

## **Proposal for *La guerra es nuestra.***

We propose to create a large sign with the statement “La guerra es nuestra.” spelled out in black, back-lit lettering and attach it to the façade of the Círculo de Bellas Artes. The sign will utilize a format that is most often seen on storefronts and is also common in advertising—the viewer may initially overlook the sign, as we are often indifferent to new information and media constantly being introduced to us, but a second glance may procure a very different reaction. Moreover, the placement of such a sign on a well-known cultural building leads to a juxtaposition of the political onto the beautiful.

We are particularly concerned how to bring the political back to art. For almost two decades, art has often steered away from some of the controversial topics it had previously investigated, such as feminism in the 1970s and AIDS activism in the 1980s, in favor of an exploration of aesthetics; however, in the past couple years politics has returned to art. This return is closely tied to the political climate we are currently experiencing, namely the war in Iraq, and most of this new work is a reaction against the policies of many nations, particularly that of the United States.

Political art *does* effect change and it can do so in many ways—it can effect change in everything from governmental policy to a shift in perception in a viewer’s mind. For example, Act Up’s campaign to make the AIDS crisis more visible in 1987, which culminated in posters bearing pink triangles labeled with the bold statement SILENCE=DEATH, had massive effects. The six men who collaborated in the campaign were artists and designers, and their talents contributed to the success of the campaign. They worked through every detail from the phrase (their initial choice was “gay silence is deafening”) to the color choice to the font.

One would be naïve to think that aesthetics are not relevant—everything is perceived from an aesthetic point-of-view as well as other points-of-view. In choosing to propose a political artwork, we had work out what phrase to use (we wanted something that was as simple as possible for the maximum effect), what format to showcase our sign (we considered options like a billboard, an LED sign, and neon lettering but, in the end, we decided the type of sign we picked—what is called “channel lettering”—would be most efficacious for the cost), what font to use (our choice is Times New Roman because it is well-recognized and it references the font used in many texts), what color to use (we decided black because of the seriousness and the gravity of our message), and where to place the sign (the Círculo de Bellas Artes is a public building on a well-traveled street, which has a large and diverse public audience).

The initial reference in the statement “La guerra es nuestra.” is, of course, the war in Iraq. But the statement is also open-ended; the “war” or the “guerra” can refer to anything that incites passion and concern in the viewer. In Madrid, this might be the activities of the Basque group Euskadi Ta Askatasuna or the need for more affordable housing within the city. Our goal is to show that everyone is a voluntary participant in the political. Indifference is a statement, as much as waging a war or being involved in activism.