

# Grey Room

## Fall 2016

### Post-Election Artists Dossier

Zoe Leonard

MTL+

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Pradeep Dalal

Adrian Piper

Andrea Geyer

Eran Schaerf

Jacky Redgate

Simon Leung

Frieder Schnock

Renata Stih

Ricardo Basbaum and

João Camillo Penna

Andreas Siekman

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fierce pussy

Zoe Beloff

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Jason Simon

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Sean Snyder

Guerrilla Girls

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The current American political crisis is appalling but not unique. Long in the making yet somehow still shocking, the election of Donald Trump as the forty-fifth president of the United States is symptomatic of broader transformations unfolding across the globe. We are bearing witness to a toxic mix of populism, patriarchy, nationalism, neoliberalism, and financialization—locked, perhaps, in a fight to the death; or, potentially more catastrophic, mutating into some new hybrid form for which, as yet, we have no name.

Meeting only days after the election, the editors of *Grey Room* recognized that we could not let this moment pass in silence despite the inevitable logistical limitations of scholarly publishing. Academic journals are ill-equipped to seize the decisive time of *kairos*, which, as Antonio Negri writes, “is power at precisely the moment that the experience of time restlessly observes the edge over which it leans.” What we could offer at this juncture is a minor gesture of solidarity: to temporarily suspend academic business as usual, stopping the presses in order to assemble a collective response, opening the pages of *Grey Room* to a multitude of voices from within and outside the U.S., which were curated in part by us, the editors, and in part by the artists themselves, who were free to extend the invitation to others. Future issues of *Grey Room* will assist in the task of naming the current crisis. The present dossier aims simply to register the state of emergency in which we find ourselves.

The catalyst was Zoe Leonard’s word piece *I want a president* (1992), which begins “I want a dyke for president. I want a person with aids for president . . .” and concludes “I want to know why we started learning somewhere down the line that a president is always a clown: always a john and never a hooker. Always a boss and never a worker, always a liar, always a thief and never caught.” Although written under different historical circumstances, this *cri de coeur* seemed uncomfortably apt to the present moment of counterrevolutionary identity politics. It was, indeed, the discomfort that forced the piece into our consciousness.

In the last decade, Leonard’s *I want a president* has attained a rare level of popularity for a work variously classified as a manifesto, a poem, or a conceptual artwork. Live performances, YouTube renditions, variations and adaptations, monumental installations, and numerous reproductions have proliferated across the globe and the internet. The work’s persuasive power cannot be divorced from a historically-specific identity politics that makes even Leonard uncomfortable.

We number ourselves among the uncomfortably persuaded. And so we circulated Leonard’s *I want a president* to artists and requested their responses, in words and/or images, to the work or the crisis at large. Understandably, some could not find the right images or words. Others justifiably found the effort insufficient. But many responded with haste and conviction, soliciting further responses and widening our circle to unfamiliar voices. The pages that follow reproduce all the works submitted before we went to press. Individually and collectively, they register the crisis for our moment and for the dark days that surely lie ahead.

—*The Editors*

I want a dyke for president. I want a person with aids for president and I want a fag for vice president and I want someone with no health insurance and I want someone who grew up in a place where the earth is so saturated with toxic waste that they didn't have a choice about getting leukemia. I want a president that had an abortion at sixteen and I want a candidate who isn't the lesser of two evils and I want a president who lost their last lover to aids, who still sees that in their eyes every time they lay down to rest, who held their lover in their arms and knew they were dying. I want a president with no airconditioning, a president who has stood on line at the clinic, at the dmv, at the welfare office and has been unemployed and layed off and sexually harrassed and gaybashed and deported. I want someone who has spent the night in the tombs and had a cross burned on their lawn and survived rape. I want someone who has been in love and been hurt, who respects sex, who has made mistakes and learned from them. I want a Black woman for president. I want someone with bad teeth ~~and an attitude~~, someone who has eaten ~~that nasty~~ hospital food, someone who crossdresses and has done drugs and been in therapy. I want someone who has committed civil disobedience. And I want to know why this isn't possible. I want to know why we started learning somewhere down the line that a president is always a clown: always a john and never a hooker. Always a boss and never a worker, always a liar, always a thief and never caught.

FIRST THEY  
CAME FOR THE  
MUSLIMS, and  
we SAID "NOT  
THIS TIME,  
motherfucker"

BECOMING  
UNGOVERNABLE



Decrease  
This Place

Our Uprisings No. 1

OUR  
UPRISINGS  
ARE  
QUEER  
TRANS  
BLACK  
BROWN  
PALESTINIAN  
IMMIGRANT  
INDIGENOUS  
AND  
GLOBAL



صوتك سلاحك  
صوتك السلاح

HOW TO SHUT DOWN THE CITY



WALKOUT EVERYWHERE  
STRIKE EVERYWHERE  
BOYCOTT EVERYWHERE  
BASH BACK EVERYWHERE  
DECOLONIZE EVERYWHERE  
SABOTAGE EVERYWHERE  
SANCTUARY EVERYWHERE

BASH BACK EVERYWHERE  
DECOLONIZE EVERYWHERE  
SANCTUARY EVERYWHERE  
SABOTAGE EVERYWHERE  
COLLECTIVE DEFENSE EVERYWHERE

NUESTROS  
LEVANTAMIENTOS  
SON  
LA JOTERIA  
TRANS  
NEGAX  
MARRÓN  
PALESTINX  
INMIGRANTE  
INDÍGENA  
Y  
MUNDIAL

WHAT IS THE ROLE  
OF THE ARTIST?

इकितार जिंदगी



"The coalition emerges out of your recognition that it's fucked up for you, in the same way that we've already recognized that it's fucked up for us. I don't need your help. I just need you to recognize that this shit is killing you, too, however much more softly, you stupid mother-fucker, you know?"

- Fred Moten

#decolonizethespace

I want an electorate that votes in every election.

I want an electorate that engages with the political system and the political process.

I want an electorate that engages with the political process to do more than vent anger.

I want an electorate that stops being shocked that a sexist bigot won the election—most American presidents have been both those things.

I want an electorate that can reflect upon its own responsibility for the demise of a democratic order.

I want an electorate that can stop resorting to name calling of its opposition.

I want an electorate that is sufficiently educated about the American political system to be able to judge its representatives on something other than hairstyles and bravado.

I want an electorate that stops leaving politics to the politicians.

I want an electorate that can imagine and implement change once its protests are over.

I want an electorate that can abolish the electoral college.

I want an electorate that will keep god out of politics.

I want an electorate that calls its elected representatives to complain on a regular basis instead of leaving that task to zealots.

