

M/E/A/N/I/N/G  
The Final Issue

Edited by Susan Bee & Mira Schor

December 2016

©2017 M/E/A/N/I/N/G

Introduction .....	4
Charles Bernstein: For <i>M/E/A/N/I/N/G</i> .....	6
Johanna Drucker: Past Optimism and Illusions of Agency .....	7
Sharon Loudén—Artists: Calling for a Mandate .....	9
Tatiana Istomina: Some thoughts on fear and permanence .....	14
Toni Simon .....	16
Rit Premnath: The Day After.....	18
Beverly Naidus: Holding On.....	23
Christen Clifford: Instagram posts.....	26
Shirley Kaneda .....	30
William Villalongo.....	34
Sheila Pepe: The United States of Calvin.....	37
Joseph Nechvatal .....	40
Martha Wilson as Donald Trump .....	41
Deborah Kass.....	46
Bradley Rubenstein: It’s Not Blood, It’s Red .....	46
Lenore Malen: What Now?.....	49
Peter Rostovsky.....	51
Susanna Heller: A Pussy in the Boardroom .....	53
Rachel Owens .....	55
Mary D. Garrard: Three Letters .....	57
Kate Gilmore .....	59
Maureen Connor .....	60
Bailey Doogan.....	63
Suzy Spence: Plotting.....	66
Faith Wilding .....	68
Matthew Weinstein: American Dreamers, 2016, on the Precipice .....	70
Jennifer Bartlett.....	72
Ann McCoy .....	75
Mimi Gross .....	77
Myrel Chernick.....	82

Robin Mitchell .....	84
Judith Linhares .....	87
Noah Dillon .....	89
Felix Bernstein and Gabe Rubin .....	92
Elaine Angelopoulos: .....	94
What is Meaning? How do I make art and perform activism now?.....	94
Alexandria Smith.....	97
Joyce Kozloff .....	99
Tamara Gonzales and Chris Martin.....	100
Legacy Russell: AN ANATOMY OF MOURNING.....	101
Nancy K. Miller: Trump and his cabinet meet their fate.....	103
Ligorano Reese .....	104
Joy Garnett and Bill Jones: “No” .....	106
Aviva Rahmani: Blowin’ in the Wind.....	108
Aziz + Cucher .....	111
Erik Moskowitz + Amanda Trager.....	114
Michelle Jaffé: Soul Junk .....	117
Hermine Ford .....	119
Erica Hunt .....	121
Noah Fischer: We Are Called to Fight.....	123
Julie Harrison.....	125
Roger Denson: The Individual Is No Longer Invisible in There .....	127
Robert C. Morgan: The Presence of <i>M/E/A/N/I/N/G</i> .....	132
Jenny Perlin.....	134
Altoon Sultan.....	137
From Susan Bee & Mira Schor, Scrapbook.....	139
Susan Bee: Non Finito .....	152
Mira Schor: Written during the Preoccupation .....	155

## Introduction

The first issue of *M/E/A/N/I/N/G: A Journal of Contemporary Art Issues*, was published in December 1986. *M/E/A/N/I/N/G* is a collaboration between two artists, Susan Bee and Mira Schor, both painters with expanded interests in writing and politics, and an extended community of artists, art critics, historians, theorists, and poets, whom we sought to engage in discourse and to give a voice to.

We published 20 issues biannually over ten years from 1986-1996. In 2000, *M/E/A/N/I/N/G: An Anthology of Artists' Writings, Theory, and Criticism* was published by Duke University Press. In 2002 we began to publish *M/E/A/N/I/N/G Online* and have published six online issues. [Issue #6](#) is a link to the digital reissue of all of the original twenty hard copy issues of the journal. The *M/E/A/N/I/N/G* archive from 1986 to 2002 is in the collection of the [Beinecke Library at Yale University](#).

Our 25th anniversary issue came out in November 2011, sparked by the transformative moment of Occupy Wall Street. During the past year, we considered marking the 30th anniversary of our collaborative project by publishing a final issue in hard copy, a format we still cherish. Entropy and life intervened. Now, in the wake of the recent election, when the optimism of Occupy is dramatically reversed, we have decided to produce our final issue as a series of posts on *A Year of Positive Thinking*. Subsequently all the material will be permanently posted and archived on the *M/E/A/N/I/N/G Online* site.

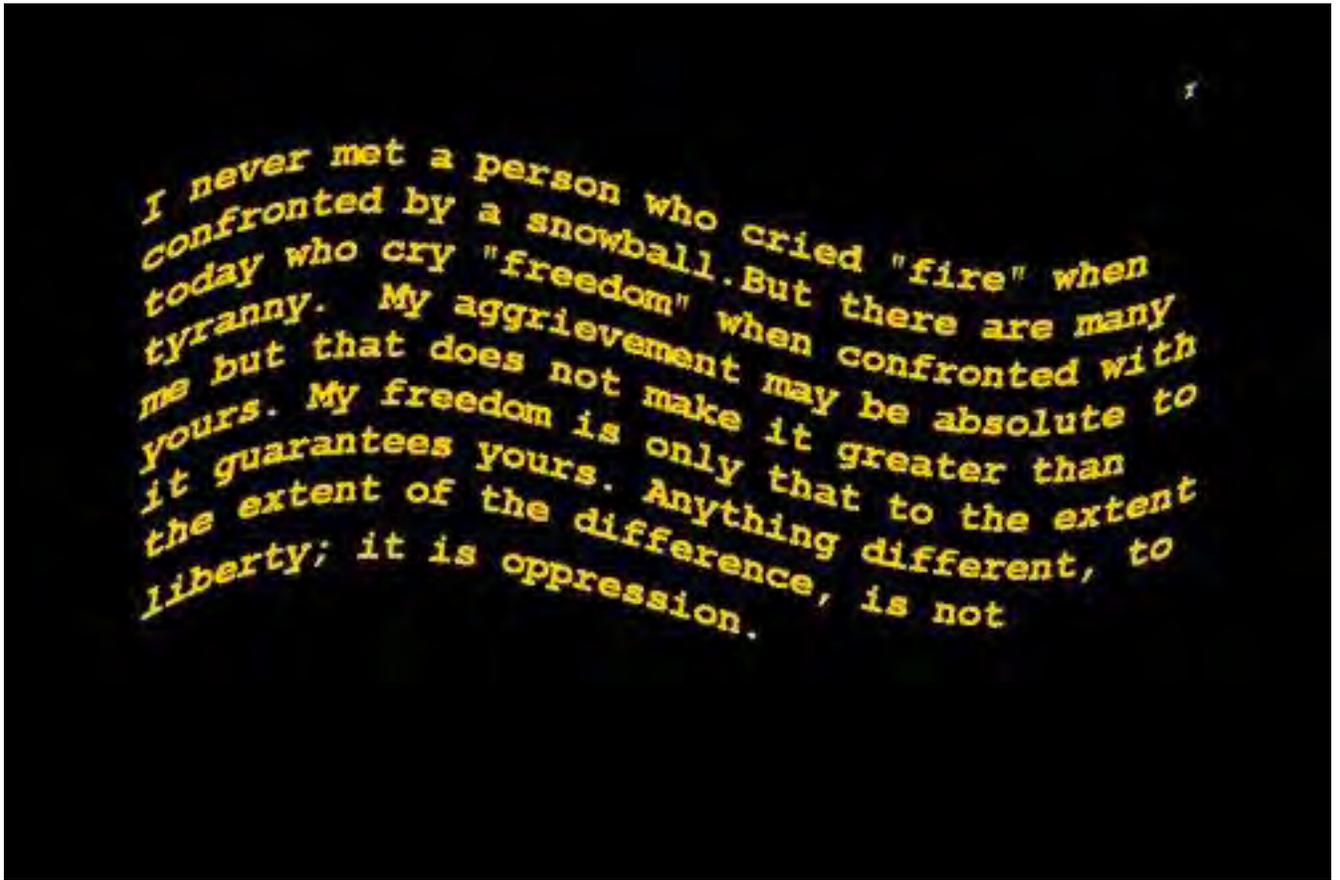
We asked some long-time contributors and some new friends to create images and write about where they place meaning today, as we stand weeks before the official inauguration of the right-wing government takeover that has so many of us depressed, terrified, grieving, angry, and trying to figure out what activism we can engage in and how we can balance our dedication to our art with our existence as citizens, local and global. In keeping with the contingency of the time, they have chosen to submit a text, a poem, an image or video clip, a painting, drawing, photograph, or collage, that expresses their views, desires, fears, and thoughts at this time. Hopefully, something that will burrow into people's consciousness, appeal to their humor, educate, enrage, or inspire.

Because we have always focused our publication on a broad range of issues deeply relevant to the arts community, and because this is our final issue, we also have welcomed reflections on the impact of our entire project over thirty years, including our forums on meaning, on motherhood and art, on racism, on feminism, on resistance, on collaboration, on privacy, on trauma, and on art making over a lifetime from youth to older age. As ever, we have encouraged artists and writers to feel free to speak to the concerns that have the most meaning to them right now.

Every other day from December 5 through December 29, 2016, a grouping of contributions appeared on [\*A Year of Positive Thinking\*](#). We invite you to live through this time with all of us in a spirit of impromptu improvisation and passionate care for our futures.

Susan Bee and Mira Schor

Charles Bernstein: For M/E/A/N/I/N/G



Charles Bernstein's *Pitch of Poetry*, new essays, was published in 2016 by the University of Chicago Press. His most recent book of poems is *Recalculating* (Chicago, 2013). In 2010, Farrar, Straus & Giroux published *All the Whiskey in Heaven: Selected Poems*. Bernstein is Donald T. Regan Professor of English and Comparative Literature at the University of Pennsylvania, where he is the director of PennSound. More info here. Bernstein's "For M/E/A/N/I/N/G," about the crisis in art criticism in the mid-80s, was the first essay in the **first** issue of M/E/A/N/I/N/G.

## Johanna Drucker: Past Optimism and Illusions of Agency

The optimism of *M/E/A/N/I/N/G* was almost assumed, beginning as it did with the initial force of the Women's Movement behind us, chronologically speaking. The stage had been set by the (truly) courageous work of Gloria Steinem, Germaine Greer, and the other women who had confronted the patriarchal culture directly, demanding fundamental rights. I was not one of those women marching in the 1970s, and the systematic consciousness-raising that had to proceed through the culture had its effect on me only slowly. One of the myths of artistic identity was exceptionalism. Somehow one would find one's way on account of it, be exempt as well as distinct, and thus transcend the social processes of oppression or exclusion. Naiveté takes many forms. That was mine. But the shared illusion was optimism about agency—as if social forces could be *detoured*, contravened, or transcended through self-willed action, individual or collective. Our belief was founded on the notion that barriers and obstacles could be identified and addressed through activism. Our concept of agency was instrumental. We believed that focused and directed activity could have an effect. We even saw those effects in legislation and Supreme Court rulings.

Why did we imagine, then, that progress would always be forward in its drives? That battles once won would not have to be fought again? That was where we missed a deeper historical and cultural understanding. The asymmetries of gender are real. If we look globally, and across diverse areas of cultural life—medicine, education, health, civil rights, and financial opportunity—the right to self-determination is still far from guaranteed. Even in our own highly privileged environments, the asymmetries operate every day to position women differently from male colleagues at the same level of accomplishment, stature, and age. The means by which these symptomatic realities are enacted are not themselves fully apparent.

In the recent election, which will mark a major turning point in the history of the West, not just America as a failed experiment in maintaining the elements of society required for a viable social contract, we see how far we have not come. Not only because we did not elect a woman president, but because the rhetoric of misogyny, the backlash against women's rights, and most fundamentally, rights over our bodies, is so stridently angry. Optimism is gone, at least for now, and the elegy to optimism must give rise to activism and support for the generations ahead. We know that, and yet, these moments have the feel of real tragedy, the broken figures of characters caught in the inevitability of forces against which we had thought we had some power.

Now we need to recognize that social forces have their own agency, own capacity for repressive and backlash actions. We who have so long critiqued Reason should not be surprised when it does not prevail. Our charge is to model our understanding of the workings of the social world differently than in the Newtonian mechanics of the past.

The concept of agency has to be re-conceptualized within the forces of occulted and intractable conditions, as a systemic complexity to which we are subject, not merely—or even—self-directed participants. Illusions about agency make its actualization elusive. Much work lies ahead. *M/E/A/N/I/N/G* provided a start point, but now, with checks and impasses, the work to be done is less clear perhaps than it was when the struggles seemed identifiable and lines of conflict were able to be drawn with some certainty.

**Johanna Drucker** is an artist and writer known for her typographic work, innovative writing, and interest in the visual dimensions of language and knowledge. She has written and published widely on topics related to contemporary art, digital media, and aesthetics and is currently the Breslauer Professor in the Department of Information Studies at UCLA. Drucker's text, "LES IMMATERIAUX: Long-term Effects of the Exhibition" appeared in the **first** issue of *M/E/A/N/I/N/G*.

Sharon Louden—Artists: Calling for a Mandate



*Oceti Sakowin Camp, Standing Rock Reservation, North Dakota on Thanksgiving Day, November 24, 2016.*

As I write this essay on a plane from Minneapolis to Miami, I am looking forward to seeing all kinds of art this week. I carry with me the memories of my time with the incredible people I met at Oceti Sakowin Camp, Standing Rock Reservation in North Dakota last week. [Hyperallergic](#) editor Hrag Vartanian had the idea to visit Standing Rock over the Thanksgiving holiday. We (with Veken Gueyikian and Vinson Valega) were there to support the water protectors, talk with artists, and stand in solidarity at the front lines of demonstrations against the Dakota Access Pipeline. My perspective is one from an artist embraced in the strong and always welcoming artists' community which I found at Standing Rock.



*Artist Yatika Starr Fields (second from the left near his painting) poses with admirers of his work at Oceti Sakowin Camp, North Dakota.*

Entering the camp, I thought there may be some resistance to our visit. I couldn't be more wrong about that initial trepidation. The actions and conversations that took place at the camp were coming from a peaceful, loving place. What the police and military were doing was not. They were systematically and aggressively taking human rights away from Native Americans.

As artists, some (if not most) of us have been misunderstood and not accepted most of our lives. And often times, we are censored. What I learned at Standing Rock was a reaffirmation of the strength of our community. Given our current political climate, there is a clear urgency to preserve creativity as a human right. Thus, I'm calling for a mandate that all artists share their wealth.

What does it mean to share "wealth" while so many of us are struggling? As artists, we are privileged and have a tremendous amount of assets that we often do not

recognize. These assets include managing and bouncing back from failure, naturally creating things from nothing and sharing our most intimate truth in the way we know how. And we do it well by sharing it with others, in exhibitions, performances, or just in simple conversation. By showing up and being present in any situation, we become sources of validation for those seeking creativity. Because we carry so many assets within us, we can create opportunities for our fellow artists and the general public.

Our visit to Standing Rock reinforced that there will inevitably be human rights violations under a Trump presidency. We have a responsibility to our fellow artists to share every opportunity that is received. If you have an exhibition, why not suggest others to show with you? If you receive a grant, perhaps use the profits to create a project with others. If you can write about another artist's work, do it and circulate it widely. If you can hire artists, pay them a living wage. Refer artists to others who can open doors for them or simply inquire about their work, which can go a long way. I know this fluid practice will be an example for others to be able to speak freely in a compromised society.

Surrounded by capitalism at the fairs and away from the kindness and strength of the Native artists in North Dakota, I'm reminded that anywhere there is creativity, it must be recognized. If all of us shared each other's work, inevitably doors will open. At the end of the day, it's the natural assets that all artists embody that will further our growth no matter what obstacles are put in front of us. This is an opportunity to use our power, which should never be underestimated.



*Oceti Sakowin Camp, Standing Rock Reservation, North Dakota, the day after Thanksgiving, November 25, 2016.*



Sharon Loudon, *"Windows"* (detail) 2015. Aluminum and steel screws, dimensions variable, at the Tweed Museum of Art, Duluth, MN.

**Sharon Loudon** is an artist, advocate for artists and editor of *Living and Sustaining a Creative Life* books.

## Tatiana Istomina: Some thoughts on fear and permanence

It is hard for me personally to come to terms with the new American reality. Having lived in this country for thirteen years, I developed a sincere trust in the American democratic system and a belief that, despite many drawbacks, it continues to sustain basic ethical values. Such belief does not come easy to someone who, like I, was born in the Soviet Union and came of age at the start of Putin's rule in the post-Soviet Russia. Lately I have found myself reverting to my Russian habits of coping with a horrible political climate – staying away from politically-oriented social media, avoiding reading or watching news, mentally blocking all thought about future, etc. It is easy to dismiss such an attitude as defeatist. However, for millions of people around the world it ensures their ability to go on with their lives despite the daily feelings of dread, depression or imminent danger. They learn to direct their energy away from active social or political engagement – which in many countries is pointless and mortally dangerous – to cultivating personal relationships, building families, cooperating on local projects, writing poetry or making art – in short, creating alternative worlds to their abhorrent reality. Such work needs to go on even in the darkest of times, to sustain the seeds of possible futures for when the society is ready to change. It is a quiet work, and the results may be difficult to detect, but this makes it all the more necessary. Perhaps it is not accidental that in Russian language, “to be silent” is an active verb.

Over the past three years I have worked on a project that used drawing and storytelling to explore various concepts of danger and fearfulness in American society. I invited different people to tell me a “scary” story about anything that concerned them in their lives or the life of the society, and to draw in response to another person's narrative. I then reworked the stories and drawings into short films and released them online. The stories of many participants expressed not only their personal anxieties, but also the collective fears caused by major social and political problems in the country. As a result, the collection of “Scary Story” films has become a reflection of the psychological landscape of contemporary America, with its racial and economic tensions and polarized opinions on issues such as climate change, women's rights, gun control, etc.

The video excerpt below may well be symptomatic of the mood of deep anxiety and uncertainty that has pervaded the country in recent years. “A happy guy's story” narrated by James Biderman, with drawings by Barbara Westermann, was recorded in 2014, and released in 2015. His video can be accessed [here](https://vimeo.com/119693500) [https://vimeo.com/119693500]. More videos and information about Scary Stories may be found on [the project's website](#).



## Toni Simon

Exhale the finite glow of our forgotten planet. If only we had a parachute of elastic carbon to forestall its demise.

To be without a backdrop when there's no curtain, that's the imitation. Too elusive to be apprehended by pursuing parables and forestalled by that very wicket that we tripped over to begin with.

We are back at the start with only a cart and a wheel.



**Toni Simon** is a multimedia artist living in Brooklyn. Her illustrated book of prose poetry *Earth After Earth* was published by Lunar Chandelier Press in 2012. She is collaborating on a literary/visual project entitled *Dear Air* with poet Joanna Fuhrman.

## Rit Premnath: The Day After

Dear 72% of non-college educated white men  
Thank you for your overwhelming enthusiasm  
I was following the polls  
trace a mirrored line  
dipping and rising  
in anticipation  
But when you filled your circle  
the statistician's needle shivered

You were the butt of our jokes  
and we'd all but forgotten you  
Now the clown has returned  
shouting his white rage  
With the tongue of a troll

Dear 62% of non-college educated white women  
Thank you for tossing a grenade in our basement  
My ears are still ringing from the aftershock  
and I'm empty and sad  
Like there's been a death in the family

Dear 37% of white people  
and 74% of non-whites  
This morning the city was silent  
and in the subway  
we couldn't bear to look at each other

I met a friend for breakfast  
and we talked about this agnosia  
How everything is exactly the same  
but unrecognizable  
cheaply built on closer inspection  
like Mar-a-Lago

Dear overeducated friends  
Thank you for your persistent paranoia  
As you know well, the present is always Kali Yuga  
The last phase of the crumbling cosmic order  
The bull of dharma has lost three legs  
and teeters precariously

hopping one-legged from calamity to calamity  
Our angel of history zigzags

For you nothing is good enough  
Until something is much worse  
And even then you blame the foreclosed possibility  
of that which will have been  
Dear friends of various demographic categories  
Thank you for being here tonight  
I can't speak for you, but my emptiness is like a vacuum  
that sucks all things into its gloom  
I think we were silent because we recognized it  
It has always been there  
A hole at the center

We were talking yesterday  
About how the art world is not for us  
That we have always sensed an emptiness at its core  
But we play along and service its white walls  
fighting one another for its fleeting attention  
Afraid that we have already invested too much  
Afraid that we will disappear if we withdraw  
Afraid that withdrawal is shameful  
Ashamed that our politics rarely extends to action  
Confused about who the objects of our politics should be  
But as the ground cracks beneath our feet  
we suddenly feel an orientation  
A sense of possibility in this quickly widening trench

Dear teachers  
Yesterday we realized that we knew nothing  
Or at least that we must actively unlearn the knowledge  
that has stopped us from knowing

We were silent because we were ashamed  
that we didn't even know each other  
We said we must work together  
But knew right away that the "we" we were talking about  
is an idea that cannot be learnt  
But must be made  
And that none of us has the time to make it

I feel a sense of urgency  
that this is a call to action  
That we must try to capture and hold that feeling  
of the moment before we fall when our knees have begun to buckle  
Or the moment right after  
When the force of gravity orients us  
but we have not yet fallen  
That feeling we felt the first night and the morning after  
The soundlessness of that night and the hum in our ears searching  
A silence enveloped in a distant ringing  
Every sound in its inverse, a listening  
An ear for the mouthless

A being-with that is a listening and looking  
Unlearning as directed possibility  
A sensory orientation that stops the shuddering needle  
We must make a new time of being-with  
A time of learning through unlearning  
And reorient this era post truth  
Towards its looking-for  
Towards its becoming by being-with



*A Lapche near Dharapuri, Humla District, Nepal. Photo courtesy Sreshtha Rit Premnath, 2016*

“Chorten, Mani and Lapche are three kinds of sacred structures built with rocks that are found throughout the region of Humla in Northwestern Nepal and Southern Tibet. ...Lapche, the third and simplest category are cairns—simple rock mounds that any passerby may add to. ... Lapche are an accretion of *nows* that are each embodied in the intentional selection and placement of a rock....Unlike villages or monasteries that serve as destinations for a traveler, Lapche are always in between or at the

threshold of such places. They are polychronic nodes that mark non-sites en-route to *somewhere*.”

