercapitalized dissidents were suddenly able to broadcast their views as if composing them on typewriters.[2] Why then do I refer to a missing cultural mass if low-cost technology actually set off a creative "big bang" within the cultural arm of various liberation movements? Because, as those who have organized this exhibition will acknowledge, most of this passionate output has been lost: left to fade on streets, tacked to bulletin boards in community centers or union halls, folded up and forgotten in storage closets, or occasionally torn down and destroyed by the opponents of a given message or cause. Even the producers of social movement culture tend to treat such work as expendable.[3] Despite embodying considerable labor as well as often historical value, once a given political objective is attained, an event has past, or a cause is lost the posters, flyers, and street art associated with it are nullified. Neither the form nor the content is intended to endure, and in this sense movement art could be described as doubly ephemeral by design. However, what if we looked at this mass of creativity not in its strictly material sense, but instead viewed it as part of an informally structured shadow archive–let's call it a phantom or spectral archive, one that exists partly as tangible

1–The Post-It Notes were most likely attached by a less-than-knowledgeable intern or volunteer since overall the archive is very well managed and accessible to scholars. For more on this collection see, http://www.moma.org/learn/resources/library/faq_library#padd, accessed July 11, 2011.

2–Lincoln Cushing, "Red in Black and White: The New Left Printing Renaissance of the 1960s–and Beyond," in the present volume, p. X.

3. See Carol Wells, "Have Posters, Will Travel," included in Lincoln Cushing, ed., *Visions of Peace & Justice–Over 30 Years of Political Posters from the Archives of Inkworks Press Posters* (Berkeley, Calif.: Inkworks Press, 2007). A website has now been set up to help locate copies of these orphaned artworks as well as any information about them. See http://www.politicalgraphics.org/exhibitions/Peace%20Press/peacepress.htm, accessed July 11, 2011.

Fig. 2. Abolitionist Poster
Fig. 3. Peace Press
Fig. 4. Peace Press

4–For more on the graphic art of the abolitionist movement, see Nicolas Lampert, *A People's Art History of the United States* (New York: The New Press, forthcoming, est. 2012).

5–Dara Greenwald and Josh MacPhee wrote an excellent catalog for the Exit Art exhibition, entitled *Signs of Change: Social Movement Cultures, 1960s to Now* (Oakland, Calif.: AK Press, 2010). See especially Greenwald and MacPhee's essay "Social Movement Cultures: An Introduction."

6–Taken from a press release regarding a documentary on Peace Press available at http://www.peace-press.com.

7–See http://www.politicalgraphics.org/exhibitions/Peace%20Press/peacepress.htm, accessed July 11, 2011.

documents and posters salvaged in whatever condition found, while also existing–and this is key–within our collective cultural imagination? This concurrently material and immaterial archive of dark matter activity would inevitably comprise centuries of visual imagery, like an archeological site of art not collected, not recognized, and not valued by institutional high culture. It would include graphics created by an abolitionist movement that flourished in the mid-1800s, yet long preceded the American Revolution [Fig. 2],[4] as well as graphics and images produced by 19th-century anarchists, suffragettes, industrial labor organizers, and assorted socialist and communist parties stretching into the 20th century and beyond. But it would also include materials generated by religious and secular antiwar activists since at least World War I, as well as the voluminous creative productivity of the 1960s and '70s "New" Left and ethnocultural liberation movements after World War II. [*Fig. 3*] Innovative as well as repetitive, startling as well as sloganistic, if viewed as an aggregate the variety, depth, and originality of this oppositional movement-generated art is not that different from the vaunted world of museum culture. Any doubt about that was put to rest by Dara Greenwald and Josh MacPhee's ambitious 2010 display of oppositional graphics *Signs of Change*, first seen at Exit Art in New York City, as well as the many scholarly exhibitions mounted by the CSPG in Los Angeles.[5] Movement culture makes available a range of visual tropes, some of which are recycled not only by "serious" artists, but also by commercial advertisers. That said, the haunting of mainstream art and art history begins with a moment of muted recognition. What is excluded is also somehow invisibly present within the institution. Like a well of seeping ectoplasm, the phantom archive passes through barriers of time and space, never simply enclosable within a specific space, be it a museum, a library, or a climate-controlled warehouse in Queens New York where the Political Art Documentation/Distribution (PAD/D) Archive is housed. This vibrant dark matter is not somewhere outside of the art world, but lurks within the very heart of its aesthetic economy. This may also explain the growing tendency by professionally trained artists to adapt the look, feel, and texture–though seldom the political intentions–of dissident movement art for mainstream contexts.