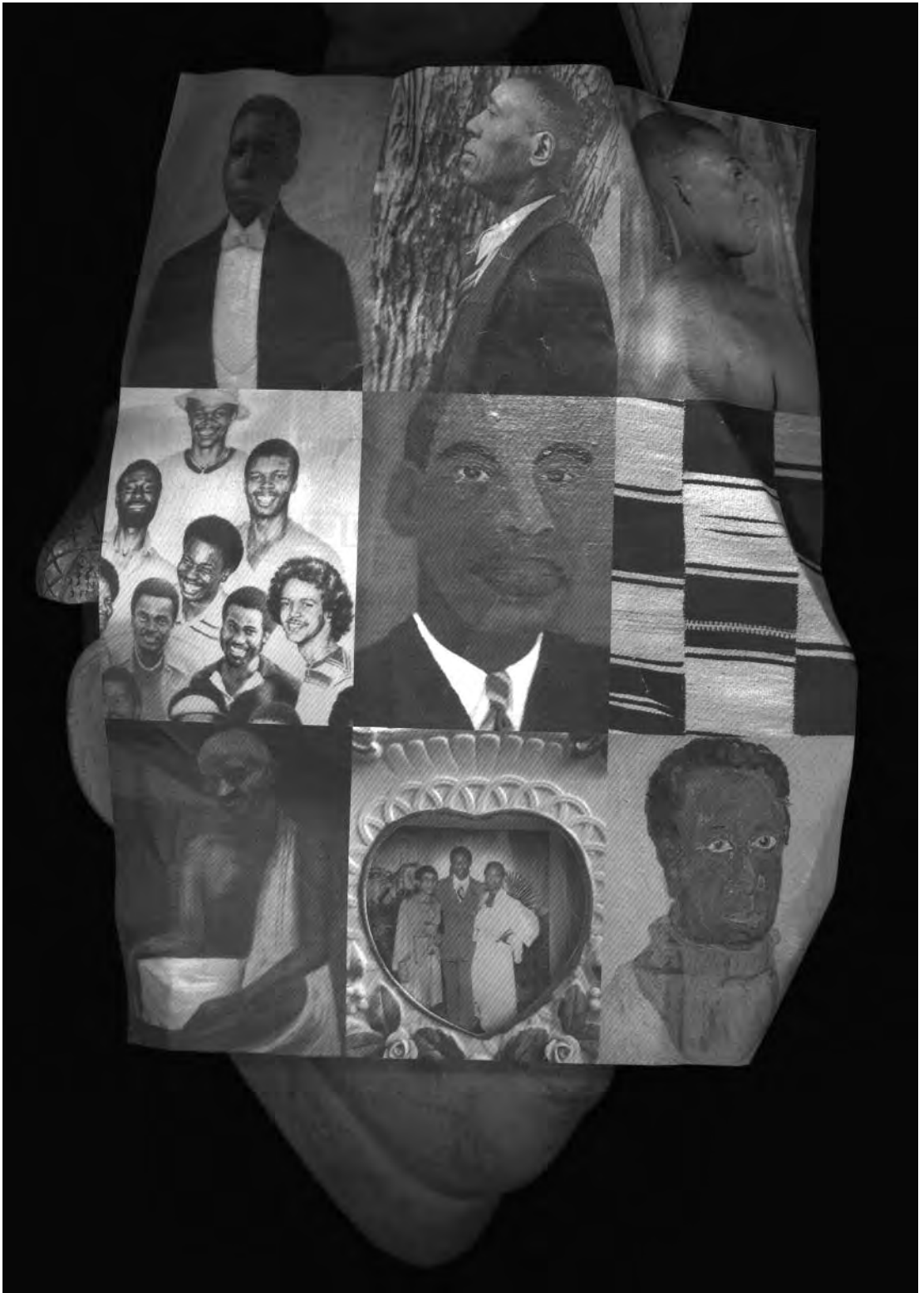
I want an electorate that shows up to town-hall meetings instead of signing petitions that go nowhere.

I want an electorate that seeks out news from a broad range of sources rather than Fox News.

I want an electorate that values something other than personal enrichment.

I want an electorate that appreciates and defends the notion of the public good.

Any socialist will do.



Pradeep Dalal. *Talisman* (row 1: Paul, Horace, Bill; row 2: *The Clubhouse DC*, Horace, Bamana; row 3: Mohandas, Viola/John/Peaches, Beauford), 2016.





Unfortunately, my comments about this election are unprintable.  
It has rendered the very concept “President of the United States”  
meaningless, like the concept “Jabberwocky”.

—*Adrian Piper*

I want the museum to be. To gather together. // I want the museum to recognize that for culture to take place, our bodies must appear. // I want the museum to welcome my smell, my noise, my inadequacy and my struggle. // I want the museum to make space to overcome my voice silenced loudly before. // I want the museum to wake up to this new world with necessity. // I want the museum to dismantle its paywall, its safety nets and its desire to entertain. // I want the museum to give us direct access to the art we need to demolish the limits to our ability to find each other. // I need the museum to show that art is no luxury or pastime. It is a fundamental necessity. // I want the museum where “we” is inevitably the right mode of address. // I want the museum to build coalitions, across colors, sounds, materials, cultures and affinities. // I want the museum to teach a new kind of vanishing point. // I demand the museum to undo the division between the rational and the crazy to help us imagine that which we have failed to see. // I demand the museum abolish the imperial mindset that gave rise to it. // I need the museum to start from scratch, because we need it now more than ever before. //

I want the museum that can hold difference and dissonance without fear. // I want the museum to offer spaces of resistance against the terror of disappearance. // I want the museum to be a space in which things feel closer together. // I want the museum to create its own unregulated wildness. // I want the museum where we can find the things that are not, as they slip through the cracks of their absence into an inevitable presence. // I want the museum to refuse the refusal of violent traditions. // I want the museum to contest the division between public and private, demonstrating that politics are already in the home, in the streets, at our work. // I want the museum to unhinge an assembly of opinions. // I want the museum to be a place where people cannot help but speak, materializing the freedom and radicality of conversation. In response I want the museum to be quiet and listen. // I want the museum to teach me that truth resists being projected into the realm of knowledge. // I want the museum to lead its viewers away from passive admiring to an active viewing, instilling an honest will to re-enact. // I want the museum to be where space starts to tremble and floors crack open. // I want the museum to

become the echo chambers of calls to action. // I want the museum to be the space where my feet start to dance so my voice can't help but sing. // I want the museum to be a place of practice liberation. // I want the museum to laugh at its own prejudice and draw new lines of vision. // I want the museum to realize that those stripped of representation are still here, gagged by a collective blind spot. // I want the museum to tear down its colonial present. // I need the museum to move on. // I want the museum to emphatically court those who have been uninvited and who have never felt the need to cross the threshold of its doors before. // I want the museum to recognize that it not only needs those missing but actually fails in its entirety without. // I need the museum to offer a space in which we spend less time antagonized and antagonizing. // I want the museum to be a space where I can glance back at those who are looking. // I want the museum to foster disorientation for me to linger with perception. // I want the museum to disorganize my thoughts. // I need the museum that in tragedy and strain, offers the people the refreshment of the spirit art can give – so they can carry through unfalteringly the hard things that must be done. // I want the museum in which I don't walk from void to void, but I rather stumble from present to present. // I need the museum to invite us patiently and persistently to be present to what it means to be alive. // I demand the museum be a site of collective study and never call to order. // A space of dissonance and noise. // A space of a public weave to which one sends one's imagination visiting. // I need the museum to be a place of courageous vulnerability. // I need the museum to be a place that allows me to rest. // I want the museum to transpire prejudice as a predicament of privilege. // I want the museum to be open until 10 PM. // I need the museum to be a space to breathe. // I want the museum to offer free food, a bathroom and respect. // I need the museum to give me shelter from the monolithic, the dogmatic and more. // I demand the museum give us tools to undo visual regimes generated to blind us. // I need the museum to open our eyes to something entirely new but yet already present. // I need the museum to be a place where time expands. // I need the museum to be a place we can be with time instead of being emptied without. //



I am a Zara Jewish Sheriff (by mistake), a Comme des Garçons Death Camp Prisoner (by interpretation) and an Adidas Slave (obviously there was no one of color in the room when the marketing team ok'd this). Shop my look and run for office (Burn the 'new balance' beanie, a new model saying 'old balance' will be available soon).

