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Photo 1

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JR

Parisian street artist JR started taking photographs when he found a 28mm film camera that was left at a Paris metro. He continued to use this new medium to do street art by printing his photographs and wheat pasting them to walls and other places in the city. After being featured in the local news, JR used his newfound fame to continue pasting his photographs around the world, photographing everyday people and telling their stories. During his continuing career he won a TED Talk award and created a film with the French director Agnès Verda, called "Visages/Villages" or "Faces/Places".

JR began his exhibitions by seeing something in the world and bringing light to a reasoning. This started off when his picture, "Portrait of a Generation", was featured on the local news after rioting took the streets. His picture was negatively depicted since it showed a black man holding a camera in way that people assumed it was a gun. He took this opportunity to show the people of Paris that those who were labeled as "dangerous" were just kids. JR took black and white portraits of the gang kids with goofy faces and pasted them on garbage cans, walls, and any place people would have to see it, showing others that their dangerous label was wrong. His works usually involve that same or a similar process. JR works mainly with people, framed in headshots, just the eyes, or whole body, but has also done exhibitions of disappearing and later extending the pyramid at the Louvre.

Face 2 Face was completed in 2007 in the streets of Israel and Palestine. JR took photographs of people from both countries in the same or similar positions and pasted them next to each other in the streets. Jr and his friend Marco wanted to figure out why there was a conflict between the people in Palestine and Israel. In order to do this, they took a trip to cities in both countries and concluded that the

people on both sides looked the same. They wanted to show these people that they are the same. The thought was that by taking portraits of people in both countries in the same or similar positions and pasting them side to side, or face to face, the people would realize that they are the same. Not only had JR and Marco done street art before, but they wanted to make the point to people who would not normally visit Art in a museum setting. The portraits were printed out in a large scale and were pasted in unavoidable spots in both countries. The people on either side would then look at these portraits and assume they were their own, when it was a portrait from the other country.

Overall, JR's style focuses on contemporary issues while using the same, powerful technique. Although his images are done in the same style, the different exhibits convey the individual themes. The choice to paste the photographs in the streets instead of a traditional art museum allows the contemporary issues to be dealt with and talked about by everyone, not just a select group of people. He chooses attention grabbing poses with his models to show off the fun, less serious side to portraiture. Once the large scale, nontraditional portraits invite the viewer in, then the political conversation is had.

JR's format of striking portraits pasted in common areas in large prints allows the viewers to think about a contemporary issue without the overall theme of the artwork being overly political. The portraits grab the attention of passerby's who then want to know why the photographs of their neighbors are on the walls. They have an underlying political tone that initially draws in the viewer and then poses the questions. Often artworks have heavy political tones that prove to be more obnoxious than thought provoking. The decision to continue working with the world as his gallery, even though JR has been in several art museum exhibitions, provides an insight to why JR does what he does. It shows that JR does not create art for monetary reasons, but for the sake of having a conversation with the world.

Bibliography

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