

BILL WEEGE: Peace is Patriotic

Curated by Robert Epp

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MARCH 15 - 30, 2007, Gallery One One One

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Bill Weege (American, b. 1935), *Blessed Are The Peace Makers* (from the portfolio *Peace is Patriotic*), 1967, serigraph and offset lithograph, 23/25, 58.4 x 45.7 cm, Collection of Gallery One One One, School of Art, University of Manitoba, Winnipeg, 69.291.

Gallery One One One is excited to present *Peace is Patriotic*, a portfolio of 25 anti-war prints from 1967, by American artist Bill Weege (weeg-he). Born in Wisconsin in 1935, Weege studied printmaking and sculpture at the University of Wisconsin at Madison during the Vietnam War era, and became one of the sixties most politically active artists. Using pop culture images and text, his inflammatory prints condemn American military aggression, government war propaganda, and the obscenity of modern warfare. His sophisticated prints combine photomontage and collage techniques with serigraphy and offset lithography printing. Widely reproduced as protest posters for student demonstrations in the 1960s, Weege's *Peace is Patriotic* fueled the peace movement in the United States that sought to end American involvement in the Vietnam War. Selected from the collection of Gallery One One One, *Peace is Patriotic* marks the fourth year anniversary of the U.S.-led invasion and occupation of Iraq that began March 20, 2003.

Essay by Robert Epp

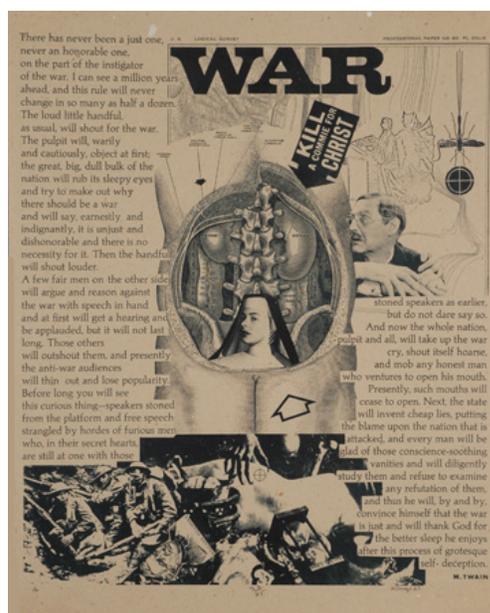
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RIGHT: Bill Weege (American, b. 1935), *Kill A Commie For Christ* (from the portfolio *Peace is Patriotic*), 1967, serigraph and offset lithograph, 23/25, 58.2 x 46.4 cm, Collection of Gallery One One One, School of Art, University of Manitoba, Winnipeg, 69.284.



"Peace is Patriotic!"
"Peace is Patriotic!"
"Peace is Patriotic!"
Art as Protest

By the Summer of Love, U.S. military casualties in Vietnam were hitting 250 deaths a week. Back home, Americans watched a steady stream of troubling images from the battlefield flow through the nightly television news: American planes carpet-bombing the countryside, jungle villages set on fire, terrified Vietnamese civilians burnt by napalm, and dead American soldiers laid out in black body bags. After two years of fighting, U.S. forces were bogged down in the quagmire of Vietnam. Their mission to stop the spread of communism stalled by their adversary the North Vietnamese army. Throughout the summer of 1967, opposition to the war in Vietnam mounted steadily across the country, along with the growing number of dead and wounded being flown back to the United States.

In the fall of 1967, Bill Weege (weeg-he) was an art student at the University of Wisconsin at Madison, studying printmaking and sculpture. While studying at Madison, Weege became politically active in the anti-war movement. He, and thousands of other students, became part of the growing sixties counterculture that opposed the Vietnam War on political, moral, and ideological grounds. They were horrified at the daily carnage unfolding in Southeast Asia inflicted by American military might. Many students felt disillusioned, and resented the fact that they were being drafted to fight a foreign war that lacked any apparent purpose and, in which they failed to see any progress being made. Anti-war rallies and demonstrations became a regular occurrence at the UW, as the growing peace movement expressed its increasing opposition to the war. One demonstration in particular at Madison that fall, however, deeply radicalized the anti-war movement, not only at the UW campus but across the country.