I want a dyke for president. I want a person with aids for president and I want a fag for vice president and I want someone with no health insurance and I want someone who grew up in a place where the earth is so saturated with toxic waste that they didn't have a choice about getting leukemia. I want a president that had an abortion at sixteen and I want a candidate who isn't the lesser of two evils and I want a president who lost their last lover to aids. I want someone who sees that in their eyes every day. I want someone who held their breath in a crowded town forest, who held their breath and knew they were dying. I want someone with no airconditioning. I want someone who stood on line at the welfare office and got cut off and sexually harassed. I want someone who was in the tombs and was thrown away. I want someone who survived. I want someone who has been in love and broken. I want someone who has made mistakes. I want a Black woman. I want someone with bad teeth and a bad attitude. I want someone who has eaten that nasty food. I want someone who crossdresses and has been in therapy. I want someone who has committed civil disobedience. And I want to know why this isn't possible. I want to know why we started learning somewhere down the line that a president is always a clown: always a john and never a hooker. Always a boss and never a worker, always a liar, always a thief and never caught.



I don't remember when I first saw what I now know is called *I want a president* but I remember thinking about the aesthetic of the wonky typewriter font and how it determined so much of the look of first-generation conceptualism, when it looked like administration; and then of zines, even long after word processors and computers, when it looked like attitude. Administration and attitude may not be different in the end, except that they are performed as different modalities of self-consciousness. What I offer below is another proposition circa 1992.

On the eve of the election that year, after sending at least one proposal to art institutions in each of the fifty states, Lincoln Tobier presented a project at Real Art Ways, Hartford; Randolph Street Gallery, Chicago; and Eye Gallery, San Francisco. *Roger Ailes: A Retrospective in Context* was an installation Tobier conceived two years earlier, when Ailes, who worked on Richard Nixon's, Ronald Reagan's, and George H.W. Bush's successful presidential campaigns, announced his "retirement" from political consulting after his association with the Willie Horton ad became irrefutable and the ethics of his work in the making of presidents came under scrutiny.

Tobier's project also included the work of other political consultants who worked for both Democrats and Republicans, such as David Garth, Larry McCarthy, Robert Squier, and Roger Stone, but focused on Ailes. If Ailes's "retirement" from being a political media consultant in the early 90s provided Tobier the logic to "give him a retrospective as an artist," it could be said that it was because in art talk Ailes was "influential" but "under-recognized." Treating Ailes as a kind of Benjaminian author-as-producer, Tobier linked the two arenas of Ailes as "image maker." His work as a film, television, and theater producer since the late 60s included the Mike Douglas Show, Charles Manson's first network interview, an Emmy-nominated special on Fellini, and Obie-winning plays. Meanwhile, his politician clientele included Phil Gramm, Mitch McConnell, Dan Quayle, Rudy Giuliani, Alphonse D'Amato, in addition to Nixon, Reagan, and Bush. Tobier highlighted Ailes's innovations in molding the presidential candidate as medium, from introducing a new genre of television programs designed to showcase and reshape Nixon's image before a carefully chosen pseudo-public panel; to authoring Reagan's quip that he was "not going to exploit for political purposes [his] opponent's youth and



inexperience”; to instructing Bush to attack Dan Rather personally during their interview on CBS *Evening News*. *Roger Ailes: A Retrospective in Context* was a close reading of the potency of Ailes as activist-artist at the heart of the political-cultural-industrial-entertainment complex, with the proposition that Ailes, though then hardly known to the general public, was the most successful *Gesamtkunstwerker* of our time. In an NPR interview about his work in 1992, Tobier succinctly stated, “whereas most artists’ work reflects their worldview, Ailes’s work realizes his worldview.”

Is there a more prescient prediction for the influence of the Ailes aesthetic? We know more plots to this story: in four year’s time, upon the invitation of Rupert Murdoch, Ailes would create something called Fox News. By the time of Ailes’s forced resignation as its president in the summer of 2016, Newt Gingrich gleefully declared the obvious: “Trump is the candidate *Fox & Friends* invented.” I understand the importance of a politics of difference and the urgency of enunciation in *I want a president*. I know that we have a clown and a john and a boss and a liar and a thief. I understand the sense of need to circulate that image. But I am also thinking about the operation of the political differently from the efficacy of first-person declamations of desires and identities, exactly because desire and identity, and the hatred and fear thereof, have been routinely weaponized to form the lexicon of resentment on the right by the likes of Fox News in the last two decades.

The Willie Horton ad was made cheaply, aired only briefly in a limited market, but designed for the media in order to simultaneously stage and disavow its concoction of racist hatred and fear. News programs dutifully guaranteed its endless circulation, shown in full, over the course of the election of 1992. It was an example of what Ailes called, proudly, a “commercial for the news,” a term he coined and genre he took credit for inventing. We have watched Ailes’s development of the genre in plain sight for twenty years; and in the last two, we have seen its virtuoso

culmination in the daily improvisational performances of Donald Trump. This is where we are now. To use *Grey Room*’s expression from the invitation to respond to *I want a president*, I submit it may be an understatement to say that Lincoln Tobier’s project “has assumed a new life.”

—Simon Leung



Lincoln Tobier. *Roger Ailes: A Retrospective in Context*, 1992. Installation views.