TROPICS OF EXCLUSION

The massive graphic output of the Los Angeles-based Peace Press underscores the vital presence of this spectral absence. The group operated for twenty years (1967-87), collectively generating thousands of posters, pamphlets, flyers, newsletters, and books for "every progressive cause."[6] Few, if any, of these creations were intended as "art" to be exhibited in a gallery or museum. Instead, the work was produced to "serve" the political objectives of any number of concerns, including the struggle for civil rights, feminism, environmentalism, and of course peace, along with other causes linked to the New Left and Southern California's legendary counterculture. As a result, like so many other movement-oriented art projects, much of what Peace Press produced is either physically lost or missing vital information about dates, artists, and commissioning organizations. In many cases, when such information is known, it leads back to small groups of artists and activists who either no longer exist, or whose names and mission have long since changed. (It is worth noting that a website has now been set up to help locate missing data about these orphaned artworks and causes.[7]) To survive financially, Peace Press also took on commercial jobs for small businesses as well as musicians and artists. This is why among artwork demanding the release of Black Power activist and Communist Party member Angela Davis, or calling for solidarity with imprisoned Native American activists Richard Mohawk and Paul Skyhorse, there are also posters for countercultural events including a concert by the Grateful Dead and the Venice (California) Canal festival. One colorful graphic, emblazoned with a stoic bald eagle and splashing whale, was sponsored by the "Tree People" for a concert by New Age musician Paul Winter. Production costs at Peace Press were often arranged on a sliding scale. Movement causes were typically charged a bare-bones fee while more commercial ventures, like the self-declared avant-garde *Wet Magazine*, paid more because they expected to turn a profit. Peace Press appears to have actually attempted to put into practice Marx's famed dictum, "From each according to his ability, to each according to his needs." However, it was the internal organizational culture of the collective that most clearly reflected its day-to-day critique of market capitalism. As much as possible the group made decisions nonheirarchically, including what

production jobs they should or should not take on, how much to charge, and whether, in some cases, the images clients had chosen to print were really appropriate for a "movement printer" (see, for example, Ilee Kaplan's discussion about the *Wet Magazine* cover controversy in this volume). As much as power was communally shared, so were friendships and food. But most importantly Peace Press redistributed technical expertise horizontally within the group, including the skills of graphic reproduction as much as press management. Those members more professionally trained simply taught newcomers what they knew. As former group member Stacie Widdifield explains, "There was a generosity to say OK, you don't know this, but we'll teach you how to do it," or, as Henry Klein comments, "[We] became professionals in the process of working at Peace Press."[8] Such collective "do it yourself" (DIY) learning was woven into the very ethos of the counterculture broadly speaking; however, what sets social movement groups apart was the way this generosity was understood to be in the service of something larger, more radical, or even revolutionary. Artist Mary Patten captures this spirit of global solidarity in her bittersweet memoir about the New York-based ultra-Left group Madame Binh Graphics Collective. "We learned to make silk-screened posters, like students in revolt internationally."[9]

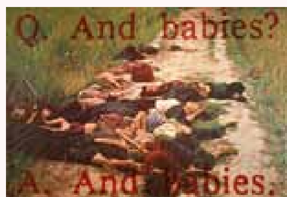


Fig. 5. PAD /D newsletter, NYC, 1981
Fig.6 Art Workers Coalition poster, 1968.

Similarly, PAD/D, with which I was involved in the 1980s, declared that its primary mission was to establish an "international, grass roots network of artist/activists who will support with their talents and their political energies the liberation and self-determination of all disenfranchised peoples." [Fig. 5][10]

Calls for cultural, ethno-cultural, or international political solidarity bound together such otherwise diverse groups as the San Francisco Poster Brigade, Fireworks Graphics, the Royal Chicano Air Force, Chicago Woman's Graphics Collective, Syracuse Cultural Workers, La Raza Graphics Collective, Kearny Street Workshop, Northland Poster Collective, and See Red Women's Workshop in the U.K. And a rebirth of this same spirit fuels contemporary social-movement artists like those involved in Just Seeds, an online radical graphics cooperative with members across North America. Artistic generosity and political solidarity not only set movement culture apart from entrepreneurially driven publishing ventures (or from highly commercialized youth culture, for that matter), but it also divided Peace Press and similar ventures from older Left organizations, including traditional trade-union printing shops. In Los Angeles, these unions had for decades protected their rank and file's craft-based technical skills from disclosure. And yet such protectionism was diametrically opposed to the collective "gift ethos" of Peace Press.[11] These same qualities no doubt also contributed to the gap between movement culture and an increasingly commercial mainstream art world. Perhaps PAD/D put this most clearly when it argued that the group "cannot serve as a means of advancement within the art world structure of museums and galleries. Rather, we have to develop new forms of distribution economy as well as art." This makes the New York Museum of Modern Art's acquisition of PAD/D's Archive of social and political art some ten years later all the more poignant and ironic, for certainly there is no cultural space more powerful or foundational to the contemporary art world than MoMA. This is also why the museum's meticulously maintained radiance casts such long, deep shadows of exclusion not only beyond the institution's walls, but also within. Thanks to its privileged location at MoMA, PAD/D's Archive has been well cared for, but its content has only once been seriously displayed in the museum. In 1988, before the PAD/D archive had been gifted to the MoMA, retired Curator of Prints and Illustrated Books Deborah Wye organized the exhibition *Committed To Print: Social and Political Themes in Recent American Printed Art*; however, it was

