

BELIEVING IN CHANGE: THE AESTHETIC VALUE OF REPETITION AND ACCUMULATION TO SOCIALLY-ENGAGED PRACTICE

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Summary: On June 8-10, 2013, about 1,000 volunteers laid 1,018,260 fabricated bones on the National Mall in Washington D.C., bringing to fruition almost five years of effort to execute the project *One Million Bones*. The project's intention was to create a symbolic mass grave in this democratic public space in order to bring awareness to current and ongoing genocides happening in various countries in the world. We participated in almost every aspect of *One Million Bones*, and, during the installation, we came to observe the unanticipated use of the 2.0 app Instagram. In this chapter, we examine the Instagram images posted following the *One Million Bones* live D.C. installation in order to illustrate that mobile media offer activists the rhetorical affordances of two particular aesthetic strategies: repetition and accumulation. First, we illustrate that the *One Million Bones* project is socially-engaged practice involving the social media platform Instagram, an app that proved to be used often during the three day installation and event. Next, we describe the concepts of repetition and accumulation, articulating the ways that they emerge, are practiced, and can be identified. We turn to roughly 450 unplanned Instagram postings in order to explore these concepts in action. Finally, we discuss the ways repetition and accumulation visible in *One Million Bones* reveal a sincere belief/faith in art and activism to address global issues and change the world. Overall, we offer ideas for further thinking about art activism and mobile media by proposing that scholars, activists, artists, and communities consider these aesthetic strategies when study-

Resumen: El 8-10 de junio de 2013, unos 1.000 voluntarios instalaron 1.018.260 huesos fabricados de arcilla y de papel en el National Mall en Washington D.C., llevando a cabo casi cinco años de esfuerzo para cumplir el proyecto <<One Million Bones>>. El proyecto se centraba en crear una fosa común simbólica en este espacio público democrático para concienciar al público sobre los genocidios actuales que ocurren en varios países del mundo. Los investigadores participaron en casi todos los aspectos del proyecto <<One Million Bones>>, y, durante la instalación, llegaron a observar el uso imprevisto de la aplicación 2.0 Instagram. En este capítulo, se analizan las imágenes de Instagram publicadas después de la instalación en vivo de *One Million Bones* para ilustrar las ventajas retóricas que los medios móviles les ofrecen a los activistas. Los investigadores presentan dos estrategias estéticas particulares: la repetición y la acumulación. Primero, se plantea el proyecto *One Million Bones* como ejemplo de arte comprometido y activismo cívico que contaba con el apoyo del medio social Instagram, una aplicación se utilizaba con frecuencia durante la instalación y el evento de tres días. A continuación, se definen los conceptos de repetición y acumulación y se describen las formas en las que se emergen, se practican y se pueden identificar, utilizando aproximadamente 450 publicaciones en Instagram con el fin de explorar estos conceptos en acción. Finalmente, se comenta la manera en que las formas de la repetición y la acumulación en *One Million Bones* sirven para crear una creencia / fe sincera en el arte y el activismo cívico y también proveen un mecanismo para abordar los problemas globales. En suma, los inves-

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COMUNICACIÓN CULTURAL Y
ARTÍSTICA EN LA ERA DE INTERNET

ing, practicing, and delivering art activism projects within non-digital and digital spaces.

Keywords: repetition; accumulation; art activism; socially-engaged practice; Instagram

tigadores ofrecen ideas para reflexionar sobre el activismo cívico y el poder de los medios móviles y proponen estrategias estéticas al desarrollar proyectos de activismo cívico y artístico situados en espacios digitales y físicos.

Palabras claves: Activismo cívico; arte comprometido; compromiso civil; práctica socialmente comprometida; medios de comunicación social; escritura digital; Instagram; genocidio

INTRODUCTION

On June 8, 2013, more than 1,000 volunteers associated with the large-scale social arts project *One Million Bones* installed 1,018,260 fabricated bones (plaster, clay, paper, wood, and fabric) on the National Mall of Washington, D.C. Initially created in 2008 by Artistic Director Naomi Natale, the project intended to address current genocides, such as those happening in Democratic Republic of Congo, Sudan, Burma, Syria, and Somalia. Through the symbolic connection of fabricated bones to victims of genocide, the idea was to prompt politicians and citizens to take social and political action against these atrocities. In addition to the installation, the three-day event included information tents, educational workshops, and reflection booths. On June 9, the event featured speakers and performers, later followed by an evening candlelight vigil. On June 10, many participants joined the Enough Project, and engaged in their Act Against Atrocities advocacy day, by meeting with politicians to address genocide and public policy.

Both during and following the installation, volunteers and non-volunteers took many photographs of aspects of the arts activism project, oftentimes posting them on various social media platforms. Photographs on social media, specifically on Instagram, were often hashtagged with the project's name: #onemillionbones. This engagement with *One Million Bones* via a web 2.0 technology had two important impacts: 1) it enabled identification of an arts activist community through connection between disparate individuals; and 2) it created a second, unanticipated digital iteration from photographic images of the physical non-digital installation.

