

'Creative Fix' Invites Artists to Play an Active Role in Politics

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Sheena Ghanbari

In her upcoming project, "Creative Fix," Sheryl Oring asks artists what they would do to fix the country if they could do anything at all. Oring, 43, is a Master of Fine Arts candidate in Visual Arts at the University of California, San Diego. She is calling artists to the university's Marcuse Gallery on April 16 and 17, Agitprop in San Diego on May 2, and compactspace in Los Angeles on May 30, to discuss their creative solutions for our country. Oring will make one-minute videos of their answers and post them on YouTube. By doing so, Oring hopes to bring artists into the contemporary political debate. Artists of all types - writers, musicians, visual artists, architects etc. - are invited to participate.

"Creative Fix" is currently California-based and has the potential to expand to an international scale as viewers respond to the videos posted on Oring's YouTube channel: <http://www.youtube.com/iwishtosay>. The final shape of the participatory project depends on the creativity of respondents.

The idea for "Creative Fix" grew out of Oring's most recent past work, a public art project called "I Wish to Say." For this, Oring set out to gather public opinion during the 2008 presidential election by setting up an "office" - complete with a manual typewriter - in public places and inviting passersby to dictate postcards to the next president. Many people spoke out for change, and Oring feels the challenges facing this nation demand attention from more than just the usual suspects. Artists, she said, can offer a fresh perspective on many of the most pressing issues of the day.

"In other parts of the world, artists play a legitimate role in politics and political debate," said Oring, citing examples such as Václav Havel, the playwright who became president of Czechoslovakia, and the German political system, in which the arts play a significant role in local and national political institutions. "In the U.S., however, artists are seen as suspect. I'd like to do one small thing to change this and bring more creativity to American politics."

Oring is a first-year MFA student focused on public culture. Led by architect Teddy Cruz, Public Culture is a new emphasis at UC San Diego's Department of Visual Arts. Cruz is Oring's mentor.

Details: April 16 and 17, noon to 4:30 p.m., Marcuse Gallery Visual Arts Facility, University of California, San Diego

May 2, 3 to 6 p.m., Agitprop 2837 University Avenue (entrance on Utah), North Park, San Diego

May 30, 3 to 7 p.m., compact *space*, 105 E 6th Street, Los Angeles

More About the Artist:

Sheryl Oring is the author of "I Wish to Say: The Birthday Project," a book published in 2008 that features a collection of birthday cards for former President George Bush, which were dictated at public events Oring held in eight cities across the country. Named ABC News' Person of the Week by Peter Jennings for her performance

piece “I Wish to Say” during the 2004 Republican Convention in New York City, Oring is a former journalist (The New York Times, the San Francisco Chronicle, Die Welt) whose provocative work explores the intersection of language, politics and memory. Her past work includes “Writing Home,” a performance in which she invited people to dictate letters to their ancestors; and “Writer’s Block,” a sculptural installation made out of hundreds of antique typewriters. She has received fellowships from the Creative Capital Foundation, New York Foundation for the Arts and the Robert Bosch Foundation; held a residency as part of the Lower Manhattan Cultural Council’s Swing Space program; and exhibited in museums, cultural centers, galleries and public spaces in the United States, Europe and India. Oring has a degree in journalism from the University of Colorado, Boulder, and has studied art history and theory at the Humboldt University in Berlin. She is working on an MFA in Visual Arts with an emphasis in public culture at UC San Diego.

Media Contacts: Sheena Ghanbari, 858-822-7755, sghanbari@ucsd.edu Inga Kiderra, 858-822-0661, ikiderra@ucsd.edu