8–Unpublished interview of Henry Klein conducted by John Ciulik, Elizabeth Hanson, and Ilee Kaplan, March 5, 2010.

9–Mary Patten, *Revolution as an Eternal Dream: The Exemplary Failure of the Madame Binh Graphics Collective* (Chicago: Half Letter Press, 2011), {p # TBD}.

10–*PAD/D*, 1st Issue, New York City, February 1981. (Note: the title of the PAD/D newsletter was changed to *Upfront* beginning with issue no. 3.)

11–For better and worse, this closed-shop mentality was doomed to disappear following the advent of inexpensive reproduction technologies. See Errol Wayne Stevens, *Radical L.A.: From Coxey's Army to the Watts Riots, 1894-1965* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 2009), 29.

12–Roger Kimball, "Is MoMA Attempting Suicide?" *The New Criterion* 6 (1988), 30.

13–Notably CSPG offered to house the PAD/D Archive, but MoMA ultimately won out. For more on the contradictions, ironies, and the history of the PAD/D Archive, see "The Grin of the Archive," in Gregory Sholette, *Dark Matter: Art and Politics in the Age of Enterprise Culture*, (London: Pluto Press, 2011), 46-70.

14–A fine introduction to free software and open source programming is Michel Bauwens, "The Political Economy of Peer Production," at http://www.ctheory.net/articles.aspx?id=499, accessed July 11, 2011.

15–While not an actual museum, CSPG's work is unique in that it not only collects and preserves such work, but also mounts regular scholarly exhibitions out of their collection. In addition, the Tamiment Labor Archive and Fales Archive (both at New York University), the PAD/D Archive (at MoMA), and the All of Us or None political poster archive (at the Oakland Museum of California) are among the handful of United States repositories for politically committed movement art. http://www.docspopuli.org/articles/AOUON.html

16–Rosler points out that her series *Bringing the War Home* was initially inspired "by a San Francisco based artist named Jess Collins and by surrealist Max Ernst and only dimly, in the background," though she adds that Heartfield "became an influence for real a few years after I began them, when his books were finally published in the US." Email from Rosler to the author, March 27, 2011.

17–Martha Rosler, *Decoys and Disruptions: Selected Writings, 1975-2001* (Boston, Mass.: MIT Press, 2004), 279.

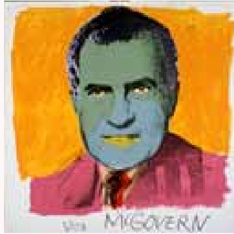
immediately denounced by critics, including Roger Kimball, who called the show a "jumble of unadorned political propaganda without a shred of aesthetic interest." Notably Kimball's review was acerbically entitled "Is MoMA attempting suicide?"[12] One can only speculate about how much more visible the materials would now be if they had been left to CSPG, or a similar, movement-based collection. At the same time, there is something satisfyingly clandestine about the presence of this uncouth compilation of resistant culture lying in state within the bowels of the art world's mother ship.[13]

