

EDUCATOR GUIDE

HUMAN RIGHTS ILLUSTRATED THROUGH ART

KEY LEARNING OBJECTIVES:

- What are my human rights?
- What are history's important human rights documents?
- How are human rights depicted in art?
- How can art influence the awareness of human rights in the world?

OVERVIEW:

Robert F. Kennedy Human Rights Switzerland and VforArt have joined forces to teach pupils about the value of human rights illustrated through art. The combination of education and art, in addition to a cognitive stirring, provides an emotional effect, whereby the values of human rights are better and more sustainably internalised.

Human rights are the guiding principles of our society. They tell us how to treat each other on both an individual as well as a community level. Unfortunately, we often fall short on meeting these self-imposed standards. Sometimes without even realizing this, because other people – strangers – are suffering the consequences

of our behavior. Art can be a means to mirror our current state of affairs and open our eyes and hearts to the faiths of others.

This presentation shows how art can illustrate the meaning and importance of human rights in three different ways:

- Objects with historical value becoming art through the centuries
- Art as a bearer of opinions and informations
- Protest art

The artists that are featured in this presentation have no (personal) connection to either VforArt or Robert F. Kennedy Human Rights Switzerland, but were chosen to show a diverse range modern and contemporary artists from all over the world to illustrate the power art can have in the fight for human rights.

SPEAK TRUTH TO POWER

UNIVERSAL DECLARATION OF HUMAN RIGHTS

The whole spectrum

ACTIVITY DURATION

2–3 lessons

TARGET AUDIENCE

Primarstufe 6. Klasse

Sekundarstufe A/B 1

Sekundarstufe A/B 2 (Englisch Unterricht)

STUDENT SKILLS

- Analytical skills
- Interdisciplinary thinking
- Inquiry skills
- Creative thinking
- Discussion skills

MATERIALS

In order to use this presentation, one needs a computer and projector. For the students participation, no additional material is needed.

The accompanying book “Speak Truth to Power”, the basis of our curriculum, is available in German and French and can be downloaded or ordered (for free) at:

<https://de.rfkhumanrights.ch/book>

NOTE TO TEACHERS

This lesson plan with accompanying presentation gives a complete overview of the topic. No necessary research is required, but additional links for further reading are provided.

Most sheets start out with suggested questions for the pupils to engage them with the topic at hand and contain additional background information. Teachers are free to in- or exclude any parts as they see fit according to available time and interest.

The questions in the presentation can either be answered and discussed plenary or in duos/ small groups.

In case any questions arise, please feel free to contact:

Chantal van Vlijmen of VforArt at chantal@vforart.com

Team Robert F. Kennedy Human Rights Switzerland at info@rfkhumanrights.ch

FEEDBACK

We would be happy to receive your feedback on our learning materials:

<https://forms.gle/cadJTVwNs26cNnV4A>

PRESENTATION AND STUDENT ACTIVITIES

SLIDE 1 TITELPAGE: HUMAN RIGHTS ILLUSTRATED THROUGH ART

SLIDE 2 PRESENTATION OVERVIEW

An overview of the subjects that will be discussed during the presentation.

1. What are human rights? Here examples and definitions of human rights will be explained.
2. History of human rights through art. Here we take a look at several major human rights documents of the past centuries and will take a closer look at how they are depicted in art.
3. What can art do for human rights? This part focuses on how art can play a role in the awareness of human rights in the minds of the people.
4. Modern and contemporary artists and activists. Finally we go deeper into in which way and what message artists try to spread when it comes to violating human rights.

SLIDE 3 WHAT ARE HUMAN RIGHTS?

Questions: Before talking about human rights and its connection with art, it is important to know what human rights are. One can start by asking the class:

- to give examples of human rights
- give a definition of human rights
- explain why human rights are important

There are many examples of human rights. Some may be well-known like the right not to be tortured or freedom of speech. Others are less well-known, such as the right to a nationality or access to a (fair) trial.

Besides examples, we can also determine certain traits of human rights, like the ones listed on the sheet:

- Human rights are non-discriminatory and apply to every human being.
- Human rights have to be guaranteed by the government, but people and businesses also have their part to play when it comes to respecting each other's rights.
- Human rights guarantee people's freedoms – but do not give them the right to hurt others.
- There are many different kinds of human rights; they can be categorized into civil rights and social and economical rights.