Scholars have shown the importance of social media in building affiliation (Gillen and Merchant, 2013; Lee, 2011; Marwick and Boyd, 2011) and the intersection of social media and activism (Strafella and Berg, 2015; Fischer, 2016). We add to this scholarship by proposing that, in addition to documentation, idea circulation, and communication, Instagram and other social media platforms enable certain aesthetic strategies when practicing and delivering art activism projects within non-digital and digital spaces. In this chapter, we examine the Instagram images posted following the *One Million Bones* live D.C. installation in order to argue that mobile media offer activists the rhetorical affordances of two particular aesthetic strategies: repetition and accumulation. First, we illustrate that the One Million Bones project is socially-engaged practice invol-

ving the social media platform Instagram, an app that proved to be used often during the three-day installation and event, and some brief delineations about versions of web technologies (1.0 web, early 2.0 web, and later 2.0 web with mobile media). Next, we describe the concepts of repetition and accumulation, articulating the ways that they emerge, are practiced, and can be identified. We turn to roughly 450 unplanned Instagram postings in order to explore these concepts in action. Finally, we discuss the implications of repetition and accumulation, and focus on the spontaneous interest in and connection to *One Million Bones* by those who may or may not have seen themselves as activists, but expressed a sincere belief/faith in art and activism to address global issues and change the world. Overall, we offer ideas for further thinking about art activism and mobile media by proposing that scholars, activists, artists, and communities consider these aesthetic strategies when studying, practicing, and delivering art activism projects within non-digital and digital spaces.

ONE MILLION BONES

From 2008 to the final installation in 2013, both of us participated in the *One Million Bones* (hereafter referred to as OMB) project in various capacities, most of which would be considered “on the ground,” as opposed to virtual or digital interactions. One of us (Ames) is an Associate Professor at Columbia College Chicago, and created, taught, and co-taught Art and Activism courses with a particular focus on OMB, created an installation piece at Columbia, and co-led a group of more than twenty volunteers during the D.C. installation. The other (Phil) introduced the project into First-Year Writing and Professional Communication courses, as well as community centers around Gainesville, Florida, while a graduate student at the University of Florida. Prior to the final installation in D.C., OMB hosted several 50,000 bones preview installations (one in 2011 in Albuquerque and another in 2012 in New Orleans), as well as the “Road to Washington” initiative, which consisted of mini-installations of approximately 2,500 bones and events in each of the fifty state capitals. Ames participated in Albuquerque and Phil in New Orleans. Both of us were there in Washington, D.C., June 8-10 and took part in the full range of weekend events.

Many often see OMB as either art or activism. They see the project as primarily art with activist notions as secondary, or they see the project as a form of activism with little or some artistic creation. The fact is that OMB is better understood as arts activism, or, as is understood by the practitioner, as so-

cially-engaged practice. Socially-engaged practices require and involve public space and the public with regards to politics, justice, power, and oppression. Moreover, socially-engaged practice oftentimes focuses on processes, rather than on product. OMB did not regard its art installation as a product, but as what Nancy Love and Mark Mattern (2013) identified as “the medium through which community members exert their efforts and the community evolves” (345). In other words, we contend that the art connected with OMB was the community building itself. The processes and repetition of bone-making by thousands of students, artists, and activists, over years of work and engagement, continually accumulated and rearticulated—through the smaller installations—into a final weekend event.

Furthermore, we assert that the aesthetic strategies of repetition and accumulation continued through the taking and then posting of digital images on Instagram. To be sure, OMB circulated among a number of social media venues, e.g., Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, and personal and organization blogs. However, we focus on the popular photo-sharing app Instagram because we saw its potential for creating an iteration of OMB—a digital art activism piece through socially-engaged practice. Instagram includes elements of both Facebook and Twitter: the ability to share and caption photos and videos and comment on those whom one is following. Furthermore, like Twitter, Instagram has the instantaneousness to connect seemingly disparate people to the social issues of our day in our era of the Internet. Instagram made visible the ways that volunteers and non-volunteer participants employed the aesthetic strategies of repetition and accumulation, through a digital platform, to engage with the pressing social issue of genocide. Collectively, the images illustrate a shared desire to enact political and social change by using digital technologies (cell phones), internet discourse (hashtags), and an internet platform (Instagram).

INSTAGRAM

Uta Russmann and Jakob Svensson (2016) noted that Facebook and Twitter, the two most frequently used platforms globally speaking, “are primarily text-based. Previous social media content research has therefore mainly focused on written words” (2). However, they also asserted that “the use and influence of images, pictures, and videos are constantly increasing on social media—also on (to date) largely text-based social media platforms, such as Facebook” (2). Like Russmann and Svensson, we found very limited scholar-

ship on Instagram, and indeed most of it “focuses on the individual user and investigates aspects such as self-presentation and self-imaginary” (Russmann and Svensson, 2016: 3). While Russman and Svensson examined Instagram in relation to organizational perspectives, offering insights into visual communication, they did not touch upon collective social practices and perspectives, or the rhetorical affordances making it particularly valuable for socially-engaged practice. We address this gap.