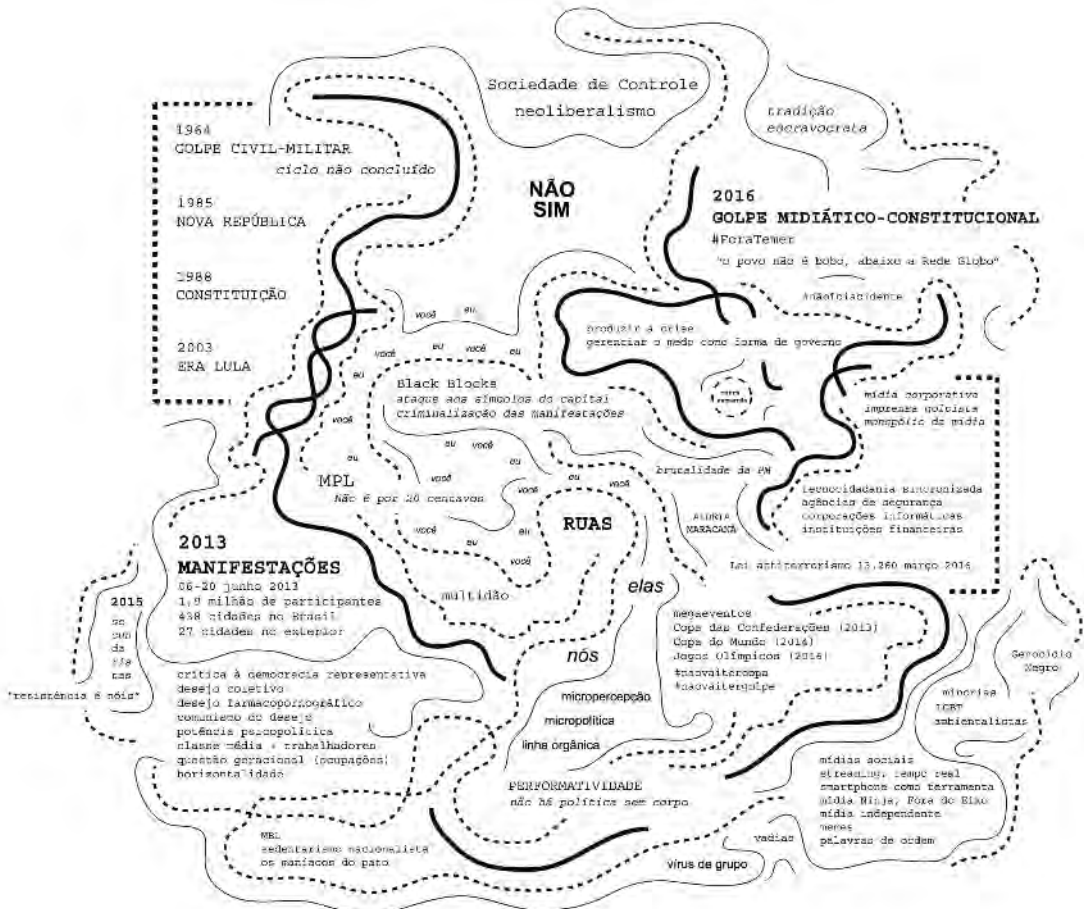
## **SWING STATES**



**NOW PLAYING**

**STIH**  
FILMS & THEATRE

**DONALD I.  
KING OF QUEENS**  
A FILM IN COLOR



This particular diagram was developed as an effort to map the manifestations that took place in Brazil in 2013, when large groups of the population went out to the streets of some of the country's largest cities to protest against the lack of representativity of the government and the current state of things. It seemed to us very necessary—in the light of the adverse and conservative political atmosphere of 2016—to produce the gesture of putting together some aspects of the significative series of multitudinous 2013 protests and organize them as a set of relations: not only so that some of the main agents of that moment could be registered and connected, but also to bring forward a multiple and plural image, emphasizing the manifestations' heterogeneous and progressive characteristic. In this diagram, actors, organized groups, order words, refrains, locations, numbers, hashtags, and other elements are displayed side by side with dates and recent moments of Brazilian history, establishing a reading pattern that is triggered by the different featured types of lines and the words. Discourse drifts around in a fragmentary and dynamic mode, moving rhythmically throughout the drawing's surface—resulting in a nonlinear apprehension of the events, as a sort of organic entity which unfolds thought production processes. Such approach prevents any analytical closure: there is a political attitude in the diagrammatic procedure, where the gaps and intervals function as devices for inconclusiveness, in the sense of engaging the viewer/reader in the activation of the diagram through the production of speech. Polyphony is expected, since new voices are continuously asked to contribute to the conversational process, eventually adding layers to the diagram. We propose an exercise of cartography, taking the diagram as a gesture of engagement, where new subjects are produced and a gesture of intervention is proposed.

A point of no return in Brazil's recent political history, the "June 2013 manifestations" are taken here as a grid which allow readability for events which took place prior to and after them, as they provided a brief opening into unmediated, direct politics, though almost instantly translated back into representative, party politics, ultimately with dramatic, conservative results. The first mass street movement in Brazil after the introduction of social networks into politics, in the aftermath of other similar protests which spread out virally all over the world in the second decade of the twenty-first century, it was subsequently appropriated by every single, operative, political force in the spectrum, making it extremely hard to uncover its true sense at the time it happened. The fact that the protests were leveled against a Center-Left government, with historical ties to social movements, and that this government saw in them the "enemy," proving itself to be entirely unable to hear and articulate any form of dialogue with them, to

the contrary, shutting them down through extreme police force and eventually criminalizing them, added an extra ironical twist to the events. The way of the street was very quickly paved by elite organized manifestations which mimicked their original, fundamentally ambiguous, non-hierarchical, multiple shape, and eventually at the height of an open dispute for street representativeness, by pro-government forces, providing ultimately the pretext that was needed for the “constitutional-media-parliamentary coup” that took place in August 2016, precisely at the moment we exhibited our diagram for the first time. The real-time media coverage of the debates which took place in the Congress, Senate, and Supreme Court, leading to the impeachment of a president elected by popular vote, replaced the focus entirely on the empty stage of political rationality and representativeness, with extraneous and long-drawn juridical arguments barely hiding the fact that the true negotiations were happening somewhere else, in a place where the cameras could not reach. Politics as unusual. The government now in place represents the interests of financial capital, and traditional oligarchic families, with their large share of congressional seats, and constitutes a vast setback in terms of cultural and social policies. The line of events opened up by the 2013 protests is very much alive though in the widespread high-school occupations (the “secundaristas”) that have been taking place nationwide, with often very articulate students questioning severe budget cuts in education, and occupations unfolding in colleges and universities as well.

—*Ricardo Basbaum and João Camillo Penna*



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LETTER E TYPED OUT IN ALL CAPS SCREAMING

LETTER E TYPED OUT IN ALL CAPS IN WEBDINGS MAKES  
IMAGES OF DESERT ISLANDS:



STOP SCREAMING & GET BACK TO WORK



During one of his lunch breaks in Istanbul, while trying to resume his novel *Another Country*, James Baldwin is content with his decision never to learn Turkish in this land, which he perceives as foreign. He never wants to speak this language that surrounds him because he can only hear his own voice this way. While he is waiting for his fish sandwich, he can't help but wonder whether the English word *freedom* has ever meant the same as its Turkish equivalent *özgürlük*, or as *حرية* (*hurriyah*) in Arabic, or *azadî* in Kurdish . . . He finishes his sandwich dreaming about what freedom might have meant in the Tower of Babel. He will never know the answer, yet he likes to think about it.

**THE**  
**MAN**  
**WITHOUT**  
**A**  
**COUNTRY.**



I imagine—I hesitate to say I want—a president who has experienced exile. A person who has left a soft life in the United States of America and been set adrift on the sea, with only their conscience as company. This someone returns changed, changed enough to know that they have no country of their own, that they only live here in this place, in society with us.

