



1/05

- THE LONG ROAD TO WAR -

George

The art of democracy

THEME The Art of Democracy project aimed to stir up interest in America's recent Presidential election via art. Anne Desmet looks at its part in the historic turnout

The Art of Democracy (AOD), a USA-wide coalition of political art exhibitions, was held during the run-up to the recent Presidential election and continues online. 'We chose this time', said organiser Stephen Fredericks, 'when the nation is particularly politically aware, to bring into focus overlooked and under-represented voices and views on the state of politics and democracy today.'

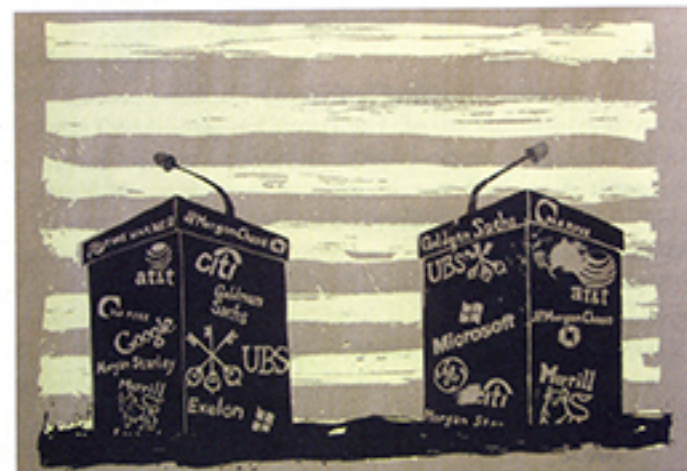
The coalition encompassed over 50 venues, from New York to San Francisco, Seattle to California, Atlanta to Puerto Rico, all of which hosted different shows on a united theme. Venues ranged from Dayton International Peace Museum, Ohio, to the University of Rhode Island Library, from Chicago Printmakers Collaborative to the tiniest café-galleries. There were no prescribed political messages and no fees. The AOD's aim was simple: 'to organize a national or international voice for political art and artists and amplify that voice by the multiple venues all participating at the same time' – strength in unity.

The AOD worked not as organizer but as promoter and hence could promulgate its messages of civil activism, reform, dissent and protest via a unifying title, logo, website, PR campaign and exchange of related posters and prints. It began as a coalition of artist groups from San Francisco and New York, its alliance inspired by a show at the National Arts Club, New York, in 2007, titled *The Art of Persuasion*. The New York Society of Etchers, under Stephen Fredericks' directorship, secured the same venue for the follow-up show of *The Art of Democracy* this autumn; San Francisco print artist and independent curator Art Hazelwood linked up to organize the Bay Area effort. 'Our hope is to inspire a handful of interested parties around the country who will share their energies for creating a positive change in American politics through exhibitions of art' they commented.

Every exhibition was organized according to each venue's needs, but prints, as befits their long history in political art, featured strongly. As Barack Obama assumes the Presidency, the *Art of Democracy* remains one to watch.

Contact

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Other political art sites

<http://www.politicalgraphics.org/> <http://www.justseeds.org/> <http://lpc.revolt.org/>
<http://politicalartwork.blogspot.com/> <http://www.art-for-a-change.com/blog/>
<http://graphicwitness.org/iney/index2.htm> <http://www.graphic4change.com/index.html>
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