

# Art using police barricades, 55 years apart

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I saw some art utilizing police barricades by two different artists at two different art fairs – and the art works themselves are 55 years apart. But I think it’s interesting to see them paired up, side-by-side.

The first is this great photograph by Gordon Parks which I saw at the Armory Show. The piece is “Untitled, Harlem, New York,” from 1963. It’s quite clear that this boy is perfectly comfortable having crossed a “do not cross” barrier, and he appears to be calmly watching the set up for some sort of civil rights protest or event. It could be interpreted a number of ways: my guess is that the boy simply wanted to observe this event and didn’t take the barricade or its message too seriously. But one could argue that Parks has framed it this way, from this perspective, as an image of defiance. At any rate, I think it’s a great image.



I saw the next two works by Michael Zelehoski at the SPRING/BREAK Art Show. The large image is titled “Dead Horse,” 2018, and the inset piece is titled “Knot,” 2018. I’m not 100% sure that these are political pieces or any sort of defiance or protest against the police. The large image shows what can be referred to as a “saw horse barricade,” so the fact that it’s broken and collapsed could be simply why it’s titled “Dead Horse.” The “Knot” piece could be a bit defiant, in that it’s taking a bold police message and tying it up in a knot as a way to ignore it. Or it could just be the source material for his sculpture. I did find one thing online that mentions an art historical viewpoint:

*Zelehoski initiates a playful dialogue with earlier artistic examples of constructions and assemblages, including Picasso’s Cubist collages, Duchamp’s Readymades, and Rauschenberg’s Combines.*

In this sense, the “Dead Horse” has an element of humor, while I can appreciate the skill in creating “Knot,” to make several pieces of word combined as a flat object which has a 3-D illusion of one part being tied under the other.