Edwin Hale wrote just such a tale, *The Man Without a Country*, inspired by a real person—let's not name him—an evil politician who was exiled from our country in the middle of the Civil War. Writing in 1863, Hale could not know that this “man” would in the end return from his banishment changed only for the worse: his movement, the Copperheads, leads directly to the KKK, segregation, and Supermax prisons.

What then? Perhaps I can try to imagine a president who has known internal exile on our own streets, alone, invisible, and dismissed.

Maybe such a president would realize—would *feel*—that we need a county for those that have none.

—*Josiah McElheny*

MANASSAS, Va. — A 26-year-old suburban Washington man whose wife cut off his penis with a kitchen knife while he slept [REDACTED] was reported in satisfactory condition [REDACTED] after 9½ hours of surgery to reattach the organ, officials said.

Authorities learned of the incident when the man showed up at a local hospital about 5 a.m. Police officers were dispatched [REDACTED] to search for the missing penis, but couldn't find it.

About the same time, the man's wife called authorities [REDACTED] to say she had been raped, had fled [REDACTED] "in a panic," unknowingly taking the penis with her, and had thrown the penis out the window of her car [REDACTED] near the city line [REDACTED].

The penis was recovered [REDACTED], packed in ice and taken by fire and rescue personnel to Prince William Hospital [REDACTED], where the surgical reattachment [REDACTED] took place.

The woman told police that her husband had raped her shortly before she cut off two-thirds of his penis.

Next  
time  
we'll  
bury  
it.

fierce pussy



We don't want a president,  
a drumhead of the March of Calves,  
a bogey from the misery of other people,  
who purports  
to be able to decide,  
who acts as if he  
can press the red button,  
who wages war on drugs and terror,  
and in doing so shoots  
farmers, vagrants, and philosophers dead.

We don't want a president.  
A talk show master  
with stage direction cables in his ear.  
We don't want promises of cornucopias and  
any further bluster of stopped up misery.  
We don't want someone who announces,  
again,  
that he will build border walls and ramp up prisons,  
who transpires security  
like a puddle  
full of the other peoples'  
existential fear.  
We don't want someone who governs anymore.

We don't want a government anymore  
No administrative technique pressed from the foam of this fear,  
tinkered by spin doctors and engineers,  
whose cell phone data are more important than their decisions,  
which they have done away with, because the is "no alternative."  
We don't want any algorithm of power.  
We don't like self-learning machines.  
We despise the bodywork of the Leviathans stamped by robots.  
We no longer want a state  
that prevents us from living.

We must urgently remember.  
We must sit down  
at the tables of other people.  
And there we will then remember  
card games and stories in the ear,  
threads between the fingers,  
and guns on chair legs,  
and we will necessarily remember  
the possibility of spending days together,  
shared life, and all its forms of sharing.

We will then, in this moment,  
finally be able to validate ourselves,  
like expired tickets,  
and we will sweep away  
from this table our fear  
with its empty phrases, beadles, round shoulders,  
a fly, with the back of our hands.  
Yes.

—*Alice Creischer, translated by Karl Hoffman*

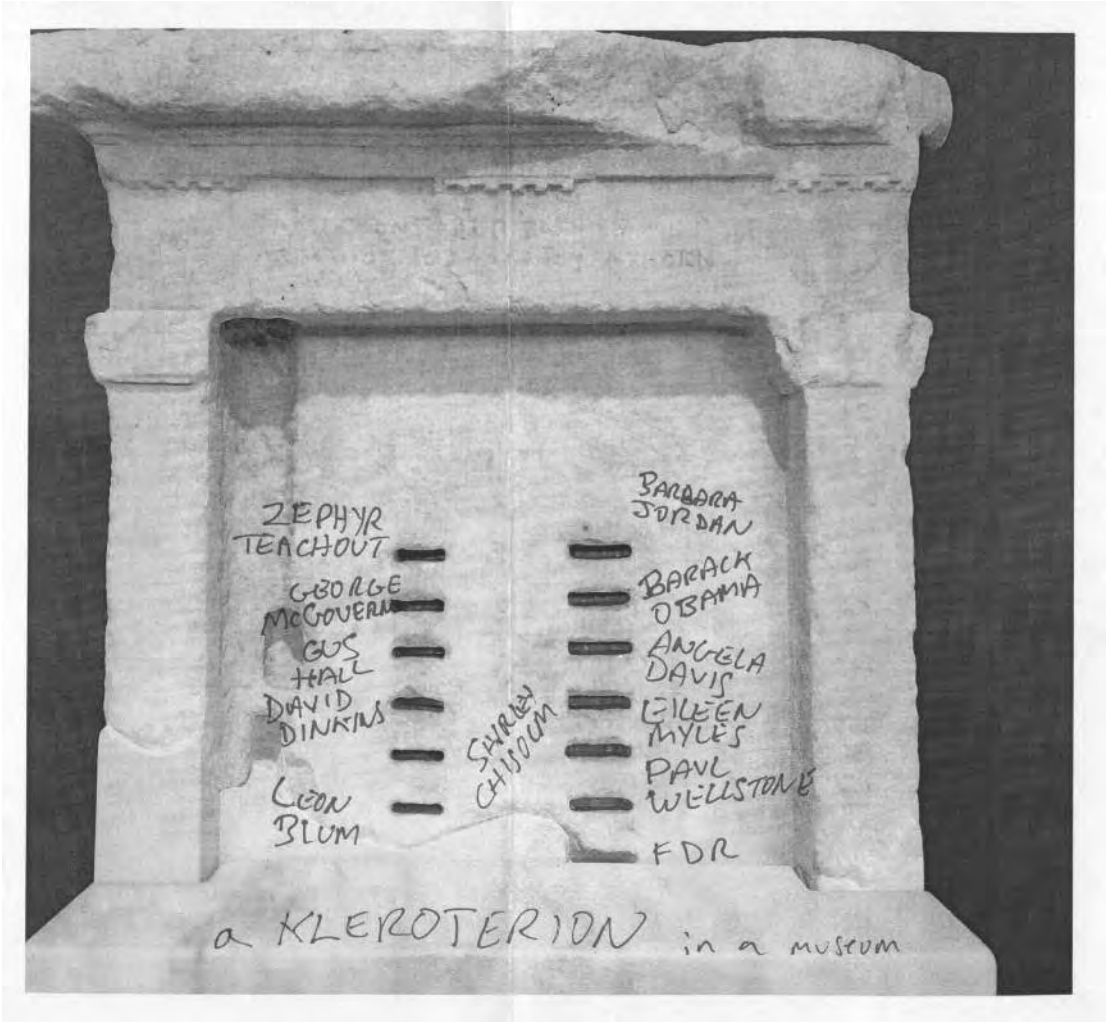
Wir wollen keinen Präsidenten,  
kein Kälbermarschfell,  
keinen Popanz aus dem Elend anderer Leute,  
keinen, der vorgibt,  
entscheiden zu können,  
der so tut, als ob er  
den roten Kopf drücken kann,  
der Kriege führt gegen Drogen und Terror,  
und der darin  
Bauern, Landstreicher und Philosophen erschießt.