There are many human rights laid down in different (international) human rights treaties. Different treaties apply to different countries. However, the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights and the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights taken together are often called the “international bill of human rights” and are considered to apply to all people all around the world.

More information:

- <https://www.ohchr.org/documents/publications/factsheet2rev.1en.pdf>
- <https://www.ohchr.org/documents/publications/compilation1.1en.pdf>

SLIDE 4 TITELPAGE: HISTORY OF HUMAN RIGHTS

SLIDE 5 ANCIENT HUMAN RIGHTS

Human rights as we now know them have developed over time. Nowadays, we see human rights as rules for states on how to protect their citizens. In the past, there were no democracies and Kings ruled in an absolutist way. This means they could rule their country as they saw fit, without having to check with anyone else (like for example the citizens or parliaments). They could do this, because it was believed that the King's authority derived directly from God. So, if you disobeyed the King, you disobeyed God.

However: even in times of authoritarian rule, laws existed. Because without rules there would be complete chaos. Some of these rules can be seen as the first precursors of human rights. We will discuss two examples and look at them from an art historian perspective:

Hammurabi's Code:

Questions:

- How would you describe the object?
- Why do you think it was important?
- Would you call it art and why (not)?

Background: Hammurabi was a Babylonian (modern-day Iraq) ruler who lived 1810–1750 BC (so: almost 4.000 years ago). His kingdom comprised of many different states, cultures and peoples. All these people had different rules in their society. In order to make it easier to rule over all of them in a unified way, Hammurabi decreed one set of rules that would apply to anyone in his Kingdom. These rules become known as “Hammurabi's Code” and were chiseled in twelve stones and displayed publicly for all to read. Some examples are: the prohibition of marriage by capture, an early form of the presumption of innocence and rules on divorce.

About the object: Art history is a study which helps us to understand the times pieces of art were made in. Let's take a look at Hammurabi's code: it is a stele (upright stone) which in those times was used as a billboard. Important messages that you wanted all people to read, were written on steles. This in turn means that whatever was written on a stele, must have been important for the people at the time.

The text itself, the laws, also tell us a lot about what kind of society ancient Babylonia was. For example, we can read that the citizens were divided into three classes and depending on if you were part of a higher or lower class, your punishment for the same crime would be lower or higher. A nobleman caught stealing would have to pay a fine however, if a slave was caught stealing his hand his would be cut off.

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A last aspect of this piece is the relief carving. We can make out Hammurabi himself and the God Shamash. We can recognize them from their typical imperial/godly headware. Depicting them together delivers the message that Hammurabi's rule was divinely inspired (as we talked about before). By making them of equal size, it shows that the king was of the same importance as the God.

More information:

- <https://web.archive.org/web/20201205050436/http://www.louvre.fr/en/oeuvre-notices/law-code-hammurabi-king-babylon>

The Cyrus Cylinder

Questions:

- How would you describe the object?
- Why do you think it was important?
- Would you call it art and why (not)?

Background: More than 1.300 years later (in 539 B.C.), the Babylonian empire was conquered by King Cyrus of ancient Persia (modern-day Iran). Babylonia itself was now part of a large Kingdom and like Hammurabi before him, Cyrus laid down rules on how to govern his new empire. Amongst these he declared that slaves would be free, people had the right to choose their own religion and that different races living in the city would be treated equally. These and other decrees were recorded on a baked-clay cylinder known today as the "Cyrus Cylinder". It inspired many Asian leaders and even Thomas Jefferson, later President of the United States and writer of the US constitution.

About the object: The Cyrus Cylinder is a multi-purpose object: both political and religious. It tells the story of how Cyrus conquered Babylon, it gives new laws that were supposed to ensure peace between the many different cultures living in this vast new empire and by burying it underneath the citywalls of Babylon to ask for the ongoing protection of the god of Babylon. Not just its content, but it's design also tells us how important this document by Cyrus was: by choosing a round shape, the written text had no end and no beginning. It goes on endlessly which gives it more majesty and authority.