Launched in October 2010, Instagram is a type of social media service that allows users to distribute and share information by uploading photos that can be accompanied by text through both captions and comment boxes. After users take photos with their smartphones, they can transfer them into their Instagram account and begin to visually manipulate them by applying one of Instagram’s many filters. In addition, users typically add a caption. Instagram service is not an isolated system. Users can choose to also share the photo on Facebook, Twitter, Tumblr, and/or Flickr. Once image and caption have been uploaded, a user’s followers can “like” and comment on the photo. In January 2011, Instagram allowed users to create hashtags, which, according to the Instagram blog, “allows for everyone from you and your friends to strangers at a conference to contribute to an ever-growing pool of photos organized by hashtag” (Instagram, 2011: n.p.). Following its purchase of the emerging social media platform in April 2012 for one billion dollars, the social force of Facebook lifted Instagram to another level. By January 2013, Instagram claimed it had “90 million monthly active users. . . . [with] users [who] upload to the social network 40 million photos per day. . . . [And] every second they like 8,500 of the filter-enhanced snap shots and make 1,000 comments about them” (DesMarais, 2013: n.p.).

One of the main reasons current social media platforms such as Instagram can be so effective in socially-engaged practices is because, as 2.0 technologies, they offer many more community-building possibilities as compared to the web 1.0 technologies of the recent past. In *Cyberactivism: Online Activism in Theory and Practice*, Martha McCaughey and Michael D. Ayers (2003) explored some of the emerging ways activists were able to use the technology of the Internet in order to achieve their goals. Given the 2003 publication date, however, the imaginings discussed in this volume are fairly limited to the understanding of the Internet as still a collection of websites based in 1.0 technologies, limited to 1.0 rhetorics. McCaughey and Ayers did cite examples of digital activism that

illustrate both the production and consumption of information. In these examples, these digital activists, for the most part, used the web to attract people to get involved with real-time protest.

In many ways, OMB functioned within this understanding of 1.0 communications and as a hub of information. From 2010 to 2013, the website served as a repository for genocide data, news, and press releases. The website presented some 2.0 modes, such as their videos and the blog, but the overall intention was to make visitors aware and inspire participation with the project in real-time, on-the-ground in non-digital places. OMB's website was principally a means by which the organization shared and disseminated information. The OMB website offered educators curriculum in order to introduce genocide as a topic for study and bone-making as a related activity. It also linked together other arts activist initiatives, such as Survivor Stories from Sudan, an effort connected to i-ACT, a digital storytelling project connected to the political organization Stop Genocide Now.

The overall purpose of the OMB website was to provide information about OMB and to support their on-the-ground installations and events—to promote the making of bones and the raising of money toward that end. In the end, OMB did reach its goal of laying over 1,000,000 bones on the National Mall; in the end, OMB did have an impact on the passing of a number of resolutions via its coordination in lobbying with the Enough Project. But what is more interesting is the way in which participants in the installations engaged with them, particularly in digital spaces. How and when and why individuals use the early 2.0 web techniques in order to inspire and organize activism, and what impact they have, remains a critical issue.

With this shift, from 1.0 to 2.0 technologies, users extended their social interactions and networks, particularly in presenting them(selves) to publics. As danah boyd and Nicole Ellison (2008) remarked: "What makes social network sites unique is not that they allow individuals to meet strangers, but rather that they enable users to articulate and make visible their social networks" (211). Even more, Jason Farman (2012) who has also explored the activities involved with locative media, argued that the implications of such mobile usage suggest that more complex understandings of self, identity, and community have emerged: "Certain mobile technologies create a sense of community and intimacy" (5). While OMB certainly understood the way the process of laying out bones on the National Mall with one thousand volunteers would make clear the

creation of an arts activist community, OMB did not anticipate—and neither did we—the way that this mobile 2.0 media allowed for a kind of grassroots reiteration/rearticulation of the initial text—the on-the-ground real-time OMB D.C. installation Instagramming of OMB with the hashtag #onemillionbones, which involved a digitally spontaneous artistic, activist installation. In doing so, this activity made visible another site of perceived community connection and intimacy. Instagram works in this vein—a way for professional and amateur photographers to post, to provide images of everyday life and encounters. With this grassroots reiteration—this digital art activism installation—repetition and accumulation became apparent.

REPETITION

Repetition is the recurrence—whether in form, content, or medium—of an exteriority. Repetition can produce an accumulation of an idea, representation, thing, or event. It is a condition, as Gilles Deleuze asserted: “Repetition is a condition of action before it is a concept of reflection” (1994: 90). Repetition also inherently produces difference. For Deleuze, “difference in itself” is difference that does not rely upon identities; rather, this kind of difference forms through a prior relation which in turn constituents identities. Deleuze was invested in metaphysics and shifting from classic Western philosophy concepts of essence, substance, and possibility to event, multiplicity, and virtuality. To work this shift, he focuses on real experiences. Repetition never is or produces the same/identical; rather, it is a semblance, loaded with difference; or, for Deleuze, simulacra. Real experiences exist in and of themselves, even when they are a repetition of an exteriority. And real experiences happen in time.

