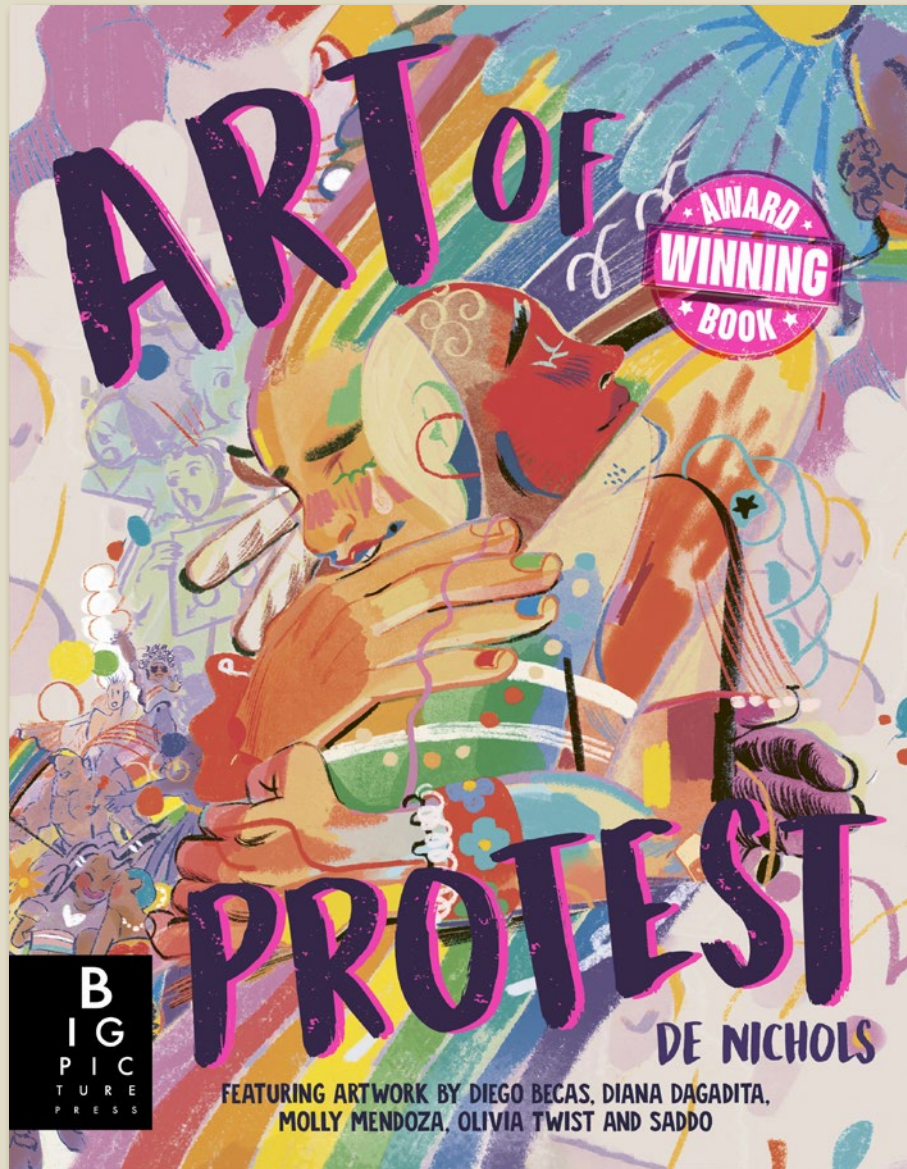


Art of Protest



Discover the power of words, images and much more in this analytical and thought-provoking look at protest art.

- Stunning artwork by contemporary artists around the world
- As told by TED talker, activist, lecturer and artist De Nichols
- De's *Mirror Casket* project was commended by legendary activist Angela Davis in Smithsonian Magazine.
- **WINNER OF THE BRITISH BOOK DESIGN & PRODUCTION AWARDS IN THE CHILDREN'S TRADE 9 TO 16 CATEGORY!**
- **WINNER OF THE 2023 BOLOGNA RAGAZZI AWARD!**
- Uncoated and fluoro pantone cover treatments with flaps.

Art of Protest

INTRODUCTION

When I was a kid growing up in Mississippi and Tennessee in the United States, I learned early on about social injustices that exist in the world.

I remember defending myself against bullies who did not like me because of my dark skin. I recall watching my favourite TV shows and learning about South African apartheid, police brutality, the global AIDS crisis and historic movements for civil rights through episodes that dared to highlight these causes. As I recognised the power of the media in expanding my knowledge, I began to create art in my teens that reflected the issues happening around me - 9/11, Hurricane Katrina, the Jena Six trials. And by the time I found myself as an arts organiser on the ground in the 2014 Ferguson Uprising, I felt equipped with the experience to deploy art as a way of bringing people together to raise our collective voices.