“Rocks map scales of geological time that vastly exceed human time and indeed precede the very existence of humans and our conception of time. We are fascinated with things that exceed our ability to grasp, and so we literally grasp them, hold and touch them, to fill them with meaning and make them ours.”

(Photo and text excerpts from Premnath, “The Chronotopography of Mountains” courtesy Sreshta Rit Premnath, 2016)

**Sreshta Rit Premnath** is an Indian-born artist who works across multiple media, investigating systems of representation and reflecting on the process by which images become icons and events become history. Premnath is the editor of *Shifter* and teaches at **Parsons**.

## Beverly Naidus: Holding On

I'm out of breath, running down the sidewalk in a foul-smelling, factory town in Maine. My dad works at the plastics factory, as a research chemist, putting dead leaves, textiles and flowers in between sheets of acrylic to create new decorative plastics for home design – very 1950s. He's grateful to have a job. He's been blacklisted.

At that moment, I don't know any of this. I only know that the air stinks, neighborhood kids are chasing me and I don't know why. I am four years old, with dark, curly hair and olive skin. I look quite different from the locals. I am being pelted with grapes. They shout and then chant an unfamiliar expression at me, "DIRTY LITTLE KIKE." It fills my ears like intractable glue that no anti-adhesive can remove.

Is that when I awoke? Perhaps. It was certainly one of the first seeds of awakening. I was being raised to assimilate, and the lesson that day was this: It's not the difference that marks you. It's the response of others to that difference.

I have learned that lesson repeatedly over the years. As the McCarthy Era drew to a close, my New Yorker parents, both children of immigrants, moved us closer to NYC, thinking we would all be more at home there; it did not help. Our new town had been the center of the New Jersey Nazi party during the 1930s. I don't think my parents knew this. They were assimilating, and chose to live in a non-Jewish part of town deliberately. Trouble was, a few of the neighbors were unhappy with this choice and made their displeasure known.

I felt the pressure to fit in. I sang solos in the Christmas choir at school, read the Bible secretly in bed, joined the Brownies and attempted to straighten my hair. Somehow all these attempts to be accepted fell short, and this failure came with a sticky residue of shame. That I couldn't pass was my fault. I grew wary. I began to identify with outsiders and oddballs. I began to write poetry and draw weird surreal images searching for a way out.

Thankfully there was an exit door with a neon sign that said "LIBERATION THIS WAY." I came of age in the late 60s. Although the complex counterculture was not necessarily a place to find easy comfort, it offered an alternative to suffocating and destructive conformity. I found safety and acceptance among feminists, queer friends, activists, artists, mystics and communities of color. All residues of dissonance between the dominant culture and my new havens of solidarity went into my creative work. Years later, as I expanded into teaching what I had learned as an artist, I began to offer similar refuge for my students to tell their stories of shame, otherness, trauma and alienation. That, combined with some media literacy and anti-oppression training, became a standard recipe for shifting or strengthening values. I saw and still see the trajectory of my work as something expansive; eventually subverting the

dominant culture and replacing it with a world where difference will be celebrated and where equity and fairness will be the norm.

But I am not a Pollyanna who thought the bullies had gone away. The daily brutality of ongoing white supremacy, homophobia, patriarchy, and corporate capitalism has been ever present and the manipulations of fear & economics have created an ongoing apocalypse for many.

Two nights ago, in response to the latest assault (our recent election), we attended a community meeting in a local church in our new hometown of Tacoma, WA. that was advertised with the appropriate name, “What Now?” Organized by the facilitators of the local Anarchist Discount Center (an online “buy nothing” group), they packed the room with eager, depressed, passionate, enraged, mostly younger, seemingly white folks. We made extensive lists of what concerns us the most; the panic almost bubbled over as each new item was added to the list. Small groups discussed strategies for resistance, solidarity, educating those who are feeling lost and vulnerable. It was a beginning.

Some people describe this bizarre post-election moment like a waking nightmare, like we are in suspended animation waiting for fascism to start. But those of us who have identified as activists for decades, once we have shaken off the disgust and frustration, have noticed an expanding cohort of awakening folks. It’s essential that we share our tools for processing the daily trauma and insanity, and get grounded for the long haul. Our work will likely be much harder now, but with more imaginations and muscles joining the cause, who knows what will happen. We’ll have to hold on to each other lovingly during this bumpy ride.



*Beverly Naidus, Cognitive Dissonance #8, from the series "Wrestling with the Uneasy Present." Digital photo-collage, dimensions variable, 2016.*

**Beverly Naidus** has been subverting within academia, museums and public space for most of her adult life. She likes to stir things up via art, writing, face-to-face improvisations, online interventions and within contexts where difficult questions can be raised, vulnerable stories can be shared and connections can be made. For more about her work and pedagogy go to her website.

Christen Clifford: Instagram posts  
from @cd\_clifford November 11 & 14



Nov 11 So grateful that our Jackson Heights and Flushing city councilman #DannyDromm voiced his resistance and his commitment to holding our legislature and government accountable. This was #queensrally for unity and diversity in #diversityplaza . Those “Let’s wait and see what he does” opinions—um, NO. He

told us who he is. I have been thinking about the argument that “Some took him literally but not seriously, others took him seriously but not literally” in relation to the capitulation of places like *HuffPo* and *People* magazine—taking off the warning about DT and the lavish photo spread of Ivanka’s family, respectively. This is not normal. I refuse to normalize this. I have been thinking about the connections between rape and war, about the very real #ptsd and #retraumatization happening for many people. I have been rereading *Trauma and Recovery* by Judith Herman. I numbed out with Ativan for a few days. I understood why after picking up T&R and reading about “CONSTRICTION—a state of surrender where...the system of self-defense shuts down entirely.” Thinking about how Tuesday night was such a shock it was like an ambush. I didn’t see it coming. The surprise attack makes me remember “Oh, it’s Veteran’s Day” and my dad fought in WWII and he was at The Battle of the Bulge which was a famous surprise attack. Sortie. Invasion. Thinking how grabbing a woman by the pussy or groping someone on the subway is the new lying in the long grasses with a rifle all night long. Thinking about invasions of personal space, even the forced laugh and endurance of a hand that lingers a little too long, though no one else might notice it. And rape, forced intimacy, as a weapon of war. I felt crazy on Tuesday night <x-apple-data-detectors://11> . I thought the #silverlining of DT was exposing #rapeculture and I was completely ready to have our American society finally take #sexualassault survivors seriously- to listen and believe women. I was ready for a woman to be in charge so I wouldn’t feel like it was all in my head. We need more women in office. And then the rapist is elected. As if he’s my rapist. “Trauma isolates, the group recreates.” #strongertogether Some of my students fear for their safety. This is not normal. #TheResistance

Nov 14 #supermoon tonight. #lenorachampagne and I walked to see the super of our building who is in the hospital. He had a stroke. The nurse said his left side needed massage to get the blood flowing so I massaged his legs. I never thought I’d be that intimate with him but I know the healing power of touch and I grew up massaging my mom’s legs and feet so it felt normal to me. It was the first time I’ve been in a hospital for someone other than myself and I walked out thinking that I am doing really well right now and #fuckcancer like just fuck it and I just have to be in the present and enjoy my anger and take care of my anxiety. I have repeated to myself “Two steps forward, one step back.” But I know that doesn’t help the brown boys I know. Later we went on the roof and I tried to bathe in the magical power of the moon being so close #tommurri n s #lunamacaroon In my mind I am naked swimming in a lake bathing in the moon’s reflection drinking in some form of pureness that would protect those brown boys and girls. I talked to the kids about being an #upstander then obsessed over the *NY Times* weird letter to readers- are they capitulating or doubling down? Feel deep in my heart I can’t normalize this fascist elect but small good deeds helped. Walking, cooking, neighboring. Still thinking about feelings—how good it felt to think that HRC saw my issues and how good it feels to “other” someone else. Like middle school. Most of us grow out of it, right? We are all together under this big fucking moon, whether we like it or not.



*\*These texts were originally published to Instagram @cd\_clifford and then automatically posted to Facebook and Twitter.*

**Christen Clifford** is a feminist performance artist, writer, curator at Dixon Place, mother and teaches at The New School. She is a core member of The No Wave Performance Task Force and the creator of The Pussy Bow, a feminist action disguised as a fashion accessory. She lives in Queens and online @cd\_clifford

## Shirley Kaneda

Sadly, not only did we not see the first woman to be the President of the most powerful country in the free world, but we are also now faced with grave concerns of civil liberty brought on by the ultra conservative agenda of Trump and his coterie of advisors who blatantly support white male supremacy. Their reactionary views on everything from free trade which greatly aids the world's poorest people, advancement of minorities, women's reproductive rights, gun control, and least of all economic disparity can now be set back decades.

53% of white women voted for Trump. Even if traditional feminism may not be attractive to some women, it would seem to be a no-brainer to elect an eminently qualified woman candidate to a hate inspiring incompetent racist and sexist buffoon in 2016. Evidently, these white women put race over advancing the status of women at the expense of domination over liberation. At least, being white gives them the perception that they have power over everyone who is not.

I recently saw a video of a debate between James Baldwin and William F. Buckley that was held at Cambridge Union Society, Cambridge University in 1965. The topic was "The American Dream at the Expense of the American Negro." Almost the entire audience except for a few blacks here and there was white. Baldwin was already a well-established writer and civil rights activist and Buckley was a young editor and founder of the conservative National Review. Baldwin was riveting. The exchange could not have been better made as a movie. Baldwin's passionate, articulate oppression of American blacks was so intelligent, deft and moving that he received a standing ovation by the young audience when he finished. Buckley on the other hand resorted to attempting to strip Baldwin of respect by commenting that it was curious that Baldwin all of sudden spoke with a British accent. He did no such thing of course, but it is the white's position to paint blacks as the barbaric "other" and incapable of becoming civilized. In the end the Society took a vote on the proposition and Baldwin won by 540-160 on the issue of "The American Dream at the Expense of the American Negro."

Evidently the mostly white audience of this debate in 1965 was far more progressive than the 51% of Americans who elected Trump in 2016. The issue of the economy and the diminishing middle class were certainly factors in this election, but they are inextricably tied to the not so latent issue of race easily promoted by Trump's embrace of xenophobia.

How do we break this cycle of bigotry and oppression? First we must divest ourselves from the notion of "other." From my perspective, the mutual respect for difference must extend to oneself. The other must not be an extension of the notion

of tolerance and non-judgment. It may be confusing to think of the dominant – subordinate relationship and the notion of other which were possibly and probably progressive at one time, but now must be disposed for no other reason than the fact that it is archaic and counter-productive. The concept of the other has to be abandoned and absorbed so it can produce independence. The other is now revealed as a myth that signifies anything that is not “I” and which does nothing to alter the dynamic of power.



*Shirley Kaneda, Untitled, 2016, 30" x 34", acrylic on linen.*

**Shirley Kaneda** is an abstract painter, contributing editor to *Bomb* Magazine and a Professor at Pratt Institute.

The video that Kaneda refers to of the 1965 debate between James Baldwin v. William F. Buckley Jr. at Cambridge University on the question: “Is the American Dream at the expense of the American Negro?” can be viewed [here](#).

## William Villalongo

My figures toil between various histories and an endless natural world conscious of painting as their condition of being. These new works meditate on the Black male presence in society as a figure shifting in out of visibility. It is a post-human existence in which the form disperses and recollects in various form like fallen autumn leaves, more subject to the conditions of nature than individual will. Yet, like nature it has the power of regeneration held within the substance of its decay. “Hands up” and “hoodies” become symbols of resistance as well as the figurative elements associated with body language.

*William Villalongo, Seed, 2016. Acrylic, cut velour paper and collage, 79" X 40" [next page]:*





*William Villalongo, Speak No Evil, 2016. Acrylic, cut velour paper and collage, 40" X 39"*

**William Villalongo** lives and works in Brooklyn, NY. Villalongo is the recipient of the Louis Comfort Tiffany Award and the Joan Mitchell Foundation Painters & Sculptor's Grant. Villalongo is currently represented by **Susan Inglett Gallery**.

## Sheila Pepe: The United States of Calvin

In 1856, one-time pastor and faculty of the Harvard Divinity School Ralph Waldo Emerson published *English Traits*. As an introduction to a text that exhaustively conveys all favorable traits of the Englishman, Emerson a champion anglophile, asserts the precision of race as not only historic, but also plainly scientific. “It is race, is it not?,” Emerson asks, “that puts the hundred millions of India under the dominion of a remote island in the north of Europe.” His answer is yes. No wonder he was late to the idea of abolition.

Less than seventy-five years later, in 1928, the *Harvard Theological Review* (Vol. 21, No.3, Jul., pp.163-195) publishes Kemper Fullerton’s “Calvinism and Capitalism.” Within these thirty-two pages many ends are achieved. Most important is, as the title conveys, building a finer point upon Max Weber’s ideas connecting “Protestantism and money making.” For Fullerton the Protestantism key to leadership in modern American Capitalism is specifically Calvinism. Lutheranism doesn’t quite make the grade. Catholicism would catapult us back into the Middle Ages, as Catholics cling to professions in the handicrafts, rather than that of financier, industrialist, or technical expert. Consider the year it was published. In 1928 New York Governor, Catholic and reformer Al Smith was running for president. Wall Street was riding high and Prohibition, which Smith ran against, was in full swing. The Republicans had failed to reapportion Congress and the Electoral College after the 1920 census (which had registered a 15 percent increase in the urban population). Smith lost to Herbert Hoover in a landslide. Many ascribed the loss to the three “P’s” – Prosperity, Prejudice, and Prohibition.

Both the Puritans of Boston Bay Colony and the Dutch Reformed traders of New Amsterdam were Calvinist-based communities. Both built secular societies that were completely religious by design. That is, they believed that man lay bare in the unmediated presence of God. That each individual had an obligation to that God to live a highly disciplined life persistently in pursuit of good works in a secular world. Good work was not social work, rather productive, profitable work. “The Calvinist practised (sic) self-discipline not even to secure assurance (that he was elected for salvation); he practised it for the glory of God, and in the practise of it assurance came.” As Fullerton argues, this is the perfect platform for modern capitalism. Tireless money making at the expense of others is not bad, but there were limits – flagrant avarice was not seen as appropriately ascetic.

As founding father and Boston-born Ben Franklin would say, “A penny saved is a penny earned.” This seems a benign enough aphorism for his young America, even while fueled by a mandate from heaven. What the good humor and simplicity belies is that this country wasn’t simply founded by oligarchs, but by a religious oligarchy that squarely placed duty to God in the secular commons. This is not new; it simply

persists.

As we look to find ways to change the damage done in this last presidential election, let's consider U.S. values as a set of religiously formulated dictates, not the least of which is, for example, the construction of race in the service of making money for the glory of God. No one is out of the loop on this one – whether or not there was or is a “God” in your life. We might wonder where exactly the separation of church and state is in this country, and if the toleration of difference in the service of commerce is adequate expression of civil rights.

It's time to ask again, and hopefully for the last time: What is this secular church that calls itself America?



*Sheila Pepe, “Glass Ceiling Fantasy,” 2006. Charcoal + chalk on grey paper*

**Sheila Pepe** lives and works in Brooklyn. She is a resident of the Sharpe-Walentas Program. Pepe is working on an exhibition and book with Gilbert Vicario, Chief Curator of the Phoenix Museum, AZ.



## Joseph Nechvatal



*Joseph Nechvatal, Portrait of the 45th President of the United States, 11/2016*

For this digital painting entitled *Portrait of the 45th President of the United States*, I have taken an official Wikipedia photo portrait of Donald Trump and buried it in visual noise, denying his presence to a large degree. The idea is to visually refuse to acknowledge him clearly as president. To stop reproducing him and his brand as presidential. To resist and oppose him with noise.

**Joseph Nechvatal's** computer-robotic assisted paintings and computer software animations are shown regularly in galleries and museums. *Towards an Immersive Intelligence: Essays on the Work of Art in the Age of Computer Technology and Virtual Reality (1993-2006)* was published by Edgewise Press in 2009. In 2011, *Immersion Into Noise* was published by the University of Michigan Library. His collected critical art reviews at [Hyperallergic](http://Hyperallergic.com) can be accessed [here](http://Hyperallergic.com).

## Martha Wilson as Donald Trump

### Politics and Performance Art are One and the Same.

*Grace Exhibition Space May 29; Smack Mellon, July 31, 2016; Creative Time Summit/Transformer party, October 13, 2016; P.P.O.W "Inauguration" exhibition, October 28; Tara benefit November 6, 2016.*

Enter to Queen, "We are the Champions"  
Hello America! People keep asking me how I'm going to make America great again.  
How I'm going to make America safe again. It's you and me baby—we're going to do this together.  
It's the coming of the solid state  
When we'll all be together again  
Just like—I can't remember when  
We'll have paradise on Earth at last

It's the coming of the solid state  
Instantaneous control's what it takes  
No more dropouts to spoil the view  
Our society will be so cute!

It's the coming of the solid state  
When morality follows interest rates  
Making money's a right God-given  
Here's to Calvin—is it Coolidge or -ism?

(Put on glasses)

I don't care if you record me talking about grabbing women's pussies; however, I never let photos be taken of me wearing glasses. I don't want to look like a 4-eyed egghead LOSER. But this performance is in the artworld, **which does not count.**

Hi! I am Martha Wilson, an artist and an arts administrator dressed up like Donald J. Trump. In all my previous performances, I have endeavored to go completely into Nancy Reagan, Barbara Bush and Tipper Gore's brains, so see what it's like in there. But I had to turn off Donald's speech to the Republican National Convention. I am here today wearing both personae to say a few words about how I have seen the relationship of art and politics evolve during the last 50 years.

In the 1960s, the Vietnam War was like a black curtain hanging behind everything. The cultural scene was one of protest, with marches, sit-ins, teach-ins, tax protests, non-violent and violent confrontations of ideas. Kent State was perhaps the nadir of

this time, when the National Guard shot and killed students. People left America for Canada; I was one of those. It was a time when neither side would listen to the complaints of the other; our society was truly divided.

The 1970s saw Watergate go down. This is when Richard Nixon's dirty tricks were exposed; he had to take responsibility and was impeached. The way this happened was that Robert Redford, a successful actor, paid *Washington Post* journalists Woodward and Bernstein to research and publish what the administration was up to.

In the artworld, artists of the 1970s were inventing postmodernism, becoming socially conscious, and invading the commercial gallery scene with temporary installations and video. Performance art, too, was entering the mainstream through the bar scene. There was recognition that the artworld was a white place: artists who were white were engendering dialogue through friendship with artists of color; Jenny Holzer's friendship and collaboration with Lady Pink comes to mind.

In 1980, Ronald Reagan was elected. Although as President of the Screen Actors Guild, he started out as a liberal, after he married Nancy, she persuaded him it was politically smarter to be conservative. He in turn chartered Frank Hodsoll with shutting down the National Endowment for the Arts, the agency put in place by Richard Nixon to fund the arts. In the beginning the NEA and the U.S. Information Agency were seen as a way to project America's cultural hegemony (Abstract Expressionists had fled Europe as a result of World War II). **We were better at art than anyone else**, plus Abstract Expressionist art kept its mouth shut. However, when Franklin Furnace tried to send politically explicit artist book works to South America through the U.S. Information Agency, they were rejected. Later, the agency itself was killed off.

Back to Frank Hodsoll: the first thing he did was kill off the NEA's Critics Fellowships. We, the arts organizations, did not see that the goal would be to kill off artists' fellowships as well, and later to "professionalize" the art spaces.

The Culture Wars began in the late 1980s with the furor caused by Robert Mapplethorpe's show, "The Perfect Moment," as it traveled. Dennis Barrie, Director of the Cincinnati Center for Contemporary Art, lost his job as a result of his decision to take this show containing explicit images of S & M practice. The Culture Wars were fought over sexuality as a legitimate subject of contemporary art. After a lawsuit brought by "the NEA Four" Karen Finley, John Fleck, Holly Hughes and Tim Miller made it all the way to the Supreme Court, the arts community lost—the Court installed "community standards of decency" over artists' First Amendment right to free expression.

This brings us to the 1990s, and the notion that no tax dollars should be paid for

“obscene art.” This decade is when the Internet became widely accessible and artists started looking at surveillance instead of sexuality as the locus of threat. Meanwhile, the locus of the Culture Wars changed too, from art to a more granular and local series of battles over women’s reproductive choice; “balance” of equal numbers of radical and conservative views on university faculties; free speech granted to corporations; and Super Pac money allowed to influence public thought.

