

Cultural Agents: Why Art?

Thursday, November 3 - 4:10pm

Sinclair Auditorium

Doris Sommer

Ira and Jewell Williams Professor of Romance Languages and Literatures, and of African and African American Studies, Harvard University



Celebrating art and interpretation that take on social challenges, Doris Sommer steers the humanities back to engagement with the world. The reformist projects that focus her attention develop momentum and meaning as they circulate through society to inspire faith in the possible. Among the cases that she covers are top-down initiatives of political leaders, such as those launched by Antanas Mockus, former mayor of Bogotá, Colombia, and also bottom-up movements like the Theatre of the Oppressed created by the Brazilian director, writer, and educator Augusto Boal. Alleging that we are all cultural agents, Sommer also takes herself to task and creates Pre-Texts, an international arts-literacy project that translates high literary theory through popular creative practices. *The Work of Art in the World* is informed by many writers and theorists. Foremost among them is the eighteenth-century German poet and philosopher Friedrich Schiller, who remains an eloquent defender of art-making and humanistic interpretation in the construction of political freedom. Schiller's thinking runs throughout Sommer's modern-day call for citizens to collaborate in the endless co-creation of a more just and more beautiful world.

Doris Sommer is the Ira and Jewell Williams Professor of Romance Languages and Literatures and of African and African American Studies at Harvard University, where she is Founder and Director of Cultural Agents: Arts and Humanities in Civic Engagement. She is the author of *Bilingual Aesthetics: A New Sentimental Education* and editor of *Cultural Agency in the Americas*, both also published by Duke University Press.

Pre-Texts Workshop—Friday, November 4 - 10am to 3pm

Ice House, 56 River St., Bethlehem PA 18018

(pre-registration required—email: humanities@lehigh.edu)

Co-sponsored by the English Department