Wir wollen keinen Präsidenten.  
Keinen Talkshowmaster  
mit Regieanweisungskabeln im Ohr.  
Wir wollen kein Versprechen von Füllhörnern und kein weiteres  
gewaltiges Getöse von zugestopfter Not.  
Wir wollen niemanden, der ankündigt  
schon wieder  
Grenzmauern zu bauen und Gefängnisse aufzustocken,  
der Sicherheit ausdünstet  
wie eine Pfütze,  
voll mit der Existenzangst  
anderer Leute  
Wir wollen keinen mehr, der regiert.

Wir wollen keine Regierung mehr  
Keine Verwaltungstechnik gepresst aus dem Schaum dieser Angst,  
gebastelt von Spindoctors und Ingenieuren,  
deren Mobilphone Daten wichtiger sind als ihre Entscheidungen,  
die sie abgeschafft haben, weil es "keine Alternative" gibt.  
Wir wollen keinen Algorithmus der Macht.  
Wir mögen keine selbstlernenden Maschinen.  
Wir verachten die von Robotern gestanzte Karosserie der Leviathane.  
Wir wollen keinen Staat mehr,  
der uns am Leben hindert.

Wir müssen uns dringend erinnern.  
Wir müssen uns hinsetzen  
an die Tische von anderen Leuten.  
Und dort erinnern wir uns dann  
an Kartenspiele und Geschichten im Ohr  
an Fäden zwischen den Fingern  
und an Gewehre am Stuhlbein  
und notwendigerweise  
erinnern wir uns  
an die Möglichkeit des Verbringens gemeinsamer Tage  
an das geteilte Überleben und an all seine Formen der Teilung

Wir werden dann in diesem Moment  
uns endlich entwerten können  
wie abgelaufene Tickets  
und unsere Angst  
mit ihren Floskeln, Bütteln, runden Schultern  
werden wir hinwegfegen von diesem Tisch  
eine Fliege mit unserem Handrücken  
Ja.



THE SECRET OF THE DEMAGOGUE IS  
TO MAKE HIMSELF AS STUPID AS HIS  
AUDIENCE SO THAT THEY BELIEVE  
THEY ARE AS CLEVER AS HE IS.

SENeca TAPPA

TROMPE-L'ŒIL

When the President does it, that means that it is not illegal.  
- Richard Nixon

Wild Cherry, Blue Raspberry, Pifa Colada  
- red, white and blue Slurpee ingredients at 7-11



From: mnemosynedrone@[REDACTED].com  
To: [transition2017@hq.dhs.gov](mailto:transition2017@hq.dhs.gov)  
Re: Trompe-l'œil (Report Of Suspicious Activity)  
Date: 01:01:59, December 24, 2016

To whom it may concern at the Department of Homeland Security,

Since the Presidential Transition Office branch of the DHS is responsible for coordinating the mutation from the current administration to the next, I feel compelled to report suspicious activity I recently witnessed. I am not entirely sure it doesn't have relation to the Trompe-l'œil phenomenon, as well as an Elephant Dream. In an analysis which Sigmund Freud was conducting in French a dream came up for interpretation in which he appeared as an elephant. He asked the dreamer why he was represented in that form. The answer was: "Vous me trompez" ("you are deceiving me"). I'll follow the template suggested by the DHS, and can go into further detail, if warranted.

The incident occurred the 24th of December, 2016 in Washington D.C. between a 7-11 and the International Spy Museum. The victim had a red, white and blue Slurpee knocked out of his hands by an assailant. Although visibly shaken, he verbally continued to uphold Patriot Act. The Slurpee splattered on the asphalt appeared similar to *Lavender Mist* exhibited at the Smithsonian National Gallery of Art. The apparition of the CIA supported artist's painting is maybe a prediction of imminent crisis. Before contacting the DHS, I ventured further in the Smithsonian Air and Space Museum to enquire into the origin of Patriot Act relative to the suspended exhibition on the onslaught of the Cold War, Trompe-l'œil phenomenon, and the Art of Deception.

I contacted the White House, but it hasn't yet responded. The staff must be overwhelmed with post-election debriefing activities. To be safe, I thought to alert the DHS because of its experience with aviation security, protection of nuclear facilities, cybersecurity and wall engineering.

I hope this information is useful.

Sincerely,  
Sean Snyder



# PRESIDENT TRUMP ANNOUNCES NEW COMMEMORATIVE MONTHS!



**WAS**

**NOW**

Feb

~~African American History Month~~

Ku Klux Klan Month

Mar

~~Women's History Month~~

Locker Room Talk Month

Apr

~~Immigration Awareness Month~~

Extreme Vetting Month

May

~~Asian American Heritage Month~~

Internment Camp Heritage Month

Jun

~~LGBTQ Pride Month~~

Pray The Gay Away Month

Sep

~~Latino Heritage Month~~

Mass Deportation Month

Oct

~~Disability Awareness Month~~

Supermodel Month

Nov

~~American Indian Heritage Month~~

White Peoples Month

It is gratifying to see quick artist responses to the election. It goes hand in hand with massive turnouts in the streets including student walkouts from classes and lots of other actions. Most of the art I have seen so far has been on *Hyperallergic* and has the grit and wit one should expect from our field. We have had a socially critical margin in the art world for some time now but I do not yet see a sense of how to approach the social-class component of Hillary Clinton's vote victory but election loss. Even citizens here have to scratch their heads about the electoral college. What was decisive was the appeal of Trump to a significant part of the white working class in the "rust belt" states and elsewhere. Michael Moore tried to warn us that the polls were missing these people. So parallels are being drawn with the exit-the-EU vote in the UK. We now know that there were union members voting for "change." Mike Davis warned us years ago that the Democratic Party has been betraying workers for decades in spite of few Democrats getting elected without union money and members knocking on doors. The Labor Council here in San Diego is very good at the latter. If we want to draw a significant time to start, we could hardly do better than Bill Clinton and NAFTA (this is not a pitch for my artwork—actually, it is!). So, working class. So Old Left, no? At least since the cultural turn. Maybe it's long overdue to get on board with syndicalism? Left organizations? I have been in the art world since the war on the Vietnamese and I have to say that there are very few colleagues I have in the arts or academia with a good grasp of the history of unions and the working class which also includes experience in them and with them. In fact, union members in this country are also quite without such knowledge. That has been my long experience. If one comes to the conclusion that to move forward one must in a sense move back in certain ways to social class, socialism, Marx and some Marxists, where to start? Well, there is no shortage of stuff to read but, as someone who has paid union dues for over thirty-five years, I am very aware that connecting with unions is gonna be a challenge.