In October of 1967, Weege participated in the infamous Dow demonstration, protesting the Dow Chemical Co.'s recruitment on the UW campus. Dow Chemical was the manufacturer of napalm, a vicious jellied gasoline used in flame throwers and bombs by U.S. forces in Vietnam. Napalm stuck like glue and generated temperatures of up to 1,200 degrees Celsius, literally melting human skin and causing unimaginable pain. The presence of Dow

Contents		recruiters on campus outraged anti-war activists like Weege. On October 18, the Dow demonstration began as a peaceful sit-in at the Commerce Building, where protesting students jammed the hallways to block prospective students from entering the classroom Dow recruiters had set up for interviews. Not knowing how to resolve the tense situation, the university administration called in the Madison city police to remove the students from the building. Weege, along with thousands of other shocked students, watched the demonstration turn violent, as the police waded in and brutally beat the defenseless students with wooden billy clubs to break up the protest. The riot between protesters and police ended with scores of injured students sent to the hospital for bleeding head injuries, broken bones, and severe bruises. Leaders of the protest were hauled off to jail; some were put on trial, and later expelled from the university. The Dow riot was the first violent anti-war demonstration on a university campus, and it was a life-changing event for many students who went from being politically ambivalent, to active participants in the anti-war movement.
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Weege produced *Peace is Patriotic* as his M.F.A. thesis in 1967, following the Dow riot. The portfolio of 25 collage prints is at once a fierce protest against U.S. involvement in the Vietnam War, and a declaration of the right to dissent. Using images and text from popular culture, Weege's inflammatory prints condemn American military aggression. They attack government war propaganda, and expose the brutality and cruel obscenities of modern warfare. Selected from the collection of Gallery One One One, *Peace is Patriotic* marks the fourth year anniversary of the U.S.-led invasion and occupation of Iraq that began on March 20, 2003. Like the war in Vietnam, the U.S.-led invasion of Iraq and subsequent four-year occupation, is considered by many in the international community to be an act of American military aggression--a war of choice--that is illegal, immoral, and politically indefensible. In fact, large peace demonstrations took place worldwide before the invasion even began, demonstrations firmly opposed to the U.S.'s strategy of fighting terrorism by invading a sovereign country. And once again like in Vietnam, after four years of fighting, American (and coalition) forces are stuck in a foreign war with no real clear victory, or way forward in sight. Although printed 40 years ago in response to a much different war, Weege's message of peace and protest is no less relevant and imperative today than it was four decades ago.

The prints themselves rely on Weege's sophisticated graphic sensibility to get his message across. Using a combination of photomontage and collage, the prints are a surreal mix of images from American popular culture: Hollywood film stills of Charlie Chaplin and Edward G. Robertson, "sex bomb" pin-ups and advertisements for toy M-16 rifles collide with newspaper photographs of politicians, combat soldiers, and political cartoons. In almost all the prints, he overlays the pop iconography with detailed illustrations, often of male and female anatomy, lifted from the medical reference textbook, *Gray's Anatomy*. Weege, however, tempers the fun of Pop with grisly images of death, suffering, and human atrocities, recalling at times Goya's *The Disasters of War* (1810-14).