More Information:

- <https://www.metmuseum.org/exhibitions/listings/2013/cyrus-cylinder>
- https://www.britishmuseum.org/collection/object/W_1880-0617-1941
- <https://www.bbc.com/news/world-us-canada-21747567>

SLIDE 6 WESTERN FRONTRUNNERS OF HUMAN RIGHTS/MAGNA CARTA

Documents asserting (individual) rights, such as the Magna Carta (1215), the US Constitution (1787), the French Declaration of the Rights of Man and of the Citizen (1789) are the written precursors to today's Human Rights documents. Let's take a closer look at them.

Magna Carta or 'Great Charter'. In 1215, after King John of England violated a number of ancient laws and customs, his subjects forced him to sign the Magna Carta. This is a document that contains what later came to be thought of as Human Rights. The Magna Carta recognised and protected the liberty of *individual* Englishmen, made the King subject to the common law of the land (which means he was no longer above the law like a God), formed the origin of the trial by jury system and acknowledged the ancient origins of Parliament. It also contains the right of the church to be free from governmental interference, the rights of all free citizens to own and inherit property and to be protected from excessive taxes.

SLIDE 7 MAGNA CARTA

Questions:

- What do you see in the different pictures?
- Can you see the same people in the pictures?
- How does the King look?

Art can be a means to tell an important story, like for example to record of the signing of the Magna Carta. When looking at the different impressions one can discover certain similarities:

- King John is clearly not happy signing the document. This shows us that he was *forced* to do so.
- In some pictures, we see knights and people of the church surrounding King John. They look very serious. From this scene, we notice two things: 1) That the knights (nobleman) and the church were the two major players in this story and 2) that they are the ones that made the King sign the Magna Carta.

In the 13th century, many people could not read, important stories and histories had to be depicted so people would understand and over generations remember them.

SLIDE 8 WESTERN FRONTRUNNERS OF HUMAN RIGHTS/ US DECLARATION OF INDEPENDENCE

The United States used to be a colony of the British Empire. Although the Magna Carta ensured that the powers of *British* rule were subjected to *British* parliament, the people of the United Colonies (the former name for the United States of America) were not represented. When the British imposed new taxes on the colonies, people there rebelled under the slogan "No taxation without representation". This demand was not met by the British and so a trade war started that culminated in an armed fight for independence. As part of this fight the United States of America called for independence in 1776. (The war did not end until 1783.) Philosophically, the Declaration stresses two themes: individual rights and the right of revolution against an oppressor. These ideas became widely held by Americans and spread internationally.

SLIDE 9 US DECLARATION OF INDEPENDENCE

Questions:

- Where does the painting hang?
- Why do you think it is important that the painting hangs there?
- Can you name a similar painting and place in Switzerland?

Background: In this photo, we can see the painting by John Trumbull which depicts the presentation of the draft of the Declaration of Independence to Congress. We can see the five person drafting committee: John Adams (2nd president of the USA), Thomas Jefferson (3rd President of the USA), Benjamin Franklin (one of the most famous intellectuals of his time), Roger Sherman (the only person to have signed all four great state papers of the USA) and Robert Livingston (who later negotiated the [Louisiana Purchase](#) which doubled US territory). It is a depiction of one of the most important moments and people in US History.

About the object: Painter John Trumbull was commissioned to make this and three more paintings specifically for the Capitol (US's Parliament's building). The Americans were very proud of their independence over the British, which is why they wanted their central seat of power to show what a great and brave nation the USA is. (The other three paintings show two important victories in battles over the British and the resignation of general George Washington which was significant for establishing civilian authority over the military, a fundamental principle of American democracy.)

In Switzerland, we have a similar [painting in the Nationalratssaal](#): the mural by the Geneva artist Charles Giron offers a view of Lake Lucerne and shows the "cradle of the Swiss Confederation".

SLIDE 10 WESTERN FRONTRUNNERS OF HUMAN RIGHTS/ DECLARATION OF THE RIGHTS OF MAN OF THE CITIZEN

The events in the United States had a strong influence on what happened in France only a few years later: the French Revolution of 1789. As in the United States of America, the French citizens were unhappy by the absolute rule of the French monarchs. Becoming philosophically enlightened, seeing the American example, a financial crisis and food shortages all culminated in the French Revolution in 1787.

