

Aspen Art Museum
Aspen Art Museum
Aspen Art Museum
Aspen Art Museum

Educator Notes



Installation view: *With Liberty and Justice for All (A Work in Progress)*, 2014. Photo: Jeff Murcko

Jim Hodges

With Liberty and Justice for All (A Work in Progress)

August 9, 2014–January 25, 2015

About the artist

Jim Hodges was born in 1957 in Spokane, Washington, and lives and works in New York. He is best known for his use of diverse, often commonplace materials including silk flowers, photographs, paper napkins, broken glass, and mirrors, which he often weaves into sculpture-based visual narratives that reflect on the passage of time. Hodges designed the 2008–09 Aspen Skiing Company lift ticket featuring the phrase “Give More Than You Take,” which was also included in his 2009 solo exhibition at the AAM, *you will see these things*.

Hodges speaks directly in brief yet powerful statements that address the viewer. In 2004, he accepted the Wall at WAM commission at the Worcester Art Museum in Massachusetts. He invited representatives from all member-nations of the United Nations to write down the phrase “don’t be afraid” in their native language. Hodges combined their contributions into a composition he printed as a billboard for the wall.

About the exhibition

With Liberty and Justice for All: (A Work in Progress) (2014) wraps around the Aspen Art Museum building in life-size, reflective letters. This outdoor, text-based sculpture has the ability to engage a wide audience including passersby. It invites viewers to ponder their personal relationship to a familiar yet powerfully charged philosophical notion. The familiar ending to the Pledge of Allegiance of the United States emphasizes three important aspects of human rights and equality: liberty, justice, and all. By isolating this phrase, Hodges urges us to read deeper into the meaning and application of the words.

With Liberty... exemplifies art’s capacity to be a catalyst and facilitator of conversation. As both a statement and an implied question, this artwork prompts us to carefully consider ideas and experiences that we might take for granted. The reflective letters symbolize the mirror that art turns on society. What do we see about our world through art?

Questions for discussion

Ask students to think about what they associate with the words “liberty,” “justice,” and “all” using these questions:

- | What are different types of liberties and freedoms?
- | How is justice different from liberty?
- | What are other words that mean “all”?

Then discuss your personal opinion and experience of these words using these questions:

- | What can you do with your liberties?
- | Who gets to decide what is fair and just?
- | Do you believe that all people experience the Pledge of Allegiance in the same way?
- | Why or why not?

Consider the title: What might “a work in progress” mean?

Suggested activities

Writing exercises

After students have discussed their personal relationship with the words “liberty,” “justice,” and “all,” challenge them to create their own statements that could start a dialogue.

- | Give each student a large piece of paper or surface to write on. Ask: If you could put a phrase on a building, what would it be? Write this phrase and consider on which building you would put your phrase.
- | Or: Ask students to write an essay about how they experience liberty and justice today.

Reflective installations

Powerful artworks can show us something we have never seen before, or perhaps something familiar in a new way. Begin this activity by discussing what *With Liberty...* presents to you that you have never seen before.

- | Have students consider objects that have a deep meaning. Place the reflective side of some tin foil around an everyday object and see how it changes your perspective.

For more information, please contact the Education Department at 970.925.8050 ext. 133 or email education@aspenartmuseum.org.

All new Aspen Art Museum inaugural exhibitions are generously underwritten by Stefan Edlis and Gael Neeson. Indirect exhibition costs are funded in part by the AAM National Council. AAM education programs are made possible by the Questrom Education Fund. Education Workshop support is provided by Melva Bucksbaum and Raymond Leary and Mary and Patrick Scanlan. Scholarships for AAM Summer Workshops are funded by Cari and Michael J. Sacks.