



In the Name of Justice, We Can Do It—A Review of the [CCA@CCA Artwork Campaign](#)

Gordon Fung

Witnessing the ongoing pandemic and traumatized by racial and economic injustice, the artists featured in the CCA@CCA Artwork Campaign call for creative outputs supporting social equality and justice. In an enthusiastic response to CCA’s prompt, 66 CCA students, faculty, staff, and alumni contributed more than 80 artworks that deal with social activism and democratic participation. The artists weave together the many issues at stake in this election and beyond, including racial violence, gender inequality, xenophobia, and environmental awareness, among other topics.

Adrian Harper’s (Graphic Design 1986) *Rorschach test* is a digital work that draws reference from the eponymous inkblot test. In the artwork we see a mirrored side portrait of an African-American on top of a black inkblot—which derives from the Rorschach Test’s Card Number One. The caption “What do You See When You See Me?” is written on top of the collage. The original Rorschach test was a series of mirrored inkblot images given to a patient to determine if they had a potential psychological abnormality. By inviting the participants to draw associations from the images, the psychiatrist can reveal if the patient has an extreme violent tendency. Though the validity of the test is debatable, the method is still being taught in psychology curriculum. Adrian’s digital inkblot test treats a law enforcer as if they were the patient, displaying unnecessary lethal force that targets many unarmed and innocent African-Americans. Police brutality is a psychotic malfunction that is based on delusional thoughts. Under no circumstance should Black people, Indigenous people, or People of Color be regarded as a harmful threat. Skin color is never a threat, but a person’s prejudice and racially-motivated fear of BIPOC is.

Racial violence has been an ongoing phenomenon in the U.S. since initial colonization. Robin Dintiman’s (MFA 1983) *Thin as Our Skin* series examines the never-ending violence Black and African-American people face in America. Barbaric lynchings were still happening during the artist’s upbringing in Texas. Such extrajudicial killings posed life-threatening dangers to Robin’s African-American neighbors. To avoid the

potential brutal consequence, the two families of different racial backgrounds had no choice but to keep a distance from each other. Robin uses homegrown leather to represent human skin. Trimming the animal down to its skin eliminates the defining attribute of the animal. If one cannot deduce anything from animal skin, how could one make assumptions based on an individual's skin color?

Marsha Shaw's (MFA 2007) *It's My Choice Mr. Trump!* is a digital portrait modeled on the *We Can Do It!* poster. As an iconic image that promoted feminism during World War II, the original poster has been re-appropriated and re-interpreted since the '80s. In Marsha's work, the figure challenges the viewer's expectation by not showing the original's determined facial gesture and a closed fist. Instead, with a big and carefree smirk, the character is humorously displaying "the finger" in response to the Trump administration's attempt to defund Planned Parenthood. To subtly hint at this financial oppression, the logo of Planned Parenthood on the collar pin replaces the original's "Westinghouse Electric & Manufacturing Company."

Tina Takemoto's (Dean, Humanities and Sciences Division) *Be Notorious (Vote)*, interweaves Ruth Asawa and Justice Ruth Bader Ginsburg's iconographies, a testament to the power of womanhood. The Japanese-American artist's use of loop-wire, a technique inspired by Mexican basket making, and RBG's collar are combined in one single creation. Takemoto concisely displays the influential women's accomplishments by interweaving imagery iconic of the two figures, and celebrates cultural diversity in this Nation. In response to the recent passing of Justice Ginsburg, a long-term supporter of gender equality and women's rights, this work invites the viewer to continue Ginsburg's legacy through democratic participation.

Julia LaChica's (Industrial Design 2001) *Never Again Is Now!* is a digital collage that calls for an end to immigrant exclusion amplified by the Trump administration. The collage revisits the history of Japanese internment camps as sparked by the Pacific War (1941 - 1945), and Executive Order 9066, by juxtaposing photo cut-outs of the detained Japanese children from Order 9066, and parcel labels that read "fragile" and "this way up." The concentration camp—which detained famous Bay-Area artists like Ruth Asawa and Miné Okubo—were created because of xenophobic racist attitudes towards Japanese-Americans in the early '40s. The work hints that civilians can be inhumanly transported and delivered like lifeless objects when framed through anti-immigrant sentiments.

On top of the pandemic, social injustice, inequality, and climate change, the surging demand for non-biodegradable disposable masks and irresponsible disposal of such materials have created a massive ecological disaster. This pollution has already claimed countless sea animals' lives, and harms the plants and animals who also call this place home. Amy Tavern's (MFA 2017) *American Values* is a timely warning that our irresponsible behaviors will cause ecological catastrophe and collapse. Amy composed a digital photo montage of the discarded masks for the campaign. The artist collects the photos from an ongoing map-plotting project. After seeing the discarded masks on the street, Amy was inspired to initiate a participatory project

that drew the public's attention to such irresponsible behavior. By inviting Instagram users to send in GPS-embedded pictures of masks thrown on the street, Amy plots these found "lost" items on Google maps daily. This data hints that our current American values lack moral responsibility. For Amy's map tracking project, please visit: <https://tinyurl.com/y9l86578>.

Emily Van Engel (Painting and Drawing 2012) also demonstrates environmental concern in the work *First Class Cabin*. Emily collected pollution sediment from around the Bay Area and transformed them into paints—the brown/red hues seen in the poster are created by heating the black deposits. Choosing the first-class air cabin as the subject satirizes our fossil-fuel based economy that sacrifices our own environment for immediate gratification and entertainment. Continuing the theme of environmental wellness, sherry xiang (Community Arts 2022) presents a collaborative environmental installation through the work *Green Nation*. Over a burnt hill devastated by the wildfire at Vacaville, nine participants were invited to collect and stitch leaves gathered from the neighborhood into the word "VOTE"—a powerful statement on how polls can affect our Lands, as the health of Mother earth is tied to the health of our society.

A ballot is not a superficial duty. Voting is a democratic art where we can show compassion and love to individuals, humanity, and non-human beings who need it. To promote active engagement in the democratic process this November, and after the election, most of the artwork featured in the CCA@CCA Artwork Campaign are available for free download. Check out the exhibition for more:

<https://www.creativecitizens.cca.edu>

The CCA@CCA Artwork Campaign is part of [Creative Citizens in Action](#) (CCA@CCA), an initiative at California College of the Arts that promotes creative activism and democratic engagement, and features work by 66 CCA students, faculty, staff, and alumni who responded to an open call for artwork and poster designs that encourage civic engagement. Submissions are showcased on the Creative Citizens in Action website, as well as in a walk-by exhibition in the windows of the CCA Hubbell Street Galleries in San Francisco.

Do you have questions or opinions about this response? Have you seen an event at CCA on which you'd like to report? Please email exhibitions@cca.edu to contribute to our Letters to the Editor series or submit to *Review Rewind Respond*.

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