Though PAD/D's militant countercultural sentiments certainly steered some artists away from mainstream museums and galleries, its cultural separatism also pointed to the presence of a different artistic universe, one rooted in bottom-up democracy and the anticipatory politics of hope. There is something striking about the way movement culture's emphasis on nonmarket production, horizontal distribution, and collective generosity is now resurfacing among the most progressive—nay, utopian—proponents of the DIY, tactical media, free software, and P2P (peer-to-peer) digital technology communities.[14] And yet, despite all the organizational complexity, aesthetic innovation, and even farsightedness, not one major museum today systematically collects or exhibits the work of politically engaged movement art.[15] That is not to say that here and there, one or another major art institution procures a specific example of grassroots political art. It might be an iconic poster like Lorraine Schneider's *War Is not Healthy for Children and Other Living Things*, or Art Workers Coalition's (AWC) grisly *Q. And Babies? A. Yes, And Babies*, or Shepard Fairey's striking Barack Obama image, *Hope*. But these captured specimens of oppositional art play a proscribed role within the museum aesthetic ideology. It is a part that typically involves one "political" art work standing-in as a synecdoche for an entire historical phase of resistant culture. Thus, Schneider *is* the antiestablishment '60s, AWC *is* the anger of the '70s, and Fairey *is* the post-Reagan angst of downsized expectations and ambiguous calls for "change." When not filed away in a drawer these pieces are orphaned within the collection like political refugees. The reception of any lingering militancy they might still hold is isolated, reified, and ultimately managed. (At least until that moment when some independent minded scholar or curator or interventionist artist seeks to re-activate their presence.) Thus the phantom archive remains always potentially a threat, though typically suspended in a state of lifelessness. Its real "presence" within the mainstream art world is therefore an absence that can only be grasped by gaining access to a different realm of cultural engagement that high art can neither represent, nor sustainably offer its patrons. To do so would mean to fundamentally politicize all artistic culture and thus undermine the very logic of art's political economy that carefully separates what should and should not be aesthetically valued, collected, or enshrined.

Movement culture also offers something else—call it a set of tropes or a toolbox of images and techniques that seem to lie in wait as if ready to be appropriated and recycled when the need arises. Along with the familiar repertoire of doves, clenched fists, police, and people being tied, gagged, or otherwise repressed, there is a range of available techniques involving startling juxtapositions of collaged imagery typically clipped from print media, emphatic slogans either handwritten like graffiti or rendered in oversized stenciled lettering, and the rugged, high-contrast visual effects of lithography, woodcut, Xerography, and silkscreen (serigraphy) printing. But one might ask: whose aesthetic tropics influenced whom, and where exactly is the line separating movement culture from its fine art "other"? Furthermore, doesn't commercial advertising adopt and adapt these graphic practices for its own purposes? But like the gently enveloping red and green leaves of the Venus Flytrap *Dionaea muscipula*, the archival specimen imperceptibly engulfs its prey as seduction and misrecognition play equal roles in this tender assimilation.

COUNTER-ENCLOSURES

Martha Rosler's now iconic anti-Viet Nam War montages of the late 1970s found indirect inspiration in the cut-and-paste aesthetic of Dadaism and Surrealism, including John Heartfield's anti-Fascist photomontages of the 1930s.[*Fig. 10*][16] Notably, Heartfield produced his sharp satirical pieces not for collectors or for art galleries, but for working-class readers of the pro-Communist newspaper *AIZ* (*Arbeiter-Illustrierte-Zeitung*).[17] Likewise, the dense photomontages of Heartfield's fellow Dadaist Hanna Hoch haunt Robert Rauschenberg's magazine



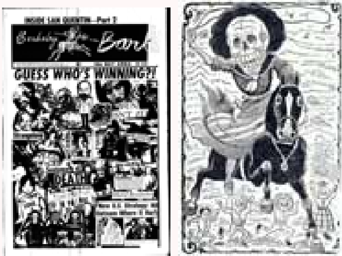


Fig. 7. Cover, Berkeley Barb, ?
Fig. 8. Andy Warhol, Vote McGovern, 1972 Fig. 9. José Guadalupe Posada Calavera Revolucionaria

and newspaper collages of the early 1970s. Rauschenberg's silkscreened graphics also bear a striking similarity to certain underground newspapers from the same period, including the *Berkeley Barb*. [Fig. 7] Even the pioneering installations of Nancy and Edward Kienholz can be seen as rooted in the contrapuntal tropes of street art as much as the politicized antiaesthetics of Berlin Dadaism. This verdant ecology of visual tropes and graphic techniques is difficult if not impossible to differentiate into neat categories of high and low, inside and outside.Still, it should be apparent by now that aesthetic influence flows up from social movements to artists (and commercial interests) as often if not more often than high art trickles down.