Weege is adept at using letters, words and phrases as graphic elements--choosing and placing them for maximum visual impact. Oversized fonts add headline-grabbing punch to the radically altered rearrangement of his images. A provocative sentence will outline a shape, or like the hip sixties saying "sock it to me baby," it is repeated to form a backdrop to the figure in the work. Weege frequently includes pithy quotations and lengthy excerpts from the writings of anti-war poets (Wilfred Owen), writers (Baudelaire), and

Contents		statesmen (Thomas Jefferson), as part of the composition, at times to emphasize the original meaning of an image, and at other times to subvert it. Weege's crisp images flash with colour or fade to gray and black depending on the message. They all demonstrate Weege's exceptional skill at using the printing techniques of serigraphy and offset lithography.
Introduction	1	
Essay by Robert Epp	2	In <i>Peace is Patriotic</i> Weege emphasizes the role language plays in war propaganda by deconstructing its empty rhetoric. He disarms a warning like "death to traitors" by equating it to the banal marketing slogan "Clip and Save." The famous quotation "This war is, I believe, a war for civilization" appears ironic and absurd in the context of Weege's raging monsters, tribal warriors, and heavily armed Marines. In several prints Weege has appropriated the famous U.S. Army recruiting poster, <i>Uncle Sam Wants You</i> (1917), created for World War I. He takes this icon of war propaganda and complicates its jingoistic message with a symbol of American capitalism--a soup can--that points toward the corporate economic interests that often underlie and drive the surge to war.
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With print titles inciting viewers to "kill for Christ" and "kill a commie for Christ," Weege shows how the fight against communism in the 1960s became linked with religious duty. The print *Kill A Commie For Christ* revisits Mark Twain's famous anti-imperialist tirade *The War Prayer*. Published posthumously in *Harper's Magazine* in 1916, *The War Prayer* exposes the twin demons of blind patriotism and religious fervor that supported American military intervention and occupation of the Philippines in the late 1890s. Elsewhere, Weege spins the Biblical text message "blessed are the peace makers" into an endorsement for the use of gun violence to enforce peace, cynically corrupting its original message of compassion and non-violence.

Weege's process and incendiary political content recall the anti-Nazi photomontage works of German Dada artist John Heartfield (1891-1968). Heartfield too composed his prints from press photos of politicians and political cartoons of the day, and recast their meaning into scathing indictments of the National Socialist Party of the 1930s. Like Heartfield, Weege saves his sharpest criticism for the government leadership of the day: President Lyndon Johnson and his Secretary of Defense, Robert McNamara who were primarily responsible for orchestrating the role of American forces in Southeast Asia. Nearly half of the prints in Weege's portfolio attack L.B.J. and his administration. Weege satirizes the president as a charging Roman soldier in cowboy boots, a game show host, and a bull-headed Texas longhorn. He mocks him apparently crying over wounded soldiers, and bluntly calls for his impeachment.

Peace is Patriotic became popular with the sixties hippie counterculture, as Weege reproduced the prints as posters for campus political rallies and student demonstrations. At times he printed up to 500 posters in a week for different events. The emerging women's liberation movement had a high demand for the print titled *Fuck the C.I.A.*, which features a young, semi-naked woman fondling an M-16 rifle that they liked to burn at protest marches, says Weege. The prints gained further notoriety at the 35th Venice Biennale in 1970. The portfolio was included in the exhibition *US Print Workshop* at the American Pavilion. Outside the pavilion Weege handed out free copies of the print, *Impeach Johnson*, updated to "Impeach Nixon," to reflect the newly elected U.S. president, Richard M. Nixon, inaugurated in 1969.

Contents		Following his graduation from the University of Wisconsin Weege went on to have a teaching career at the UW Art Department, and exhibited regularly at Richard Gray Gallery, his Chicago dealer. In 1987 Bill Weege founded the experimental printmaking workshop Tandem Press (www.tandempress.wisc). It is affiliated with the UW-Madison Department of Art, and regularly invites internationally recognized artists to work with students and to produce new work. Artists, who have been in residence at Tandem Press to work with the press's master printers, include Judy Phaff, comics artist Art Spiegelman, Chicano painter and performance artist Gronk, and filmmaker David Lynch. Now retired from teaching,
Introduction	1	Weege lives outside Madison where he continues to make art and agitate for political change.
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References:

Agitated Images: John Heartfield & German Photomontage, 1920-1938, February 21-June 26, 2006, The Getty Center, Los Angeles, CA (www.getty.edu/art/exhibitions/heartfield/).

