



Presentation for the Joseph Binder Symposium 2014

It seems the world has gone mad.

Tanks rumble over boundaries without resistance or outcry.

Innocent people tragically fall from the sky without more than a mild clamor for justice.

Schoolchildren aren't safe in their classroom from retaliatory strikes that rain from the skies.

Journalists and aid workers are senselessly threatened, paraded in front of cameras and beheaded.

Powerful world leaders continually exert their unyielding power over the weak.

Bomb strikes are never quite as pinpointed as they say.

And yet where is the outrage, where is the call for sensibility and sanity?

Where are the voices of artists and designers? When looking back on the history of art we see pointed imagery that speaks to the insanity of its day.

Artists and designers called out the cowards, brought to light the despair and anguish of war. Just look to Goya or Ben Shahn or Picasso's *Guernica* to see how artists have shown a light on hypocrisy. Or Kollwitz and Moore's images of underground shelters when bombs fell on London.

Is it because these artists lived and breathed war, they saw first hand how violent and destructive humanity can be and were repelled by it.

Certainly many were deeply affected by war, even in the hauntingly beautiful drawings of Schiele you can feel the horror they must have seen.

Where are the visual provocateurs of today?

Why do we allow sanitized film and video to replace personal expression? Their view has done nothing more than desensitize the world to atrocities.

We've grown used to graphic images seen through the bombsites of warplanes that we don't sense the damage that's done to innocents caught in harm's way. If what we're seeing now has no effect on the psyche then we have to believe that art will.

But have we ourselves become so immune to violence, so insensitive to the hurt of others. Do we look away instead of at a problem?

Are we too interested in making something beautiful than something meaningful? What is holding us back from using our imagery and talents to engage a population who cares more about a celebrity wedding than the cost of lives cut short.

Where are the protest posters of a new Tomi Ungerer? Why isn't our art on social media decrying what is happening around the world.

Are we afraid to share our true feeling, have we become part of the masses who care more about self-interest than challenging authority? Certainly we realize that today's media fear upsetting the apple cart so they play it safe. Who says we have to?

Do we not realize that our voice can make a difference? That our art, our posters, our social discourse will provoke honest discussion.

That as artists we have an obligation to denounce violence and war or whatever name they put on it. People pictured falling out of the sky over the fields of Ukraine would have more impact than the passive photos of a child's toy among the ruins. Yes that image tugs at our heartstrings but it is followed by a much happier story in the next ten seconds.

Who is telling us to hide our images?

Let us create our own furor.

Let us engage and enrage.