Throughout this book, you will learn the art of protest through the work of artists, experiences and campaigns that have been created across the world to protest social injustices and advocate for the rights and liberties of diverse people. You will learn about the art of protest, and how it can be used to create change, inspire, and help you connect with others. You will also learn about the art of protest, and how it can be used to create change, inspire, and help you connect with others.



With this, you might be more aware of the issues, causes and global concerns that matter to you. Our society constantly experiences waves of social movements, campaigns for justice and rights against climate change and disease on a global scale. And as we move forward, it is my hope that this book will encourage and inspire you to use art as a language and movement that can help you champion your chosen cause.

01 WHY ART MATTERS IN SOCIAL MOVEMENTS

MY STORY AS AN ARTIST IN FERUGSON

On August 9, 2014, my life - like those of many in my home city of St. Louis, Missouri - was forever changed when I learned that a teenager had been killed by a police officer while walking along the streets of his grandmother's neighbourhood. His name was Michael Brown Jr., and his body lay in the street for four and a half hours as news media captured photos and people crowded around in dismay. Over the days that followed, hundreds of people began to march in protest across the small municipality of Ferguson, Missouri, where he lived. I was one of them, and after daily - and when nightly - protesting, I wanted to do something more.

At that time, I was an advocate of our local contemporary art movement. I had learned an intense lesson in social work, and the lessons were a combination of social and political concerns that matter to you. Our society constantly experiences waves of social movements, campaigns for justice and rights against climate change and disease on a global scale. And as we move forward, it is my hope that this book will encourage and inspire you to use art as a language and movement that can help you champion your chosen cause.

inspired and amplified the stories of people involved in the uprising. And my best friend, David, and some other local artists and activists joined me to create a series of protest art. We used our art to challenge the status quo and to inspire change. We used our art to challenge the status quo and to inspire change. We used our art to challenge the status quo and to inspire change.



WHY ART MATTERS IN SOCIAL MOVEMENTS

Most art that is created in protest will not be acquired by museums, nor is this usually the goal of activists and artists working together. Most often, we aim to reflect and respond to the immediate causes that are grounded in our social movements. And whether used in a march, a social media campaign or as guerrilla art in a public space, protest art helps social movements inform the public of issues, challenge the status quo, convey collective goals and messaging, imagine a vision of change and persuade others to take action.

Informing the Public
When used in public spaces, protest art serves as a mighty tool to help people learn about social issues. As an example, *Chalked Unarmed* was a guerrilla art series by public performance artist and *Mirror Casket* collaborator Mallory Nezam. The project invited citizen collaborators to create chalk outlines, like police outlines of murder victims, on pavements across their communities. Each outline was filled with the name, date and location of a person who had been murdered by a police officer.

Making Messages Visible
In protests across the globe, people tend to write and illustrate their calls to action on cardboard, posters or banners.

At marches, where it can be hard for target audiences to hear each individual's voice, signage allows each person's message to be seen, and the results are often full of creativity and passion.

Imagining a Vision for Change
Protest art effectively helps people develop a language and create a vision for how outcomes in a community can be better. While projects like the *Mirror Casket* challenge viewers to look inward to see themselves differently and empathise with those whose lives have been lost, other works may propel people forward to imagine a new reality.

Influencing Action
Efforts like *Decolonise This Place* and *Theatre of the Oppressed* use performances, flash mobs and "spect-acting" (whereby a member of the audience also becomes part of the performance) to engage with people across the world and explore how justice and equality can become reality. Each experience that the artists facilitate is directly tied to demands for organizations and government leaders to change a policy, boycott unjust spaces, disinvest from harmful companies or stop violent or inequitable public actions. For example, *Theatre of the Oppressed* ran a performance in 2016 entitled *The Housing Circus*, based on the real life experiences of different individuals trying to receive housing benefits. Told from the perspective of LGBTQ+ individuals and war veterans living in New York City, *Theatre of the Oppressed* used this performance to suggest policy changes.

Challenging the Status Quo

One of the common impacts of protest art is to push against the norms and rules of society. Artists like Elizabeth Vega, Ai Weiwei, Banksy and others have mastered using art as dissent. Such works often take existing materials and cultural artefacts and re-purpose them, or they might remix messages from advertisements, buildings, monuments, news articles or political documents in ways that point to their hypocrisy, outdated messages or other flaws.



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