

***Nancy Wang***



***Barbara Kruger***

***1945 – Now***

***“ I mean, making art is about objectifying your experience of the world, transforming the flow of moments into something visual, or textual, or musical, whatever.***

***Art creates a kind of commentary.”***

## Barbara Kruger

is an American conceptual/pop artist that was born in Newark, New Jersey in 1945 and left there in 1964 to attend Syracuse University. Early on she developed an interest in graphic design, poetry, writing and attended poetry readings. After only one year at Syracuse, Kruger moved to New York City to take more advanced art and design classes at the Parsons School of Design.

While enrolled at Parsons, Kruger's instructors included the American photographer Diane Arbus and graphic designer Marvin Israel. Israel in particular had a dramatic influence on Kruger, encouraging her to prepare a professional portfolio when she was becoming disenchanted with art school.



*I shop therefore I am (1987)*

Upon leaving Parsons, Kruger found work as a designer and editor with a number of publications based in New York, including House and Garden, Aperture, and then Mademoiselle, becoming lead designer within a year of being hired and at the age of twenty-two. Despite her early success in editorial work, she felt compelled to pursue a career in art, having said,

*"I basically wasn't cut out for design work because I had difficulty in supplying someone else's image of perfection."*



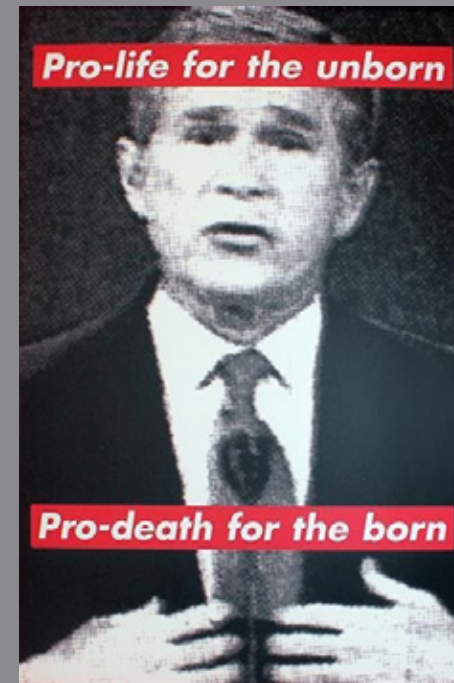
*Your Body Is a Battleground (1989)*

In 1979 she published an artist's book, *Picture/Readings*. She was inspired to photograph architecture from her family "looking at family homes [they] could never afford." Shortly after publishing her book, Kruger completed a similar photographic study of hospitals, only this time the accompanying text was far shorter and more declarative, including phrases like "Go Away" and "Not that"

Her poster for the 1989 Women's March on Washington in support of legal abortion included a woman's face bisected into positive and negative photographic reproductions, accompanied by the text "Your body is a battleground." A year later, Kruger used this slogan in a billboard commissioned by the Wexner Center for the Arts.

## **Repeat After Me (1985-94)**

The motif of image and text in her work would soon mature into phrases that explored issues of social power dynamics, technology, death, violence, and the human condition, often taking the form of abstract concepts and postulations.



## **Untitled**

**Pro-life for the unborn,  
Pro-death for the born**

**(2000--2004)**

In recent years Barbara Kruger has extended her aesthetic project, creating public installations of her work in galleries, museums, municipal buildings, train stations, and parks, as well as on buses and billboards around the world. Walls, floors, and ceilings are covered with images and texts, which engulf and even assault the viewer. Since

the late 1990s, Kruger has incorporated sculpture into her ongoing critique of modern American culture. Justice (1997), in white-painted fiberglass, depicts J. Edgar Hoover and Roy Cohn—two right-wing public figures who hid their homosexuality—in partial drag, kissing one another. In this kitsch send-up of commemorative statuary, Kruger highlights the conspiracy of silence that enabled these two men to accrue social and political power.

By the early 1980s Kruger became more ambitious in both her use of rhetoric and imagery. Kruger would later claim that her chosen motif of overlaying pictures and words was due to their “ability to determine who we are and who we aren’t.” Indeed, with slogans like “I shop, therefore I am” and “Your body is a battleground,” Kruger was exploring text that addressed issues of feminism, consumerism, desire, and personal autonomy.

LOOK FOR  
THE MOMENT  
WHEN PRIDE  
BECOMES  
CONTEMPT

**WHO IS FREE  
TO CHOOSE?  
WHO IS BE-  
YOND THE  
LAW? WHO IS HEALED? WHO  
IS HOUSED? WHO SPEAKS?  
WHO IS SILENCED? WHO  
SALUTES LONGEST? WHO  
PRAYS LOUDEST? WHO DIES  
FIRST? WHO LAUGHS LAST?**

## **Questions**

**- 1991**