



INTERVIEW WITH
CONCEPTUAL ARTIST
AIRCO CARAVAN
- By Lee Lanier

CREATIVE RESISTANCE: THE IMPACT OF ARTIVISM ON SOCIAL JUSTICE MOVEMENTS



Airco Caravan Unleashes Artistic Tempest

“I wanted an artist name that is not my passport name. I wanted to be free to create everything I wanted,” declares Airco Caravan. “Airco comes from air conditioning. In Dutch, we call an AC ‘Airco,’ meaning a fresh breeze.” And the name fits the artist, who challenges the status quo with her fresh perspective and provocative ideas.

During her time at the prestigious HKU Academy of Arts, Airco Caravan seized on conceptual art as her chosen medium for challenging oppressive norms and daring to address unpopular truths. Since then, her fearless artwork has established her as a powerful voice in the contemporary art world.

Each of Caravan’s pieces serves as a wake-up call, challenging norms, raising awareness about pressing issues, and demanding societal progress through art.

Artivism Impact

The Provocative Voice of Artistic Activism

“My art is a reaction to topics that are happening in our society,” Airco Caravan explains. “It’s direct and also colorful, bold, and humorous.”

The firebrand conceptual artist’s works have ignited both admiration and controversy. In the Netherlands, her uncompromising artistic vision has often been met with resistance. “People want art to be

aesthetic and not too political or outspoken,” Caravan suggests. “In some exhibitions, my art was censored.” One such case involved an exhibition denouncing the atrocities of the Assad regime and the Syrian war. Caravan’s paintings were initially removed, only to be reinstalled after a journalist intervened.

Caravan’s unwavering commitment to her values has also necessitated personal sacrifices, underscoring the delicate balance she has had to find between artistic expression and respecting collaborative spaces. “In another group show,” she recalls, “I was summoned to remove a wall tapestry because there was

a complaint from a passerby. I decided to remove it, under protest, because I was in a group show with my art collective and didn’t want to cause the whole show to close.”

Caravan’s most celebrated work, “Monument for Martin

Luther King,” exemplifies her fearless approach to activism through art. “I was grateful to work with a bronze foundry who thought it was a great idea to put the statue in Martin Luther King Park in Amsterdam illegally, in broad daylight,” she says. The daring installation of a 4 ft. tall bronze statue of Dr. King commemorated the 50th anniversary of the iconic civil rights activist’s assassination.

Creative Advocacy

Exhibitions Beyond Borders

Though Airco Caravan is based in New York and Amsterdam, her artistic endeavors have taken her across the globe in the hope of transcending geographical and cultural boundaries.



Caravan’s socially charged artworks have graced the walls of prestigious institutions worldwide, including the Museum de Fundatie, MOTI Museum, Amsterdam Museum, MOYA Vienna, Arte Museum Korea, and the Museum of Memory and Tolerance in Mexico City. But she is firm that her artistic journey defies the confines of traditional gallery spaces.

“It all blends and changes all the time,” Caravan says. “When I have an opportunity to do an exhibition, I will do that and create an installation with the series ‘Pest AC. For A Better World’ or show some separate pieces from that collection. Always in dialogue with the venue.”

Beyond the prestigious venues in major cities that have hosted her solo exhibitions, Caravan’s activism extends into the streets, where she fearlessly creates attention-grabbing guerrilla art in public spaces.



Series For A Better World

At the core of Airco Caravan’s artistic mission lies “Pest AC. For A Better World,” her series of over 200 meticulously crafted, colorfully provocative spray cans and bottles fabricated to confront the injustices plaguing society—and inspired by encounters with New York’s ubiquitous roaches.

“The [‘Pest AC’] series is the basis of it all,” Caravan says. “The labels of the spray cans and spray bottles are first designed on the computer and then materialized into different mediums. Like the huge solid cast resin spray bottles. Or woven tapestries, wallpaper, stickers, and real spray cans and spray bottles.”

Caravan’s unconventional choice of medium—spray cans and bottles—is vital to the “Pest AC” series.



These everyday objects, typically associated with pesticides and household cleaners, become potent symbols of exterminating conceptual “pests” through the transformative power of art. Each can or bottle features a unique design that either demands eradication of the ills that afflict humanity (think misogyny, racism, and other forms of inequity) or urges protection of the virtues that uplift it.

Other Notable Works

Caravan’s “Whiteness” series offers a poignant critique of the deeply rooted biases that pervade the beauty industry. Through a striking collection of oil paintings on wooden panels and digital collages, Caravan dissects the insidious concept of “whiteness” as the pinnacle of beauty, exposing its damaging effects on identity and self-worth.



Relatedly, Caravan’s “Decolonization of Beauty” series serves as a powerful protest against racial discrimination in the beauty industry, challenging its longstanding exclusion of diverse beauty standards and advocating for a more inclusive and equitable landscape.

In her role as founder and curator of the ground-breaking Nasty Women Amsterdam exhibitions, Caravan rallied nearly 400 artists from 27 countries to create 500 artworks and raise \$45,000 for causes including Planned Parenthood, Women on Waves’ abortion boat, and LGBTQ rights advocacy groups.

Into The Future

With each new project, Airco Caravan solidifies her position at the vanguard of artistic activism and social justice. Whether in the hallowed halls of galleries or in bustling city streets, her work demands attention and challenges complacency, inspiring action toward a more just and equitable world.

And Airco Caravan’s artistic activism shows no signs of slowing down.

“I think I will create art until the day I die,” she says.

aircocaravan.com @airco_caravan @pest_ac
Upcoming Events and Exhibitions: Mural at Park Ave., Harlem, NY (Between 124th & 125th St.)
Ongoing: Monument for Martin Luther King, Kunstgeraal, Bronkhorst, Netherlands.