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Maraniss, David. *They Marched Into Sunlight: War and Peace, Vietnam and America*, October 1967. New York: Simon and Schuster Paperbacks, 2004.

Special thanks to Bill Weege for the use of written and oral statements regarding his work, and for permission to reproduce *Peace is Patriotic*. Bill Weege's later work can be seen at www.lakesidegalleries.com.

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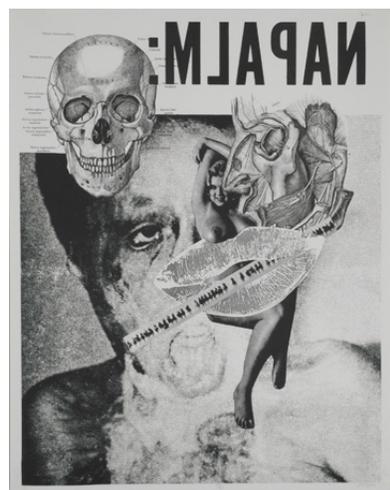
Bill Weege (American, b. 1935), Colophon Print: *Peace is Patriotic*, 1967, serigraph and offset lithograph, 23/25, 55.4 x 43.1 cm, Collection of Gallery One One One, School of Art, University of Manitoba, Winnipeg, 69.278.



Bill Weege (American, b. 1935), *Kill for Christ* (from the portfolio *Peace is Patriotic*), 1967, serigraph and offset lithograph, 23/25, 57.0 x 44.2 cm, Collection of Gallery One One One, School of Art, University of Manitoba, Winnipeg, 69.280.



Bill Weege (American, b. 1935), *All The Way With L.B.J.* (from the portfolio *Peace is Patriotic*), 1967, serigraph and offset lithograph, 23/25, 58.4 x 45.6 cm, Collection of Gallery One One One, School of Art, University of Manitoba, Winnipeg, 69.292.



Bill Weege (American, b. 1935), *Napalm* (from the portfolio *Peace is Patriotic*), 1967, serigraph and offset lithograph, 23/25, 58.4 x 45.8 cm, Collection of Gallery One One One, School of Art, University of Manitoba, Winnipeg, 69.293.

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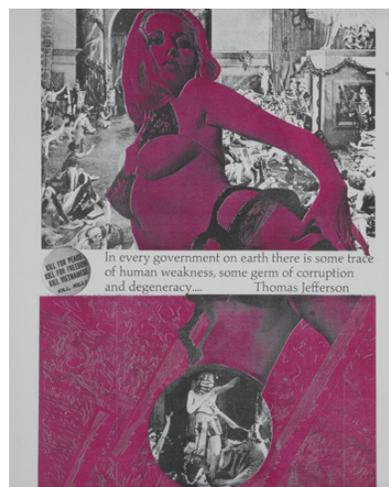
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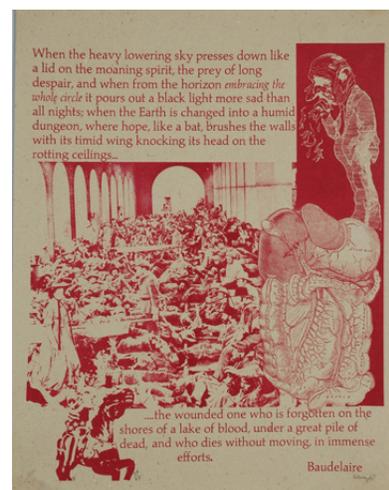
Bill Weege (American, b. 1935), *Peace* (from the portfolio *Peace is Patriotic*), 1967, serigraph and offset lithograph, 23/25, 58.2 x 46.0 cm, Collection of Gallery One One One, School of Art, University of Manitoba, Winnipeg, 69.290.