As Donald, I represent a beacon of hope for the white working class because I am so rich nobody can buy me. I represent their desire to shake up the binary political system—or just fuck things up. I let the barking dogs of racism, sexism and xenophobia run free. Meanwhile, Republican donors and party leaders are getting behind me because I WON... the nomination. They figure, as in the case of Bush vs. Gore, they can still control the political outcome of my presidency.

(Take off glasses)

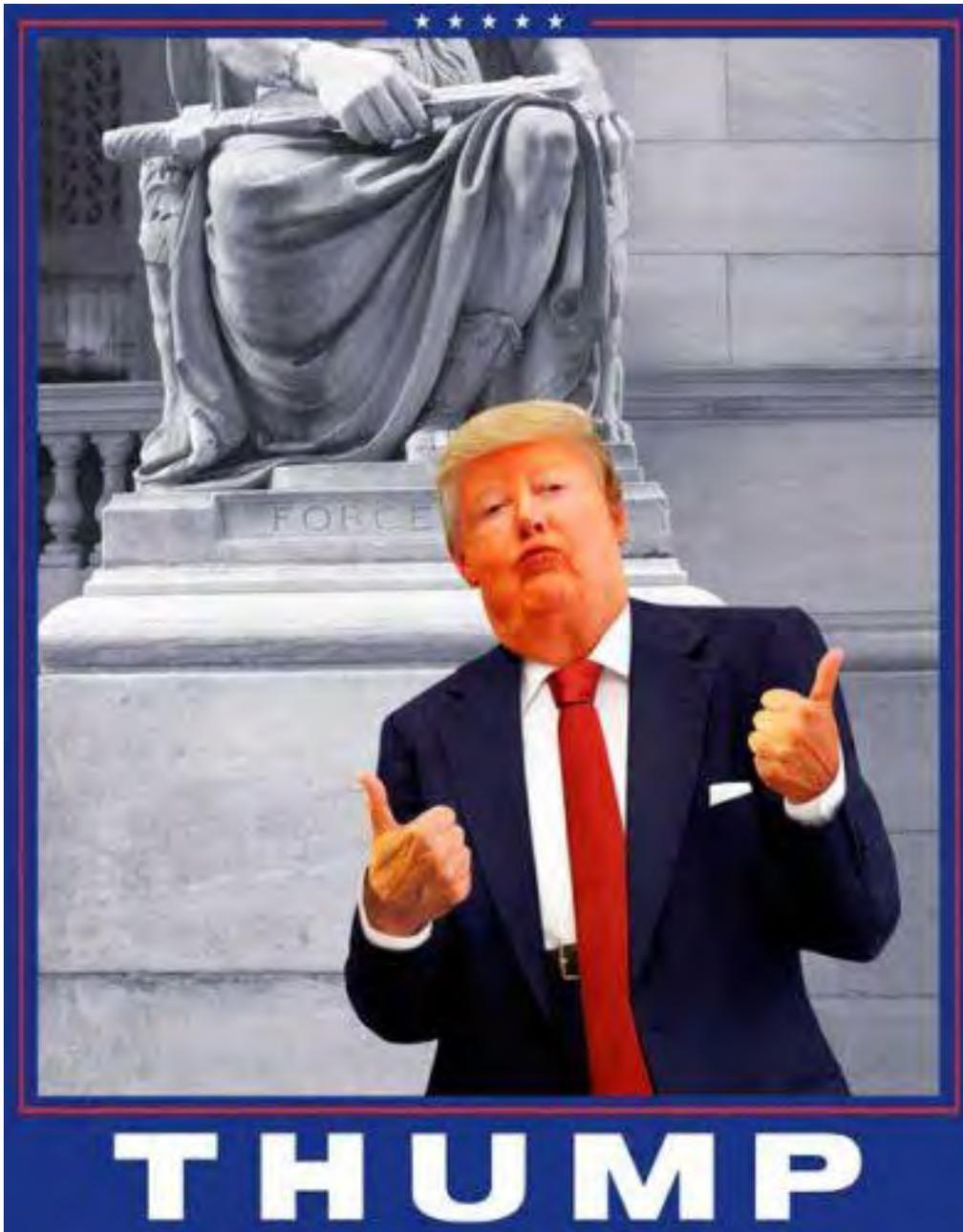
Tit for tat and tat for tit  
Politics is made of this  
You give me this I’ll give you that  
And we’ll both smile

Publicity’s our strategy  
And due to public memory  
Which lapses so conveniently  
In a few years

We can raise a family  
No scandal’s bad enough to flee  
The United States is still all milk and honey  
Tooooo meeeeee!

I will make America great again. I will make America hate again. I will make America white again. **I have already made politics and performance art one and the same.**

Good luck!



**Martha Wilson** is a pioneering feminist artist and art space director, who over the past four decades created innovative photographic and video works that explore her female subjectivity. She has been described by *New York Times* critic Holland Cotter as one of “the half-dozen most important people for art in downtown Manhattan in the 1970s.” In 1976 she founded Franklin Furnace, an artist-run space that champions the exploration, promotion and preservation of artist books, temporary installation, performance art, as well as online works. She is represented by P.P.O.W Gallery in New York.

## Deborah Kass



*Destroyed by the election and have nothing to say about anything yet. Too hard to process the current reality. Other than experiencing sheer terror, incredible sadness, and grief.*

**Deborah Kass** is an artist whose paintings examine the intersection of art history, popular culture and the self. Kass's work has been shown nationally and internationally. The Andy Warhol Museum presented "Deborah Kass, Before and Happily Ever After, Mid-Career Retrospective" in 2012, accompanied by a catalogue published by Rizzoli. Her monumental sculpture OY/YO located in Brooklyn Bridge Park became an instant icon, appearing on the front page of the *New York Times* and was a beloved destination in NYC. In 2014, Kass was inducted into the New York Foundation for the Arts Hall of Fame. Kass's work is represented by the Paul Kasmin Gallery.

## Bradley Rubenstein: It's Not Blood, It's Red

11/22/2016

Dear Susan and Mira,

Thank you so much for inviting me to contribute a thought or two for this, your final issue, of *M/E/A/N/I/N/G*.

As artists, we come into our practice largely by finding, and in some ways imitating, figures from whom we imagine we might model ourselves. Barnett Newman's concept of the "citizen artist" has always loomed large for me, and, I believe, his example might have been in your minds when you started *M/E/A/N/I/N/G*. His writings, letters to editors, and sometimes even his work (*Lace Curtain for Mayor Daley*, 1968) reflected a mind attuned to both aesthetics and the delicate fabric of society. Of course there are other examples, both historical and contemporary, who saw their work as part of a larger practice. Jacques-Louis David, Eugène Delacroix, Alexander Rodchenko and Varvara Stepanova, and Ana Mendieta come to mind.

Does the artist occupy a large role in the body politic? It is somewhat paradoxical that, in the age of Twitter and Instagram, media that privilege the image over the printed word, fewer works of art transcend the ocean of random images. Deborah Kass's *Vote Trump* (2016) print edition, despite its complex appropriational historical context, remains one of the few iconic visual works from this election cycle to capture the attention of the public; iconic because it combined a complex historically informed sensibility with graphic effect. To be honest there are no other images that come to mind because, I fear, our current academic culture is not developing a student body willing to engage in public discourse, perhaps due to our trigger-warning, microaggression-fearing culture of safe spaces that has begun to privilege isolation and the cult of victimization over political action and social participation. It might be cautionary to remind younger artists that there is a difference between censorship and persecution (like having your press destroyed, or being imprisoned) and merely being actively ignored. There are artists in other countries who could remind us of this difference if only they weren't busy being tortured at the moment; Iran, for example, doesn't have many judgement-free zones.

This is not to say that we should just throw up our hands and admit creative failure. Rather, we might take stock of our time and be attentive, and when necessary, active in our role. When you asked me to contribute to your final issue I was unsure of what I might write, draw, or print that would encapsulate the many disparate thoughts that I have regarding art and culture at the moment. A truckload of ideas were sketched out, discarded. I went back to Newman's letters hoping for some inspiration, direction. In the end I came to realize that sometimes just being present, and supporting one's fellow artist-citizens when called upon, might be the most important form of resistance there is. If there is one message that we might take away from 30

years of *M/E/A/N/I/N/G*, it is that “if you can still read this there is hope.”

With best regards,

Bradley Rubenstein

**Bradley Rubenstein** is a painter and writer who lives and works in Brooklyn, NY.

## Lenore Malen: What Now?

It was a summer of total anxiety and compulsive poll watching and now shock, despair, fear, along with remorse for what I've failed to see and failed to do.

A couple of years ago when politics were as usual I wrote a short essay for the *Brooklyn Rail* on the subject: "What is Art?" Quoting Leon Golub, I said: "If you are extremely worried about the state of the world and believe that art with its myriad of contradictions can't stand up to it, think of Golub's book *Do Paintings Bite?* in which he writes: "Art retains a residual optimism in the very freedom to tell." "Last week one of my students said to me: "Now we have a real reason for making art." Yes, but in truth, it is only art.

A hope and a plea: Take action immediately in whatever ways we can, each of us, so that the very worst doesn't happen here, can't be normalized, doesn't last. At the same time be worried about climate, race relations and other grave divisions here, the tinderbox of the Middle East, North Korea, Britain, France, Turkey, and everywhere — everything at once. Stay in touch.

I'm very sad to think of this as the last issue of *M/E/A/N/I/NG*, which, when it began, was the only journal especially devoted to contemporary artists in their studios, and has continued to function as such for so many years. It's a totally unique publication, not academic, not literary, but rather a voice for practicing visual artists — unedited, uncensored in any way.



<https://vimeo.com/170826135>

*Reversal* from *Lenore Malen* on *Vimeo*. *Reversal*: The central scene of a 3-channel installation. A United Nations address to the human species by a horse character declaring a list of atrocities exacted on non-human animals by humans.

**Lenore Malen** uses the lens of history and humor to explore utopian longings, dystopic aftermaths, and the sciences and technologies that inform them. Recently her explorations have focused on ecology, on cultural myths, and on the unstable boundaries between humans and animals. She teaches in the MFA Fine Arts Program at Parsons The New School. Her show *Scenes From Paradise* will be on view at Studio 10, 56 Bogart St., Bushwick, NY, January 6, 2017–February 5, 2017.

## Peter Rostovsky



*Peter Rostovsky, Green Curtain, 2013, 78 × 50 in., oil on linen.*

*The curtain is a barrier. It demarcates time: the closing of a chapter, the beginning of another. For ancient painters and modern philosophers, it has served as a metaphor for representation—a surface that always promises a depth that is not there. For others, like me, it is perhaps an adequate symbol of this dark moment, that feels like the end, but could be—if we make it so—a new beginning, too. Like many, I lurk on the boundary, stretched over its threshold and balanced on this uncertainty, constantly reviewing the program notes, and guessing the next act.*

**Peter Rostovsky** is a Russian-born artist who works in painting, sculpture, installation, and digital art. His work has been shown in the United States and abroad and has been exhibited at The Walker Art Center, MCA Santa Barbara, PS1/MOMA, Artpace, The Santa Monica Museum of Art, The ICA Philadelphia, the Blanton Museum of Art, S.M.A.K., and private galleries. Rostovsky also writes art criticism under the pen name David Geers. Focusing on the convergence of art, politics and technology, his writing has appeared in *October*, *Fillip*, *Bomb*, *The Third Rail Quarterly*, *The Brooklyn Rail* and *Frieze*.



## Susanna Heller: A Pussy in the Boardroom



*Susanna Heller, ACTUAL SIZE (A Pussy in the Boardroom), December 2, 2016. Oil, fabric, mixed media on wood, canvas and board, 32 x 28 inches spherical, detail.*

In the sphere pictured above you see visceral images: paint marks, line marks, blobs, scumbles, drips, and shapes evoking pussy's world. The escalation, diminishment, or distortion of pussy's scale, shape, and actual appearance occurs in every person, but

the most powerfully destructive distortions are those coming from that great circle of violent power: *the men at the table!*

Where is MEANING now? One of many places to find meaning is in the glorious force of the physical weight of marks on surface, something I have always nicknamed 'groiny-ness'. Whether making things or experiencing things, groiny-ness is empowering and brings courage and joy.

More and more I realize that simply insisting on this feeling in one's life and work is pretty frightening and challenging to the *boardroom-table-men*.

**Susanna Heller** was born in New York. When she was 7, her family moved to Montreal, Canada. After completing college at Nova Scotia College of Art and Design in Halifax, Heller returned to New York in 1978. She has lived and worked in Brooklyn since 1981. Her awards include grants and fellowships from the NEA, Guggenheim Foundation, Joan Mitchell Foundation, The Canada Council, and Yaddo. She is represented by the Olga Korper Gallery in Toronto, John Davis Gallery in Hudson, NY, and at MagnanMetz gallery in New York.

Rachel Owens



*Rachel Owens, Ginny's Fist, broken glass and resin, 2015.*

**This is my  
mother's fist.  
She gave me  
my fist.  
I will give more  
and more  
and more  
and more  
and more**

**...**

**Rachel Owens** lives and works in Brooklyn. Her first job in NYC was helping Mira Schor where she first read *M/E/A/N/I/N/G*. She makes sculptures, performances, and videos, teaches at SUNY Purchase College, and works with people in all parts of the world. La Lutte Continue!

## Mary D. Garrard: Three Letters

Dear Enlightened Men,

Thank you for supporting Hillary, even though you never really got it. Nor could you have, unless you'd lived it viscerally, and your support of her is a credit to your moral imagination. But you never understood that to see her candidacy through the narrow prisms of her emails and her flaws (as if our greatest heroes didn't have any flaws) was to distort reality and deflect the energy. Many of you are saying that this election was really about race, and Obama. Pent-up resentment was part of the story, but this time it was her name on the ballot, and her face in the crosshairs. You kept on saying that she just didn't inspire us. What do you mean *us*, kemo sabe? Electing Hillary Clinton president was never some kind of tokenist box-checking, it was the end point of a long historical arc that, we now know, may not necessarily bend toward justice. It was to have been, as one writer (male) put it, the fulfillment of Seneca Falls.

Dear Clueless Women,

You say that to vote for her because she is a woman would be sexist. No, it wouldn't. It would be a recognition that the little extra that is always required of women was especially needed now. To fixate on her rare flashes of self-interest or, for god's sake, her ambition, in the face of the spectacular evidence in this election of patriarchy's ever-present leer – pathetic or menacing, depending on its power status – is to be blissfully unaware that the butcher's fat thumb is always on the scale. Until now, when the opportunity to embody and symbolize women's fully equal humanity was so close at hand. Hillary herself has called out eloquently to little girls, as the standard-bearer of the most recent generation to put up a political fight for what was once called women's liberation. It's a liberation that has yet to fully take root in our psyches, but will eternally bloom in the hearts of little girls.

Dear Hillary Rodham Clinton,

As a participant, like you, in that now historical women's movement, I want to thank you on behalf of our generation. Thank you for accepting and taking forward the torch that, in the reach of historical memory, was first ignited in the fifteenth century by Christine de Pizan, and carried proudly by Laura Cereta, Lucrezia Marinella, Mary Wollstonecraft, Sojourner Truth, Elizabeth Cady Stanton, Susan B. Anthony, Alice Paul, Eleanor Roosevelt, Eleanor Holmes Norton, Gloria Steinem, Shirley Chisholm, and so many others. Sure, it's comforting to hear you say that a woman will be president one day, maybe sooner than we now think. But it's cold comfort to realize that once again, a woman has paid a steep price for challenging the patriarchy, and once again the women's agenda has been subordinated to supposedly more pressing concerns. This long struggle for equality has seen both victories and defeats, and I am so sorry you had to be the sacrificial lamb this time. But you have brought fresh energy and inspiration to the cause, and you've given us another role model for the dream that will never die. Thank you, Hillary, for showing a new generation of women and girls what feminism is. We are all so very proud of you.

**Mary D. Garrard**, Professor Emerita at American University, is the author of *Artemisia Gentileschi* (1989), and many other writings on women artists and gender issues in art history, including *Brunelleschi's Egg: Nature, Art and Gender in Renaissance Italy* (2010). With Norma Broude, she co-edited and contributed to four volumes on feminism and art history, including *The Power of Feminist Art* (1994). Broude and Garrard were activists in the Feminist Art Movement of the 1970s and '80s; Garrard was the second president of Women's Caucus for Art.

## Kate Gilmore



*"It was the Future- Hillary and Mom," 1996.*

**Kate Gilmore** lives in NY. She has participated in the 2010 Whitney Biennial, The Moscow Biennial (2011), PS1/MoMA Greater New York, (2005 and 2010), in addition to numerous solo exhibitions. Gilmore is Associate Professor of Art and Design at Purchase College, SUNY, Purchase, NY.

## Maureen Connor

For my contribution I've used quotes from *M/E/A/N/I/N/G Online #4's Feminist Forum, 2007*, as responses to the 2016 election. All of the essays from that issue were moving and inspiring; I've chosen these excerpts because for me they can serve as reminders and guides over the next four years.

**Sheila Pepe, writing about her mother:** As a Sunday painter and homemaker, visibility was not an issue for Josephine. Not like it is for her daughter and her artist colleagues. Service was Josephine's guiding principle, and as much as I once completely rejected this call as decidedly anti-feminist, I now know its great value. Directing one's work in the service of a greater good is at the heart of social justice, and therefore, Feminism. And that the art world, no matter how progressive it perceives itself to be, no matter how well the objects it produces claim the ground of good politics, the mechanism of it will always benefit from some old fashioned feminist practice: women willing to work toward a more complex and equitable future.

**Carolee Schneemann:** (Notes from 1974 for *Women in the Year 2000* by CS) In the year 2000, books and courses will only be called, "Man and His Image," "Man and His Symbols," "Art History of Man," to probe the source of disease and mania which compelled patriarchal man to attribute to himself an his masculine forbears every invention and artifact by which civilization was formed for over four millennia.

**Faith Wilding:** I am NOT interested in canonization or star-making or genius pronouncements. Rather I'm calling for a kind of deep socio-cultural history that can be helpful to all generations of feminists, students, artists, in understanding specifically how feminist artists have used the philosophy, politics, and practices of feminism to embody new images, visions, inventions, ideas, processes, and ways of doing things differently. Dissing "cunt art" was like shooting fish in a barrel for art critics, but let's see them engage in specific discussions of how feminism can be (and is) embodied as an aesthetic, and as a LIVED ethics of justice.

**Mira Schor,** speaking about giving tours at the feminist installation, *Womanhouse* in 1972: One day when I was there, a number of middle-aged ladies from the neighborhood came by in their housedresses. As our little group of young feminist art students realized that we were approaching Judy Chicago's *Menstruation Bathroom*, filled with feminine hygiene products and "bloody" tampons, we melted away, leaving these ladies to their own devices. Later, they came to find us and laughingly chided us for thinking they would be embarrassed. I realized how much we were still girls while they were women, and also how one should never underestimate any audience for art.



*Maureen Connor, collage with photo of "Thinner Than You", 1990 and images of Fasciat Sexy Whole Body Stockings Unisex Bondage Sheer Encasement Cocoon, 2016*

**Maureen Connor's** work combines installation, video, interior design, ethnography, human resources, feminism, and radical pedagogy. Current projects include *Dis-content*, a series of community events that considers the human story behind certain medical advances; and her ongoing projects *Personnel* and with the collective *Institute for Wishful Thinking (IWT)*, both of which aim to bring more democracy to the workplace. Now Emerita Professor of Art at Queens College, CUNY where she co-founded Social Practice Queens (SPQ) in 2010 in partnership with the Queens Museum, she also co-founded the *Pedagogy Group*, a cooperative of art educators from many institutions who consider how to embody anti-capitalist politics in the ways we teach and learn.

Bailey Doogan  
Fingered Smiles



*Bailey Doogan, Split-Fingered Smile and Four-Fingered Smile, 2013. Graphite on Duralar with PrismaColor on verso, 36" x 24"*

These graphite self-portrait drawings, *Split-Fingered Smile* and *Four-Fingered Smile*, done in 2013 continue a series of works about manipulating my face to feign a pleasant, socially acceptable expression. I was invited to an opening that I couldn't refuse, and so I stood in front of the bathroom mirror and used my own hand to push and pull smiles and grins onto my face. Thus a series of large charcoals, small paintings, and these graphite drawings ensued. This body of work from 2008 to 2013 alternately deepened, and ultimately purged, my depression. This July I started a series of paintings of women in long skirts.



Bailey Doogan, *Skirt I and Skirt II*, 2016. Gouache and oil on primed paper, 17" x 11"

## Skirts

These small paintings on primed paper are the first two works in a series entitled *Skirts*. They were begun in July 2016. For years, my work has been about the body, usually women's bodies, often specifically my own. I have always worked from photographs and for the past five years I've been unhappy with that process.

The first painting, *Skirt I* started as an earnest attempt to paint a portrait of my daughter's Chihuahua, Kiko. After a few strokes quickly done, the women in the skirt appeared. My heart pounded. I kept on painting. I didn't have a thought in my head. I was filled with joy. There are now six *Skirts*. Trump was elected. I cried for days but these paintings still fill me with joy, The skirts have a life of their own, girding and girdling my loins—Donald Trump can't become my president, not mine.

**Bailey Doogan** is a seventy-five-year old artist living in Tucson, AZ and Nova Scotia, Canada. She is Professor Emerita at the U of A where she taught for thirty-two years. In 2009, she was awarded a Joan Mitchell Painting Grant.