The painterly caricatures and antiestablishment images of Ed Patschike, Peter Saul, May Stevens, Robert Arneson, or Robert Colescott share more than a passing resemblance to the visual style of political satire and cartooning like the "skeletal grotesques" or "calaveras" of Mexican printmaker José Guadalupe Posada, who lampooned government officials and wealthy Mexicans around the turn of the last century.[Fig. 9] The issue is not whether these artists were directly informed by specific examples of populist and dissident culture (although we know that José Clemente Orozco was influenced by Posada and in turn was well-known in the art world of *América del Norte*), but rather what hidden grammar of politicized image-making returns in time of crisis from the off-stage spectral archive. Most complex of these crossover artworks is Warhol's silkscreen poster *Vote McGovern*. [Fig. 8] It looks at first like an extension of the artist's earlier portrait pieces of Marilyn Monroe, Elizabeth Taylor, and Elvis Presley, except that Warhol replaces the anticipated image of the 1972 presidential peace candidate McGovern with that of his opponent, Richard Nixon, who appears wearing several shades of sickly green and blue ink. One is reminded of John Heartfield's ironic cut-and-paste image of Nazi propagandist Goebbels caught in the act of disguising *der Führer* beneath a flimsy fake Karl Marx beard [Fig. 1]. In Vote McGovern Warhol uses his signature "dirty" silkscreen technique, previously employed for celebrity portraits, to mock rather than commemorate. His

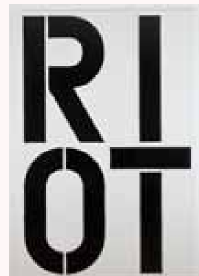


Fig. 10. Martha Rosler photomontage from Bringing the War Home: House Beautiful, 1967-72.
Fig. 11. Christopher Wool, 1996

18–Carol Wells points out another ironic twist to the Warhol image. In 2008 it was "appropriated and altered by Robert J. Berman and John Colao, putting Bush's face on the same shoulder and tie as Nixon in the original, and the word underneath stating: Vote Obama." See http://www.artnet.com/Galleries/artwork_detail.asp?G=&gid=118591&which=&ViewArtistBy=&aid=425760360&wid=425760361&source=artist&print=1&rta=http://www.artnet.com, accessed July 11, 2011.

19–Serra's potent remix was created for a pro-voting advertisement that ran in *The Nation* magazine during the lead-up to the 2004 elections.

intentionally course graphic style having entered the museum now leaves it again (momentarily) to join up with the "vulgar" political needs of social movement art. McGovern eventually lost his presidential bid to Nixon; however, Warhol's print went on to raise some $40,000 for the Democratic Party.[18]

One could also argue that some conceptual artists borrowed their direct, unaffected approach to communicating information from certain 1960s and '70s political graphics, as much as from advertising tactics. Think of Lawrence Weiner's typographic installations, or Bruce Nauman's text pieces, and compare these to the direct "sloganesque" approach that echoed in the streets of Paris in May of 1968. More recently, the slushy word-covered paintings of successful Saatchi artist Josh Smith, or the large canvases of art star Christopher Wool, suggest a similar appropriation of urban guerrilla culture. Wool's precisely stenciled paintings are emphatically inscribed with incendiary words and phrases like *RIO*, *FOOL*, and *FUCK THEM IF THEY CAN'T TAKE A JOKE*. In a sense they appear to be political agitprop graphics minus the politics. [Fig. 11] Perhaps more helpful in delineating the absence/presence of this phantom archive is to note the way certain mainstream artists who are compelled to make an occasional political statement often do so by shedding their own familiar artistic style only to embrace the evidently "available" tropes of "movement art."

Fig. 12. Louise Bourgeois "NO," 1973

Sculptor Louise Bourgeois produced her 1973 antiwar statement *NO* by repeating the two-letter word in several type styles and sizes. [Fig. 12] Significantly, this protest graphic does not resemble any of the artist's work before or since. Bourgeois briefly abandoned her characteristic surreal-feminist aesthetic to make a work of emphatic "message art." Is it a stretch to suggest that her use of bold typography and pared-down exclamatory language even resembles antislavery broadsides from the 19th century abolitionist movement? More pointed still are the recent political graphics of sculptor Richard Serra. In his artistic response to the Abu Ghraib prison tortures, Serra abandoned his signature stark, minimalist style to mimic the unschooled urgency of political graffiti. Serra's smeary, black-and-white impasto drawing of the iconic hood-covered Abu Ghraib prisoner was captioned with scrawling letters that read, "STOP BUSH." [*Fig. 13*] The Whitney Museum then transformed Serra's image into a poster for the museum's 2006 Biennial, except that Serra's original caption was replaced with the more ambiguous "STOP B S." All of this seems to suggest that when one turns from making "serious" art to creating a strong social statement, it is necessary to abandon well-honed professional trappings and seek out another, less encumbered artistic directness. And yet looking at Serra's calculated naïveté, the work appears forced and conceptually graceless when

