



WOMEN ON THE RISE!

TEACHING INSTRUCTIONS: Jenny Holzer

THEMES:

- Using mass media communication techniques to create art
- Text as art
- Art in public spaces

FEATURED WORKS:

Truisms (1977-79), xenon projections such as *Xenon for Rio de Janeiro* (1999), and *Project for "Suddeutsche Zeitung Magazin Edition #46"* (1993).

RESOURCES:

Links to images

- <http://www.pbs.org/art21/artists/holzer/index.html>
- <http://www.heimread.com/artists/jenny-holzer/>
- http://www.guggenheimcollection.org/site/artist_work_md_65_1s.html

Books

- *Jenny Holzer* (1998): Phaidon Press

DISCUSSION POINTS AND QUESTIONS FOR STUDENTS:

- (Optional) View and generate questions related to the Jenny Holzer segment of Art21 <http://www.pbs.org/art21/artists/holzer/index.html>
- (Lady Pink wearing "Abuse of Power Comes as No Surprise" T-shirt) What does "abuse of power" mean? Do you think that people in the street might have reacted to this t-shirt and/or asked her about it? Would the reaction change if a man were wearing the shirt?
- ("Protect Me From What I Want" sign) Why do you think the artist chose to place this phrase in an urban landscape?
- Have you ever felt like you've needed to be protected from something you've desired?
- (*Project for "Suddeutsche Zeitung Magazin Edition #46"*) How are these works different from Holzer's *Truisms*? How does the content of the writing relate to its inscription on skin? Do you recall having someone writing on your skin? Why do you think that body art is practiced by so many groups of people around the world?

MATERIALS FOR HANDS-ON PROJECT: Jenny Holzer

Truism Jewelry

- Alphabet beads of various sizes
- Assortment of colored/textured beads
- Bead cord
- Fasteners
- Scissors
- Clipboards

PROCEDURE FOR HANDS-ON PROJECT:

Students will create a necklace or bracelet using text from the *Truism* they wrote for the creative writing exercise. This method is inspired by the manner in which Holzer placed truisms on the body via t-shirts. (*You may also want to conduct an additional or alternate project in which students create Truism shirts*)

- Students will select the alphabet beads needed to create their *Truism*
- Students will attach one end of the bead cord to a clipboard
- (Optional) Students will choose colored/textured beads to use as embellishments
- Students will place beads on the string and attach fasteners
- Students will show their jewelry pieces to teachers, friends, and family members and note reactions (can be later discussed as a group in class)
- (Optional) Students can photograph each other wearing their *Truism* jewelry pieces

APPLICABLE NATIONAL VISUAL ARTS STANDARDS (GRADES 5 -12):

- NA—VA.5-8.1 (9-12.1): Understanding and Applying Media, Techniques, and Processes
- NA—VA.5-8.3 (9-12.3): Choosing and Evaluating A Range of Subject Matter, Symbols, and Ideas



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STUDENT HAND OUT: Jenny Holzer

Jenny Holzer (b. 1950—Ohio)

Jenny Holzer uses words as art to bring new ideas to viewers. Holzer's aim is to make her work accessible to everyone by placing it in the landscape. Her works are most often seen in urban spaces like subways and Times Square in New York City instead of museums.

She moved to New York City in the mid-1970's to attend the Whitney Museum of American Art's independent study program where she found the required readings inspiring yet difficult to get through. Holzer's desire to present the challenging content of these books through language that was easier to understand led her to produce what she termed **Truisms**. They are slogans created by the artist that address common myths and important issues in contemporary society such as power, money, love, and violence. Many of Holzer's statements are familiar pieces of advice, such as "*You should study as much as possible.*," or more troubling phrases, such as "*Stupid people shouldn't breed.*" The word "truism" suggests that most people accept these statements as fact. The artist was intrigued by the way language influences opinions and perspectives on the world and found that most profound ideas are lost in long and complex texts while **clichés** spread rapidly throughout our culture.

She began to place posters and fliers with truisms throughout her neighborhood in New York City in 1977. Holzer also used mass media advertising techniques to show her work such as billboards, benches, T-Shirts, stickers, and the Internet. In more recent works she broadcasts text using **xenon** projections on landscapes and architecture. She has created these projection art works in various cities including Florence, Buenos Aires, Paris, Berlin and Miami.

Vocabulary

Cliché - An unoriginal or overused phrase.

Xenon - High definition laser.