Bill Weege (American, b. 1935), *Thomas Jefferson* (from the portfolio *Peace is Patriotic*), 1967, serigraph and offset lithograph, 23/25, 58.0 x 45.6 cm, Collection of Gallery One One One, School of Art, University of Manitoba, Winnipeg, 69.270.



Bill Weege (American, b. 1935), *Impeach Johnson* (from the portfolio *Peace is Patriotic*), 1967, serigraph and offset lithograph, 23/25, 57.9 x 45.4 cm, Collection of Gallery One One One, School of Art, University of Manitoba, Winnipeg, 69.281.



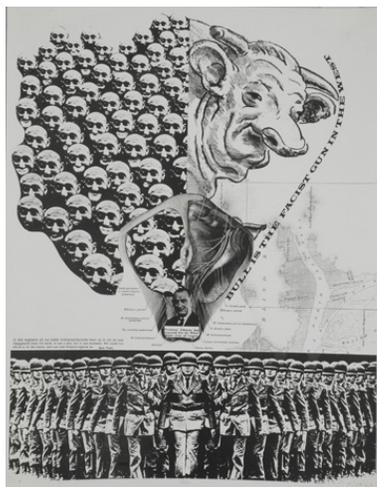
Bill Weege (American, b. 1935), *Baudelaire* (from the portfolio *Peace is Patriotic*), 1967, serigraph and offset lithograph, 23/25, 58.3 x 45.6 cm, Collection of Gallery One One One, School of Art, University of Manitoba, Winnipeg, 69.286.

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Bill Weege (American, b. 1935), *Lady Bird And Friend* (from the portfolio *Peace is Patriotic*), 1967, serigraph and offset lithograph, 23/25, 58.2 x 45.8 cm, Collection of Gallery One One One, School of Art, University of Manitoba, Winnipeg, 69.268.



Bill Weege (American, b. 1935), *My Little One* (from the portfolio *Peace is Patriotic*), 1967, serigraph and offset lithograph, 23/25, 58.5 x 45.6 cm, Collection of Gallery One One One, School of Art, University of Manitoba, Winnipeg, 69.289.



Bill Weege (American, b. 1935), *An Egg* (from the portfolio *Peace is Patriotic*), 1967, serigraph and offset lithograph, 23/25, 58.3 x 46.0 cm, Collection of Gallery One One One, School of Art, University of Manitoba, Winnipeg, 69.279.

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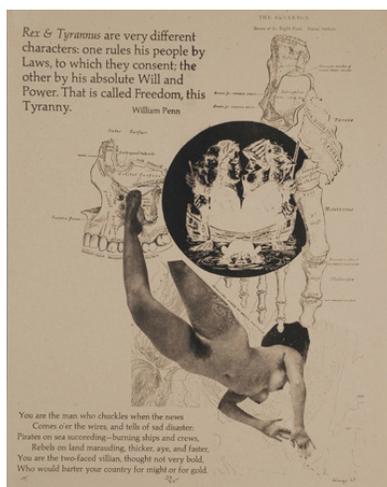
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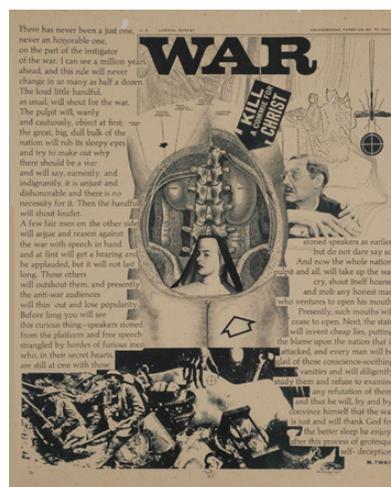
Bill Weege (American, b. 1935), *A War For Civilization* (from the portfolio *Peace is Patriotic*), 1967, serigraph and offset lithograph, 23/25, 57.8 x 46.1 cm, Collection of Gallery One One One, School of Art, University of Manitoba, Winnipeg, 69.285.