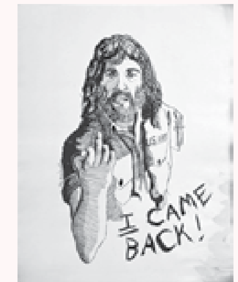


Fig 13. Richard Serra, 2006
Fig 14. Peace Press ???

compared to say the genuinely awkward and unaffected black-and-white sketch of an angry returning Vietnam war vet featured on the 1971 Peace Press poster *I Came Back!* [Fig. 14]

There are exceptions of course to this detour tactic taken by those who only briefly dip their brush into social protest aesthetics. Picasso's monumental painting *Guernica* appears to construct an entirely new language of protest art based on a mixture of Surrealist and Cubist technigue. Yet even here the artist incorporates figures and symbols familiar to popular forms of protest culture, including a flower, a light, a dead child, and an agonizing scream. At the opposite end of this spectrum is a different choice involving the recycling of one's own painterly imagery for a social cause. Jasper Johns chose one of his well-known flag paintings to support a massive, nation-wide protest against the Vietnam war on October 15, 1969, merely adding the stenciled letters *MORATORIUM* beneath it. This was a temporary foray into social protest art, as was Frank Stella's 1975 poster for the Attica Prison Defense Fund. Stella reproduced one of his familiar black minimalist paintings, added captions in stenciled typeface (again, a trope drawn from movement culture), and essentially offered up his recognized artistic brand as a fundraising tool for survivors of the brutal 1971 police attack at the upstate New York prison. Let me conclude these examples by returning to another, far more effective foray into "political" graphics by sculptor Richard Serra in which President George W. Bush plays the part of the hungry Roman god in Goya's terrifying canvas *Saturn Devouring His Son* (c. 1819-23).[19]

DARK MATTER

Few art historians, critics, or curators would deny that something variously described as an oppositional or movement culture of the Left has existed, and likely still does. If nothing else, it is impossible to ignore the broad scope of defiantly radical ideas and imagery in the 1910s, '20s, '30s, and then again in the 1960s, '70s, and early '80s. The impact of such widespread dissent on everything from advertising to high art is markedly obvious. Most will concede this but then move on, never stopping to define what that impact actually means or what exactly "it" is that produces such powerful effects. Perhaps this other cultural phenomenon operates in a world all its own, like a parallel universe or unknown country. Or maybe it occupies a space at the margins of high art, but short of Madison Avenue's churning commercialism. Or perhaps it is something like Freud's drives, a mixture of Eros and Thanatos mysteriously motivating action from below. Despite major efforts by independent scholars and researchers such as Carol Wells, Lincoln Cushing, Paul Buhle, and Henry Klein—or more recently Dara Greenwald, Nicolas Lampert, Dylan Miner, and Josh McPhee—the notion that movement-generated art is a significant component of past and present culture more broadly is an assertion that the gatekeepers of high art either ignore, or greet with cynicism.[20] And perhaps that is a good thing—up to a point, espcially when we consider the cooptation of radical ideas by normative culture over the past fifty years. Far more disconserting is to assert that mainstream art has benefited from a nebulous but far larger sphere of imaginative production that lacks a precise discourse and identity. This nondescript zone includes not only artistic nonprofessionals and amateurs, but also forms of visual culture generated by politically engaged social movements including those of Peace Press. Think of this as a kind of creative dark matter that remains invisible precisely to those who lay claim to the management and interpretation of "serious" culture—the critics, art historians, collectors, dealers, museums, curators, and arts administrators who nevertheless depend on its quantitative offscreen presence in ways both direct and circuitous. Much in the way cosmic dark matter and energy are necessary for the gravitational stability of the universe, this hidden artistic productivity exists not strictly outside of, but invisibly within, the heart of the elite art cosmos where it serves (and always has) to prop up the established distribution of power and visibility. And like physical dark matter, this other productivity might only be perceived by its effect on visible structures. To test this idea, contemplate the impact on art world institutions if hobbyists and amateurs were to stop purchasing art supplies, or if the enormous surplus army of MFAs stopped subscribing to art magazines or museums, or no longer attended lectures, or refused to serve as part-time instructors "reproducing" the next generation of artists for the market. We can easily see how the producers of movement graphics and other oppositional art practices might belong to this

20—Among the few "mainstream" curators who have briefly engaged with movement art, Deborah Wye, who organized the 1988 exhibition *Committed to Print* at the MoMA (discussed above), and Charles Esche, who curated the 2009 exhibition *Forms of Resistance* at the Van Abbemuseum in the Netherlands.

21—Van Gosse, *Rethinking the New Left: An Interpretive History* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan), 2005.

