



What is the Beehive Collective?

The Beehive Collective is a multi-faceted organism, a wildly motivated, all-volunteer, art-activist collective that has gained international attention for its collaboratively produced graphics campaigns focused on **globalization** and **militarization**. All of our work is anonymous and **anti-copyright**, for free use as **popular education** tools.

We are working to dispel the tradition of activism that is based on books, experts, speeches, and “hoarding knowledge”, by creating communication methods that are more holistic, accessible and invite participation... inspiring action, instead of passive listening or absorbing. We build, and disseminate these visual tools with the hope that they will self-replicate, and take on life of their own.

The Beehive's mission is to **cross pollinate** the **grassroots**, by building connections between activists that use words, and those that speak in pictures, to help create more accessible, powerful campaigns for the important issues of our time. We do this in a wide variety of ways, but the work that most people recognize is our posters- these are a graphic alternative for educating and organizing. We collaborate to create visual **narratives** that break down and expose the circuitry of really complex and overwhelming political/social issues, turning them into a more digestible format that appeals to the visual learner who can process information more readily through images than in highbrow lectures or books.

The posters form the backbone of **graphic campaigns**, educational tours and trainings that are the product of interviews and exchanges focused on the globally pertinent issues of our time: from struggles for **sovereignty** and widespread **indigenous resistance** in Latin America, to **biotechnology's** pursuit of power over life itself, to **ecosystem-shattering** and **climate-changing industrial development** and **resource extraction**.

The Hive is also steward of a 100 year old farmers' **Grange** Hall in Machias, Maine, which after six years of volunteer labor is almost completely restored. In collaboration with other local organizations, we host lots of community events, music, dances and meetings at the Grange Hall.

Everything we do is non-profit and 100% volunteer driven.

How has the Beehive's work evolved?

The collective at first had little resemblance to what it is now. Springing from a large stone **mosaic** commission, a group of 8 women planted a seed in eastern Maine, and when the root took hold graphic campaigns ensued. Early posters and bumper stickers about biotechnology grew to become more intensive campaigns against larger unifying themes. If it sounds like magic, in a way it is- the evolution of our bee organism, from the onset, had a life of its own! Not only is our work not intended for the expert audiences—we're certainly not experts ourselves! Trial and error, but mostly trial and success is the story of how the Beehive and its many facets came to life.

How many people are in the Beehive?

Last we checked our core group is about 12 workerbees. This 'core,' mostly based in Maine, also work with a very decentralized swarm of 'autonomous pollinators' spread throughout Canada, Mexico, the United States and Europe. In addition, we also get a lot of seasonal help from part-time volunteers. It's impossible to define ourselves without including the contributions from so many individuals. Often times folks seem to fall from the sky in our darkest hours- illustrating a section of a poster, or pitching in to help us complete a gargantuan d.i.y. building restoration project.



What's the Hive's graphic design process?

Extensive travel and dialogue with communities affected by the myriad faces of corporate globalization forms the source of stories, history, and inspiration that comprise our imagery. The Beehive prefers to gain knowledge of issues as directly from the source as possible, by conducting interviews with those being directly affected, or organizers that are specialists on the issues. We collaborate on shaping the story and depicting its parts through dialogue with many diverse groups such as **community leaders, teachers, women's groups, farmers, organizers, botanists, and entomologists**.

The sum of our interview process yields a massive compilation of personal anecdotes, stories, and statistical information. We pore over these for long hours and fit

them into a working **mind-map** that exposes the connections between the stories. The points where diverse stories overlap and interact are literally visible.

From here, we meticulously research the local flora and fauna of the region we're illustrating, including suggestions, myths and folklore about the creatures. We research each topic of our graphics campaigns thoroughly, including the specific species of animals and plants we convey, and have our ideas and facts critiqued by many people before they hatch and get shouted to the world.

Filtering the information for subtle **racist assumptions**, **cultural appropriation**, and myopic North American perspective through the critique of people of color and those directly affected by the issues being discussed is an important step in our collaboration process. Our illustration process is collaborative too, and when under construction, the posters often travel to have workerbees draw on them.

Where does the Beehive generally show their work?

In the U.S. and other parts of the so-called **"first world"**, the Beehive tirelessly does speaking tours, which often double as fundraisers for our projects. We tour internationally and visit universities and colleges, community centers, and performance venues as a part of this. Often times when we're hosted in a town, we try to schedule free events at local middle or high schools, or in public parks. We bring a creative presence to large **mobilizations, demonstrations**, and **social forums**, while working to bring political awareness into the **"Art world."**

When bees travel in the **global South** our presentations are always free and public, in an effort to give back to those who shared their stories. We have the goal of distributing 50% of our posters at no cost to communities, subsidized by our speaking tours and donations received in the north.

What reaction do you get from people experiencing your work?

The reaction we've gotten to our work is overwhelmingly positive. It shows us that there's a real thirst for creating **alternative education** strategies, and a lack of **visual communication** tools. What's most valuable though is the approval that comes from the global south, from the communities and struggles whose stories we are trying to amplify. To us, it means we're doing something right.

The imagery looks so consistent, is it really just one person drawing?

A very common question! Most people assume that there's a single star artist hiding in the folds of this "collective" rhetoric. In truth, very many workers spend long hours in crafting our graphics. Some do research and design, some translate information, some do line-work, some shade. If a Bee has a knack for illustrating plants, they may work exclusively on the flora that is interspersed through the graphic. The image is layered in this way, like a comic book, with different bees doing different tasks. That's how it creates a well-choreographed, some would say uniform, texture.

How does the Hive sustain itself?

"Your donations are our only source of honey!" is emblazoned on our tabling placards. The entire operation is amazingly funded entirely through the generosity of donations in exchange for posters, and honey we get as speaker fees. We seldom capture the attention of grant foundations as our methodology is often considered too "outside of the box."

What's in the Beehive's future?

Right now we're excited to be working on two new graphics campaigns, the first of which will complete our trilogy about **corporate globalization** in the western hemisphere. It's

a campaign four years in the making, featuring nearly 400 **endemic** animal and plant species, describing massive resistance to a mega development project slated for Central America. The piece is called Mesoamérica Resiste and you can see the work in progress on our website now.

Once the trilogy is done, we'll be compiling the **FTAA, Plan Colombia**, and Mesoamérica Resiste graphics into a coloring book project to be distributed as a teacher's curriculum about the workings of corporate globalization.

Also in the works is a graphic campaign tentatively titled The Story of Coal, using **Mountain-Top Removal Mining** in Appalachia as a lens to discuss **energy policy, fossil fuel consumption, toxification** of vital life-sustaining ecosystems, and climate change.

We also plan to expand our studios and our work to include other media, and continue our **solidarity** work by creating more materials for other activists and organizations to use.