To identify, understand, and practice repetition, one must tend to the ways in which time affords, constraints, dissolves, produces, and sustains repetitions and their effects. Repetition works with linearity, but can do so in different ways. It connects the past to the present; it connects the present to futurities; and it connects all three concepts (past, present, future/fururities). But the concept of repetition (and difference) in relation to time/temporality configures one of the three syntheses Deleuze proposes: empty time. This synthesis deals with “time itself unfold[ing]” (88). According to Deleuze, empty time does not have “things unfolding within it . . . [but] ceases to be cardinal and becomes ordinal, a pure *order* of time” (88). With empty time, “the present is no more than an actor, an author, an agent destined to be effaced; while the

past is no more than a condition operating by default. The synthesis of time here constitutes a future which affirms at once both the unconditioned character of the product in relation to the conditions of its production, and the independence of the work in relation to its author or actor" (94). Empty time is the model that allows repetition to not be underprivileged (as the other syntheses, passive synthesis and active synthesis, tend to do), but allows it to be a repetition-of-itself. Empty time affords individuals to see themselves how they would like to be seen and become.

The concept of repetition emerged in various ways with OMB. One obvious example is the repetition of making a vast number of bones. In the years leading up to the D.C. installation, thousands of individual bone-makers repeatedly made bones with the vision of themselves as making something to contribute to a larger project. Repetition also occurred in the laying of bones by participants onto the D.C. mall lawn. Through this engagement, participants contributed to an art activism project larger than themselves; they participated in a social activist moment in order to illustrate how they would like to be seen.

This kind of participation extended beyond the physical and performative elements of the event through the employ of Instagram. We are interested in the use of Instagram as an ancillary, unanticipated means of engaging with the OMB installation. In examining this application and these images in terms of repetition, we note a range of patterns regarding the shots. First, many of the Instagram posts are captioned with the hashtag #onemillionbones. The use of this hashtag was not officially initiated or promoted by OMB's organization. While the organization did join Instagram, its profile—onemillionbones—has surprisingly not seen much traffic: (to date) only 101 posts and 157 followers. And of those 101 posts, 74 are hashtagged with #onemillionbones. Many more D.C. installation participants used #onemillionbones as they captured their engaging moments, creating a much larger network of shared photos and comments compiled into one location through Instagram's internal search engine.

While there are many different repeated images, one of the more notable compositions is that which includes the pairing of the bones on the lawn and the Washington Capitol in the background. To date, #onemillionbones currently has a total of 1,169 postings. From those 1,169, 448 were taken, tagged, and uploaded from the D.C. installation weekend to Instagram (as well as shared in other social media, such as Facebook). Of those 448, 213 displayed bones and the Capitol; of those 213, 49 included the OMB center walkway, 132 were

the final installation of OMB, 49 were engagement/performance shots (participants laying down bones), and 28 were set-up shots taken the day before the performance.

The repetition of the installed bones and the Capitol suggests a couple of things. First, there are aesthetics to such photos. Obviously, the Capitol is a monument, an attractive structure for visitors and tourists. It has deep historical and national (and global) meaning. We do not deny that the Capitol would have been included for visual appeal. Yet, the proportion of images, nearly half of all those taken during the installation weekend, suggest that these participants engaged in empty time—a way for them to see themselves as part of a democratic and artistic moment.

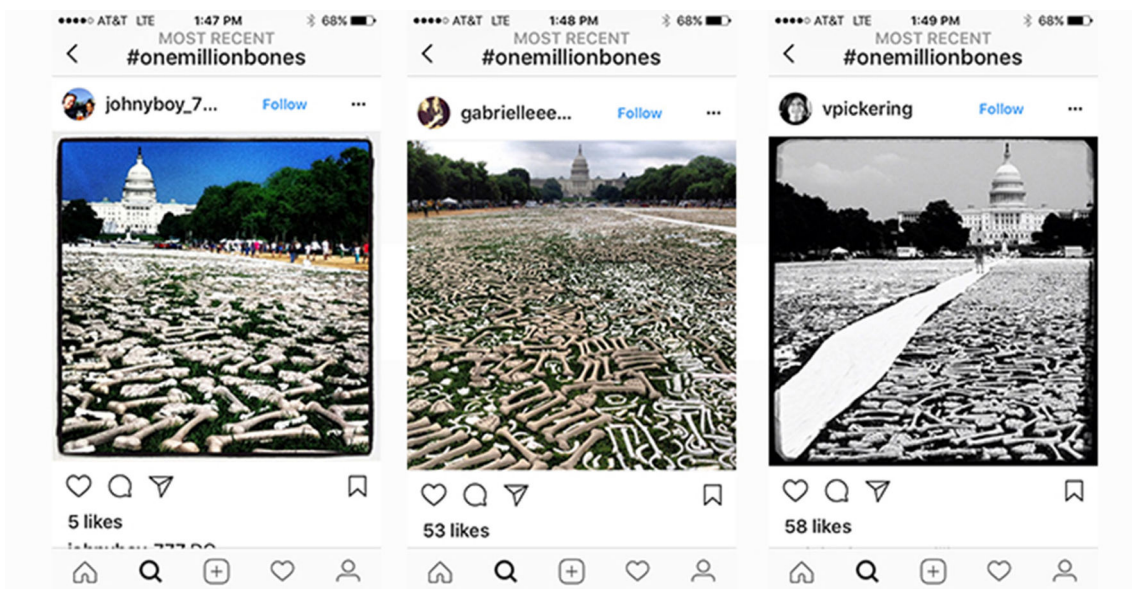


Figure 1. Repetition. Three images of the OMB installation with the Capitol as the backdrop. Mobile screenshots of johnyboy_777, gabrielleee_katherineee, and vpickering's Instagram postings by Phil Bratta.