The citizens of France demanded more power and so during the beginning of the revolution the [National Constituent Assembly](#) was founded. Although only noblemen took place in this gremium, this was already an enlargement of power from a single ruler. Because civil unrests did not calm down, the nobility saw itself threatened by the peasants who also wanted more power. In order to appease the peasants, the noblemen adopted the *Declaration of the Rights of Man and of the Citizen* and thereby abolished the feudal rule of the king and nobility over the peasants. For the king however, this went too far and he did not sanction the document, which in the end led to his deposition and decapitation.

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The Declaration proclaims that all citizens are to be guaranteed the rights of ‘liberty, property, security, and resistance to oppression’. The Declaration sees law as an ‘expression of the general will’, intended to promote equality of rights and to forbid ‘actions harmful to the society’.

More information:

- <https://www.elysee.fr/en/french-presidency/the-declaration-of-the-rights-of-man-and-of-the-citizen>
- <https://www.britannica.com/event/French-Revolution>

SLIDE 11 DECLARATION OF THE RIGHTS OF MAN AND OF THE CITIZEN

Questions:

- Can you recognize any symbols?
- Who do you think are those women on top of the declaration?
- Do the tables with the articles of the declaration look familiar?

About the object: This is what we call an “allegory” which means a symbolic representation, often with a hidden meaning. In this painting by Jean-Jacques-François Le Barbier (1738–1826) we can see the declaration being celebrated as a crowning achievement of the French Revolution.

On the left we see the allegorical figure of France breaking their chains of tyranny (through the French revolution). On the right, we see the genius of the country holding the sceptre of power. In the middle, we can see the eye of God looking over the 17 articles of the declaration, which are modelled in a similar way to the ten commandments of Moses on clay tablets. In the middle of the two tablets, we can see three more symbols: a snake biting its tail (meaning eternal unity), a laurel wreath (representing glory) and red Phrygian cap (which stands for liberty).

More information:

- <https://www.bl.uk/collection-items/the-declaration-of-the-rights-of-man-and-of-the-citizen>

SLIDE 12 WESTERN FRONTRUNNERS OF HUMAN RIGHTS/OVERVIEW

The documents we just discussed, are all predecessors of modern human rights. When looking closely at these different treatise, we can see some similarities. Core theme if you like:

- Submission of the divine rule of the king to the will of the people
- Individual rights
- Property rights
- Rights to rise up against unjust rule
- Financial rights (f.e. against unjust taxation)

All of the however, still excluded one or more members of society from these rights such as like women, slaves, people without land and property or people from specific religions. However, even the people that were suppressed were “infected” with these freedom rights and continued to fight for equal rights and self-determination.

SLIDE 13 TITELPAGE: FROM ANCIENT TO MODERN HUMAN RIGHTS

SLIDE 14 THE UNIVERSAL DECLARATION OF HUMAN RIGHTS

Today’s international human rights conventions and the establishment of the United Nations (UN) were preceded by the aforementioned treaties, but also several important events. Prime examples are the efforts to abolish the slave trade, the development of the laws of war (called “humanitarian law” to end human atrocities on the battlefield) and the two world wars.

After World War II ended, a new international cooperation between countries was founded: the United Nations. Shaken by the crimes against humanity that were committed in the past years, countries decided to create an organization that would work to prevent such horrors. By 1948 the UN’s new Human Rights Commission had captured the world’s attention: under the chairmanship of Eleanor Roosevelt and inspired by all the documents we worked through today, the commission created the *Universal Declaration of Human Rights* which was adopted on 10 December – still celebrated each year as international human rights day. The rights we talked about at the beginning of this lecture, can all be found in this international charter.

SLIDE 15 TITELPAGE: WHAT CAN ART DO FOR HUMAN RIGHTS?

SLIDE 16 WHAT CAN ART DO FOR HUMAN RIGHTS?