22—Mark di Suvero worked in collaboration with artist Rirkrit Tiravanija on the 2006 tower.

Fig. 15. Los Angeles Peace Tower, 1966

phantom sphere of dark matter that continuously haunts, informs, and/or delimits the works of visible, mainstream art and culture.

Curiously, perhaps not coincidently, something similarly amnesic and dislocated has befallen the legacy of both the New and Old Left. This strand of our collective social narrative has all but fallen out of historical memory. However, it did not drop from sight by its own volition (though infighting and factionalism took their toll). As Van Gosse points out, some American radicals were jailed, others assassinated, and some went on to organize less visibly in factories, environmental groups, and women's organizations, as well as, of course, entering into academia.[21] And while the Left has failed in its attempts thus far to radically overhaul capitalism, it still managed to advance real economic and political change. For example, it secured voting rights for women and the poor, eliminated Jim Crow policies, ended the draft, and resisted the further militarization of Indochina, among many other tangible gains. This narrative seems especially lost following the nation's recent hard-Right shift, although the rise of a new, centrist liberal politics may be even more to blame for the erasure of Left history. After all, the Tea Party still loudly claims to find socialists hiding under every bed (just think of the conspiratorial hash made of Barack Obama's informal connection with former Weather Underground activist Bill Ayres). But in an act of historical matricide, liberal-centrist politicians and policymakers answer their conservative hecklers that the old "angry" Left is over and done with. Even the progressive gains described above are attributed to liberals thanks to the weakened state of current political discourse. Today, the legacy of Left politics in the United States is like so many fading chalk marks on the sidewalk of our national memory. To underscore this inestimable loss with an example directly relevant to this exhibition, consider the way the 1966 Peace Tower, sponsored by the Los Angeles Artists Protest Committee, was reframed and reconstructed some forty years later. The original protest project was located off an intersection near Hollywood. Its fifty-eight foot tower was surrounded by some four hundred smaller artworks condemning military intervention in Southeast Asia. [Fig. 15] The public outcry regarding the piece's political stance became fierce. At one point, volunteers from the nearby African American neighborhood of Watts joined artists in defending the structure from conservative opponents. This was just months after Watts had exploded in opposition to years of brutal, racially motivated acts of repression by the Los Angeles Police Department. For the 2006 Whitney Biennial, a new version of *Peace Tower* was erected just inside the Whitney's posh Madison Avenue entrance. This sterile, barely noticed "remixed" tower was intended to signal opposition to the widely unpopular war in Iraq. But even though a few of the original Los Angeles crew worked on this art-world-oriented remake (notably Mark di Suvero, who had supervised the fabrication of the first

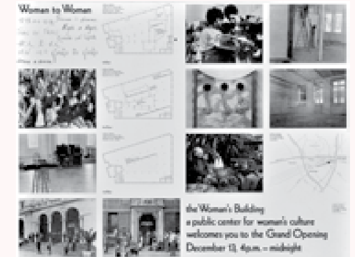


Fig. 16. Peace Press, Woman's Building poster, 1975

project), the Whitney's tepid update ultimately preached to a politically receptive choir rather than moving out and provoking a wider debate within the public sphere.[22]

By contrast, an undiluted glimpse of a lost Left culture materializes within the CSPG's exhibition *Made in L.A.—The Posters of Peace*

