

## Craftivism: What? Why? How?

In addition to titles like feminist, writer, animal lover and ruminator, I have certainly adopted 'crafter' to my encyclopedia. If you leave me alone with a glue gun and googly eyes, upon return you will not only find a mess with remnants of supplies scattered across the floor, but a masterpiece of artistic intuition will have been created. That's right! All first grade art classes, and summer campers should cower in fear after witnessing the beauty of my crafts! I would not call myself an expert, but I am certainly well versed in the 'art' of crafting. As you probably know I also consider myself an activist (i.s. someone who makes efforts both politically and socially for the betterment of marginalized groups or concepts). When given the opportunity to combine the two, I jump at the opportunity. This chance is referred to as 'craftivism.'

Craftivism is a form of activism, typically incorporating elements of anti-capitalism, environmentalism, solidarity, or feminism, that is centered on practices of *craft* - or what can traditionally be referred to as domestic art. It is a social process of negotiation, action, expression, and central empowerment. In craftivism, engaging in the social, performative and critical discourse around the work is central to its production and dissemination.

Originally, the term craftivism was coined in 2003 by writer Betsy Greer; she defines such as, "craftivism is a way of looking at life where voicing opinions through creativity makes your voice stronger, your compassion deeper, and your quest for justice more infinite." While quite expansive and broad, there is no denying the inspiring sentiment.

Although the term was newly added to the crafting dictionary, the use of craft as an activist tactic can be found throughout history. Feminism has been a strong supporter of craftivists since its beginnings! In the early 1900s first wave feminism - relating to women's suffrage - was facing society, and on top of the protests and groups, crafting was a key element to the suffragettes! They sewed pockets on to their dresses, made white ribbon sashes, and constructed posters and banners. Even third wave feminism has carried out this tradition. Recently, the Anarchist Knitting Mob held a "Massive Knit" in Washington Square Park to honor the death of activist Jane Jacobs. Knitters decorated the trees, benches, and light posts with colorful yarn and unique patterns.

Environmentalists have also been fond of craftivism. Focussed around ideas of sustainability, when buying new materials, many craftivists have chosen organic fabrics and fairly traded products such as home-spun yarns. Some even take a step further by repurposing items through the utilization of vintage, thrifted, and donated goods in an effort to minimize waste.

Some craftivists see their art form as a protest against war and violence. Anti-war craftivists often choose to make their statement through colorful, soft, feel-good materials where positive messages are spread to all on lookers. In 2006, Danish artist Marianne Jorgensen stitched a giant pink "tank blanket" and placed it over a combat tank to protest the Iraq war.

Despite its seemingly foolish appearance, craftivism actually has incredibly applicable and frankly important impacts. If you are even a remotely artistic or creative person I encourage you to take part in some craftivist projects; to help you do so I have compiled a list below to spark your ideas!

1. Stitching patterns
2. Magazines
3. Posters
4. Flags
5. Clothing
6. Buttons/Pins

Hopefully those non-specific ideas inspired you even in the slightest bit; however, if you have yet to be impressed, I strongly encourage that you visit these craftivist sites where hard working artists are incorporating advocacy into their craftsmanship!

**Craftivism:** <http://craftivism.com/projects/>

**Craftivist Collective:** <https://craftivist-collective.com/>

**Crafting a Green World:** <https://craftingagreenworld.com/articles/category/craftivism/>

**Unbound:** <https://unbound.com/books/craftivist/>

Here are some of Bleed Shamelessly's Craftivist Projects:

