

# Socio political art essay

[Art & Culture](#), [Artists](#)



Socio political issues affect personal opinions; these often result in artworks, protesting authorities and sending messages to the public. Socio Political art is a conceptual expression of an idea. This style of art focuses on communication, reflecting socio political events transpiring during the time and allowing the audience to convey the artist's response. Ben Quilty produced *Captain S after Afghanistan* and *Self Portrait after Afghanistan 1* after being commissioned by the Australian Government to go to Afghanistan and illustrate the war on terror.

Pablo Picasso was inspired by the war to paint his *Weeping Woman*, however he was also commissioned by the Spanish Government to produce a mural in memory of the Spanish Civil War. These artists are contrasted with Banksy, an anonymous street artist who chooses to illustrate messages through graffiti, artworks such as *Balloon Girl* and *I Love You* display deep meanings though simplistic. These artists present the whole picture of socio political art, from being commissioned to anonymous graffiti. *Captain S after Afghanistan* is oil on linen painting by Ben Quilty after his journey into the Afghanistan War, commissioned by the Australian Government. Between October and November 2011 Quilty was exposed to the reality of war, experiencing firsthand an emergency situation with *Captain S* and his soldiers. Quilty was humbled by the soldiers' strengths but respects the human nature tucked away from the media. The structural frame of this piece consists of a man in a vulnerable pose, lying down.

The thick brushstrokes used to paint his muscles and face resembles the strength carried throughout the body and mind. Ben Quilty's colour pallet evokes a form of power to the subject, using reds, blues and greys to

contrast each other, creating the feeling of depression or pain. The subject in the painting is not the same man who left. This is embodied in his incomplete limbs. The hardships faced can be seen from the facial expression of Captain S, showing agony as well as a form of a pained look.

We can see this through the technique Ben Quilty used. Heavy dark colours on one side to outline what could be the hardened expression of the soldier, and the lighter tones on the other side of the face to show the softened expression to create balance. Quilty was inspired to display the human nature in his artworks; this can be seen in his other paintings such as his self-portraits. Ben Quilty's self-portraits were painted when Quilty had been through a life experience. Self Portrait after Afghanistan 1 is an oil on linen painting, showing what Quilty thought himself to be after his 3 week stay in Afghanistan. Quilty's facial expression shows a form of respect and humbling, representing how his experience changed his view or perspective of war and the soldiers. The position of Quilty's head makes the audience feel as though the subject looks up to them. By making one eye appear larger than the other, Quilty gives the audience a leering appearance as well as a sense of awe.

The colours Quilty uses create an earthy sense, letting the audience understand he is still a man and nothing more. Quilty's life experiences give him the ability to capture the whole picture, street artists such as Banksy addresses issues by showing the hidden messages in his artworks. Banksy is an English street artist, dealing with 21st century government handling of unemployed citizens. Banksy broadcasts his messages anonymously, using “

illegal” methods. Because the Government raises the cost of living and doesn’t match these actions by raising incomes, families struggle to support themselves. Banksy mainly uses spray paint and stencils to apply his artwork on public grounds quickly. His artwork Balloon Girl is a spray paint, showing a female child, reaching out to a heart shaped balloon. The girl reaching out expresses the need for the love and nurturing she wants to be brought into life with however the balloon, represent this love seems to be pulling away, forced away by the wind.

This could represent how parents need to work to support their family financially but are unavailable emotionally. The faded effect Banksy uses with the spray paint could represent the change taking place in the next generation, growing up with something they don’t have and slowly not wanting it over time. This artwork addresses many issues such as want, love and need that can be seen in his other works. Socio-economic class affects people’s opinion for one another. Banksy sees this as a problem and addresses it in his artwork I Love You. Banksy’s spray paint on wall, I Love You, presents the audience with those 3 words and a picture of an hour glass, on the letter U, with a heart running out through the bottom.

