

Resistance from Within: Art as Covert Defiance (Medford, 27 Mar 26)

Medford, MA, Mar 27, 2026

Deadline: Dec 21, 2025

Kendall Murphy, Tufts University

The Department of the History of Art and Architecture at Tufts University invites graduate students to submit paper proposals for the 2026 Graduate Symposium titled Resistance from Within: Art as Covert Defiance, which will be held on March 27, 2026, in Medford, MA.

Keynote Speaker: Dr. Diana Martinez, Assistant Professor of Architecture, UC Berkeley.

In 1984, Lucy Lippard asked if the Trojan Horse was the first work of activist art. Written during the first Reagan administration, Lippard's famous essay posits activist art as working both "within and beyond the beleaguered fortress that is high culture or the 'art world.'" (Lippard, 1984, p. 1) This symposium seeks to explore how art throughout history has worked as a Trojan Horse, quietly maneuvering across tangible and figurative boundaries, defying the restrictions of authoritative institutions, and subverting societally imposed conventions and expectations.

In the interest of tracing a broad spectrum of activist stories, we encourage diverse perspectives on art and defiance throughout art history, spanning time, place, and media. Examples could range from marginalia in medieval manuscripts that deride members of the clergy, to Impressionist painters who counter conventional gender norms in their work, and from Cuban artists who subvert propaganda using the principles and visual language of Pop Art.

Recent scholarship and exhibitions have spotlighted myriad forms of resistance throughout time, including Gregory Sholette's 2022 book "The Art of Activism and the Activism of Art", the Walker Art Center's exhibition "Multiple Realities: Navigating Experimental Art in Central Eastern Europe, 1960s-1980s", and the Clark Art Institute's "A Room of Her Own: Women Artists in Britain, 1875-1945."

Topics may include:

- Decolonial perspectives on art created within the Empire
- Feminist interventions across art history
- The role of art in resisting censorship
- Institutional critique from within the institution itself
- Dissent through architecture, street art, and/or monuments

Submission Guidelines:

The symposium will feature 20-minute presentations. We welcome submissions from graduate students in all fields and disciplines. For consideration, please submit a title and abstract of no more than 250 words, along with a brief biography, to tufts.grad.symposium@gmail.com by

December 21, 2025. Participants will be notified by January 9, 2026.

Reference:

CFP: Resistance from Within: Art as Covert Defiance (Medford, 27 Mar 26). In: ArtHist.net, Nov 5, 2025 (accessed May 31, 2026), <<https://arthist.net/archive/51072>>.