Bill Weege (American, b. 1935), *Death To Traitors* (from the portfolio *Peace is Patriotic*), 1967, serigraph and offset lithograph, 23/25, 58.3 x 46.1 cm, Collection of Gallery One One One, School of Art, University of Manitoba, Winnipeg, 69.271.



Bill Weege (American, b. 1935), *Rex & Tyrannus* (from the portfolio *Peace is Patriotic*), 1967, serigraph and offset lithograph, 23/25, 58.2 x 45.5 cm, Collection of Gallery One One One, School of Art, University of Manitoba, Winnipeg, 69.287.



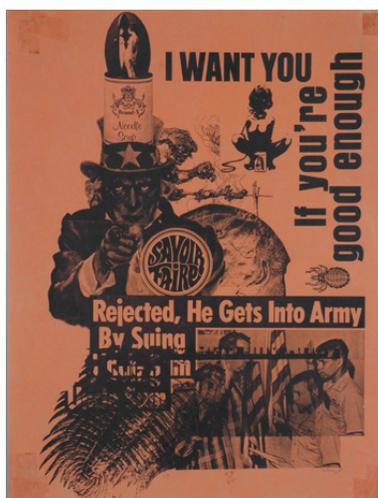
Bill Weege (American, b. 1935), *Kill A Commie For Christ* (from the portfolio *Peace is Patriotic*), 1967, serigraph and offset lithograph, 23/25, 58.2 x 46.4 cm, Collection of Gallery One One One, School of Art, University of Manitoba, Winnipeg, 69.284.

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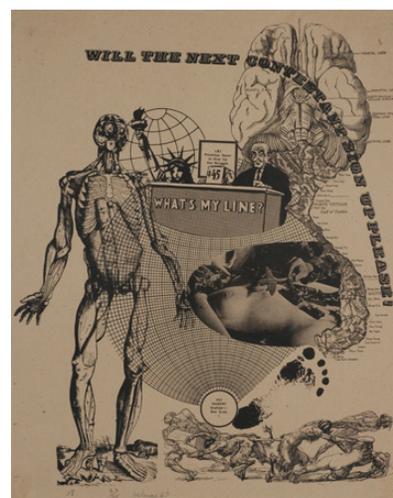
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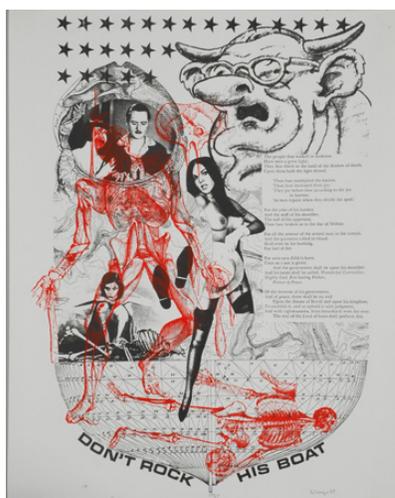
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Bill Weege (American, b. 1935), *Brand X Noodle Soup* (from the portfolio *Peace is Patriotic*), 1967, serigraph and offset lithograph, 23/25, 58.5 x 45.4 cm, Collection of Gallery One One One, School of Art, University of Manitoba, Winnipeg, 69.288.



Bill Weege (American, b. 1935), *What's My Line?* (from the portfolio *Peace is Patriotic*), 1967, serigraph and offset lithograph, 23/25, 58.4 x 46.6 cm, Collection of Gallery One One One, School of Art, University of Manitoba, Winnipeg, 69.272.



Bill Weege (American, b. 1935), *Don't Rock His Boat* (from the portfolio *Peace is Patriotic*), 1967, serigraph and offset lithograph, 23/25, 58.4 x 46.1 cm, Collection of Gallery One One One, School of Art, University of Manitoba, Winnipeg, 69.283.