## Suzy Spence: Plotting

We're so ready, so it's a shock to learn that society is still not ready for us. There will be no basking in Hillary Clinton's matriarchal glory. The difficult election proves that progressive politics were not as well seeded as we'd thought. To their credit Mira and Susan's first issues of *M/E/A/N/I/N/G* read as if they were written today: gender and racial dissonance are the subject of most of the critical writing from the 80s and 90s and those concerns continue to be central. For sure leftist ideals once relegated to the university fringe have slowly infiltrated the mainstream, in part enabled by the massive transition we've made to live a portion of our lives online. It's as if the digital age has allowed our collective consciousness to grow a subterranean stem, changing our perspectives in ways we could never have predicted.

That said, coming of age in the era of Obama was a stroke of luck for some of us. At eleven, my child is already meeting our immediate predicament with resistance. She is obsessed with the play *Hamilton*; its multiracial cast and tight poetic score are as poignant to her as the story being told. Nothing Lin Manuel Miranda intended to lay raw is lost on this child, she is for it, and of it.

I've also been struck by the work of two young journalists at *The Guardian* who produced a video series that's run parallel to election news called The Vagina Dispatches. Mona Chalabi and Mae Ryan's earnest, confessional reporting is hopeful, and reminds me that the fringe can always work the back end, in order to make the front end look deeply unstable. Their first episode asks the blunt question, "do you know about vaginas?" The reporters demonstrate anatomy using puppets, photography, quizzes — the material feminist artists have reached for time and again, but this go round is for the general public. They reveal there is a terrible lack of knowledge (almost as shocking as Hillary's loss), but it's remarkable to see a major newspaper supporting their earnest investigations, indeed putting them on the home page.

In the final episode Chalabi wears a soft costume vagina on a trip to Washington DC, her head popping out near the clitoris, the labia spreading around her sides. Somehow she manages to stroll nonchalantly about the Lincoln Memorial, stopping briefly in front of Lincoln's spread legs. In doing so I felt she sent the message that being invisible doesn't necessarily mean being without agency. In other words even if we're hidden we can still be plotting. The problem of countering misogyny and racism will be ongoing, a giant project handed down from one generation to the next for as long as it takes.



*Suzy Spence, Untitled, 2016. Paint on paper, 11"×14*

**Suzy Spence** is an Artist and Curator who divides her time between Vermont and New York.

Faith Wilding



Let a thousand

"In a dark time

the eye begins to see." (Roethke)

Thank you for making M/E/A/N/I/N/G  
all these years, and helping our

eyes to see. In solidarity, Faith Wilding  
Nov. 29, 2016

**Faith Wilding** is a multidisciplinary artist, writer, educator. Co-founder of the feminist art movement in Southern California. Solo and group shows for forty+ years in the United States, Canada, Europe, Mexico, and Southeast Asia. Her work addresses the recombinant and distributed bio-tech body in various media including 2-D, video, digital media, installations, and performances. Wilding co-founded, and collaborates with, **subRosa**, a reproducible cyberfeminist cell of cultural researchers using BioArt and tactical performance to explore and critique the intersections of information and biotechnologies in women's bodies, lives, and work.

## Matthew Weinstein: American Dreamers, 2016, on the Precipice

Americans are dreamers. For us, the line between fact and fiction is one drawn in the sand. I can't condemn this, as it goes hand in hand with our ability to create contemporary culture.

What has happened to our dreams?

Our dreams have been eaten up by a distraction-heavy media. Our imaginations are no longer the stars of our fictive universes, because they have been occupied by nonsense.

Celebrities. What they think. Who the fuck cares what they think? Cute endangered animals. They aren't our fucking friends.

Celebrities getting the Congressional Medal Of Freedom. How about a school teacher. A nurse. How about an unsung activist? How about a damned struggling artist? How about attainability? No wonder most of the country thinks it's all rigged. We don't honor the nameless. We should. Not that anybody with an ant-sized amount of brains, or conscience, would accept an Iron Cross from the Nazi Elect.

For all the good that has happened in the last eight years, there has been an above average level of stupid.

High/low distinctions are idiotic. But useful and useless distinctions aren't.

We have become mired in horizontal thinking. *The Huffington Post* tracking an actor's political views, Trump, and an amazing cat that will amaze you, have become equally vital news. And this is linked directly to people blind to the radical horror of a Trump presidency. It is not all the fucking same.

Why does the left always think that revolutions are for us? Because we think and forget to see. Art is about both of these things: thinking and seeing. It can sort of help.

Our art world is mired in auction results, gigantism, art fairs as the places to see art rather than galleries and museums, and online art gossip sites with cute names. There is nothing inherently bad in any of these things. Got to make the donuts. But the problem is that we read them, and about them, when we should be connecting to what actually matters; art, politics, sex, napping, eating the wrong foods, quality nonsense and each other.

If you want to say that artists are just another form of entertainer, say it. But you're

wrong. We aren't superior. But we offer something else; an alternative to mass experience, when we are doing our job. Just more mass experience when we are sucking up.

A work of art that opens up your mind and or heart, pisses you off, makes you actually laugh, makes you deliciously sour, makes you want to rush to your own studio, or makes you want to grab a friend and talk about it; these things are not protected. Art is as fragile as Democracy. Fight for it. It won't take care of itself. We are responsible to protect it. Not museums; us.

Art needs to present a safe haven for the personal, the specific, the unpopular and for people who care about unjustifiable things; a safe haven for us to talk about art as if it matters deeply. Because it does. And criticality matters now more than ever. We are forgetting how to do it. It's too often scorned. Which leads to art feeling like propaganda for art.

Anyone who uses the word 'hater' needs to put a dollar in my mistake box. I'll buy cool stuff with it. Be a critical asshole. Lot's of things completely suck. I mean within reason.

I love art. Always have. I'll never go negative on the art world because it's my brain home, and because it is always and has always been raw potential. Which is why I get upset when I see it squandered.

In this time, as artists, all of our opportunities and impulses have to be treated as if they are our last ones. We need to do and say exactly what we mean, without apology or fear. We may not know how to fix things, but we can demonstrate what urgency looks like.

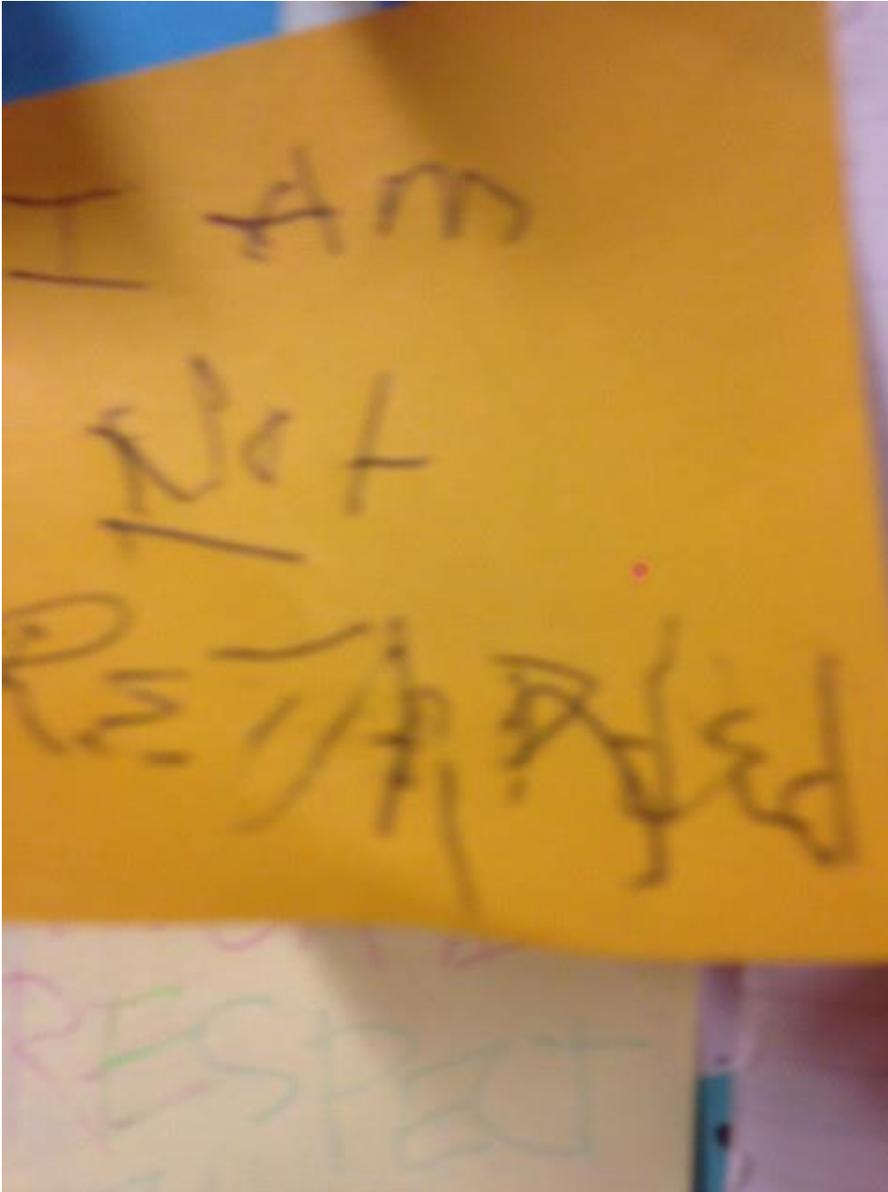
Keep the dreams flowing. But let's make sure that they are our own. Respect the animals. They are us.

**Matthew Weinstein** is an artist who lives in Brooklyn NY. He also writes for *ARTnews* and *Artforum*.

Jennifer Bartlett



*A few days after the election a pop-up artist/therapy piece began growing in the Union Square subway station. Passersby were encouraged to write a message to the world [in response to the election] on a “sticky note.”*



*My note says: "I am not retarded." I have cerebral palsy, and I was frustrated that I could not get to a flat surface to write on. Ultimately, this became part of the effect because the writing "looks retarded," i.e. what Donald Trump and most abled people would construe as "retarded" or distasteful or stupid. The message was directly based on the fact that the US elected a man who called a Deaf actress "retarded" and coined the term "libtard." In reaction to Trump mocking a disabled reporter, in the way I have been mocked continuously throughout my life, Ann Coulter attested that he was just making fun of "general retards." Virtually no one responded in protest, and as Trump moves toward the White House, there is still no protesting of able-bodied people in defense of disabled people. That is the one line people won't cross. So be it.*

**Jennifer Bartlett** is a poet, occasional writer for the *New York Times*, and working on a biography of Larry Eigner.

## Ann McCoy

Our country is in turmoil, and tomorrow seems uncertain. In this Saturnian winter, as we wait for the solstice and return of the light, it is ever harder to gather one's resources—keep one's spirit intact. During these months our ancestors lived indoors, huddled around fires. We have no such kinship and are disoriented by electric illumination and central heating. Experiencing the darkness seems harder without nature as our guide. During a winter much like this one in Berlin, I remember walking through the snow to a small Cranach museum on a lake in the middle of a forest. An advent wreath in a window led the way to a nativity scene by the Elder. I was moved to tears by the Bethlehem scene tucked in this dark hunting lodge. Today I lit my advent wreath, hoping for a similar miracle, a light bringer, a candle in the darkness. In my neighborhood a group of Coptic brothers and sisters invited me to their morning prayers. Most of them are from upper Egypt and are from the same village as the twenty men who were decapitated by ISIS in Libya. I am honored they have invited me, the singing in Coptic is transporting. I am grateful to have a place around their fire, as I light a beeswax candle in front of the Theotokos. Their optimism, charity, and kindness touch me deeply.

*Ann McCoy, "Lunar Birth" with the artist, 2001. Pencil on paper on canvas, 9 by 14 ft.*



*Ann McCoy, "Processional with Lightbringer," 2005. Cast bronze with silver crown, 19 in. by 7 ft. 2 in.*



**Ann McCoy** is a New York-based sculptor and painter whose career began in 1972. She is a working artist as well as a curator and art critic who writes for the *Brooklyn Rail*. She lectures on art history, the history of projection, and mythology in the graduate design section of the Yale School of Drama. McCoy is a winner of the Prix de Rome, the D.A.A.D. Kunstler Award, and American Award in the Arts.

## Mimi Gross

*On the election*

Shadow of shadows  
Caught, cut, & painted (black)  
Present and future disasters  
Goya could.  
We are leaping into an abyss  
Black air  
Somehow, mid-air, breathless truth,  
Calls out: the Arts will conquer!  
Which  
Blue sky  
Is brighter  
Than the sun itself  
Or is it  
A late moon?  
We will challenge the falling columns

\*

*30 years, Forums on:*

Meaning: combining amazing and absurd. So many dreams broken, glued together overhauled. Now a new generation will share the wide spectrum of “Meaning.”

Motherhood and art: Bathed in love. My daughter is long married and has two wonderful daughters, now 17 and 13. Difficult to have imagined 30 years ago. The juggling of time before, has become a privilege, without sharing responsibilities.

Racism: Confusion within the sphere of art matters. The attention to African American and of mixed ethnicity artists is totally exciting. (A much longer response is needed to recognize and discuss the great from the trendy.) Highly recommend: the Kerry James Marshall exhibition at the Met Breuer.

Feminism: Will we be in danger of disappearing? I don't think so. The younger women artists (in all fields) have no concept of the difficulties encountered by the invisible generations before them.

Resistance: This is our strongest positive hope.

“On art making over a lifetime, from youth to older age:”

(76!) What is Real?

Find forms,  
Listen to history,  
See more.

Time:  
Wood, plastic, paint,  
Cardboard, band saw, blades,  
Hot glue.

Still:  
Scaled for future details,  
Depth, present, murky, Let go!

Unlimited perspectives,  
Counterpoint concepts,  
(disparate images)  
careful creation:  
artifice make a detail, blow it up,  
Let the scale go,  
Without forgetting it  
For a second.  
Drawing all along the way.  
Study by means of doing

(Diaphanous)

A line,  
A shape,  
To do  
The idea  
Brightness of space, of light:  
Integrate the white line,  
Marry the line with paint

Imposing,	Or, vertical lines
Serious,	Layers of thoughts
Things past	Catching quickly,
Remember.	Time passing.

Find personal (line).



*Mimi Gross, design collaboration with Douglas Dunn: "Aerobia," Choreography Douglas Dunn, 2001*

Dance/ Collaboration, sets and costumes:

To fly: is it Dance?

Disjointed together

Chaos in place

Literal becomes abstract

Abstract becomes literal

Speed of images

Capture. Drawn out

Put together

The silhouette is

The darkest weight

Hear the dance.

*Travel*

Travel experiences transform, broaden perspectives, escape from "provincialism,"  
accumulate new ideas.

Portraits become landscapes, landscapes become metaphors,  
Psychology of place, of scale, of texture, of color.

(direct fun)

(breaking all the rules)

A form of sanity.



Mimi Gross, "Village outside of Gaoua, Ivory Coast, West Africa," 2013, watercolor and ink.



Mimi Gross, "Mercado Sonora, Mexico City," 2012. Watercolor and ink in sketchbook.

**Mimi Gross** is a painter, set and costume designer, teacher, who lives and works in NYC. Recent group shows include: Brooklyn Museum of Art: "*Stephen Powers, Coney Island is Still Dreamland*", 2016; Brattleboro Museum of Art, VT, "*After Old Masters*", 2016. AMP Gallery, Provincetown, MA, 2016. In 2017, her mural for the University of Kentucky, Medical School, Louisville, will be installed; her work will be in a three-person exhibit at Derek Eller Gallery, NYC, and in a large group exhibit at Grey Gallery, NYU, "*Inventing Downtown: Artist-Run Galleries in New York City, 1952-1965*", Jan.-April, 2017; she will have an "*Art Project*" in *Art Journal*, spring 2017. Mimi has worked with Douglas Dunn and Dancers since 1979, designing sets and costumes for over 25 different dances, including *Antipodes* at St. Mark's Church, NYC, " Feb 2, 3, 4, 2017.

## Myrel Chernick

Some questions I ask myself:

What does it mean to live an ethical life?

Does a creative life imply an ethical life?

Can I make art that is substantive, relevant, and meaningful, that makes a worthwhile contribution to the lives of others? And what does that entail?

What is my responsibility to those who have so much less than I do?

The problems seem insurmountable: poverty, climate disaster, bigotry, misogyny, xenophobia, homophobia, unmitigated greed. What is the best and most effective way to move forward?

I first encountered *M/E/A/N/I/N/G* with #12, *Forum: on Motherhood, Art and Apple Pie* (1992). There I learned that my difficulties with the art world that had increased after I decided to have children were by no means unique, and my subsequent exploration of maternal ambivalence became a group exhibition and then a book. Twenty-five years later, I know of no other American art periodical with an issue devoted to this topic. Thanks to Susan and Mira for their pioneering work on so many topics.



**Myrel Chernick** is an artist and writer who lives in New York.

## Robin Mitchell

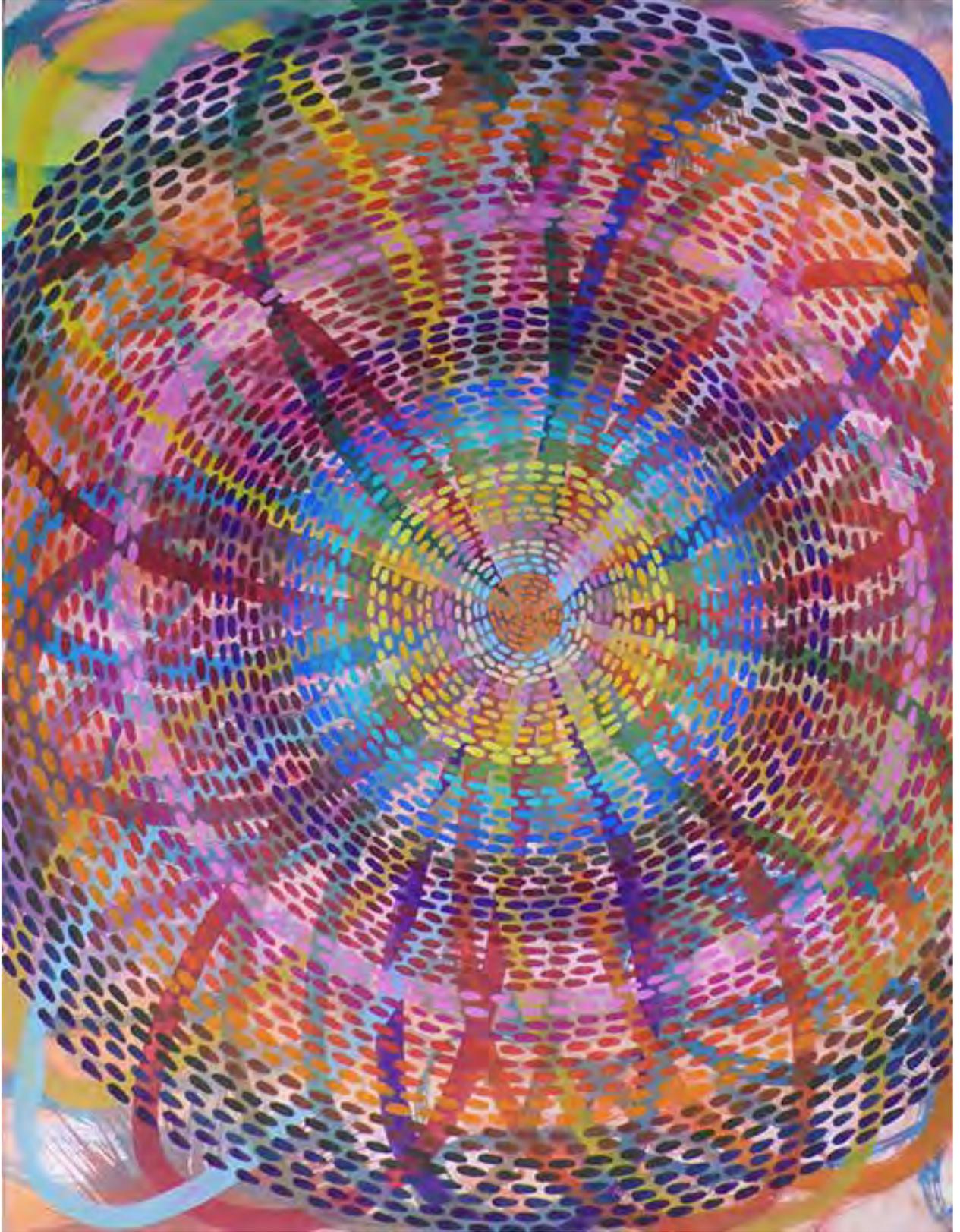
*M/E/A/N/I/N/G* has put forth questions of and *about* meaning in art for 30 years.

Meaning in art and culture has not changed in those years, but what has changed is *how* art has meaning. Critical thinking is propelling art rather than art generating critical thought.

When I was in school I was often confronted by the question “What does your art mean?” I have continually asked myself, “What does my art mean?” “What does it mean to me?” “What can it mean to others, other artists in an insular world, or to others in the wider culture and beyond?”

My experience as an artist has deep personal meaning. After a lifetime of artmaking, I feel that I making the best work that I have done and for me art making is a rich and rewarding process. I understand my artwork better and more completely as I continue making art. Artmaking for me has become personal reflective process, more of a world inward, and I find the richness of this experience deeply rewarding and gratifying. By exhibiting my artwork I am part of a dialogue with other artists and the larger art community. I would never expect for everyone or even many to make a connection to my work. What others find meaningful may be different than the meaning I intend. Yet when I exhibit the work, I am humbled by the connection that some people communicate to me that they can make to the artwork. This connection so often mirrors my own intentions.