As johnyboy_777, gabrielleee_katherineee, and vpickering illustrate with their image postings (see figure 1), there is a belief in the connection between art, democracy, and people. Art demands creativity, a much different cultural practice than a traditional connection between civic engagement and voting. The Capitol building is globally considered a symbol of liberal democracy: political candidates compete for constituents to vote them into office as a way to represent constituents' concerns. In all three of the images here, people

are visible. This moment of seeing symbolic materials—bones and Capitol—and humans engaging with them creates a belief, a hope in the potential of democracy. This moment offers an opportunity for empty time to be the mode of operation, allowing Instagram participants to envision themselves as part of this connection between art, democracy, and other people. Despite these three Instagrammers not being visibly present in their respective photos, they presented themselves in the (digital) public as a material becoming of what it means to participate in a democracy beyond simply voting, writing to their representatives, protesting, or marching. A moment captured in empty time to express hope and change.

It is significant that OMB decided to have this final installation in Washington, D.C. The symbolic weight of the buildings reinforces the relevance of the issue of genocide and makes clear the idea that this project was meant to give voice to the voiceless. The repetition of images juxtaposing bones and Capitol suggest a desire for democratic practice and social change. Had the installation been in a different city, it would have generated different meanings and aesthetics. But it didn't. It happened in Washington, near what we might argue to be the most globally recognizable building connected with the principles and practice of democracy. When individuals repeatedly post images with the #onemillionbones, they contribute to the creation of collective intention, which forms a digital art activism installation through its accumulation.

ACCUMULATION

Accumulation primarily works with spatiality. Whether analog or digital, accumulations emerge, are constructed, and are sustained through the making (and unmaking) of space(s) in place(s). For Michel de Certeau (1984), space and place are not separate in reality, theory, or practice; they are intertwined, but distinct with their own set of features. Place is a specific location. Place, as de Certeau argued, is comprised of an order of relational elements, which attempt to establish stable relations and meanings (1984: 117). This stability, even if it's an illusion of stability, lends meaning to place. Put differently, when a place is set with particular boundaries and monitored by institutions, it inherits a stability of meaning. Institutions and discourses enforce—both explicitly and subtly—expectations of certain practices and hence meanings. It is in establishing these boundaries and monitoring them that institutions tack meaning onto a place. And this meaning incites subjects to do certain practices.

The emergence of spaces also requires practices. Or, as de Certeau succinctly asserted: “space is a practiced place” (117). Subjects can also open up/create (new) spaces that allow them to potentially make new meanings. Places come to mean something else than what they were designed for. That is, practiced place gets redefined, even if only momentarily, by the rhetorical decisions and actions of subjects or a collection of subjects. In sum, no longer does the (illusion of) stability of meaning hold for the place; the practices disrupt, rearrange, and redefine place via opening space. And in opening up spaces, subjects can also create and/or sustain relations (and they can also destroy or cut relations, depending on the practices and bodies involved).

One can often identify accumulation through an accumulation reference(s) to other identifiable traces and memories. It is important to note that the visual power of OMB is connected to our collective memory of past genocides. Google any genocide—be it the holocaust, Armenia, Darfur, Rwanda, or Khmer Rouge, just to name a few—and you will find photos that document the horrors of these historical moments. Most notable about the photos is the repeated imagery of the pile, a particular accumulation. The piles themselves appear to belong to two categories: objects and bones. The impact of the photographs may be somewhat different, yet the materiality of the body—flesh, fluid, movement, breath—is as palpable in a pile of toothbrushes as it is in a pile of skulls.

While we can more than understand the connection between objects associated with humans to human life, Jane Bennett (2010), writing about new materialism and the notion of hoarding, indirectly draws attention to the concept of accumulation in terms of non-human matter. She proposes that things, and more specifically the “capacity of things—edibles, commodities, storms, metals—not only to impede or block the will and designs of humans but also to act as quasi agents or forces with trajectories, propensities, or tendencies of their own” (2010: viii), are/have a vital materiality, which, when accumulated, generate a thing-power and exercise agency. Such capacities allow accumulated things to become powerful assemblages independent of humans.

