

## Artist's Statement

Art: The term is nearly meaningless without grounding in history and place even when just referring to vanguard high art. Such grounding, of course, locates aesthetic commitments but also whatever social and political thought and movements with which an art practice or movement may be aligned or, at least, compatible or comfortable. The roots of my work are many, but to be brief, can begin with the Soviet Constructivists and Bertolt Brecht and updated with certain ideas from the conceptual art movement. At the same time, my overall position is in favor of a pluralist approach to the many positions and movements that exist and are coming. What I wish for is a vigorous and rigorous contention between points of view and practice which includes all the parties of the field: artists, critics, curators, institutions, publications and, most important, public.

Art and Social Change: Over the last decade and more, many artists have been concerned about a broad array of social issues. Commitment to social commentary and criticism through artworks is viewed as a move beyond the art-for-art's-sake limitations of liberal modernism: the artist as social isolate. But is this move toward the social really all that substantial? I think it depends upon how we come to view the role of the artist. My commitment has long been that the concerns and exhibition of social art be connected in some way to organized efforts towards the same ends; art that intends to challenge the social world has its best chance in tandem with social/political organizations and their allies.

Art and the Labor Movement: Though my work addresses, in many ways, a lot of different issues, I view class struggle as the significant arena of action. It also means that organized labor, the union movement, is the primary connection to consider. This logic would extend to other concerns such as work about race (organizations of people of color), gender (women's organizations), environment ("green" organizations), etc. If there is no apparent connection, the artist seems to be saying that the art can lead to social change (or defense of something) within the confines of the art world and not necessarily in relation to organized efforts out in our communities. I have been a union activist for over twenty-five years.

Art and Sociology: The psychological level and the mappings of the subjective certainly dominate the point of view of vanguard high art. But, once the issues of the societal are raised, framing is also necessary at the level of aggregate behavior and social structure. I am interested in both the bird's eye view of class struggle and that which cannot necessarily be directly observed at any particular site of its occurrence: relationships "seen" and represented by way of analysis. Experience isn't everything.

Art Documentary: Postmodern formulations have tended to so problematize representation that strategic ideas for social/political ends become difficult if not impossible. The context of history and causal relations are seen as untenable leaving criticism stuck at the levels of the individual and the tactical. A "reinvented

documentary" is offered to address the problematics of traditional practices. I view my work as an attempt to enter debates about the direction of both art and the labor movement at all levels of theory and practice.

Fred Lonidier, San Diego 2006