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Making and Meaning

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Through out the pass two weeks of class we have been learning about contemporary artist and how the address issues of labor. Some of the labor they experience is through their own lives, observing others, or through research. Each artist expresses this differently; however, they prove to have an affect on the audience that views the works.

Vic Muniz makes a large impact on the community he interacts with in his piece called the “Waste Land.” Muniz went out and found men and women who worked in the landfills and they were called pickers. Their jobs were to find recyclables, and they would come home smells of trash, unhappy with their lives. Therefore, Muniz interacted with the men and women; getting to know them on a more personal level. Once he did this he took portraits of them and then recreated them with the recyclables. Because Muniz decision to create the portraits out of the recyclables it was a representation of them. Also, Muniz had the pickers then work for him instead of the landfills. By doing this he gave the pickers hope of a better life. Muniz showed the audience how the pickers survive of the income the received from the landfills and they believed it was all they had. Nevertheless, after working for Muniz they find hope to do something better with their lives.

In Eleanor Heartney lecture she shows the audience an artwork of prostitutes getting tattooed for cocaine. This artist is expressing to the audience what these women would actually do just to receive drugs. The artist tattooed a simple line on the women; however, there is pain while receiving tattooed and it is something that will last forever. The tattoo is a representation of what the woman are actually willing to do for drugs. They will give their body to men, and even get a tattoo.

As a class we went of a field trip to work on the farm called Sola Gratia Farm. However, the most interesting part for me was hearing the stories the woman who worked there was telling us. She works hard everyday in the fields, yet loves every moment of it. She cares of the plants and enjoys watching them grow. I personally believe that plants are just temporary; therefore, I do not care as much for them because I know they will die and come back in the spring. Unlikely myself, the woman working there cares about the regrowth of them in the spring and heavily prepares of the work. In her daily life of working in the fields, she is able to find a beauty in the plants that are growing around her. Overall, she is able to define her practice in her everyday life because she leaves the farm everyday with a positive attitude looking at the beauty she created.

Just the woman working at Sola Gratis Farm Kara Walker found beauty in something that was only temporary. Kara Walker built large sculptures out of sugar. They represented the African Americans working in the sugar cane fields; however, the melted away and the audience were able to view the process of the melting. Walker spent so much time on the large sculptures, but she did not care that they were temporary because that was all apart of work. The work showed the audience that the works in the cane fields were unimportant and just melted away. Walker was successful in express the labor of the sugar cane workers.

All of these artists showed the audience what the workers had been through or how they were treated. Also, the artist expressed their process of this through their daily lives by documentation or physical artworks. The artist showed the audience all the time they spent on these piece and the time the workers spent doing labor. Because of these they give the audience a different view on what labor is and how it affects the people involved. Therefore, the artist were successful is depicting labor throughout their lives and artwork.