

What makes art meaningful? Hi! I'm Ari Isenberg and I'm a filmmaker, photographer, magician, and actor. The question of what makes art meaningful is something I constantly think about (and that's not even including the question of "what is art?" – something I'm not going to talk about today). Unfortunately, there is no set answer or list of criteria to go through, but I do think we can reflect back on art and see how it's meaningful. Take for example the piece you are about to see. I believe it's meaningful because: I as the artist care about the piece and put a lot of time and effort into it; there's an element of empathy which allows participants, viewers, or an audience to relate; and, it combines more than one artistic medium into one piece. Enjoy!

\*transition to performance video\*

\*take out red deck and blue deck\*

Presented in front of me here, are two choices. If you've seen the movie The Matrix, you might recall the famous line spoken by Morpheus (aka Laurence Fishburne):

"This is your last chance. After this, there is no turning back. You take the blue pill—the story ends, you wake up in your bed and believe whatever you want to believe. You take the red pill—you stay in Wonderland, and I show you how deep the rabbit hole goes. Remember: all I'm offering is the truth. Nothing more."

Fortunately, this choice in front of me right now, is not something that will impact my life or how I see the world. These decks of cards are the same exact thing. There each contain 52 playing cards with 4 suits (clubs, hearts, spades and diamonds) and 13 values (ace...king). The only difference is their color or design. So, inequality ...

\*push blue deck away\*

... is unacceptable. But, in this moment, it was a decision that had to be made.

We have learned that before hunter and gatherer societies (approximately 12,000 years ago), it didn't matter what one's gender or religion or race was. Everyone worked together as a cohesive community. But, after the agricultural revolution, males and females became divided. Then, after that, religions became divided, and then races. It has progressively gotten worse and worse and has gotten to a point today where a large percentage of the American population is "sick and tired of being sick and tired" (Fannie Lou Hamer).

So, this decision we made here today to use a red deck of cards...

\*Go into performance and talk about separate cards and separation\*

Now, a common goal between many citizens in the United States is to make things better. To have equality between people no matter their gender, religion, or race.

So, as we take these two completely separate and different cards, let's imagine that these cards *are* different genders, religions, and races. Watch...

\*finish effect\*