At least there have been encouraging developments in the U.S.A. Labor organizations have been changing in good ways here and there even when it does not bring in new members right away. The San Diego–Imperial Counties Labor Council has succeeded in pushing the city minimum wage higher and sooner than what has been done in the rest of California. This is due to both its commitments and electoral successes in city elections. On many of the issues which artists and others have been highly involved with such as race, gender, LGBTQ, the environment, and immigrant status just to list a few, union members and their organizations are often on the good side; it is a movement made up of a lot of people in these places with these concerns. At the October delegates meeting of the Labor Council, the (white) female Secretary-Treasurer spoke up to our need to weigh in on the police shooting of a black man in the nearby city of El Cajon. A number of unions and members were on board with Bernie Sanders. As was the California Federation of Teachers/AFT until

he lost the primary. At the same time, labor organizations are almost totally cut off from the larger community here and elsewhere. In all my years at UCSD, not one student in any class I taught knew who the head of the AFL-CIO was or is and that is the fault of the unions. We can hope that shock treatment will get us on the road to a new era of unity.

Some of us in the bohemian cultural world may belong to a union or have ties to working class communities. But the meaning of the term has gotten fuzzy with the growth of public employment. Also, jobs that used to be considered “professional” have slid down in class standing or split into those up and those down: like the arts and humanities versus the sciences at UCSD. Income is a poor single criterion; union electricians in San Diego make more than many UCSD full professors. Huge numbers of higher education classes are taught by “contingent faculty” also known as freeway flyers as they race around cities from class to class without security, decent pay, benefits, or many rights of any kind. They have a national organization and are unionizing along with graduate students and post-docs. Forget respect, as the tenured faculty hardly know these mostly PhDs who teach their classes. Without such ties, contact with the working class and unions can come through other movements and organizations in coalitions. It can also be confusing in this country when so many unions have adopted defending the “middle class” for their members. Many, of course, had achieved those middle income levels and some of the cultural proclivities. And their children have long gone off to college and professional or administrative jobs. Whether one’s social orientation is “single issue” or broader, by looking around locally, groups and organizations can usually be found to support and join.

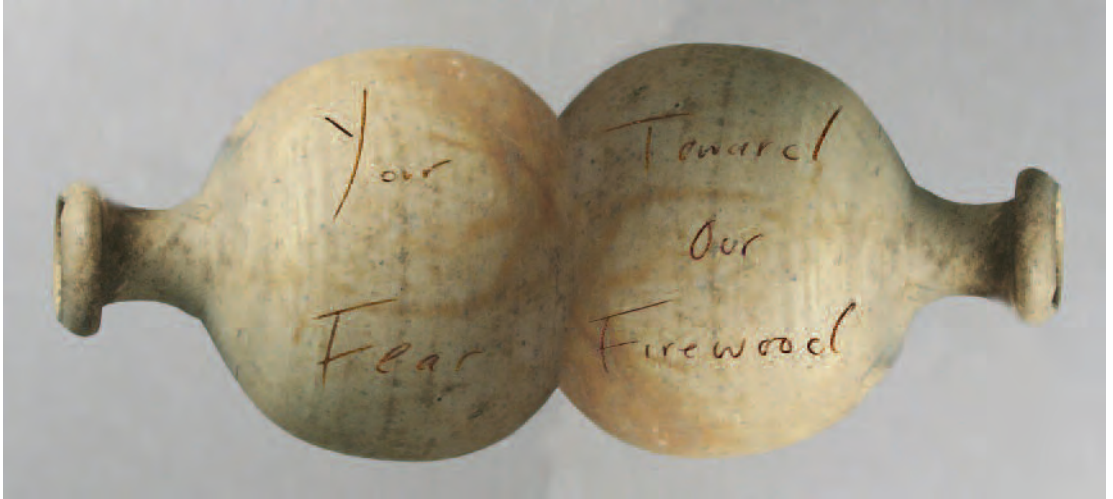
The problem I see (here comes that long experience again) is that artists are not joiners. Unfortunately, compared to the Vietnam era, youth are not so much as well: social media does not count much in my book. So far, I am addressing what can be done as members of society. The art question is another matter. The art world, especially in the U.S., is not that receptive to socially critical work. Non-art organizations are not well resourced for exhibiting wall and floor based work. This is one reason that video and poster work by artists can bridge outside to unions, community groups, and the like. Some unions commission such work and, occasionally, murals. However, almost all public and private colleges and universities have art departments with galleries. If we get work into museums and art galleries, can we get much broader audiences to our shows even if we have managed connections with activist groups? There are also the problems of audience feedback; whether exhibiting in art-world or other spaces, there needs to be someone there to engage with viewers and communicate with the artist(s). Activist docents? Lots of our showings are at a distance and time often gets in the way of travel.

If more than a few of us attempting socially critical and even partisan art care to join the fray, shouldn’t we connect up in some way?

—*Fred Lonidier*



Martine Syms. *Black Lesbian Caucus, Christopher Street Liberation Day Parade, 1973, 2014. Detail.*



My dear ghost eyes,

Know: Since you left, has it been possible to have tender governance?

Unsolved: Can our mouths drink from the same vessel at the same moment—who, you, me drink first?

Ask: Why am I ruled by a loose confederacy of corporations?

Murmur: I keep touching at your anarchy—blind fingers at the hem; will it take me in?

Now: keep turning over the possibilities of violence and the anti-possibilities of violence; rise from your grave?

me ungoverned,  
me unstated,  
me unincorporated,  
me incorpused,  
me in desperation,  
me in heat,  
me in solidarity,  
me in we and me,

Citizen, luminous.

[Letter addressed to Voltairine de Cleyre, allegedly the most important anarchist in the twentieth-century United States. One lover penned letters to V.C., addressed to *ghost eyes*. That lover's suicide is attributed to depression by a prominent historian. But it is not pill-bottle-variety depression. It is the depression of revolution gutted by unheated winter garrets (Chicago, Philadelphia) and allies subtracted by prison and beer and exhaustion. But what if Voltairine and her lovers can be resurrected in ourselves. Maybe?]

—Mary Walling Blackburn

President-elect Trump is an authoritarian bully, a racist, a liar, a cheat, and a womanizer, a proud prince of the 1% and his fellow rich parasites and rentiers. On his way into the power elite he has helped shore up absurd conspiracist bullshit and scapegoating and has successfully deflected attention away from serious questions of governance. These areas he has successfully handed over to reactionary elements of Congress, corporate lobbyists, and the mostly white male has-beens who held his coat on the way through the campaign. He needs to be broadly repudiated. People of all generations, races, and identities (professed or ascribed) have been shafted. The power of the right among the grassroots, the unsung and impoverished, the unemployed and underemployed, the unorganized, and the auxiliary institutions—including talk radio and secretive oligarchic institutions—made it possible for the challenger of the cautious, establishmentarian, neoliberal candidate, Hillary Clinton, to be a national Chaos candidate.

People are already in the streets denouncing the overt racism, sexism, and double-barreled anti-Semitism—targeting both Muslims and Jews—courted and inflated by Trump. The left needs an organized movement to continue agitating for serious political change in our collective life. Such a movement is necessary and urgent, and its way has been paved by movements on the left, broadly including the new social movements of the era. Occupy, with its ubiquitous energy, outrage, righteous spirit, and unspoken but enacted demands, has led to a moment of manifestation in electoral politics. This is a movement boiling over for a better deal than neoliberalism can offer.