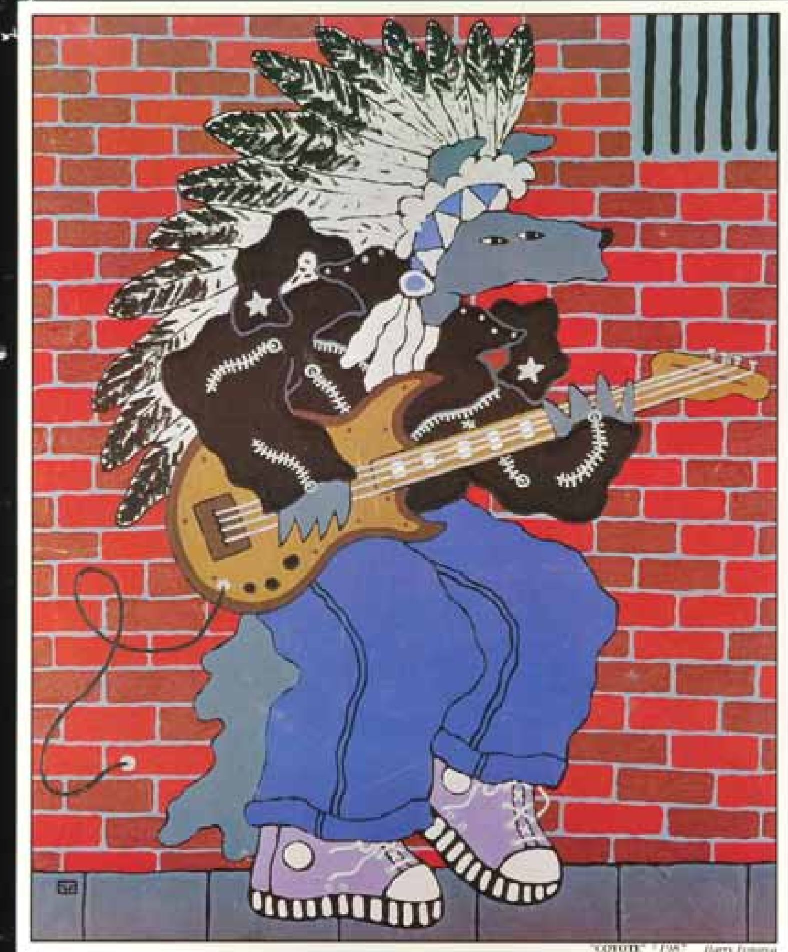
Press. Bob Zaugh articulates the breadth of the progressive dissent Peace Press made visible when he states in an interview that "at one time in the early '70s I had a list of 300 political groups that we printed for." That list almost certainly covered every significant movement organization in the Southern California region, as well as many that consisted of just a handful of members. It included the Los Angeles Black Panther Party, whose members were largely politicized by the Watts riots, and *Gidra*, an Asian American newsletter started by former University of California-Los Angeles student radicals. *Gidra* was, in turn, linked to the East Wind, a small but highly disciplined Marxist-Leninist collective that later opened a storefront on the Westside that served as a daycare center, food co-op, and host to youth-related programs. Much like PAD/D a half-decade later, East Wind's cultural mission called for "the liberation of all people oppressed by imperialism, racism, and sexism."[23] Peace Press made posters in support of Chicano students attempting to establish ethnic studies departments at the University of California, a struggle that had spread south from San Francisco. Starting in 1968, a coalition of Latina/Latino, black, American Indian, and Asian students calling themselves Third World Liberation Front organized a five-month strike in consort with SDS. The Chicano studies departments in L.A. and San Diego emerged soon after this. The Peace Press poster asks in Spanish and English, *¿Conoce Usted Su Herencia Cultural?/Do You Know Your Cultural Heritage?* Other graphics celebrate gay and women's liberation struggles, one demands the ouster of the Reserve Officers' Training Corps (ROTC) from school campuses, and several sought to topple dependency on nuclear power, especially at the Diablo Canyon power plant located a mere 150 threatening miles away in seismically unstable San Luis Obispo. Peace Press actively called on artists to organize against white rule in South Africa, as well as for Native American rights at home. Graphics were printed for politically conscious artists like Suzanne Lacy and Sheila Pinkel, as well as for the highly celebrated alternative space known as the Los Angeles "Women's Building". A 1975 poster entitled *Woman to Woman* shows imagery and floorplans of the influential feminist space founded two years earlier and almost completely peripheral to the art scene at the time. Once again, the contagion between a largely overlooked movement culture and mainstream art is underscored by the little known graphics generated by Peace Press. [*Fig. 16*]

The question that remains therefore is this: What role does this other, dark matter creativity play within the broader cultural imaginary, including in relation to that of the high art world? For if we are to consider oppositional graphics and movement culture like those generated by the Peace Press as anything more than a curious historical footnote, then we are obliged to reconsider the interdependency of visual art and its phantom archive. Suddenly a different version of art history appears. It does not devalue social-documentary photography or printmaking beneath painting; it does not privilege abstraction over artistic movements like Surrealism and Dada and Situationism, with their decidedly political dimensions. Most of all, it does not demean political posters and the ephemera generated by social movements, banishing them to the archival crypt. Still, as Cushing admits in relation to what I am calling dark matter creativity, "proper recognition of this sort of material awaits a fundamental revolution. I'm not holding my breath, I'm just working within the cracks."[24] And just as it always has done, the phantom archive with its patchy, sometimes repetitive, and ungainly cultural productivity continues to represent the radical social imaginary that is always conspicuously absent.

23–Laura Pulido, *Black, Brown, Yellow, & Left: Radical Activism in Los Angeles* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2006), 140.

24–Email to the author from Lincoln Cushing dated January 25, 2011.

COWBOYS FOR INDIANS



JUSTICE FOR LEONARD PELTIER