Bill Weege (American, b. 1935), *Our War Dad* (from the portfolio *Peace is Patriotic*), 1967, serigraph and offset lithograph, 23/25, 58.0 x 45.7 cm, Collection of Gallery One One One, School of Art, University of Manitoba, Winnipeg, 69.274.

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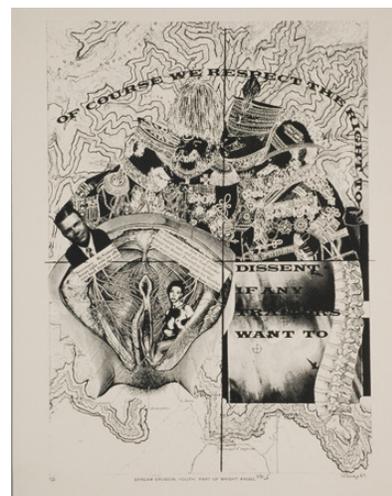
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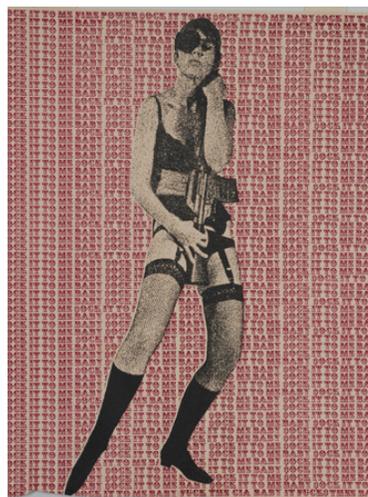
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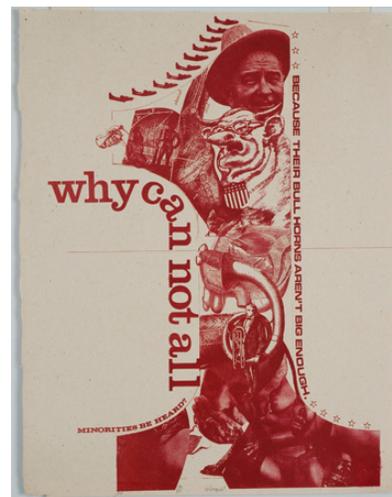
Bill Weege (American, b. 1935), *Johnson Runs The Land* (from the portfolio *Peace is Patriotic*), 1967, serigraph and offset lithograph, 23/25, 58.3 x 45.9 cm, Collection of Gallery One One One, School of Art, University of Manitoba, Winnipeg, 69.273.



Bill Weege (American, b. 1935), *Of Course But* (from the portfolio *Peace is Patriotic*), 1967, serigraph and offset lithograph, 23/25, 58.3 x 45.9 cm, Collection of Gallery One One One, School of Art, University of Manitoba, Winnipeg, 69.272.



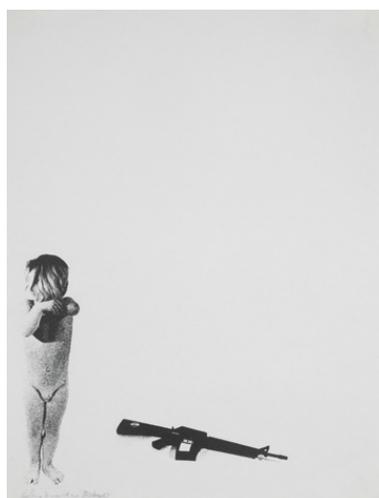
Bill Weege (American, b. 1935), *Fuck The C.I.A.* (from the portfolio *Peace is Patriotic*), 1967, serigraph and offset lithograph, 23/25, 58.5 x 46.7 cm, Collection of Gallery One One One, School of Art, University of Manitoba, Winnipeg, 69.275.



Bill Weege (American, b. 1935), *Why Can't All Be Heard?* (from the portfolio *Peace is Patriotic*), 1967, serigraph and offset lithograph, 23/25, 55.4 x 43.1 cm, Collection of Gallery One One One, School of Art, University of Manitoba, Winnipeg, 69.276.

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