I want to be counted for my stand and my beliefs. In light of the recent election I feel this even more vehemently. The act of being an artist is in some ways an act of defiance. I want my concerns and beliefs to be counted in the world, whether through my art or my actions. Marshall McLuhan said that he looked to artists to see where the rest of the culture was moving towards. “Art at its most significant is a distant early warning system that can always be relied on to tell the old culture what is beginning to happen.”



Robin Mitchell, "Numinous," 2016. Gouache on paper, 24" x 18"

**Robin Mitchell** is an artist living and working in Santa Monica, California. Her paintings are represented by the Craig Krull Gallery also in Santa Monica. Her artwork has been recognized by a National Endowment for the Arts Fellowship, the Anonymous Was a Woman award, a City of Los Angeles grant, and a California Community Foundation mid-career fellowship. She holds a BFA and MFA from Cal Arts. While a participant of the Feminist Art Program at Cal Arts she was part of the historic *Womanhouse* project.

## Judith Linhares

I am writing my account of what it is to be an artist and a feminist in very transitory times, not even two weeks after the election of Donald Trump. I do not know what the future holds what I do know is I have had a lifetime of political involvement. I would characterize that involvement as recognizing that other woman are struggling with finding their own agency struggling with the various rolls and fantasies placed on them by the dominant culture and like all of you I am looking for a way forward at a time when racism and misogyny are returning to the White House.

I believe my fate is connected to the circumstances of all other women. I have more energy and confidence when supported by others. I have been involved in feminist politics for a long time I owe a lot to the recognition and support of other woman I believe we share common cause. I have great respect for Mira Schor and Susan Bee for their decades long project *M/E/A/N/I/N/G*. This project has given legitimacy to woman's ideas and opinions over the decades I am proud to be included in this valuable document.

I do not see clearly as yet what future challenges will look like. My plan is to keep working and try to see the truth as I experience it day by day. My hope is that I have the courage to speak out in opposition to injustice when I see it.



*Judith Linhares, "Back Talk," 2012. Gouache on paper, 29.5 x 44.25 inches*

**Judith Linhares'** paintings have been the subject of 40 one-person exhibitions. Her solo shows at the Edward Thorp Gallery, as well as a survey, "Dangerous Pleasures: 1973-1993," received numerous reviews. Marcia Tucker's inclusion of her paintings in "Bad Painting" and the Venice Biennale encouraged this fourth-generation Californian to ride the New Figuration wave to New York City. She has received many prestigious awards and was honored by the American Academy of Arts and Letters.

## Noah Dillon

2016 was a very difficult year. Each day's news has been something horrifying, including intensifying effects from global warming, Syrian carnage, economic turmoil in Europe, refugee crises, authoritarianism in China and the Philippines, parts of Latin America suffering civil catastrophe. In the US, a white power presidency was voted into office. My cat and mom are dying, and a friend has terminal cancer. My sense of self continued to be a mess. I hurt people's feelings, and had my feelings hurt.

The day after the election, my friend Brian Dunning, who runs a science blog and podcast called *Skeptoid*, sent out a solicitation for donations. He wrote:

“From the election results, we can infer that about half the American population is (at worst) openly hostile to, or (at best) ignorant or dismissive of, these science facts:

- Anthropogenic global warming is real and a threat.
- Vaccines are important and do not cause autism.
- Gay conversion therapy does not work.
- Evolution is the scientific theory explaining the diversity of species.”

I would, I think reasonably, add:

- Partial-birth abortions are a myth
- Trickle-down economics is magical thinking
- Trade is good and is not the cause of working class decline
- Crime and demographic data do not show white Americans under threat by black and brown youth, or a broad rise in crime generally
- Immigration is an essential good
- Elections are rigged by statehouses and wealthy super PAC donors, not poor voters
- Authoritarian police states do not keep people safe from anything, least of all the state itself

One place I find meaning is in meaning itself. As far as I can tell, truth has been in a precarious civil position for a long time, with its value waxing and waning. Maybe cynicism and ideological closedness, rigidity, onanism are ascendant—they feel that way. Although it was most evident recently in the deluge of Trumpian trolling, this problem is pervasive on both the left and right: dissenting or even qualifying voices are suspected of being paid shells for George Soros or the Kochs, consensus is regarded as an oppressive imposition on personal freedom of disbelief, complex problems are constricted down into absurd dichotomies, the moral imperative to focus first on materially and spiritually enriching oneself reigns, and so on. These are huge problems!

(The president-elect seems to embody them perfectly: he is paranoid, believes in a

completely alternate reality, speaks out of both sides of his mouth while wielding a club, and seems most interested in himself, while promising that each supporter's personal individual desires will be fulfilled. Although he played the Rolling Stones' "You Can't Always Get What You Want," his message on the campaign trail was that he will make it possible for people, certain people, to have everything they want. He is the vile man of our era.)

Reliable and true information is essential to a functioning democracy, and likewise the ability to openly, skeptically, systematically hear new information, test it, and accept it, reject it, qualify it, contextualize it, remain uncertain of it. That's really hard to do, and we've been encouraged to eschew it, or use it selectively. The insistence on meaning and truth, even in spite of its incompatibility with our beliefs, is really essential.

Agreement about facts ought to lead to moral policies and objectives. Moralizing in the absence of fact, conversely, I think, is tilting at windmills. There are some extremely difficult problems facing the world right at this moment. Really horrifying terrible problems. Only by knowing what they actually are—honestly—and openly approaching possible solutions, or at least mechanisms for harm reduction, can they be solved.

Knowing what the world is, and what its problems and solutions are, means a lot.



*Photo by Davina Semo, 2016*

**Noah Dillon** is an artist and writer living and working in New York.

## Felix Bernstein and Gabe Rubin



Landslide-Gabe Rubin-Fleetwood Mac  
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=bQLGCM2ds1w>



There are worse things I could do (Grease stockard channing...)  
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=bQLGCM2ds1w>

Transitions are always hauntingly incomplete. The badly transitioned, like Frankenstein's monster, is the site of ridicule and fetish. The transition that does not work, or does not work out, is ridiculed since according to Derrida, "it is always non-work that is stigmatized." To manage this, the awkward transition must be streamlined into disciplinary criteria of excellence, the good hybrid—the body without organs who can parody gender, whilst emphasizing precarity, matter, ethics; while remaining virtual, ironic, mutable; and self-critically recognizing that this is all "neoliberal," and meant to be surpassed. When Gabe's voice started changing, we were unable to find the joy in the "radical de-skilling" at play, which vis-à-vis the queer art of failure seems to be an ineradicable avant-garde norm. But the horrific core of Gothic hauntings and romantic nostalgia powered us through.

In our recent videos "Landslide" and "There Are Worse Things"—Gabe hangs onto the cracked, destroyed, pseudo soprano boy voice; Felix repeats, layers, and amplifies his voice to the point of erosion. The point between visible and invisible; layered and bare; maximal and minimal lies between us—through which, we critique, imitate, and clone each other's failed 'realness.'

Like Dorian Gray, we all carry the portrait of the un-sexy rotting corpse inside ourselves, a picture that is continually ghosted by others. Loss in an age of "photogenic" tolerance comes when you can't transform your vulnerability into an Instagram ready look. Ghosts of course show up on camera. But today's specter is the unphotogenic ghost, or the suffering that cannot be rallied around vis-à-vis an Instagram campaign with a catchy Hashtag. These are our ghosts: of the poorly transitioned, the creaturely, the unnoticed, and the barely visible.

**Felix Bernstein** is the author of *Notes on Post-Conceptual Poetry* (Insert Blanc Press) and *Burn Book* (Nightboat). His writing has been featured in *Poetry Magazine*, *Hyperallergic*, and *Texte Zur Kunst*. With Gabe Rubin, he presented the shows *Bieber Bathos Elegy* at the Whitney Museum of American Art, and *Transition Incomplete* at MOCA Los Angeles.

**Gabe Rubin** is a musician, performer, and artist. His work has been shown at MIX NYC, the Brooklyn Film Festival, and MOCA Los Angeles. He recently performed in Jill Kroesen's *Collecting Injustices, Unnecessary Suffering* at the Whitney Museum of American Art and Cecilia Corrigan's *Motherland* at Issue Project Room.

## Elaine Angelopoulos:

What is Meaning? How do I make art and perform activism now?

Meaning as a noun has often felt obstructive but significant in making a statement.

Since the election, I have found myself starting to come to several conclusions, and have felt the need to participate in political activism differently than I have in the past. My art methodology seems more in tune with chaotic times like these: I have a work structure that allows diverse modes of creativity, conceptualism, object, content, and interaction with the greater world.

Meaning as an adjective allows more flexibility to the way I express myself, because it doesn't require art as a concrete series of works that appear consistent. The paternalistic cultural taboos I experienced during my childhood and challenged during my adolescence in the 1970s, were not self-identified as feminist or queer until my early adulthood in the 1990s, largely because of the socially phobic strife between movements under the cold war theater and the narrow strains of the singular narratives in the canons of art, humanities, and the sciences.

My own work as a studio artist was comprised of drawings, objects, and installations that were more formally abstract and devoid of narrative or political content. My collective projects and performance works were more welcoming of accumulative objects and conformed toward a more subjective approach toward content. The work I started to do in the late 2000's started to delve into the messiness of aesthetics, memory, personal narrative, and greater narratives, and the lessons that intersect through time and space. We embody these lessons like layers of skin within an onion and we forget they are there until we peel it back to see how different they are from one another (all within moments before they are enfolded back into a neat package within ourselves).

The power of meaningful activism is often short lived in a collective group form unless there is a long-term definitive set of strategies in place that maintains multiple modes of progress. But both forms of activism work in tandem to one another, just as art that requires daily exploration in the studio complements the more utilized forms and symbols that sustain directed feelings and reactions to particular differences in the political theater. I have been finding meaning in the everyday, even now in the post-election period. This is where the answers for change dwell. We can create incremental moments of intervention against racist and sexist slurs in public places by overcoming our silent stand and by stepping in and offering ourselves as direct allies to those being attacked. Confront rhetoric and misinformation by speaking up in conversation to those who attempt to incite fear or normalcy in the current political climate.

If we are any smarter, perhaps we ought to go beyond the metaphorical references of “taking a stab at it,” which one may associate with Melville’s *Moby Dick*. Though this slang term originates from the 1800s, we can make the correlation to today, where we are stabbing at a giant whale that may eventually overwhelm and consume us. Somewhere between the phenomena we call art and dialogue, one hopes that not too many layers of time require a peel back to find answers to the “politics in our rooms.”<sup>[1]</sup>

<sup>[1]</sup> Referencing Gregg Bordowitz’s public moving image project, “The Politics in the Room,” created by the LUX Associate Artists Programme, in 2009.

## Lines, Lanes, Traffic, and CHANGE!



<https://vimeo.com/65013871>

This video piece was composed in 2008 from documentation shot at the 9th Annual **Dyke March** in New York City from late June 2001. This media was used for a performance work in 2010 under the pseudonym of “Activista,” a persona that is part of the ensemble of “The Nested Selves.”

**Elaine Angelopoulos** lives and works in New York City. She is an artist with an interdisciplinary approach that bridges her studio practice with audience participation. Angelopoulos received a Franklin Furnace Fund/Jerome Fellowship in 2014/15. Recently, her work was included in the Labin Art Express Biennial, “Utopia=Reality,” in Croatia; and in “Project for Revolution in New York,” at the Tompkins County Public Library in Ithaca, NY. Angelopoulos wrote a chapter about her work in *Poetic Biopolitics*, (I.B. Tauris, 2016). She has been a participant in numerous art collectives. She is a staff member at Ronald Feldman Fine Arts.

Alexandria Smith



*Alexandria Smith, "what had happened wuz," 2016. Oil on panel, 24" x 24."*

"what had happened wuz" is a painting that evokes how I've been feeling at this tense and scary time. It was created during my time as Virginia A. Myers Visiting Artist in Printmaking at the University of Iowa, during the 2016 Democratic caucuses and is still very relevant. I recently participated in the New Museum's seminal event Black Women Artists for Black Lives Matter. BWA for BLM is an underground collective

that focuses on the interdependence of care and action, invisibility and visibility, self-defense and self-determination, and desire and possibility in order to highlight and renounce pervasive conditions of racism through the arts.

**Alexandria Smith** has a BFA from Syracuse University, MA from NYU, and MFA from Parsons The New School for Design. Smith is the recipient of a Pollock-Krasner Grant, Skowhegan Fellowship, Virginia A. Myers Fellowship at the University of Iowa, an A.I.R. Gallery Fellowship, and the Fine Arts Work Center Fellowship. Recent exhibitions include a solo show at Scaramouche Gallery, a commission for the Schomburg Center, a group show, “Black Pulp,” at Yale University and International Print Center NY, and in 2017, a solo exhibit at The Union for Contemporary Art, Omaha, NE. Smith has been featured in the *Huffington Post*: “Alexandria Smith’s Adorably Grotesque Cartoons Explore What Little Girls Are Made Of.” She lives in Brooklyn, NY, and Wellesley, MA, where she is Assistant Professor of Studio Art at Wellesley College.

## Joyce Kozloff

In light of the devastating election returns, I could not write a statement that said more than the eloquent words expressed by many others. Nor could I make an image to express those feelings, so this is some silly stuff I found on eBay. Globalism?



**Joyce Kozloff** is an artist and political activist who lives in New York.

Tamara Gonzales and Chris Martin



*Tamara Gonzales, "Untitled" and "Love 2010" from "Christmas in July"*

I found this photo of two old paintings of Tamara's. It made me think that in dark times – keep your eyes and heart open. —Chris Martin

**Tamara Gonzales** and **Chris Martin** are living and making art in Brooklyn and the Catskills in New York.

## Legacy Russell: AN ANATOMY OF MOURNING

**Grief is positive!**

GRIEF IS NEGATIVE

**Grief is proactive!**

GRIEF IS PARALYSING

**Grief is productive!**

GRIEF IS CAPITALIST

**Grief is reproductive!**

GRIEF IS STERILE

**Grief is useful, it galvanises me!**

GRIEF IS LABOUR, UNPAID

**Grief is movement!**

GRIEF IS STANDING STILL

**Grief is progressive!**

GRIEF IS FASCIST

**Grief is helpful!"**

GRIEF IS COERCIVE

**Grief is public!**

GRIEF IS PRIVATE

**Grief is active!**

GRIEF IS LAZY

**Grief is strong!**

GRIEF IS WEAK

**Grief is proud!**

GRIEF IS SHAMEFUL

**Grief is empowering!**

GRIEF IS FEARFUL

**Grief is realistic!**

GRIEF IS DELUSIONAL

**Grief is radical!**

GRIEF IS COUNTERREVOLUTIONARY

**Grief is relief, I am relieved to grieve!**

GRIEF IS EXHAUSTING, I AM FUCKING EXHAUSTED

**Grief is collective!**

GRIEF IS LONELY

**Grief is truthful, it is honest!**

GRIEF IS A LIAR, IT IS FRAUDULENT

**Grief is calling your MP!**

GRIEF IS HANGING UP  
**Grief is voting down ballot!**  
GRIEF IS NOT VOTING  
**Grief is self-care!**  
GRIEF IS HARMFUL  
**Grief is pragmatic!**  
GRIEF IS INEFFICIENT  
**Grief is volunteering!**  
GRIEF IS SELFISH  
**Grief is hopeful!**  
GRIEF IS CYNICAL  
**Grief is writing letters!**  
GRIEF IS WITHOUT LANGUAGE  
**Grief is speech!**  
GRIEF IS SPEECHLESS  
**Grief is showing up!**  
GRIEF IS STAYING HOME  
**Grief is relevant!**  
GRIEF IS IRRELEVANT  
**Grief is visible!**  
GRIEF IS INVISIBLE  
**Grief is a riot!**  
GRIEF IS A PARADE

**Legacy Russell** is a writer, artist, and cultural producer. Born and raised in NYC's East Village she is the UK Gallery Relations Lead for the online platform Artsy. Her work can be found in a variety of publications: *BOMB*, *The White Review*, *Rhizome*, *DIS*, *The Society Pages*, *Guernica*, *Berfrois* and *beyond*. Holding an MRes of Visual Culture with Distinction at Goldsmiths College of University of London, her academic and creative work focuses on gender, performance, digital selfdom, idolatry, and new media ritual. Her first book *Glitch Feminism* will be published by Verso in 2017. Twitter: @legacyrussell | Instagram @ellerustle. |

Nancy K. Miller: Trump and his cabinet meet their fate



As every wave Charybdis whirls to sea  
comes crashing against its counter-current wave,  
so these folks here must dance their roundelay.

More shades were here than anywhere above;  
and from both sides, to the sound of their own screams,  
straining their chests, they rolled enormous weights.

...

It was squandering and hoarding that have robbed them  
of the lovely world, and got them in this brawl...

You see, my son, the short-lived mockery  
of all the wealth that is in Fortune's keep,  
over which the human race is bickering;

for all the gold that is or ever was  
beneath the moon won't buy a moment's rest  
for even one among these weary souls.

Dante's *Inferno*, Canto VII

**Nancy K. Miller** teaches in the English and Comparative Literature Programs at the CUNY Graduate Center. Her most recent book is the memoir *Breathless: An American Girl in Paris*.

LigoranoReese



The market vAlue of labor  
Alive in Mobile homes  
the scattered daydrEams about being rich  
gambled on astro tuRf lawns  
the bIll of rights tossed offshore  
along with Corporate taxes  
microwAved food products  
and Narrow percentages falling away

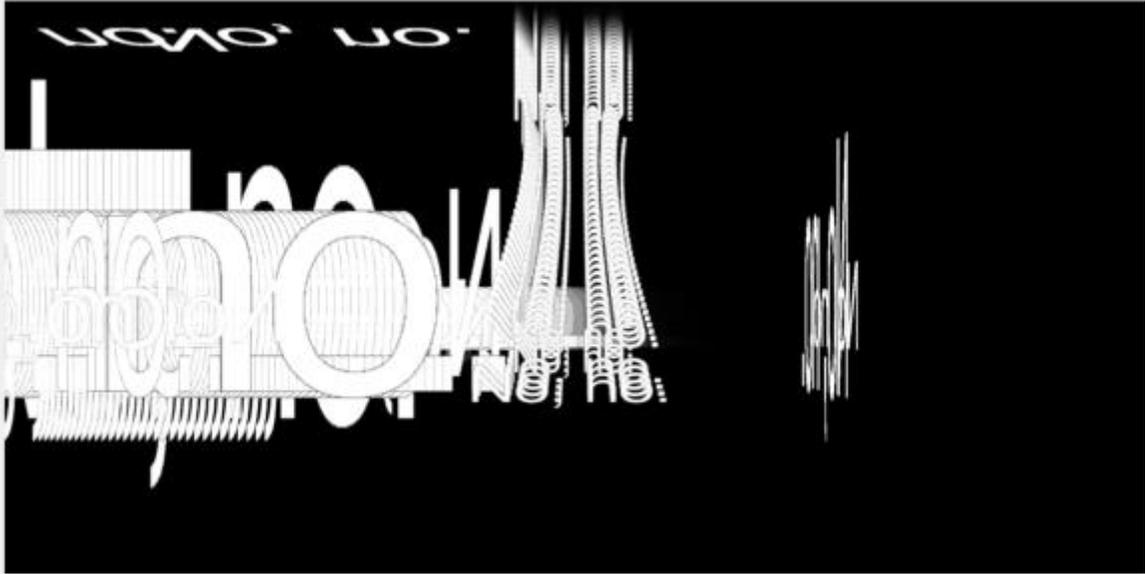
It's the law of supply and Demand  
Ringed with pRison inmates  
heart disEase and depression  
gAllons of vodka flowing  
together with subprime Mortgages  
and countless mergerS

Nora Ligorano and Marshall Reese collaborate as **LigoranoReese**. Their body of work includes public events, videos, sculptures, installations and limited edition multiples. They installed their most recent installation The American Dream Project in Cleveland and Philadelphia during the political conventions.