Each image of bones or objects recording any given genocide communicates the magnitude of the destruction, the impersonal, inhumane extinction of human life. The rhetorical power of these piles lies in the countlessness of the things both directly related to, if not actually a part of, the human body. We know few if any of the names the bones represent or even who made the

fabricated bones. There is simply a stack of skulls, femurs, carpals, metacarpals, phalanges, vertebrae, and other bone parts. Recovery efforts to try and document individuals killed during genocidal destruction, the impetus to make clear and active use of names in memorials such as the Names Project and The Vietnam War Memorial, underscore how relevant the name is to human compassion, to knowing and feeling another person. Yet, it is the lack of names, the volume of objects—each one we recognize as something most of us also have—that allows us to then imagine these individuals not as who they were, but as who we are.

Sara Ahmed brings to the forefront bodies and their relation to accumulation. She remarked: “Bodies may become orientated in this responsiveness to the world around them, given this capacity to be affected. In turn, given the history of such responses, which accumulate as impressions on the skin, bodies do not dwell in spaces that are exterior but rather are shaped by their dwellings and take shape by dwelling” (2006: 9). Accumulations impress upon bodies in various ways with various cultural significations. Accumulations orient and invoke bodies to take certain kinds of actions. Simultaneously, bodies and the actions bodies take create accumulations. As participants worked the OMB D.C. installation and strolled around it, the bones and the buildings impressed upon their bodies. Their bodies shifted, turned, and (re)oriented based on the affective relationship with OMB. Such an affective and orienting space evokes a tender and generative moment in which participants may engage in empty time—seeing and desiring to present themselves to a larger public.

Participants engaged in that moment and space with their mobile media to promote, document, and communicate the installation and event. However, be it intentionally or unintentionally, these postings also exist as a second iteration of the installation and event. Here, it’s important to note that accumulation refers to space and spatial practices, and is connected to bodies, but it is also an aesthetic strategy.

As an aesthetic strategy, accumulation is a means by which an artist brings into spatial relationships a series of objects and/or images in order to present a viewer with a sense of impact, relevance, and visual weight. Often, the ubiquitous, mundane, or quotidian nature of an object is challenged, redirected, exploded due to its accretion. The accretion of objects—the action by which they appear in the space—is not necessarily visible, but always-ever suggested

in the sense of the assemblage. This is the relationship between repetition and accumulation: a repeated action, producing an object or movement that becomes part of a recognized, articulable whole.

This can be seen in the accumulation of the OMB images hashtagged with #onemillionbones (see figure 2). The images of fabricated bones created in service of this social arts project reveal a clear connection to body and embodiment, underscoring the relevance of the political impetus to end genocide once and for all. In the collections of these images, we have a sense of the bodies that made the bones, and the bodies that laid out the bones. We also have a suggested connection with and to the human loss due to genocides happening around our world today.

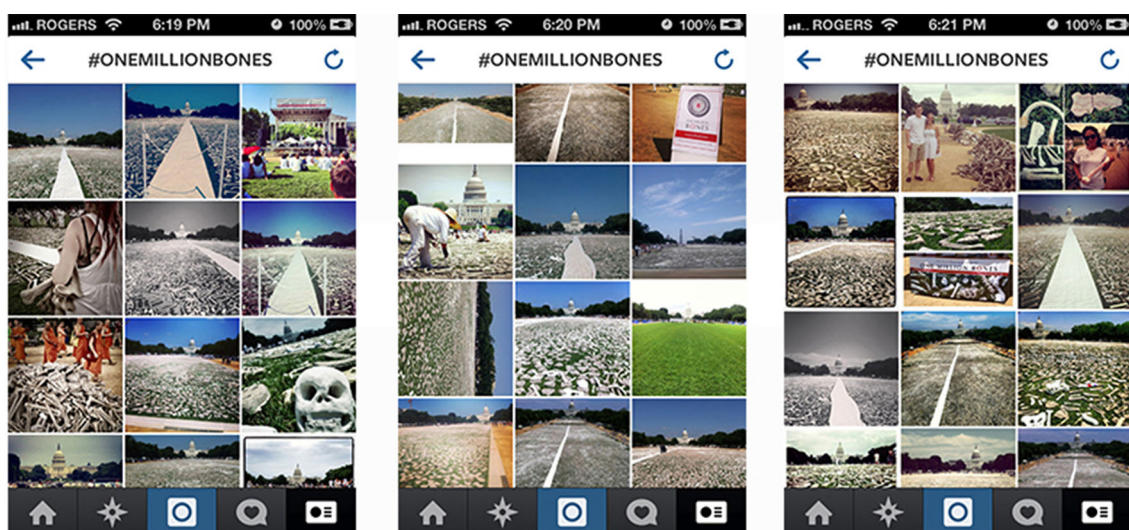


Figure 2. Accumulation. Three images of a collection of #onemillionbones Instagram posts. Mobile screenshots by Phil Bratta.

Just like the bones themselves, no image is identical. But together, they recreate the accumulative power of the installation, thereby extending the impact into digital space. There are images of piles that connect us to the documented images of past genocides. There are repetitions of images including the Capitol that reinforce our connection with and to democratic principles. Many #onemillionbones images present a ground-level perspective, thereby reinforcing a grassroots sensibility.