Unfortunately, even with the UN and international human rights treaties in place, not all people get the protection they need and deserve. Whenever human rights are being disrespected, artists tend to rise up and confront us with what is going on in the world around us. Thus, when it comes to violating human rights a piece of art can serve several options:

1. Through their art, artists stand up against violations. Art – in all kind of forms – can be a critical message towards the government or oppressive regimes that disrespect human rights.
2. Another aim of artists is to give a message of hope and support to the victims.
3. A third goal can be raise awareness of what is going on in a specific country or situation, in the hope that other countries will take action and try to end these human rights violations.

Speaking of human rights and art, did you know that making art is also a human right? According to Article 27 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights is written that every individual has the right to cultural and artistic freedom.

The reason art can be important for human right is because art communicates across boundaries of geography, politics, gender and race. The right to protest is a crucial manifestation of freedom and expression.

Art can often reflect the status quo but can also point to change and new possibilities. Art with a political or social message can be a powerful force for those challenging injustice. It can also symbolize aspirations for an alternative future. Perceptions as love, hate, hope, forgiveness, horror and empathy are more powerful than facts.

Art is a powerful tool for advocacy and human rights awareness. As a visual medium, it transcends language, cultural and political barriers. While a viewer may not be an expert on what they're seeing, the use of color, form and symbol triggers an emotional response.

People feel a connection to events of causes that they may otherwise be ignorant about. This encourages them to research a piece of art further. Especially when it comes to art outside in public spaces. It's displayed for free and accessible for the wider public. Such art can make an impression on those who don't go out of their way to seek artistic engagements in museums and other cultural venues.

Nevertheless, museums and galleries are also important sites for the display of protest art, and for people to access their cultural heritage, and those of others. An important example of protest art for many decades is *Guernica* from Pablo Picasso.

More information:

- www.humanrights.com
- www.humanrightscareers.com

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SLIDE 17 TITELPAGE: GUERNICA, ANTI-WAR STATEMENT BY PABLO PICASSO

SLIDE 18 IMAGE GUERNICA

SLIDE 19 THE HISTORY OF GUERNICA

Background: History of *Guernica* In January 1937, while Picasso lived in Paris, he was commissioned by the Spanish Republican government to create a large mural for the Spanish pavilion at the 1937 Paris World's Fair. Picasso worked from January until late April on the project's initial sketches. Then, immediately upon hearing reports of the 26 April bombing of Guernica, and reading in the *The New York Times*, an eyewitness account of the attack, he abandoned his initial idea. Picasso began sketching a series of preliminary drawings for *Guernica*. Picasso painted 'Geurnica' while in Paris.

It's a response to the bombing of Guernica, a town in northern Spain, by Nazi Germany and Fascist Italy. The painting soon became famous and widely acclaimed, and it helped bring worldwide attention to the Spanish Civil War. Where Republicans fought against Monarchists led by general Franco.

Guernica was a Republican town, which is why it was bombed. For over three hours, 25 bombers dropped 100,000 pounds of explosives and bombs on the village, reducing it to rubble. At the time of the bombing a majority of Guernica's men were away, fighting on behalf of the Republicans, at the time of the bombing the town was populated mostly by women and children. These demographics are reflected in *Geurnica*. The women and children make the image of innocent, defenseless humanity victimized. Also, women and children have often been presented by Picasso as the perfection of mankind. An assault on women and children is, in Picasso's view, directed at the core of mankind.

The painting was first exhibited at the 1937 World Fair in Paris. After the exposition, it toured through European and American cities, to raise funds for the Spanish war relief.

More information:

- <https://www.museoreinasofia.es/en>
- www.pablocicasso.org

SLIDE 20 STYLE AND ICONOGRAPHY OF GUERNICA

Questions:

- What (symbols) do you see in this painting?
- What is your opinion about this painting?

About the object: *Guernica* was painted using a matte house paint specially formulated at Picasso's request to have the least possible gloss. Picasso also used the special paint and eschewed color to give the work the black and white immediacy of a photograph. The grey, black and white painting portrays the suffering people and animals wrought by violence and chaos. Prominent in the composition are a gored horse, a bull, screaming women, death, dismemberment and flames. It depicts humans and animals suffering, their faces and bodies contorted in pain and grief.