Joy Garnett and Bill Jones: “No”



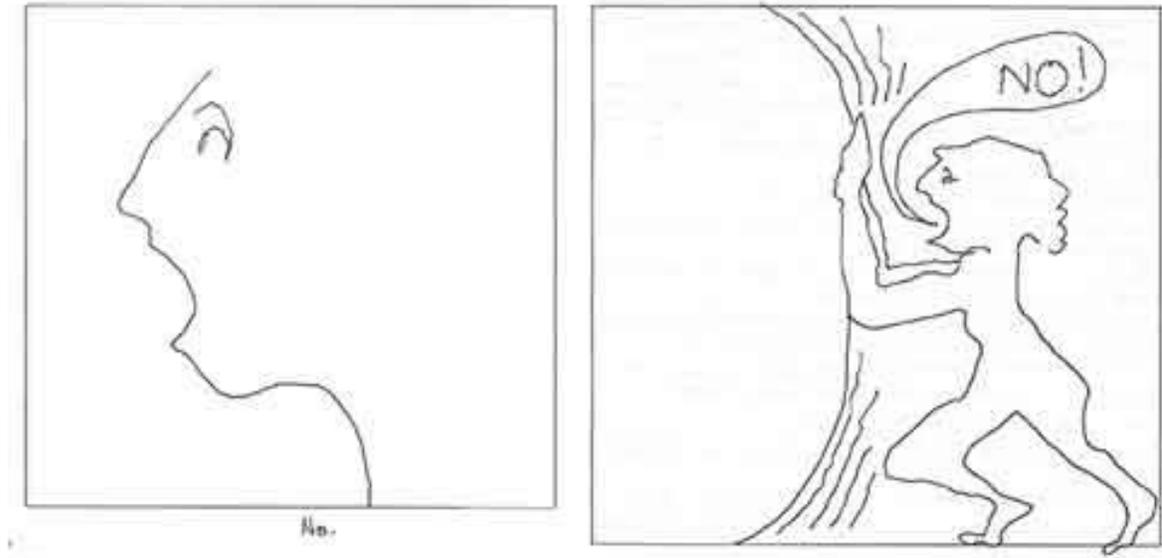
*Joy Garnett, “Yellow Scarf,” 2016. Oil on canvas, 12×9 inches*



Video: Bill Jones, *No, no*. 2016, music video animation (1:16 minutes)  
[https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=zCKGqGw\\_VRA](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=zCKGqGw_VRA)

**Joy Garnett** is a painter and writer living in Brooklyn, New York. Her most recent solo exhibitions were held at Slag Contemporary in Brooklyn, NY and Platform Gallery, Seattle, WA. **Bill Jones** is an artist and performer who lives and works in Brooklyn, NY. Jones was a seminal figure in the Vancouver School of conceptual photography along with such artists as Rodney Graham, Ian Wallace and Jeff Wall.

## Aviva Rahmani: Blowin' in the Wind



*No. NO. NO!*

About hope or solace now, I know very little. After 50 odd years of an art practice, I still believe the answers are in art.

This is the fast phase of climate change, accelerating geometrically. The planet will adjust to over-consumption dispassionately.

In 2007, for the “Weather Report,” show at BMCA, the paleoecologist Jim White and I used regular recordable desktop sharing sessions over a period of several months to analyze stress on global biogeography (the aggregation of living and non-living systems in the landscape, and their relationships to each other). In a series of maps, using Google Earth and Photoshop, we layered that information with data about population concentration, resource depletion, and the probable effects of increased climate change on those regions, with particular attention to sources of fresh water, or as a threat to human populations from sea level rise or extreme weather. Our conversations were about what elements needed to be prioritized based on scale and drama of impact, for example when drought leads to geopolitical disruption in Egypt or the Sudan, due to competitive conflicts over water loss, or how sea level rise in Bangladesh or the Gulf of Mexico would lead to a likely trajectory of massive human migrations to other parts of the globe, as I drew real time into the maps on the screen. This applied raw material into a transdisciplinary complex adaptive model (a way to study disparate agents in relationship to each other based on how complexity theory works) to determine predictive results (i.e., subsequent events in Sudan and Egypt).

In 2015, I realized the only solution to impending global ecosystem disaster was to stop using fossil fuels immediately. So then I designed *The Blued Trees Symphony*, copyrighted installations in miles of proposed natural gas corridors, intended to challenge eminent domain takings with sonified biogeographic sculpture.

I knew it would be hard to be the kind of artist I intended to be, but I didn't know how many ways I could trip over myself. The confusions I feel are more complicated now than they were fifty years ago.

I thought more people would respond when we all yelled, "fire!"

I pay more attention than ever now to formalism. The sun still sets and rises with exquisite clouds. Indigenous practices inspire me.

If I'd known how much writing it takes to survive as an artist, I would have paid more attention to grammar when I was eleven.

I detest banality but realize in retrospect how often it has seduced me.

Sometimes I cry.

I still love snow as much as I did when I was three. Small joys, blessings and miracles give meaning to life. The grand surges of joy and inspiration make life worthwhile.

I wish travel were easier. I'm writing on a late flight from Denver to New York City. The pilot just asked us to please tell him how the crew could make our flight more enjoyable. I think he has to be kidding. Let me count the ways. Let's start with isolating the man with the bad head cold sneezing in the seat next to me and calming the crying baby.

So, I'm coming to the end of my life, in a handful of years or a couple decades. I intend to go out as fiercely as I came in.

Beauty and love will always stir me.

We are all grasping at straws in a tornado now. I think we must be like bamboo bending in the wind, trusting our roots in common soil.

Thank you both for making this frame for our thoughts to be shared.

**Aviva Rahmani's** *The Blued Trees Symphony* was awarded a 2016 Fellowship from the New York Foundation for the Arts (NYFA). Her "Trigger Points/ Tipping Points,"

premiered at the 2007 Venice Biennale, and contributed to *Gulf to Gulf* (2009-present), a NYFA sponsored project accessed from 85 countries. Rahmani is an Affiliate with INSTAAR, University of Colorado at Boulder.

Aziz + Cucher



*Aziz + Cucher, "Some People," cotton tapestry, 74" x 124"*



*Aziz + Cucher, Some People, tapestry, detail*



*Aziz + Cucher, "Some People," tapestry, detail*

In 2002 we had a sort of epiphany when we encountered the first of two extraordinary tapestry exhibitions at the MET called *Tapestry in the Renaissance*, a survey of northern european tapestry production between 1460-1560, curated by Thomas Campbell. This show opened our eyes to the rich tradition of pictorial storytelling embodied in these woven masterpieces, and it challenged us to conceive of ways in which our own practice as artists in the XXI century might embrace allegorical narrative and materiality as a way to represent contemporary battlefields and geopolitical conflict.

**Aziz + Cucher**—Anthony Aziz (b.Lunenburg, MA) and Sammy Cucher (b.Lima, Peru). Anthony and Sammy have been living and working together since meeting as graduate students in 1990 at the San Francisco Art Institute. Their projects have been exhibited and published widely, including shows at The New Museum, New York; Museo Nacional Centro de Arte Reina Sofia, Madrid; Photographer's Gallery, London; Fondation Cartier, Paris; Nationalgalerie Berlin; Los Angeles County Museum of Art; and the San Francisco Museum of Modern Art. Aziz + Cucher are recipients of a 2015 New York Foundation for the Arts Fellowship in Digital and Electronic Art. They are both members of the Fine Arts Faculty at Parsons School of Design /The New School in New York City and recently were artists in residence at the Frans Masereel Centrum in Belgium where they worked on a series of prints as well as a set of digitally woven tapestries in collaboration with Magnolia Editions based in Oakland, CA.

## Erik Moskowitz + Amanda Trager

Cape Breton Island, Nova Scotia, Canada is a location that is central to our lives. We have spent time there each summer since 1999. Over the years we've created narratives that utilize the location but we have not, up until now, referenced Cape Breton explicitly in our works. Erik originally came there in the mid-70s with his family and an extended community that included creative luminaries such as Joan Jonas, Philip Glass, Richard Serra, JoAnne Akalaitis and Rudy Wurlitzer, all friends and collaborators from the downtown art world in New York City.

Until the 1970s many families in Cape Breton, with twenty or so children, lived without modern plumbing and electricity. It is still fairly common for people to raise crops, fish, trap and hunt for sustenance, build their own structures and heat their homes in winter by hauling wood from family lots. Because of Cape Breton's remoteness, its local traditions have abided to a remarkable degree — until recently.

Due to the ever-increasing need-for-speed of neo-liberalism, global trade and environmental degradation, the days of traditional living are waning. High-speed internet (widely introduced just four years ago) and world-class golf courses augur a move towards homogenization, materialism and hierarchy. Moreover, the summer artist community's post-minimalist practice — Modernism's last act — also appears to be terminal in its urgency and agency.

It appears that we are at a tipping point.

Witnessing this change and conveying what Cape Breton and its people mean to us now carries an urgency that we could not have anticipated before the horrible realities of Trump's rise. In moments of gratitude and in our worst nightmares it exists as a place of refuge. The generation of artists and back-to-the landers that arrived there in the '60s and '70s might have thought of Cape Breton as an emergency escape hatch, but that idea has now perhaps been subsumed by the contemporary world-order.

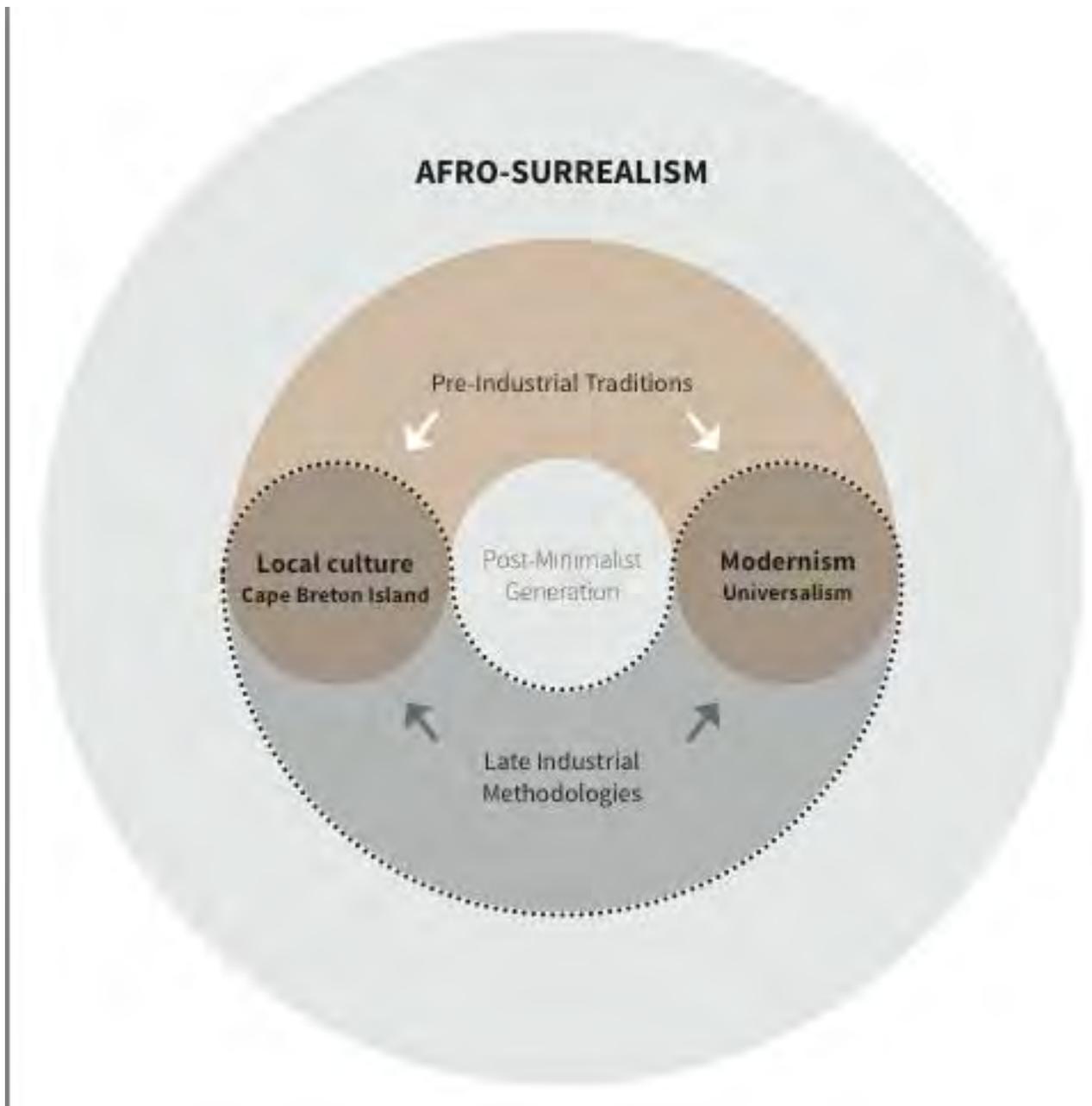
We're moved to consider Cape Breton Island within the realm of the symbolic, and to consider its alternatives within a speculative framework. If we can agree that the current situation feels like science fiction, we can then posit that a science fiction has the imaginative capacity to define answers to the planetary dilemmas we currently face.

In this we are guided by the science fiction of Octavia Butler and her reformulations of kinship structures. While anticipating how various oppressions increasingly structure lives and worlds, she simultaneously delineates emancipatory understandings of family that upset the usual barriers presented by race, gender, class, and age.

Discovering and developing connections between these disparate narratives constitutes the work of this project, offering possibilities for re-considerations of the role of culture in spiritual and emotional survival beyond the maintenance of bare life. Because expression is necessary to survival, not an addendum to it. Feeling already flung into an era of rapid destabilization on many fronts, this sentiment must now be considered within the context of a long view, and with a hopeful eye towards imagining identity in terms of dispersion and dissolution.



*Erik Moskowitz + Amanda Trager, "Island," video still (work in progress)*



*Erik Moskowitz + Amanda Trager, "Afro-Surrealist chart," 2016*

**Erik Moskowitz and Amanda Trager** are collaborators who make film and installation works. Both were born and raised in New York City. Their work has been shown at venues that include the Centre Pompidou, Participant, Inc, Museo Reina Sophia, Beirut Art Center and Haus Der Kulturen der Welt in Berlin.

Michelle Jaffé: Soul Junk



Who's in Control? © Michelle Jaffé 2013-2016 from Michelle Jaffé  
<https://vimeo.com/192025717>



Who Makes That Choice? © Michelle Jaffé 2013-2016 from Michelle Jaffé  
<https://vimeo.com/192027349>

***SOUL JUNK** is a 1, 2 or 3-channel video / audio installation that explores raw emotions, power & intent conveyed & betrayed by the human voice & facial expression. **SJ** places people inside a mind at work.*

*To view these works in full screen mode please go [here](#) for “Who’s in Control?” and [here](#) for “Who Makes That Choice?”*

Emotionally raw confessions about family trauma are juxtaposed with observations about the cocksure attitudes of those in power. Authority is assumed to be right. However, just because it holds the seat of power, does not make it so. In ***Soul Junk***, I was compelled to move through my own understanding of power structures & an individual’s power grab in the age of the selfie. How those systems get played out in the family, through power brokers, government, and corporations. I process narcissistic & patriarchal behavior through the rhythm of my own lens in an effort to understand the political, economic and ethical landscape of our time. Those in power often prevail at the expense of individuals, families, & communities.

When & where are the borders between terror, abuse & negligence blurred & crossed? How do personal behavior, corporate & national interests, & armed terrorist groups drive politics? I expose my pain, doubts & frustration in an effort to make sense of the world we live in and to stimulate conversation for change. ***Soul Junk*** is a catalyst for social justice.

**Michelle Jaffé** creates sculpture, sound and video installations, immersing people in an experience that transforms their sensory awareness. These participatory encounters create a moment where a synaptic shift in attitude is possible and new neural connections can be made. Her work has been exhibited at Duke University-Power Plant, Beall Center for Art + Technology at UC Irvine, NYCCEMF, Morlan Gallery at Transylvania University, KY, Bosi Contemporary, NY and UICA, Grand Rapids. Solo exhibitions at Bosi Contemporary, Wald & Po Kim Gallery, Susan Berko-Conde Gallery, Brooklyn College, Harvestworks Digital Media in NY, among others. Since 2008, Jaffé has been a fiscally sponsored artist of the New York Foundation for the Arts.

Hermine Ford

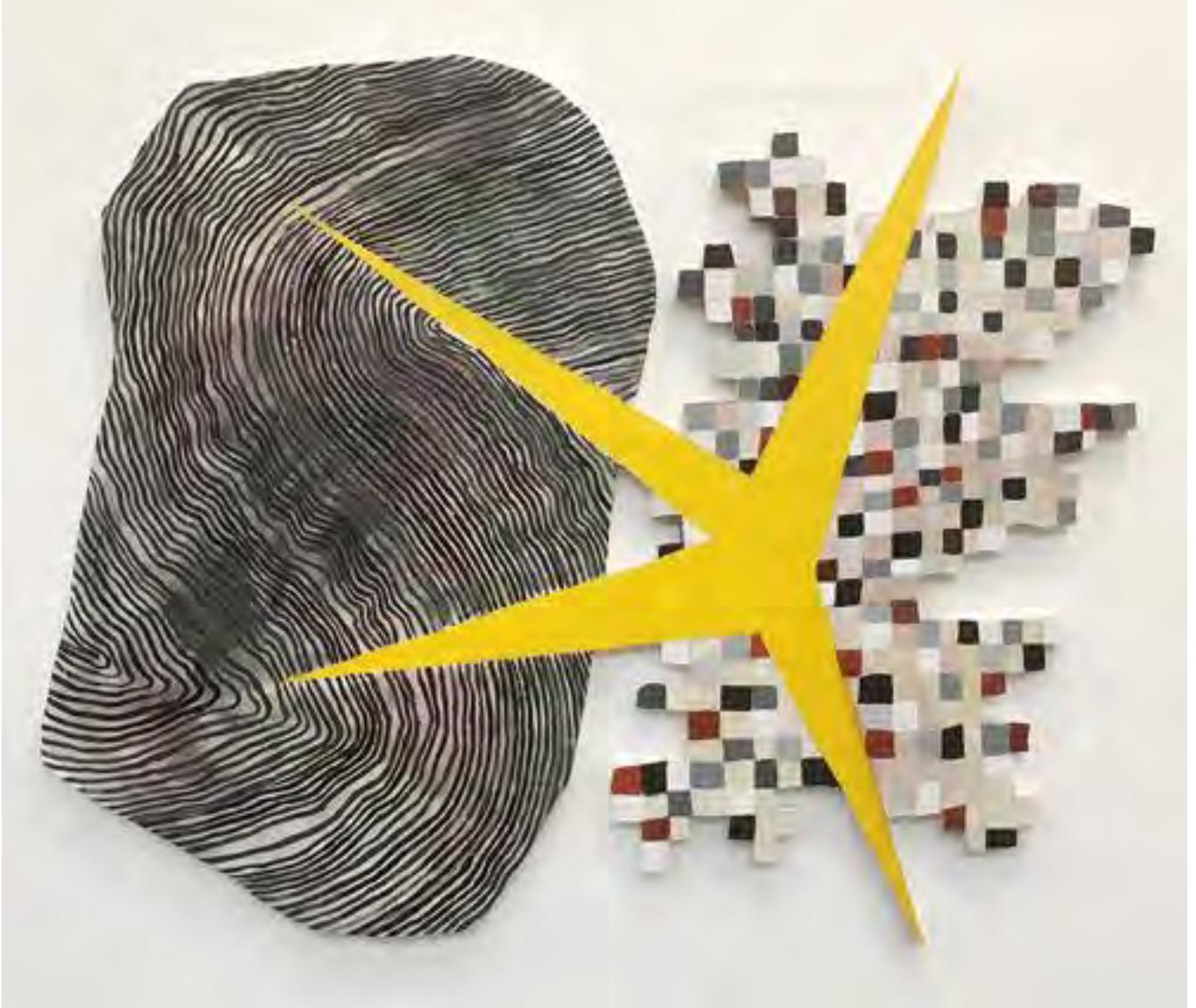
Nov. 22, 2016

Dear Mira and Susan,

Today I had lunch with Mira and saw some shows together in Chelsea. The kind of day that old friends who are artists often share. Did it feel “normal”? No. We talked about the art we were looking at, we talked about how neighborhoods have changed. We talked about growing older. And we talked about the election. We looked back over other “the worst of times” in our lives: WWII, the assassinations of JFK and MLK...both felt like the end of America. And of course 9/11. As an artist I need to do my work in order to be coherent and functional in other areas of my life. I need also to feel my friends, my community around me. I hope that my work makes a contribution to them, but I can't depend on that. I need to choose when I will participate in group actions to defend democracy, and I need to make a more specific contribution by volunteering to help open the swinging door that would enable very young people to walk into my world of reading, writing, making art, a doorway into a big wide world full of adventure and deep beauty, and through which I may have the privilege of entering their world. This is my survival plan for myself and I am grateful to *M/E/A/N/I/N/G* for always having provided a place where these kinds of musings can be shared.

Love,

Hermine



*Hermine Ford, "Yellow Star," 2016. Oil on cotton muslin on panel, 33 1/2" x 41"*

**Hermine Ford** grew up in NYC. Her childhood neighborhood was 23 St. down 2nd Ave. to Houston St and points east. She lives and works in NYC with extended stays in rural Canada and Rome. All three locations, in an annual roundelay, inform her work.

Erica Hunt

**For M/E/A/N/I/N/G**

Was there ever more blinding noise set to panic?

Was there ever more thunder than thunder muted?

Is it lightning that strikes the public stare?

Is it lightning that sticks public fascination to calamity?  
to siren's sight-obliterating call?

Is it thunder or thirst that severs thirst from throat?  
the sound disconnected from the picture?

Is thirst recollected by rain?

We wake up, waking, woke  
to thunder outside  
the house, inside, it was already  
raining.

\*

**Writing *Life*** / November 2016

this labor is not silent

but requires collaboration between clamor and music

found in rustling. Not makeshift, you are its prototype

an advanced draft. Sense

applied to warm skin. Uncanned mannequin

against gun robot. Stand.

Tricks in a picture. Stand.

Name the ruse of normal in criminal bracket.

Stand. Duet with double optics, then  
stand to its left. If the ground is too hot to tolerate long,  
improvise and stand. But  
stand.

**Erica Hunt**, poet, and essayist, once wrote “no shade to lie down in the lullaby banks” foreshadowing the November 2016 election. She is Parsons Family Professor of Creative Writing at Long Island University, Brooklyn campus.