Our political situation demands that we heighten our efforts to defend people of color, immigrants, and LGBTQ people from overt attacks as well as to combat the persistent institutional racism poisoning our society. I'd be happy to stand with or behind young women of color in struggle, who are proving to be powerfully inventive and resilient in initiating and leading these new social movements. (Black women also voted for Hillary Clinton in the highest percentage of any group: 94%.) The burning questions of intersectionality demand that white bourgeois feminism drop its blindness toward race and class while white male leftism must add misogyny to that list of necessary repudiations.

It is no surprise that the demands of white Trump supporters often mirrored those of people of color, who have suffered the same predations of capitalist systems—but with the added and quite considerable burden of racism. Donald Trump spoke to many of the economic grievances of the left, but his slender array of policy proposals utterly fail to address them, or even the demands of most of his supporters, instead attempting to model old-fashioned patriarchal masculinity and white identity.

A movement needs dreams and strategies as well as action and reason. There is no political movement without a horizon—ours ought to be socialism + democracy.

It's worth quoting Bernie Sanders at this juncture, from August 2015:

The people of our country understand that—given the collapse of the American middle class and the grotesque level of income and wealth inequality we are experiencing—we do not need more establishment politics or establishment economics.

We need a political movement which is prepared to take on the billionaire class and create a government which represents all Americans, and not just corporate America and wealthy campaign donors.

In other words, we need a movement which takes on the economic and political establishment, not one which is part of it.

A committed struggle requires us to continue to educate ourselves; no socialist movement can succeed without becoming informed on policy and goals, and reading up on traditions of political thought. We can't help redirect national policies or drive the national conversation without a sophisticated understanding of policy, and of the pernicious role of nationalism—of various nationalisms, in fact—in our national conversation.

Occupy and the political movements abroad showed that technology provides the possibility of communicative networks but does not preclude robust encounters, meetings, strategy sessions, parties, dinners, and ruckuses in the flesh . . . nor does it impede parading and running through the streets. The power of the assembly reminds us that struggles are grounded in face-to-face communities-in-formation, not confectioned by elites—and they are finally based on seizing territory in both the real world and in those ethereal spaces online. But grassroots campaigns, electoral campaigns, and symbolic actions can be run simultaneously.

Tactical efforts require a degree of hardheadedness as to choices. We need to get serious about climate change! But we need to continue to demand the end to unlimited, secretly sourced cash in elections, and to ferocious voter suppression; Locking reproductive rights in our healthcare systems into permanent policy is a major goal. Demand the cancellation of student debt, make all education free, and open a discussion on guaranteed basic income, its pros and cons. Save medical and pension benefits. Get rid of anti-union, right-to-work policies everywhere. Join with grassroots, self-generated, activist, and union efforts to organize the unorganized. Stop the wars—at home and abroad.

Stand with people of color or stand down.

What we need now is to exercise the art of showing up; a kind of street pageant of protest; a panoply of representing, dancing, and singing; clever slogans on beautiful banners; bat signals and light brigades; disruptions of traffic and of the opposition; readings and solidarity events; videos, performances, and plays from the various artistic elites; the inevitable celebrity interventions . . . we got this; we know how to do it. We just have to stay steady.

—*Martha Rosler*



(c) daniela comani

# TRUMPUSCONI



TRUMP  
FOR TRUMP!



One of the rallying cries of the Occupy movement was centered on the strange figure of “corporate personality,” which had gained a new level of visibility when the Supreme Court ruled in 2010 that corporations were protected by the First Amendment, guaranteeing free speech, which, in the case of corporate persons, took the form of money. In response to the cry “End corporate personhood now!” the last failed Republican presidential candidate coolly delivered the now infamous line: “Corporations are people, my friend.” So it is no surprise that this time around they went with a different approach. The Democrats, on the other hand, quashed the movement opposing the neoliberal status quo within their own party and what happened as a result is now clear. While it may not seem the most urgent problem to raise at this moment, the doctrine of corporate personhood has, throughout its history in the United States, under the pretense of protecting business interests, further disenfranchised some of the very same groups that Trump railed against throughout his campaign.

In a 2013 article in the *National Review*, “Corporate Personhood’s Long Life,” Paul Moreno describes the embarrassment felt by the colleagues of Justice Hugo Black when he dissented in a 1938 Supreme Court Case, declaring, “I do not believe the word ‘person’ in the Fourteenth Amendment includes corporations.” Moreno implies that this embarrassment was due to Black’s ignorance regarding constitutional law. He conveniently leaves aside Black’s observation in the same dissent that in Supreme Court cases “less than one-half of 1 percent invoked [the Fourteenth Amendment] in protection of the negro race, and more than 50 percent asked that its benefits be extended to corporations.” This is remarkable because the Fourteenth Amendment was adopted in the wake of the Civil War to ensure that African Americans were treated equally in all states of the Union. In one of the key cases, which led to the corporate personhood doctrine in the 1880s, one of the authors of the Fourteenth Amendment testified on behalf of a railroad corporation. He claimed that the word “person” had been inserted rather than “citizen” so that corporations would be included for protection along with the former slaves for whom the amendment was expressly written. Two birds with one stone. Although his testimony was later revealed to be spurious, it helped establish judicial precedent on the matter of corporate personhood and his fabrication would become simply an awkward detail of no further consequence.

But what cannot be brushed aside as merely an awkward detail is the very real fallout of the corporate person doctrine. This is precisely what Justice Black was pointing out in 1938: the rights of corporate persons had effectively displaced those of African Americans. In theory, of course, the equal rights guaranteed by the amendment were possessed equally by all persons, natural

and artificial. But, in practice, this was entirely untrue. The corporate person was recognized as entitled to the protections of the Fourteenth Amendment at precisely the moment in which Reconstruction gave way to Jim Crow. The state segregation laws that would come into effect throughout the South in this period, the very type of laws which the Fourteenth Amendment had been adopted in order to prevent, would eventually be upheld by the Supreme Court in the infamous *Plessy v. Ferguson* case, effectively suspending the protections of the Fourteenth Amendment for African Americans. If there is “no substantial controversy in mainstream judicial thought over corporate personality,” as Paul Moreno claims, then perhaps the mainstream should take another look at the origins of this doctrine and instead of seeing the very real consequences of its adoption as unintended, these consequences should be understood as a vital part of its genetic makeup. There is a cost for the extension of civil rights to business organizations and history clearly shows this cost to be born by those least able to pay it, regardless of their race, sexual orientation, or class.

Trump’s anti-immigration, anti-LGBTQ, anti-feminist, and generally racist demagoguery was the 2016 Republican alternative to “Corporations are people, my friend.” We are in a new situation now, where the structural discrimination that takes place even in the highest court will now be combined with the outspoken discrimination of a commander in chief. For me this election was not *I want a president . . .* but *I want a Supreme Court . . .* For the foreseeable future, the persons effectively recognized by the highest court in the land will be more and more artificial.

—Zachary Formwalt