The scene occurs within a room where, on the left, a wide-eyed bull stands over a grieving woman holding a dead child in her arms. In the center of the room a horse falls in agony with a large gaping hole in its side, as if it had just been run through by a spear or javelin. The horse appears to be wearing chain mail armor, decorated with vertical tally marks arranged in rows. A dead and dismembered soldier lies under the horse. The hand of his severed right arm grasps a shattered sword, from which a flower grows. The open palm of the soldier's left hand contains a stigma, a symbol of martyrdom derived from the stigmata of Christ. A bare light bulb in the shape of an eye blazes over the suffering horse's head.

To the horse's upper right a frightened female figure appears to have floated into the room through a window and witnesses the scene. She carries a flame-lit lamp, and holds it near the bare bulb. From the right, below the floating figure, a awe-struck woman staggers towards the center, looking into the blazing light bulb with a blank stare.

Daggers that suggest screaming have replaced the tongues of the horse, the bull, and the grieving woman. A dove scribed on the wall behind the bull, part of its body compromising a crack in the wall through which bright light from the outside shines.

On the far right a fourth woman, her arms raised in terror, is entrapped by fire from above and below. Her right hand suggests the shape of an airplane. A dark wall with an open door defines the right side of the room.

More information:

- <https://www.museoreinasofia.es/en>
- www.pablocicasso.org

SLIDE 21 GUERNICA AS ANTI-WAR STATEMENT

Questions:

- Why would you call the Guernica an anti-war statement?
- Would you consider this painting as an anti-war statement, since you learned about the symbols?

Guernica is considered one of the most powerful anti-war paintings of all times. Over the years *Guernica* has become a universal and powerful symbol warning humanity against the suffering and devastation caused by war.

The painting was first exhibited at the 1937 World Fair in Paris. After the exposition, it toured through European and American cities, to raise funds for the Spanish war relief.

To secure the painting from being destroyed during World War II, it was sent to the United States. Having been on loan to the Museum of Modern Art (MOMA) in New York for 42 years, *Guernica* arrived back in Spain in 1981. Since 1992 it is on display at the Museo Reina Sofia in Madrid, in a gallery especially dedicated to art with conflict, along with its preparatory drawings.

When the Vietnam War (1955–1975) broke out, *Guernica* was again used as an anti-war statement by activists. Activists used a detail of the slain man along with the phrase ‘Stop the war in Vietnam now!’ From that time *Guernica* started to gain momentum as a political icon. To this day it appears totally or partially in drawings, vignets, posters and banners at demonstrations worldwide, against international politics related to armed conflicts. *Guernica* continues to be a reminder of war atrocities and helps us to remember that the paintbrush, can be mighty weapons to fight oppression.

Another example where *Guernica* was used as an anti-war statement in diplomacy is a tapestry copy of *Guernica* in the United Nations building in New York. In 1955 Nelson Rockefeller (vice president of the United States), commissioned a tapestry, woven by a specialised atelier in the South of France under the supervision of Picasso himself.

In 1985 *Guernica* was offered by the Rockefeller family in loan to the United Nations in New York by his family. Until February 2021 it hung outside the office of the Security Council; the most powerful body of the United Nations charged with ensuring international peace and security. Therefore, it was considered a perfect work of art for the Security Council, as an anti-war statement.

More information:

- <https://tinyurl.com/ydybsy3t>
- www.un.org

SLIDE 22 TITELPAGE: CONTEMPORARY ARTISTS AND ACTIVISTS

SLIDE 23 AI WEIWEI BIOGRAPHY

Background information: Ai Weiwei (1957) is a Chinese artist and political and human rights activist. He is one of the most famous protest artists of today. His work exists in the space between art and activism, often blurring the boundaries between the two. Weiwei creates work rich with symbolism and metaphors that draw attention to social injustice, his work is often deeply political.

Weiwei proclaims that art is a very important weapon to achieve human freedom. He believes the core value of an artist must be to express yourself freely and fight for the freedom of others. Weiwei has contributed greatly to modern art. Through the use of mass media like radio, television and internet Weiwei is able to express the feelings against government protesters to the rest of the world. Weiwei doesn't only use mass media but also makes conceptual art (the idea is more important than the way the artwork looks). A form of conceptual art he uses is Installation (used to describe large-scale, mixed media constructions, often designed for a specific place for a temporary period of time).

