

"It's up to people to change the system": The artists using stamps as resistance

By Nadja Sayej, The Guardian, adapted by Newsela staff on 10.14.20

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Image 1. Designs included in "These Times," a printed and digital stamp project by TRANS>. Photo: TRANS>

A new art project focuses on stamps. The project is called "These Times." A group called TRANS> created the project. In their designs, many artists emphasize the importance of voting. The stamps can be viewed online. They will also be printed on stickers.

Sandra Antelo-Suarez is the project leader. She said the post office plays an important role in democracy. As citizens, "it's Americans' duty to vote," she said.

Envelopes, stamps and mail have been very important this year. This is mainly due to the spread of COVID-19. This is an election year. Many people plan to vote by mail because of COVID-19. Changes to the postal service have slowed mail delivery. This worries some people.

Antelo-Suarez wanted to respond to the spread of COVID-19. She wanted to use art. She thought stamps would be a great way to bring art into people's homes. She asked 50 artists to help out. The artists live in many different countries.

A Stamp With The Power To End Unfairness

She told them to make artwork that celebrates "our culture, which is being lost." She told them to imagine their stamp had the power to end unfairness in the world.

"It's up to the people, not the politicians, to vote, to change the system," Antelo-Suarez said.

The stamps cannot be used on real mail. Antelo-Suarez said she saw the effect COVID-19 was having on culture and artistic communities. She wanted "to bring artists and thinkers together to create a space for grief, but also for hope and action."

The stamps honor people who died from COVID-19. They also encourage Americans to vote.

Antelo-Suarez said culture is a way to bring change and start conversations.

A Message That Says "I Love You"

It comes down to Americans voting in the election in November. "Democracy could be taken away, not just from Americans, but from the entire world," said Antelo-Suarez. This year, President Donald Trump is running against Joe Biden. Biden used to be the vice president.

Alejandra Seeber is an artist. She made a stamp. She lives in Argentina. The stamp has the word "Futuro" on it. It is a Spanish word. It means "future." She created the stamp with her daughter. Her daughter is 11 years old. The stamp is a way to talk about democracy and voting, she said.

Mateo López is another artist. He lives in Colombia. He created a stamp with a red shape on it. It looks like a heart. He said the design is like a message that says "I love you" or "Thinking of you."

Anri Sala lives in Albania. He also designed a stamp. His stamp has a fist on it. The phrase "The egg tomorrow will be a chicken" is written on it.

He said voting represents putting effort into your future. It also honors the past struggles for freedom.



Quiz

- 1 According to the introduction [paragraphs 1–4], why did Sandra Antelo-Suarez lead the stamp project?
- (A) She hoped artists in other countries could convince Americans to vote.
 - (B) She worried that people have lost interest in sending mail to one another.
 - (C) She thought stamps would be a good way to bring art into people's homes.
 - (D) She wanted to raise money for families whose loved ones died from COVID-19.
- 2 According to the section "A Message That Says I Love You," why did Anri Sala design a stamp with the message "the egg tomorrow will be a chicken"?
- (A) to explain how democracy works
 - (B) to suggest hope for a COVID-19 cure
 - (C) to highlight the poverty in his county
 - (D) to show that voting affects the future
- 3 Read the paragraph from the section "A Stamp With The Power To End Unfairness."
- "It's up to the people, not the politicians, to vote, to change the system," Antelo-Suarez said.*
- How does Antelo-Suarez feel about the importance of voting?
- (A) It is the way that politicians remain in office.
 - (B) It is part of the system that must be changed.
 - (C) It is how people change the system of government.
 - (D) It is only needed if politicians are not doing their job.
- 4 What does the author want the reader to learn?
- (A) Artists from around the world designed stamps to promote voting.
 - (B) The post office may be very important in the upcoming election.
 - (C) Stamps created in the art project cannot be used on real mail.
 - (D) Artist Alejandra Seeber created a stamp with her daughter.