Though it has been painted over by the authorities the artwork’s structural frame displays the literal meaning of how love is not everlasting. The symbology shown with the hourglass containing the heart slowly sinking to the bottom could also show the meaning of I love you for as long as you love me. This is evident from the red residue from which the heart has leaked through time. This could also result in the deeper meaning in the artwork, as

when one loves another, the other will never truly love them back until their lover has lost interest in them. Banksy would've thought this artwork from the expression " we want what we cannot have".

The colour red is also primary in this piece. Red symbolises love and affection, however red also symbolises rage and anger. Banksy could've expressed anger on how happiness is not hard to achieve but people still make it such a challenge. The way Banksy expresses love is similar to the way other artists such as Picasso evokes the element of love into his artworks.

During the Spanish Civil War Pablo Picasso wished to communicate pain through the human face. Picasso was a Spanish artist, experimenting with different techniques and ideas, revolutionising the styles of art we see today. Picasso's Weeping Woman was painted during his relationship with a French woman, Dora Maar, who he described as always weeping. With Dora being a photographer Picasso was able to be inspired from the photographs taken. The Weeping Woman was painted in 1937 and depicts a green skinned woman, wiping her face with a handkerchief. The use of the colour green has the effect of envy or jealousy of perhaps losing her loved ones in the war and suffering the loss as she knows the people around her get to keep their loved ones for another day. The subject's facial expression shows a feeling of disbelief as though she received the news recently, her mouth open to protest but the tears cascading down her eyes know the saddened reality.

In the background the shadow painted on the wall could represent the messenger of the news given to the woman. The side of the face the tears

fall down represents how she lost a loved one and not just being informed someone has died. The tears fall on the right side of the face this can be linked to her thinking with the right side of the brain, linking it to her feelings. The extremities of war expressed on the Weeping Woman can also be seen from some of Picasso's past work. Picasso was commissioned by the Spanish Republican Government to paint Guernica. Picasso made it to draw attention to the German bombing of the town Guernica in Spain.

It is a monochromatic painting, depicting the devastation of war and what it brings to the people and the land. By using the colours of black and white Picasso portrays the effect of chaos and pain amongst the artwork. Picasso incorporates themes into his art such as the casualty of war, this is evident through the woman screaming and mourning over the death of her child held in her hands. The broken sword held in the severed arm of a man represents the death of those who have fought in battle but how they haven't given up hope as they still clench their weapons. In the background Picasso presents the downfall of the town by painting crumbled walls and a fallen pillar.

The flower drawn into this artwork could represent a new life, a rebirth of the town after this tragedy as it lies near a clenched hand which could symbolise hope. Banksy, Quilty and Picasso have all contributed to the socio political art in a refined way. Banksy uses illegal methods to illustrate his artworks to easily attract the attention of the public and the media and remain anonymous. By doing so he is able to distribute messages and images over a large scale over a short period of time. Picasso experimented with different techniques to change how socio political art was expressed. His style easily

conveyed expressions with colour, symbology and distortion of physical shapes. Quilty's contribution to socio political art was from being commissioned and learning the true human nature people had.

This impacted greatly on his artworks as he was determined to show the raw souls the soldiers possessed. All these artists have responded to socio political events by incorporating the events relevant to the time and their opinions into their art practises. Bibliography [http://www.benquilty.com/artwork\\_item.php?artwork=20120727131520&y=20120727123651](http://www.benquilty.com/artwork_item.php?artwork=20120727131520&y=20120727123651) <http://www.artgallery.nsw.gov.au/prizes/archibald/2012/29238/> <http://janmurphygallery.com.au/stockroom.php?aid=22&wid=4179> <http://www.banksy.co.uk/shop/shop21.html> <http://www.artofthestate.co.uk/banksy/banksy-i-love-you.htm> [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Pablo\\_Picasso](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Pablo_Picasso) <http://www.ngv.vic.gov.au/picasso/> <http://www.squidoo.com/sociopolitical-art>