## Noah Fischer: We Are Called to Fight

It turns out that the campaign advisors, though trafficking in next-level untruths, made one claim on America that isn't exactly a lie. They dug something up that was long-rotting un-der the floorboards: an invention of race that split the white working class from black people (and people of color in general) in order to lay the economic cornerstone of the *American Dream*. This rotting thing proved extremely effective.

Wounds never healed and debt was never paid and meanwhile the monster kept eating. It began to gobble up the white middle class too, capturing hundreds of millions into odious debts securitized by mega-firms. It gobbled the *Dream* right up. And just when the 99% were about to wake up, it jumped into the middle of the political process and cast out a thick web of lies branching out from the invention of race and steeped in its pain. That is why we choke on language now bursting with harmful triggers, each concept certain to stab one group or the other. This is how Trump rises. We now need a deeper language and an art that includes new tunnels and pathways.

The last weeks have shown us that Trumpism is threatened by artists. It was no mistake that the last alt-right propaganda meme on the eve of the election accused performance artist Marina Abramović of devil worship (#spiritcooking). Then the cast of "Hamilton" stepped up to the moment from their stage. Brandon Victor Dixon is the actor who plays Aaron Burr who shot the father of the 1%, Alexander Hamilton. So it's fitting that he challenged Pence. And in response The Predator-in-Chief himself tweeted that "the theater must always be a safe and special space...Apologize!" This meant: you will not be safe as long as you are free. The specialness of your industry is predicated on you shutting the fuck up.

Friends, this is a declaration of war. Because "shut the fuck up" is echoing around the globe from Russia to Israel to Poland to India. A webs of lies and a dredged corpse is poisoning our language and a "shut the fuck up" to those who try to rehabilitate it equals a war against *meaning*, and we are called to fight.

And there can only be one answer: preparations to join together and fight. Art practice will be our boot camp. Because if you watch Victor Dixon in his moment of protest, you will see the generously flowing movements and rich pronunciation of a trained actor-warrior. And if you go on the streets in protest, you will see that the empowered public voice and public body and paintings and songs are needed on this stage too. Even more, it's by developing a personal relationship to intuitive beauty that one sustains the struggle. It's by understanding the deeper logic of artistic time that we can speak truth to power even after the play had ended, after the exhibition is down, and the next day too. It's by committing to artistic experiment that a certain risk be-comes possible.

The stakes are high. To normalize what's coming may be the riskiest path. If we do not fight, we could lose every-thing. Or more specifically: We artists will have much to offer the 1% who will thrive under this and any regime, and nothing to offer our comrades whose survival depends on solidarity. We have come too far to calculate that "probably me and my friends will be fine." We learned too much about the history of power accumulation and its reliance on the privilege of silence. We know too much about the common work of emancipation.

**Noah Fischer** works at the crossroads between economic and social inequity and art practice and its institutions. His sculpture, drawing, performance, writing, and organizing practice fluctuate between object making and direct action as well as an ongoing theatrical collaboration with Berlin-based andcompany&Co. He is the initiating member of Occupy Museums and a member of GULF/ Gulf Labor and his collaborative work has been seen both with and without invitation at MoMA, Guggenheim, Brooklyn Museum, ZKM, and Venice, Athens, and Berlin Biennales among other venues.

## Julie Harrison



Julie Harrison, "War (Series)," 2014. Archival pigment print, 17" x 42"



Julie Harrison, "War (Series)," 2014. Archival pigment print, 17" x 42"

On December 10, 1948, the General Assembly of the United Nations signed the UNIVERSAL DECLARATION OF HUMAN RIGHTS in Paris. This Declaration established 30 Articles that spell out what it means for the entire "human family" to be entitled to dignity, equality and inalienable rights. It is the foundation for freedom, justice and peace in the world, and has been translated into over 500 languages.

The United States has a history of violating human rights, and perhaps we can frame our work towards change as such (it doesn't just begin with Trump, although he and his ilk will most certainly exacerbate it).

In reality (using the language written in the Declaration):

- We are not all born free and equal in dignity and rights.
- We are not without distinctions of race, color, sex, language, religion, opinion, origin, property, birth or other status.
- We do not all have the right to life, liberty and security of person.
- Some of us are held in slavery or servitude.
- Some are subjected to torture or cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment.
- We do not all have equal protection of the law.
- Some are subjected to arbitrary arrest, detention or exile.
- We are all being subjected to arbitrary interference with our privacy.
- Some are not allowed the right to seek our country's asylum from persecution.
- Everyone does not have the freedom to manifest their religion or belief.
- Everyone does not have the right to peaceful assembly and association.
- Everyone does not have the right to equal pay for equal work.
- Everyone who works does not has the right to a just and favorable remuneration.
- Everyone does not have the right to an adequate standard of living.
- Everyone does not have the right to security in the event of unemployment, sickness, disability, widowhood, and old age.
- Parenthood and childhood are not entitled to special care and assistance.
- All children, whether born in or out of wedlock, do not enjoy the same social protection.
- Education is not directed to the full development of the human person.
- Education does not promote understanding, tolerance and friendship among all nations, racial or religious groups.
- Everyone does not have the right to freely participate in cultural life, arts and scientific advancement.

I recognize that we operate within degrees of this or that. But if we continue to believe that human rights abuses are THEIR problem (that OTHER country), not ours, then we have not fully understood what human rights are.

Happy 68th Anniversary to the UNIVERSAL DECLARATION OF HUMAN RIGHTS.

**Julie Harrison** is a visual artist, social justice advocate, avid adventurer, bohemian mother, and amateur political pundit from New York City.

## Roger Denson: The Individual Is No Longer Invisible in There

I can't recall an election being more about identity. That is in terms of one's personal identity, one's view of what identity means, and how one's identity is a vehicle for or a hindrance to social and cultural mobility. Ironically, I found myself coming full circle, back to the early 1990s. That this circling should intersect with the "last" *M/E/A/N/I/N/G* publication is doubly ironic, in that my first contribution to the May 1994 issue is a commentary I called, "The Indivisible Individual Invisible In There," what then seemed a newly emergent anti-essentialist approach to identity.

In that work I began to integrate the writing of Anthony Appiah, Henry Louis Gates, Jr. and Judith Butler into my own positions on the debate of the new identity art being made in the late 1980s and early 1990s. This was an art made in the shadow of the neoconservative backlash to 1960s reforms and revolutions overseen by Reagan and Bush I. My targets were the mythologies of race, gender and sexuality, which had become ensnared in static and rigid ideological paradigms by even the most well-meaning activists leading our liberation movements. What had been fresh and vital to the defense of universal civil rights in the 1960s and 1970s came to seem stalled and stunted by the 1990s as artists and writers sought greater individuality and less ideological boundaries to move through in life and art.

Of course there had been earlier anti-essentialists who debunked the boundaries, if not the biological organs and makeup of difference. But Franz Boas and Margaret Mead in anthropology, W.E.B. DuBois in sociology, and Jean-Paul Sartre and Simone de Beauvoir in philosophy and political theory spoke in bygone languages that a generation of Structuralists had deactivated — or so we thought. Appiah, Gates and Butler showed us these earlier modernists in fact held out the counterpoints to the notion of *essence* still relatively unknown within the sphere of radical identity liberation movements that deferred to traditional boundaries of racial, gender, sexual, class and ideological categories. Appiah, Gates and Butler brought just the right reframing to the anti-essentialist notions of the former Existentialist generation to make the individualism that the 1980s culture celebrated consistent with the new evidence from DNA studies that the world was not composed of static races that we had 'arrived at' and 'occupy', but rather that we 'move through' in 'frequencies' of identities and generations as we branch out and mutate with ceaseless migration and mixing of racial, ethnic, cultural and biological genetic types.

Even more than attempting to spread the diversity model paradigm, I was concerned with what such a model meant for the liberation movements that proliferated since the 1960s, yet were hardly finished with their work of securing parity for diverse populations in the 1990s. Black power, feminism and gay rights were still struggling movements, and the paradigms of classical fixed identities motivated millions. To now say that we weren't biologically black, women and gay, that we were only

culturally and consensually so, seemed at the time a dangerous deflation of those movements and even a denial of what they had achieved in the name of liberty. Yet it was because discrimination flagrantly continued despite the new empowerment movements that I wrote in *M/E/A/N/I/N/G #15*:

*There is little doubt that identities like “man,” “woman,” “black,” “white,” “yellow,” “red,” “straight,” “gay,” “bourgeois,” and “proletariat,” are in crisis. Although these ancient identities have motivated and sustained the emancipation and empowerment movements of recent decades, we may at times find such traditional identities limiting our personal development. Nonetheless, for many the practice of shedding traditional identification with an assumed racial, ethnic, engendered, sexual, or economic class “jumps the gun,” particularly if an achievement of parity is still forthcoming. While some feel the time for a deconstruction of traditional identity along the lines of race, gender, ethnicity, economic status, and ideology has come, others, especially those who espouse an activist identity informed by feminism, black power, Native Americanism, or gay rights, the impetus to dissolve traditional identity and move beyond it poses a reactionary threat.*

Fast-forward to 2016 and the end of what may be the most divisive US Presidential campaign since the 1960s. Divisive because the demographics of diverse populations made themselves heard throughout and in the outcome of the campaign. Despite that the liberation movements for women, blacks, Hispanics, Asians, native Americans and LGBT peoples have still to secure unquestionable social recognition in the institutions of the US, the once-identity-phobic public has become so keenly sensitive to the slights to one’s self-identification that all sides have become intent on silencing opposition in the media, and especially social media. And this silencing was wished from all sides, not just the reactionary far right or the intransigent far left.

If I come to focus now on my own identifications and misidentifications during the 2016 campaign, it is to ensure that the record maintains its individualist center amid all the swirling identity tropes that rely on general allegiances. For while it’s true that some of the accusations here about to be counted are merely rhetorical and inflamed — the illogic of the impoverished ploys of one-upping an opponent in a debate otherwise being lost for being devoid of principles, issues and causes — the disparagements are rooted in the reality of individuals attempting to silence one another. Still, I raise them to illustrate to what degree we have made a mockery of essentialist identities, cultures and their politics — even if we don’t realize we are expressing (self) mockery.

The point is not to focus on me and what I do and don’t believe, but to consider to what degree identity has evolved from being mythologized as a static essence to being rendered a contingency in constant evolution. The matter is more than one of identifying with or against the perceived identities that our antagonists pin on us. It is a matter of recognizing that the slippages that intervene between one’s own self-identification and the perceived identities being pinned on us are increasingly the effect of identity politics having become fully integrated into mainstream media, if

not popular consciousness and expression. It is also instructive of the conceptual divide that exists between the essentialists (racists, misogynists, xenophobes, homophobes, and just plain folks identifying according to their conditioning) and the truly democratic anti-essentialists who understand that identity and identification are relative to innumerable and even unidentifiable differences between us.

It is also a matter that the rush to identify others, either habitually or intently, is too often motivated by the drive to gain personal and collective political leverage over perceived opponents. As witnessed below, a common attempt to acquire and maintain that leverage is by publicly recalling the fears of those who have been discriminated and persecuted and tagging their opponent with participating in that discrimination and persecution. Whether the accusations are true or false, the leverage is sought and maintained by resorting to the clichés of reverse racism and sexism, and that all too often render the formerly abused the newly emergent abuser. This is my point in the account below, for which I will leave to the reader the judgment whether or not this writer has been judiciously or injudiciously tagged by his critics below.

And so it is that in this year of fractious accounts of grievances, for largely rhetorical reasons, I have been called an Islamophobe and closet Zionist because I haven't criticized Israel's treatment of Arabs virulently enough. On the other side of the coin, I was called anti-Semitic because I condemned the Israeli eviction of Palestinians from centuries-old family land to make room for Jewish settlements. I've been called anti-Christian because I support a woman's right to reproductive rights and because I denounced Christians who bombed abortion clinics. I've been called a religious fanatic because I consider atheists to make the same epistemologically unsound pronouncement about the unknown that religious make. I've been called misogynist because I believe that women too often undermine their own rights by conceding to, even supporting, patriarchal social and gender codes. I've been called a hater of heterosexual men because I was critical of a recently deceased famous straight male performer who was accused of raping a teenage girl. I was called a member of the oligarchical 1% because I didn't support a Socialist-Independent presidential candidate. I was called a Communist because I didn't support an oligarch for President. I was called a white racist because my candidate was deemed a conspirator to the commercial and lengthy imprisonment of blacks for nonviolent crimes. I was called a self-hating white because that same candidate was willing to promote the advancement of non-whites economically and politically at the (perceived) expense of whites. I was called a self-hating fag because that candidate was late to embrace gay marriage. I was called an imperialist colonizer because that candidate didn't speak out on the Dakota Access Pipeline conflict. And I was called anti-American, because I support the Lakota and other tribes opposing the pipeline at the cost of jobs.

Again, this is not to dwell on my circumstance but to rather legitimize the emerging view that it can only be one's own shifting circumstance in relation to all other shifting circumstances around us that we can trust, however humbly, to reframe

defining ourselves and others according to an individual-centric model of identity. A model that is entirely relative to the individual-centric identities of others, yet no less self-defining. Is this or is this not the contingency-based relativist and anti-essentialist intersectional paradigm of identity and functionality that we sought since the 1960s? And can we use this paradigm as the building blocks, each different from the next, of use in rebuilding a democratic society with pragmatic capabilities to expand beyond prejudice and marginalization?

**Roger Denson** is a regular contributor of art and cultural criticism to Huffington Post since 2010. His feature articles and reviews have appeared in *Parkett* (Zurich); *Artscribe International* (London); *Bijutsu Techo* (Tokyo); *Art in America*; *Artbyte*; *Arts Magazine*; *Art Experience*; *M/E/A/N/I/N/G*; *Acme Journal*; and *Journal of Contemporary Art* (all New York); Duke University's *Cultural Politics* (Durham, NC and London); *Flash Art*; *Contemporanea* (Milan); *Trans>Arts, Culture, Media* (Buenos Aires and New York); and *Kunstlerhaus Bethanien* (Berlin). He is the author of the forthcoming monograph, *Vasudeo S. Gaitonde: The Sonata of Consciousness*, 2017 (Bodhana Arts, Mumbai).

## Robert C. Morgan: The Presence of *M/E/A/N/I/N/G*

The future is a conundrum, a misguided erudition of how we think things should be, but never are. It is easier to know the past; and by knowing the past, to be rehearsed in memories of thoughts gone by, which were once believed to be true. The present is perhaps the most difficult, the high wire between Points A and B, the resounding tight rope on which we may find ourselves suspended, the still transition between past and future. This is what makes the present so ironic and so difficult to perceive, to grasp and to understand.

In the 90s, I recall writing book reviews for *M/E/A/N/I/N/G*. This was something I enjoyed as it kept me focused on the academic side of art. But in addition to the reviews, there were other occasions that proved deeply meaningful. At the time I was too involved with the mystique of conceptual art and was looking for a way to think and to write from another direction. This happened in a brief contribution I made in one of the forums organized by the editors. My statement raised questions about the marketing of art, which in those days, were not discussed. It would eventually lead to my book, “El Fin del Mundo del Arte,” initially published in Spanish and then later the same year in English.

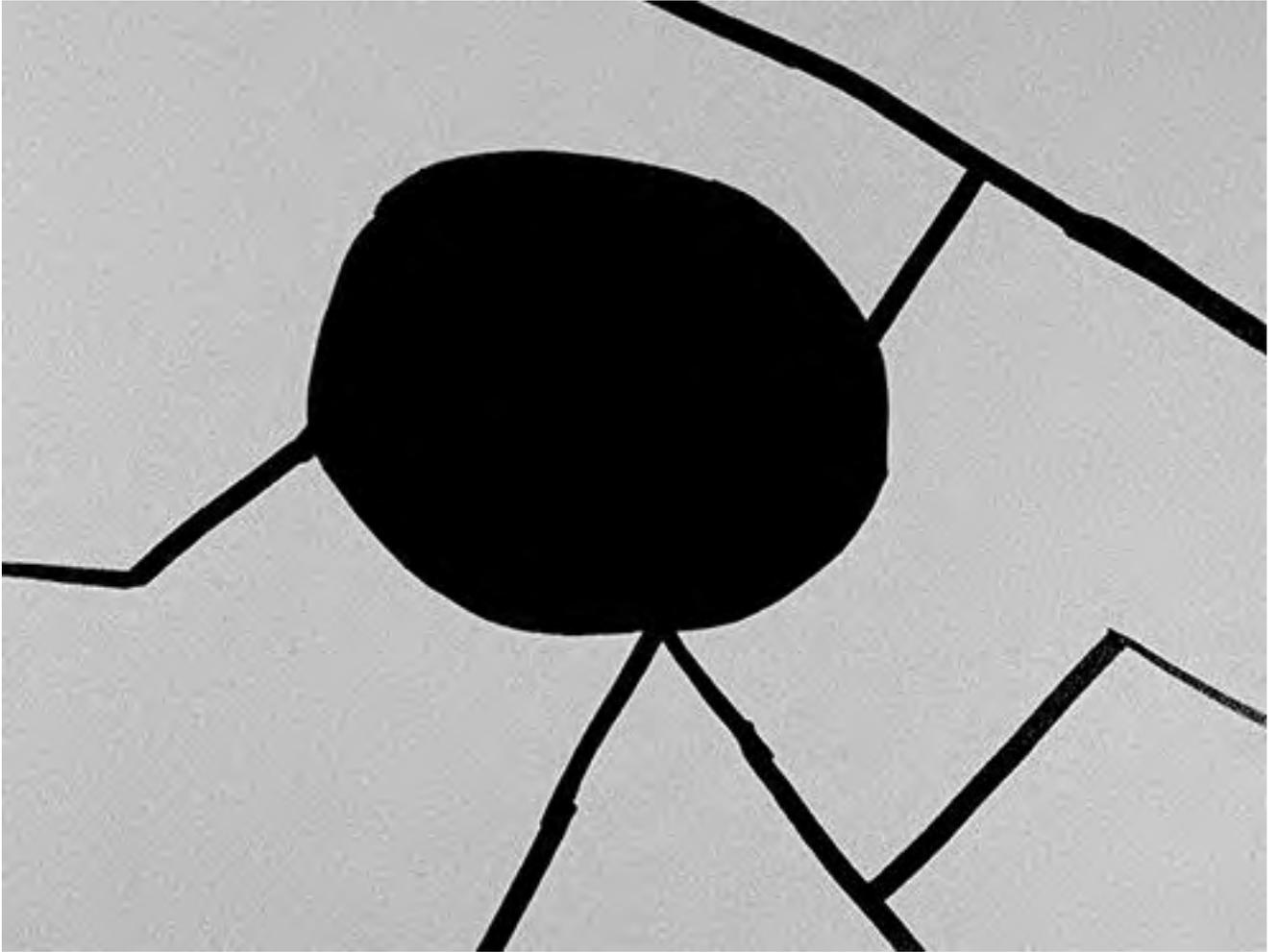
Through this forum, I found a way to connect with my changing sensibilities at the time. I found the courage to reject the trends of academic art writing and begin questioning the assumptions on which I was making critical judgments.

Printed publications, like *M/E/A/N/I/N/G*, were more likely to be seen and read in the 90s than they are today. It was a different era in art where the approach to theory and feminism seem to follow a very different course. I suppose I would call it more “open-ended” to the extent that writers were given the permission to open their minds and pursue a line of thought that was both personal and theoretical, which, of course, was something artist-writers need to do. It was a magazine that opened doors and allowed fresh ideas to move from the margins into the mainstream. There was an internal presence in *M/E/A/N/I/N/G*, consciously put forth by the editors. The language of the podium was removed from the premises and given back to artists interested in changing sensibilities that would enrich not only the beleaguered past and future but would put us squarely within the present. *M/E/A/N/I/N/G* became a harbinger for artists concerned with political change and who needed a forum by which to engage with one another on issues of discrepancy, of discrimination, of civil and human rights that are, unfortunately, still with us today.

**Robert C. Morgan** holds a Master of Fine Arts degree and a Ph.D. in Art History. He divides his career between painting and writing. He has lectured widely, curated numerous exhibitions (other than his own work), and has written literally hundreds of critical essays. He was awarded the first Arcale prize in International Art Criticism

in Salamanca, and, in 2011, was inducted into the European Academy of Sciences and Arts, Salzburg.

Jenny Perlin



*Jenny Perlin, Still image from "Inks," 16mm film loop, b/w, 5 seconds, 2014. Courtesy the artist and Simon Preston Gallery, New York*

“Silences and repetitions are rejected as a failure of language when they are experienced as oblivious holes or as the utterance of the same thing twice or more. WE SHOULD NOT STAMMER, so goes the reasoning, for we only make our way successfully in life when we speak in a continuous articulate flow. True. After many years of confusions, of suppressed voice and INARTICULATE SOUNDS, holes, blanks, black-outs, jump-cuts, out-of-focus visions, I FINALLY SAY NO: yes, sounds are sounds and should above all be released as sounds. Everything is in the releasing. There is no score to follow, no hidden dimension from the visuals to disclose, and endless thread to weave anew.” —Trinh T. Minh-Ha, “Holes in the Sound Wall,” from *When the Moon Waxes Red: Representation, Gender, and Cultural Politics*, Routledge, New York, 1991

---

“We must acknowledge that we began [in cinema] like literary people, that we’re not sufficiently literate in existing sounds and don’t distinguish among them. If [...] you go to the Donbass, then all you’ll hear [at first] is one uninterrupted roar and noise—that’s the first impression. But this wasn’t my first time in the Donbass; I studied these sounds and saw that, yes, we really are domestic, and for us these sounds are “noise”—but for the worker in the Donbass every sound has a specific meaning; for him there are no “noises.” And if it seems to you, comrades, who know all the scales perfectly, that I am at this moment emitting pure noise, then I can assure you that I am [producing] no noise whatsoever.” —Dziga Vertov, spoken at the Kiev preview of “Enthusiasm,” RGALI f. 2091, op. 2, d 417, 1. 59, in John MacKay, “Disorganized Noise: *Enthusiasm* and the Ear of the Collective,” *Kinokultura* # 7, January 2005

---

“The optical thought the optical dance to the sound of the river of your soul The flowers of a mind The dance of handwriting and the song of flowers and the white of the clouds and the blue of the sky—Sometimes it is dark and you see in the darkness nothing but your own feeling your own movements your own pulse and the rapture of your heart your blood this is what you see—what goes with the music—The Stars the Heaven the Darkness and the Light of your own love your own heart The Light of your mind, The Dancing Light of your blood—and your feeling.” —Oskar Fischinger, on *Motion Painting No. 1*, from Center for Visual Music’s *Fischinger Texts: Film Notes*.

