



At the Intersection of Art and Social Engagement

Sandy Bleifer uses paper and figurative imagery to evoke social and political issues. Her work engages the audience via interactions with freestanding and wall hung sculptural installations. Her intention has been to bring about far-reaching social change by further involving the viewer/participant through adjunct programming as well as contemplation of the artwork.

Across her considerable career, Sandy Bleifer has addressed any number of themes and issues. Her engagement with personal, psychological, social, and even political matters is constant and unflagging; each series she generates focuses on a different concern, allowing her at one time to concentrate on her inner self and her experiences, at another time to consider how humans relate to one another, at yet another time to contemplate the beauty and fragility of the world.

SANDY BLEIFER: TEXTURALITY BY PETER FRANK

Sandy Bleifer, Artist/Social Activist

Bleifer is a Los Angeles native who studied art and classical music at the University of California, Los Angeles, and has been active as an artist-in-residence in local schools, is the co-author of teaching materials on art appreciation, and worked since the mid-1970s on collages using handmade papers, and widely known for her experimental uses of paper to evoke land and seascape imagery as well as social issues. Bleifer envisioned doing more than just creating art with her life. She told me that when she returned home [from her Hiroshima/Nagasaki memorial project] she decided to use her talent as a tool for social action, embarking on an ambitious plan to bring about social change by approaching the built environment. Working as a real estate specialist on behalf of tenants and buyers, she founded a company in 1996 in order to pursue the creation of a vibrant residential and business community in the neglected historic and industrial sections of downtown.

Nick Patsouras, The Making of Modern Los Angeles

Bleifer is primarily concerned with urgent issues of war, racial genocide, destruction of human[s], and cultures of today. Bleifer successfully brings out these issues and the political issue is well integrated with her chosen media of cast paper. It is obvious she structured many aspects of the issues she was handling not only [as a] political statement but also she achieved to go beyond the boundary of so-called artwork on paper's conventions.

Masami Teraoka, *Artful Peace*, Artbeat Special Summer Issue '94





SANDY BLEIFER

ARTIST STATEMENT

I believe in the power of art to change people on the deepest levels of their being and, consequently, every major social movement needs an art component to help transcend ideological differences and reinforce shared values.

I have always been concerned with destructive forces: the power of nature, the active role of human civilization as it impacts the environment, and the inhumanity of humans towards one another. While my early work in paper and silkscreen was driven by an appreciation for the natural environment, a growing awareness of the environmental crisis and social justice issues drove me to seek more proactive/interactive methods of artistic expression. This went beyond presenting art in installation formats by creating a project matrix involving social engagement and collaboration with individuals, communities, and institutions to catalyze social exchange.

A visit to **Hiroshima Peace Memorial Museum** in Japan ignited my social justice focus. For my **Hiroshima/Nagasaki Memorial Project**, I produced a traveling exhibition of paper sculptures to depict the ravages of war. Found strips of moldy papers became the impetus for my **Holocaust Series** as they conjure up the striped uniforms of those in the concentration camps.

I've long saved compelling newspaper images of subjects such as political conflicts, environmental issues, and gun violence while searching for an artistic expression for these subjects. With my several kimono series, I utilized my collection of newspaper photos to use as messages on a "wearable format" – the kimono - thereby projecting the sentiment of the wearer. (**Plastic Bag Kimono Series**, **The Times: Kimono Series**, and **Sacred Lands**).

ARCHIVES

Smithsonian Archives of American Art - The Archives of American Art is the world's preeminent and most widely used research center dedicated to collecting, preserving, and providing access to primary sources that document the history of the visual arts in America. [Research Request Page](#)

Southern California Section – USC Libraries Special Collections

Documentation of work in the revitalization of downtown: [Sandy Bleifer Papers](#)

Venice Heritage Museum

The Saving the Venice Walkstreets Collection - documentation of my community activism, along with a [video narrative](#) of my 30 years in Venice. [Venice Heritage Museum](#) • [Oral History Project](#)

Venice High School – Art Department

Via, *Sand Castles*, an educational publishing venture, created and produced a vast library of award-winning arts & humanities teaching materials

MAJOR PROJECTS

- 1975: painted a 30-foot-long mural, **Can of Cardines**, on the underpass of the Ventura freeway in Encino.
- 1980-1983: **Artist in Residency** for Beverly Hills Unified Schools
- 1984: **Coordinator**, art/humanities programs for O.A.S.I.S. Seniors Programs, Los Angeles
- 1988: **Produced** a month-long project with High School Students culminating in a performance, *The Harmonic Eye*, at Barnsdall Junior Arts Center.
- 1994-1995: Orchestrated the **Hiroshima/Nagasaki Memorial Project** that traveled to Hiroshima, Nagasaki, Osaka, Berkeley, CA, Honolulu, HI and Los Angeles with community, art and educational programs.
- 1996: Joined the Board of **LA Artcore**
- 1996: Established **Angel's Walk LA** – to develop pedestrian-friendly pathways through historic neighborhoods.
- 1997- 2013: Established **DownTown Enterprises** and, later, **DownTown LA Realty** to reinvigorate the historic neighborhoods of downtown Los Angeles.
- 2000: Established **The Fashion Business Incubator (FBI)** which provided business skills and opportunities for startup apparel manufacturing companies.
- 2011-2013: **Artist in Residence** at Central High School, a continuation high school downtown.
- 2012-2016: Helped organize **Venice Art Block** open studio tours.

As I continue to synthesize all my life experiences, they inform my perceptions of the latent dangers to planetary survival and tragic events. Using my well-honed skills in papermaking, printmaking, and painting, I filter my views through layers of abstraction, distillation, and transformation. What I hope emerges from this creative process – and its ultimate connection with an audience – is an empathy and shared vision for a peaceful and sustainable future.