

Front Lines

A Lifetime of Drawing Resistance

Susan Simensky Bietila

This book is a blueprint for artists looking to engage with activist movements with a persistent longevity and a reminder that art has the power to be more dangerous than words.

Front Lines: A Lifetime of Drawing Resistance is Susan Simensky Bietila's story of her six decades as a movement artist and activist and a lifetime of artistic collaborations rooted in her activist experience. Growing up during McCarthyism, she rejected the nationalist masculinity of elite art and conformist culture and found feminism and collectivism as new forms of resistance. She became an artist in the New Left, creating illustrations for radical underground publications including *RAT*, *Subterranean News*, and comics for the anarchic *World War 3 Illustrated*.

With more than one hundred images, *Front Lines* documents her art on the page and in action featuring protest banners and giant puppets of birds and fish carried in the streets, masks of notorious dictators for street theater, posters pasted on walls and hung in radical spaces, community art builds, and more. Visual storytelling and detailed captions contextualize and bring to life her work with movements including antiwar protests during the Viet Nam era, Indigenous led antimine and antipipeline struggles, water protection, immigrant rights, anticorporate globalization convening, protests against the state and capital, Palestinian liberation actions, and collaborations with groups throughout the Great Lakes region and beyond. She agitates from the roots and the front lines to this day.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Susan Simensky Bietila is based in Wisconsin and works with Indigenous water protectors and allies to stop toxic mines and oil pipelines by organizing art builds and creating banners, puppets, and masks. She works with social justice movements including *Voces de la Frontera*, *Jewish Voice for Peace*, *Communities United by Water*, and many others. She was a coeditor and collective member of *RAT*—the pioneering second-wave feminist newspaper—and later joined the *World War 3 Illustrated* collective, where she continues to create graphic nonfiction rooted in her activist experience. Her work has appeared in the streets and halls of power to galleries and magazines, including *Fifth Estate*, *The Nation*, and *In These Times*, and in books, including *Anarchy and Art: From the Paris Commune to the Fall of the Berlin Wall*; *Wobblies: A Graphic History of the Industrial Workers of the World*; and *World War 3 Illustrated: 1979–2014*.

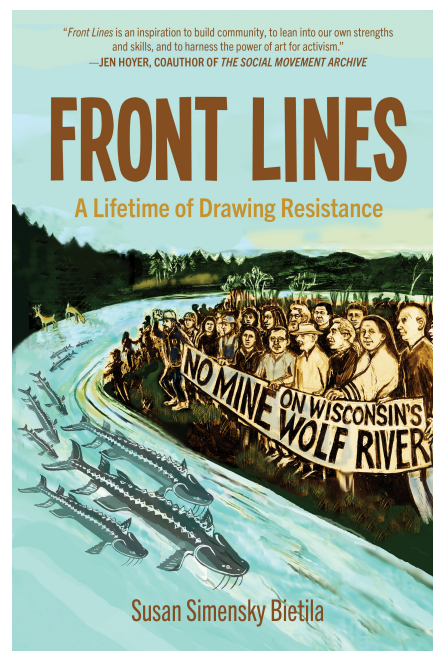
ACCOLADES

"Art is not simply about what you create, it is where you situate your art and where you form community. Most artists look to the 'art world'—a location that largely serves the 1 percent. Not Susan Simensky Bietila. She has placed her art at the front lines of social justice movements since the 1960s. She is an ally in the truest sense. *Front Lines* is remarkable, and her path is a blueprint for other artists looking to do the same."

—Nicolas Lampert, author of *A People's Art History of the United States: 250 Years of Activist Art and Artists Working in Social Justice Movements*

"Susan Simensky Bietila is not one of those self-important 'meeting activists.' She is a hands-on artist, on the front lines with communities she's organizing with. In the old days, we'd say she was cadre level. Nowadays young activists would call her fire. Follow Sue in the pages of *Front Lines* through her six-decades political odyssey in the art of activism."

—Rick Whaley, coauthor of *Walleye Warriors: The Chippewa Treaty Rights Story*



SUBJECT CATEGORY

Art & Politics; Biography: Artists & Social Activists; Graphic Novels: History & Feminism

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