Weiwei grew up in the Northwest of China, where he lived under harsh conditions due to his father's exile. As an activist, he has been openly critical of the Chinese government's stance on democracy and human rights. The Chinese government was not happy with the critics of Weiwei. In 2011 Weiwei got arrested for economic crimes. After being allowed to leave China in 2015, he has lived in Berlin. Since 2019 he lives with his wife and son in Cambridge (UK).

In recent years Weiwei has focused his practice on advocating for refugees' human rights, documenting the experiences and conditions faced by millions of people who have been forcibly displaced from their homes.

More information:

- www.aiweiwei.com

SLIDES 24–26 LARGE-SCALE INSTALLATION, LAW OF THE JOURNEY, 2017

Questions:

- What do you see in this installation?
- Is it linked to current affairs?
- What is the message that Ai Weiwei wants to convey?
- How does this installation impact you?

With this installation Weiwei shows empathy and moral concern. *Law of the Journey* is a call for action against the ignorance and blindness of the politics. Weiwei spent time visiting several informal migrants- and refugee camps around the world, including the frontline of the European refugee crisis in countries such as Greece, the Turkish-Syrian border and the US-Mexican border.

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About the object: The centerpiece of the Installation is a 70-meter-long inflatable boat filled with 300 larger than life figures of all ages, faceless figures, referencing the often-overcrowded mode of transport for the dangerous route desperate migrants undertake to cross the Aegean Sea from Turkey to Greece. They are all huddled, children sit in the middle for extra protection. A few figures lie underneath and besides of the boat, their journey ended prematurely. The inflatable boat is crowded with hundreds of anonymous (that's the reason Ai Weiwei made them faceless (slide 25), refugee figures, the work brings the monumental scale of the humanitarian crisis into focus.

The boat and figures are made from black rubber and fabricated in a Chinese factory that also manufactures the precarious vessels used by the thousands of refugees attempting to cross the Mediterranean Sea. Also displayed as part of the installation are four video works called Human Flow (videostill slide 26). Filmed over several days shows overcrowded, inflatable rafts delivering a constant flow of people the shores of the Greek Island Lesbos.

More information:

- <https://artpil.com/news/law-of-the-journey-ai-weiwei/>
- <https://www.biennaleofsydney.art/participants/ai-weiwei/>
- <https://www.ngprague.cz/en/event/153/aj-wej-wej/152>

SLIDE 27 KILUANJE KIA HENDA

Questions:

- What do you see in this photograph?
- Is it linked to current affairs?
- What is the message that Kiluanju Kia Henda wants to convey?
- Why do think this work is titled "Redefining power"?
- How do you like the idea of replacing statues of "important" people with ones of "ordinary" people?

Not only famous artists like Ai Weiwei are using protest art to show their dissatisfaction. Worldwide numerous artists try to fight injustice through art. Kiluanji Kia Henda (b. 1979, Luanda, Angola) is one of them. He is a conceptual artist who seeks ways to reconcile cultures. Kia Henda comes from Angola, which used to be a Portuguese colony and therefore influenced by Portuguese culture. He uses his art to raise the dark history of today's successful countries whose wealth was built on colonialism. As part of the Project HOMEM NOVO (New Man), the series "Redefining the Power" makes monuments the subject of investigation. Figures of colonizers used to occupy the top of the pedestals we see in his photos. On these empty monument bases, Kia Henda positions Angolan personalities, such as artists, activists, and thinkers. Through his works of art he raises questions like:

- Who do we want to imbue with the power of changing not our past, but our future?
- Who are our heroes of tomorrow?
- And which battles do they have to fight?

SPEAK TRUTH TO POWER

By reoccupying the position of power instead of rewriting history, he comes to terms with the trauma of colonization.

More information:

- <https://www.weareaia.ch>

SLIDE 28 QUESTIONS AND DISCUSSION

To close the presentation and the subject of human rights and art it might be interesting to start a discussion with the participants. Let me help you further with some examples of discussion topics:

1. Do you think art can play a role in the awareness of human rights in the minds of the people? Why (not)?
2. What kind of Art (sculpture, painting, Installation, film, etc.) would you make to convince people of injustice?
3. For which human right (or violation thereof) would you like to create an artwork? Why?

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