Even more, OMB subjects embody the spaces of both the on-the-ground installation and the digital installation through reciprocity of the spaces. “In

order to embody a space," Farman remarked, "one must feel a sense of reciprocity within that space" (2012: 60). That reciprocity, obviously, develops through how one's self interacts with others (both other bodies and other objects). In other words, how others (bodies and objects) acknowledge the self enables the self to fundamentally be embodied and located within space. As a result, the self can not only "fully embody the space" (Farman, 2012: 61), but also produce meaning through actions. Desires expressed to create meanings; desires coming through meanings. The OMB installation and the subjects involved enact desires and create meanings about democratic practice, self, and community through their embodiment of the on-the-ground and in the digital space. "Space and embodiment," according to Farman, "are actions out of which we derive meaning" (2012: 67). It is this connection to and with meaning that leads us to look toward a better understanding of the potentiality of repetition and accumulation in the identification and articulation of a shared belief: namely, that art has the power to save lives; that art can change the world.

FAITH IN PROCESS, POWER IN REFLECTION

Repetition and accumulation, in terms of socially-engaged practice, are not only relevant due to the creation of impactful art activism projects, in both live and digital forms. These strategies also become rhetorically and socially powerful because they reveal a collective belief in the power of art to address global issues. This belief begins in a space of faith. As Sharon Doetsch-Kidder (2012) remarked, "Faith is the foundation of activists' power to affect their own lives and the world around them" (83). For activists, faith is not typically tied to religious beliefs; rather, activists often rely "on a kind of 'political faith,' a belief in the value of political groups and systems and in the capacity of human action to affect political systems and the lives of sentient beings" (2012: 84).

Doetsch-Kidder further explained that "The individual-level work of examining and developing oneself creates and sustains the beliefs that produce the work of empowerment" (2012: 97). The idea of "examining and developing oneself," is tied to Doetsch-Kidder's assertion that antiracist feminists bolster their activism through self-care and reflection, two practices that also reinforce a belief in the power of art and activism to generate larger-scale social change. We assert that OMB participants had the opportunity to discover personal empowerment both through participation in the on-the-ground installation and by Instagramming their experience. Not all Instagram photos evoked a sense of

empowerment. And reflection does not necessarily have to result in exercised agency. Reflection can also express a sense of faith in democratic practice and social change. In order to explore this, we can turn to the captions of Instagrammers for a sense of what they were thinking and feeling when they posted their images. What we note is that we see a repetition of a personal connection with the political impact of movement, accumulating in the identification of a climate of hope shared by a collection of individuals.

In an examination of captions, three themes arise: 1) individual impact in terms of self-care; 2) desire for unity; and 3) belief in collective action for lasting social change. We do not present these themes as conclusive or comprehensive of the possibilities for revealing self-care and reflection, but rather as a starting point for further research into the value social arts participants express.

For any large-scale social arts project to be effective, many individuals must participate. The lone individual may believe that they would be ineffective in making a difference, especially in such large problems such as genocide. A fine line exists, at the individual level, between activism and apathy. The way to combat apathy and believe in impact is through a sense of self-care, and giving oneself an opportunity to reflect upon the power of personal, individual participation. For example, participant lebabybear captions her Capitol building and OMB photo (see figure 3) with:

These are just a small portion of the bones laid out for One Million Bones today. Each bone is worth \$1 that goes towards genocide awareness programs and a relief fund for those who have survived the current genocides that are happening in Congo, Darfur and so on. This has been a really good experience for me. I know I say that I hate people a lot, but knowing that you've help many is a really good feeling. I'm really glad that I participated in this and I hope that many more join next time. #genocide #awareness #onemillionbones #onemillion #bones #stopgenocide #help #feelinggood #takeaction

lebabybear did not articulate OMB specifically as a sense of democracy or large-scale impact. Rather, lebabybear's caption reveals an individual perspective, reflecting on the relevance in terms of their own development: "This has been a really good experience for me." lebabybear reflected upon their perception of self as hating people, and admitted that participation allowed for a "good feeling." This good feeling was so powerful that they revealed a hope,



Figure 3. lebabybear's ground-level photograph of part of the OMB installation with the Capitol as the backdrop. Mobile screenshot of lebabybear's Instagram post by Phil Bratta.

not necessarily regarding the impact of OMB, but a hope that other individuals might participate next time, presumably to also access individual feelings of relevance and impact. The “good feeling,” as accessed through participation in a social arts activism project, became a means by which an individual can practice self-care, even as they worked to create change.

A second theme present in the Instagram postings is the desire for unity. Here, unity runs somewhat oppositional to the notions expressed by lebabybear who appeared to reflect upon their participation in OMB only in terms of self-care and personal impact. A desire for unity underscored a belief in strength in numbers. For instance, the caption of participant samjo666’s final installation with the Capitol building shot reads: “1 million bones project. Each bone made generated a dollar that goes towards putting an end to genocide and is also put into a relief fund for survivors of genocide. I’m so happy I got to be a part of something so amazing. It feels good doing something that benefits others 100%. Sadly, the war on genocide still continues, but there are strength in numbers [sic] so we must stick together. #onemillionbones #genocide #volunteer #warongenocide.” Here, samjo666 reflected a tone and gratitude similar to that of lebabybear in that they are “happy” to have had the opportunity to participate. samjo666 also echoed the idea that participation “feels good,” but the source of the pleasure has more to do with a connection to the larger goal of benefitting someone else. Rather than seeing this as a way of challenging their own personal hate and apathy, samjo666 revealed a desire for a unity asserting that there is “strength in numbers so we must stick together.” For samjo666, unity was both desired and attainable. It is this connectivity that was the source of the good feelings of efficacy.

Finally, the belief in collective action, a third theme, focuses on the results of the social arts project: lasting social change. By working individually, OMB participants began to see how working with others must happen in order to create any kind of large-scale social change. In other words, OMB participants realized their individual efforts are only impactful when done alongside and with others. Another way again: it is through the repetition of individual actions that accumulate into the formation of the large-scale social project of OMB that change becomes possible.

We can see this connection to social change in the caption of OMB participant nonpareil_19, who on June 8, 2013 wrote (figure 4): “We are the art of revolution. We work to transform public opinion and inspire creative action

towards social change. Genuine and lasting change has started in our hearts, in our communities and now our efforts culminate on this national scale. True movement may begin with one mind but reaches OneMillion and more. #international #development #onemillionbones #OMB [sic].”

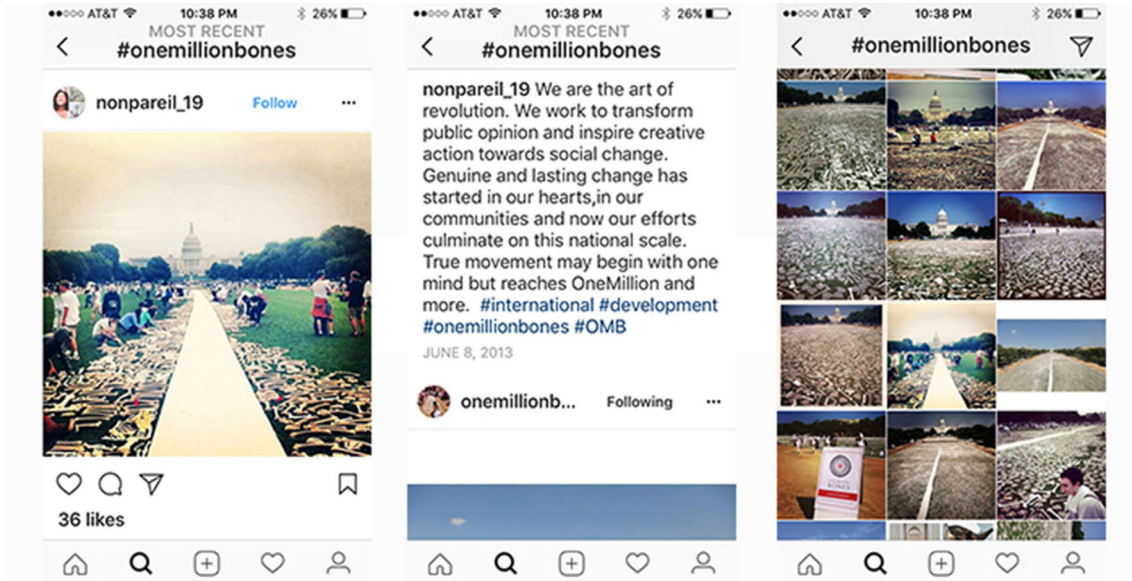


Figure 4. Three images of nonpareil_19's Instagram post: revealing repetition (left), their caption (center), and situated among other #onemillionbones posts and part of accumulation (right) of the OMB installation with the Capitol as the backdrop. Mobile screenshots of nonpareil_19's Instagram post by Phil Bratta.

nonpareil_19 underscores a notion of authenticity for making social changes with the use of “genuine” and “true.” Even more, nonpareil_19 crafted a trajectory. We see a linearity that begins with the heart and self, resonating with the words of lebabybear. Then, moving from individual relevance, we move to the community and notion of unity as also expressed by samjo666. Now, here with nonpareil_19, we can see that unity has become movement. In other words, the project that is localized both in the individual and in the place with lebabybear and samjo666 now, through nonpareil_19, extends to the space of the nation and the world.

Instagram captions reveal these three themes that are in and of themselves repeated and accumulated. Even more, the repetition and accumulation generates movement and connectivity beyond the individual. Repetition and accumulation open a moment (empty time) and space for participants to envi-

sion themselves as a part of something larger than their individual bodies and actions. They are availed of the power of collective action and the means by which the intentions and actions of individuals may accumulate to save lives and create change.

To create one million fabricated bones, thousands of people had to desire social change, and believe in their own efficacy. Many OMB participants who posted Instagram images and captions revealed the presence and relevance of repetition and accumulation as aesthetic strategies in social arts projects. We propose that scholars, activists, artists, and communities should consider these strategies when studying, practicing, and delivering art activism projects within non-digital and digital spaces. This chapter serves as a call to future researchers to explore the aesthetic power of repetition and accumulation as they relate to different art activism instances.

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CV

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