---

“CHINESE CURIOS” “These are days when no one should rely unduly on his “competence.” Strength lies in improvisation. All the decisive blows are struck left-handed.”—Walter Benjamin, from *One-Way Street and other Writings*, NLB, London, 1979

**Jenny Perlin** is an artist working in Brooklyn. Her practice in 16mm film, video, and drawing works with and against the documentary tradition, incorporating innovative stylistic techniques to emphasize issues of truth, misunderstanding, and personal history. Her projects look closely at ways in which social machinations are reflected in the smallest fragments of daily life. Perlin's films often combine handwritten text and drawn images and embrace the technical contingencies of analog technologies.

## Altoon Sultan

—“*I am here to wonder.*” Goethe

It is difficult to understand how to respond to the political shock that descended on so many of us in early November. Where to turn, how to think, what to do? For me, it is necessary to go towards what I find essential, which is paying attention to the small moments that bring joy and beauty and surprise: winter sunlight reaching far into a room, highlighting the delicate serrated edge of a seed head; a tiny snail crossing an immensity of leaf; bright light illuminating a plastic tank; the taste of a garden tomato warmed by the sun; a tangle of tree roots pushing against city pavement; the emergence of a seedling, still a miracle to me. To slow down and notice everyday things provides sense and spirit and calm to emotional chaos.

—“*The moment one gives close attention to anything, even a blade of grass, it becomes a mysterious, awesome, indescribably magnificent world in itself.*” Henry Miller

I walk in the woods, taking the same path several times a week, and each time it is different in feeling and in light, each time there are things to see that I hadn't noticed before: a bit of moss, a fluff of seeds, a leaf dangling from a spider's thread, all marvels.

—“*I think what one should do is write in an ordinary way and make the writing seem extraordinary. One should write, too, about what is ordinary and see the extraordinary behind it.*” Jean Rhys

And there is art, my own and the sweep of art history. In my painting and sculpture I too attempt, like Jean Rhys, to transform the ordinary and overlooked; details of farm machinery—panels and bolts, light and shadow crossing metal and plastic surfaces—become complex formal compositions. When I was a younger artist I felt the need to make large dramatic paintings, but now I value intimacy and close looking. And I value being part of a very long tradition of picture making by Homo sapiens going back 40,000 years, when humans painted in caves, making images of remarkable sensitivity. We don't know the purpose of these paintings, but to me they indicate a need to recreate the world, to make something beautiful from nothing. Across millennia peoples have made images and have decorated objects, not from necessity but from desire. One of my deepest pleasures is to wander the galleries of the Metropolitan Museum of Art in NYC for hours, crossing the globe, visiting favorite objects and discovering new ones. I've long felt that art-making was an essential part of being human but was nevertheless startled to read the following while writing this piece; it appears in the *NY Review of Books*, November 24th issue, in a review about brain science by the early pre-history professor Steven Mithen. He asks “what gave us ‘the Homo sapiens advantage?’”

*It wasn't brain size because the Neanderthals matched Homo sapiens. My guess is that it may have been another invention: perhaps symbolic art that could extend the power of those 86 billion neurons....*

I am part of a tradition of making; I am part of the world. In paying close attention to both, I find meaning.



**Altoon Sultan** lives on an old hill farm in the Northeast Kingdom of Vermont, where she makes art and tends her garden.

## From Susan Bee & Mira Schor, Scrapbook

### **“Introduction,” M/E/A/N/I/N/G: An Anthology of Artists’ Writings, Theory, and Criticism (Duke University Press, 2000)**

*We felt, as we consider what we should name our publication, that meaning was the concept most discredited by the market-driven postmodernism that dominated art world discourse in the 1980s. While a journal such as October has staked out its title on the ground of a specific sense of history, M/E/A/N/I/N/G announced an ethical and philosophical dimension. But the slashes (technically, virgules) that separate M from E from A from N from I from N from G not only graphically indicate our connection to the influential contemporary poetry journal L=A=N=G=U=A=G=E, they also break up the possibilities of an uninflected metaphysical belief in meaning. We put the concept back on the table of contemporary art discourse, but with a postmodern twist.*

*Some background details on how the first issue of M/E/A/N/I/N/G came into being provide an example of how interventions into art discourse emerge from serendipitous sparks between personal histories and historical moments, and also of how artists, can, on a very small budget and from a space of obscurity, achieve a voice in a large, noisy art world.*

*The two of us first met when we were children through the acquaintance of our parents, Miriam and Sigmund Laufer and Resia and Ilya Schor, all of whom were artists and Jewish refugees from Europe who arrived in New York City in the 1940s. We met again in the late 1970s, as artists living and working in New York City.*

*Bee had a great deal of experience in publishing and book design. She has designed, edited, and produced many small press and commercial publications as well as having designed L=A=N=G=U=A=G=E, which was co-edited by her husband Charles Bernstein. In the early 1980s, Schor had begun to write about gender representation. In the fall of 1986, our disgust with the increasingly overhyped art scene was the final spur to publishing a journal. Over lunch near our studios in Tribeca, we just said, “let’s do it,” not unlike Judy Garland and Mickey Rooney, deciding “let’s put on a show.”*



*Mira and Susan in Provincetown, MA, at St. Mary of the Harbor's Beach, 1984.*



*Mira and Susan, with issue #5, spring 1990, in the apartment of Mira's mother Resia, New York City*



*Susan and Mira, photo by Sarah Wells, 1991*

We held a party to celebrate our **final print issue**, it was on Mira's birthday, June 1, 1996. Here are some of our friends and contributors from the first ten years of *M/E/A/N/I/N/G*.



*l. to r., Martha Wilson, Carolee Schneemann, and Emma Amos, M/E/A/N/I/N/G party June 1996.*



*l. to r., Nina Felsbin, Maureen Connor, & Emily Cheng, M/E/A/N/I/N/G party June 1996*



*Carolee Schneemann and David Humphrey, June 1996.*



*Brad Freeman and Johanna Drucker, 1996.*



*Rudy Burckhardt and Charles Bernstein, M/E/A/N/I/N/G party June 1996*



*David Diao and Mimi Gross, M/E/A/N/I/N/G party June 1996*



*Susan and Mira, M/E/A/N/I/N/G party June 1996*

We had a reception at Accola Griefen Gallery in New York December 15, 2011, to celebrate the **25th Anniversary issue** of *M/E/A/N/I/N/G*:



*Mira and Susan, photo © Lawrence Schwartzwald*



*l. to r., Thomas McEvilley, Jerome Rothenberg, @ Charles Bernstein, M/E/A/N/I/N/G 25th Anniversary party at Accola Griefen Gallery, photo ©Lawrence Schwartzwald*



*Bradley Rubenstein & Joan Waltemath, photo ©Lawrence Schwartzwald*



*Reception for 25th anniversary issue of M/E/A/N/I/N/G, Accola Griefen Gallery, Susan Bee and Mira Schor, with Kat Griefen, Kristen Accola, Mary Lucier, Jackie Brookner, Bob Berlind, Judith Linhares, Nancy Princenthal, Lenore Malen, Bradley Rubenstein, Hermine Ford, and more, December 15, 2011, photo ©Lawrence Schwartzwald*

\*

Time passes, but friendships and community continue.



*From l. to r., Jobanna Drucker, Susan Bee, Mimi Gross, and Mira Schor at the opening of "Views and Vignettes: The Work of Miriam Laufer," Susan's mother, at the Provincetown Art Association and Museum, August 11, 2016.*



*from l. to r., Mimi Gross, Susan Bee, and Mira Schor, at the opening of their show "Three Friends," at Tim's Used Books, Provincetown, August 19, 2016.*

\*\*\*

## Susan Bee: Non Finito

This final issue of *M/E/A/N/I/N/G* brings back memories of our first issue, which came out in December 1986. At that time, I was a young artist and a new mother, working at freelance jobs as an editor and graphic designer. I had a baby at home and was full of optimism. Emma was born in May of 1985 and tragically she died 23 years later in 2008. I was 33 when she was born and Mira and I started to think of starting our own arts publication.



*Susan Bee, "Non Finito," 2016. Oil on linen, 24" x 30".*

In 1992, I had my first solo painting show, when I was 40-years-old. Now, I'm almost 65 and nearing the traditional retirement age with a 24-year-old son, Felix, and a 40-year marriage to the poet Charles Bernstein. I have been a member of the vibrant all-women artist's collective, A.I.R. Gallery, for 20 years and will have a solo show of

new paintings there in March 2017. I have been teaching, publishing artist's books, and showing my art for many years.

This election has sent me into a tailspin. I hoped to be greeting a woman president in my lifetime, and now the possibility seems remote and I am heartbroken to be facing the next four years of this administration. As a secular Jewish feminist, artist, and professor, the future in this country that my immigrant artist parents, refugees from Berlin and Palestine, came to in 1947, looks bleaker than it did just a short time ago on Election Day. Since that day, I have been taking refuge in viewing art. Through the contemplation of art and poetry, I have been trying to escape the isolation and desolation of the present moment. I know that we need to fight on and that I need to work with my community to create a strong push back to the hatred and bigotry that surrounds us. My optimism is being sorely tested by the hatred that has been empowered in this country.



*Susan Bee, "Afraid to Talk," 2016. Oil, enamel, and sand on linen, 24" x 30".*

Now, my 30-year editorial partnership with Mira is coming to an end. However, I have no plans to retire from art and life. I am grateful that we had the opportunity to publish over a hundred critics, poets, and artists. Hopefully, the artists, writers, and other creative spirits, who have nourished our project, *M/E/A/N/I/N/G*, for all these years, will continue to lead the way forward and point us to a future that will enrich us all.



*Susan Bee, "Pow!," 2014. Oil, enamel, and sand on canvas, 30" x 24"*

Mira Schor

## Written during the Preoccupation: Activism, Heroism, and Art

A week after the election, a cold heavy rain struck New York in a kind of climatic embodiment of our political shock and misery. Wearing the depressing New York winter uniform of black down coat for the first time of the season, huddled in the small doorway of a fortune teller's establishment on Lexington Avenue, I waited for a bus and I thought about what I would write about for this final issue of *M/E/A/N/I/N/G*.

My first instinct was to consider the role of activism in relation to being an artist but immediately my mind made a leap from *activism* to *heroism*. In the seconds between these two words, I was in tears as two stories I had been told by my mother since my childhood sprang to mind, one of political bravery, the other of personal bravery.

Please bear with me as I retell these stories, because they frame my ideas about the role of activism and the role of art and the artist in a moment of political necessity for activism.

To begin with, the story of personal bravery: my mother was very proud of her friendship with one of the most important Jewish families in pre-war Poland, that of Rabbi Moses Schorr, a religious leader, a historian, and the first Jewish member of the Polish Senate. The Schorrs (no relation) were kind, wealthy, generous, noble in bearing and behavior. At the outbreak of WWII Rabbi Schorr fled Poland towards the East where he was captured, imprisoned, and tortured by the Russians, dying in a Russian labor camp in 1941 (for more on the relation of Russia with Germany at that time, with interesting echoes in recent weeks, see [here](#)). Rabbi Schorr's daughters survived the war, and I knew one of them well, Fela, a beautiful, kind, imperious, and broken woman, all at once. The story I was told by my mother though I never spoke of it with Fela herself, was that Fela and her mother along with Fela's two small sons and her small nephew, all children under the age of 10, were imprisoned by the Gestapo in France. It was announced that children who were orphans would not be deported to Auschwitz so Fela and her elderly mother determined to commit suicide. Her mother took poison and died, Fela jumped out a window but survived and was saved and sheltered by doctors until the end of the war a few months later. She and the three children in her care survived the war.

The circumstances of the story were hard to believe, because it made no sense that orphans would be spared deportation and because of the cruelty of the promise, but the randomness of genocide was embedded in my consciousness as well as the emblem of maternal courage. [This story is true, you can read more [here](#).]

The story of political bravery was embodied for me in the name Bartoszek.

Franciszek Bartoszek was a friend of my parents from the Warsaw Academy of Fine Arts. He was a painter. And he was Polish. That is to say, he was not Jewish. This was central to the story, because that was a primary distinction my mother always made, a paradox at the center of her own patriotism. If she described someone simply as Polish she also was indicating that they were not Jewish, and it meant that Bartoszek's bravery was motivated by more than personal survival. When my mother showed me the picture of him she always told me that he was a hero. She would tell me that he would risk his life just to bring a poor woman some small amount of butter. Her admiration for him was such that I have never been able to say his name without being overcome with tears, the emotional outlet of my more fierce and stoic mother. When I was able to research him online, the story was verified: **Bartoszek** was a renowned Polish patriot and hero of the Polish resistance, who died in a military action in Warsaw in 1943.



*From l. to r., Ilya Schor, unknown woman, Franciszek Bartoszek, Paris, 1937.*

I have photographs of him with my father. They are in a park in Paris sometime shortly before the war, most likely in 1937. The photos are very small, so I blew up a

detail of one to try to decipher if one could see the courage to come in the face of the man in the time approaching the crisis. When I sent this picture to Luka Rayski, a Polish artist who translated for me a stele erected in Poland in Bartoszek's honor, he wrote back that it was "so hard to imagine, those last pre-war years." But I thought no, it is not hard to imagine that time. Not, I hasten to add, that I think another Holocaust is coming, yet we are in such a time, a time I call the Preoccupation.



*Photo detail, Bartoszek, Paris, c. 1937; Stele installed in Czarnow in 1964: Franciszek Bartoszek, "Jacek" [code name "Jack"] Born October 27, 1910 in Pieranie, spent his youth in Czarnow, Painter, Ardent Patriot, Colonel of People's Guard, Died fighting Hitlerist occupiers, May 15, 1943 in Warsaw.*

Years ago a non-Jewish friend of mine told me that she often wondered whether people would have saved her if she was a Jew during WWII. I found this strange since she was not Jewish and did not have my family's history of the Shoah. More importantly, I had never really asked myself that question, not only because I couldn't bear to contemplate the answer, but mostly because I was so consumed by its

corollary opposite, that is, would I have the courage to risk my life in order to save someone else or in defense of a cause? From a very early age I was totally aware that if that was the test, I would fail.

The sine qua non of resistance is that you have to be prepared to die for freedom, even though of course there is a big gap between marching on Trump Tower holding “Pussy Power” signs and prison or death.

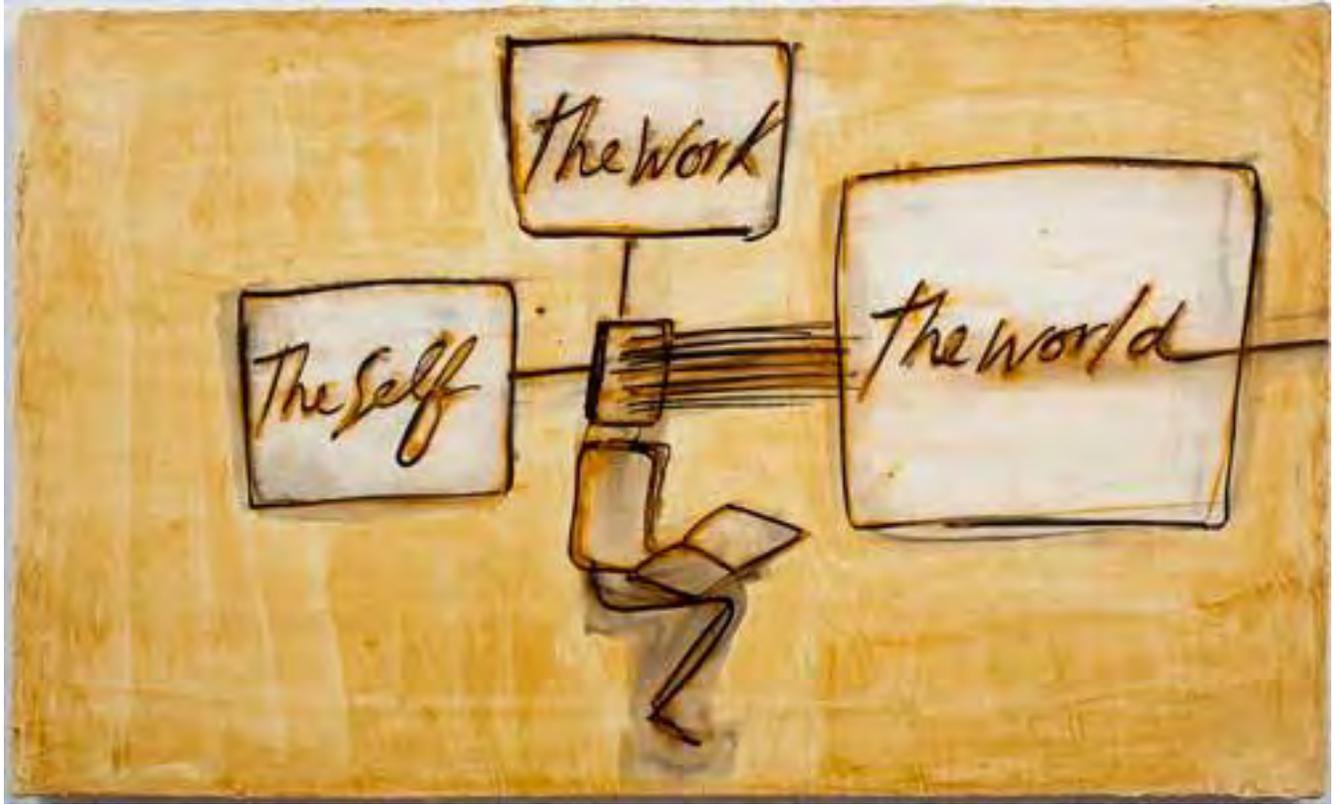
If heroism is summoned as the ultimate necessity for freedom, nevertheless practically speaking most of us who care about what is going on are considering activism. It is quite striking how many people at all levels of society are mobilizing, from the political leaders of the state of California to [artists in New York City mobilizing to provide imagery](#) and objects for the Women’s March on D.C. and beyond.

Susan and I decided to start *M/E/A/N/I/N/G* in 1986, during the Reagan administration. I remember the precise moment—standing near the corner of West Broadway and Canal Street in December 1980, a month after Reagan had been elected and a few days after John Lennon had been killed—when I had realized that a switch had been flipped. Something was over. If I didn’t grasp the full import of the switch in terms of where we have arrived now, I experienced that every value I had been imbued with had just been turned upside down, including in art. The 1980s was a very contentious decade, highly polemic and divisive but perhaps because of that it was also a bracing and inspiring time during which there was a lot of activism, including responses by artists to the AIDS crisis, to urban gentrification, and to the backlash against second wave feminism. The Guerrilla Girls’ first poster appeared overnight in Soho and Tribeca in 1985, we published the first issue of *M/E/A/N/I/N/G* in December 1986. But despite the political polarization, looking back, no matter what happened in politics in the ’80s, I didn’t feel that the end of the world as I had known it was upon us and like Susan I had the optimism that comes from the energy of youthful mid-life and from doing something constructive. I was 36 when we started the magazine. I had been out of art school for 13 years, I had had a full-time teaching job in Canada and had given it up to move back to New York, I had had gallery representation and my first one-person shows in New York and had lost that. *M/E/A/N/I/N/G* opened up my community and gave me a sense of place in the art world. It has been the only sustained collaboration I have been involved with and the many things Susan and I have in common and the differences between us, as well as the small scale of our operation—two people, two issues a year during our hard copy days—all worked for me. And when we ended our print run in 1996, if anything I felt more optimistic and confident about my own life than I had when we started.



*Mira Schor, "Patriotism on the Blood of Women," 1989. Oil on canvas, 16 x 20 inches.*

The word of the day in the '80s was intervention, actions specific to a moment and which did not necessarily seek to become an institution, though inevitably many cultural interventions did. I saw editing *M/E/A/N/I/N/G* as a kind of activism that I was able to engage in. In that spirit, our final issue is one of many artistic responses to the election and one which, as we have always tried to accomplish in *M/E/A/N/I/N/G*, is an open format, non-didactic environment for artists, writers, poets, art historians and critics to express their views in any cultural or personal register that means something to them, unrelated to market concerns. As we bring our project to an end after thirty years, we feel it provides one model for long-term activism within an art community. It is small potatoes in terms of major resistance to oppression but it is something that we could do then and now. It did enlarge our community and I think it meant something to the individuals we published, whether professionally or just because they were given the opportunity to think about something and express their views or tell about their work.



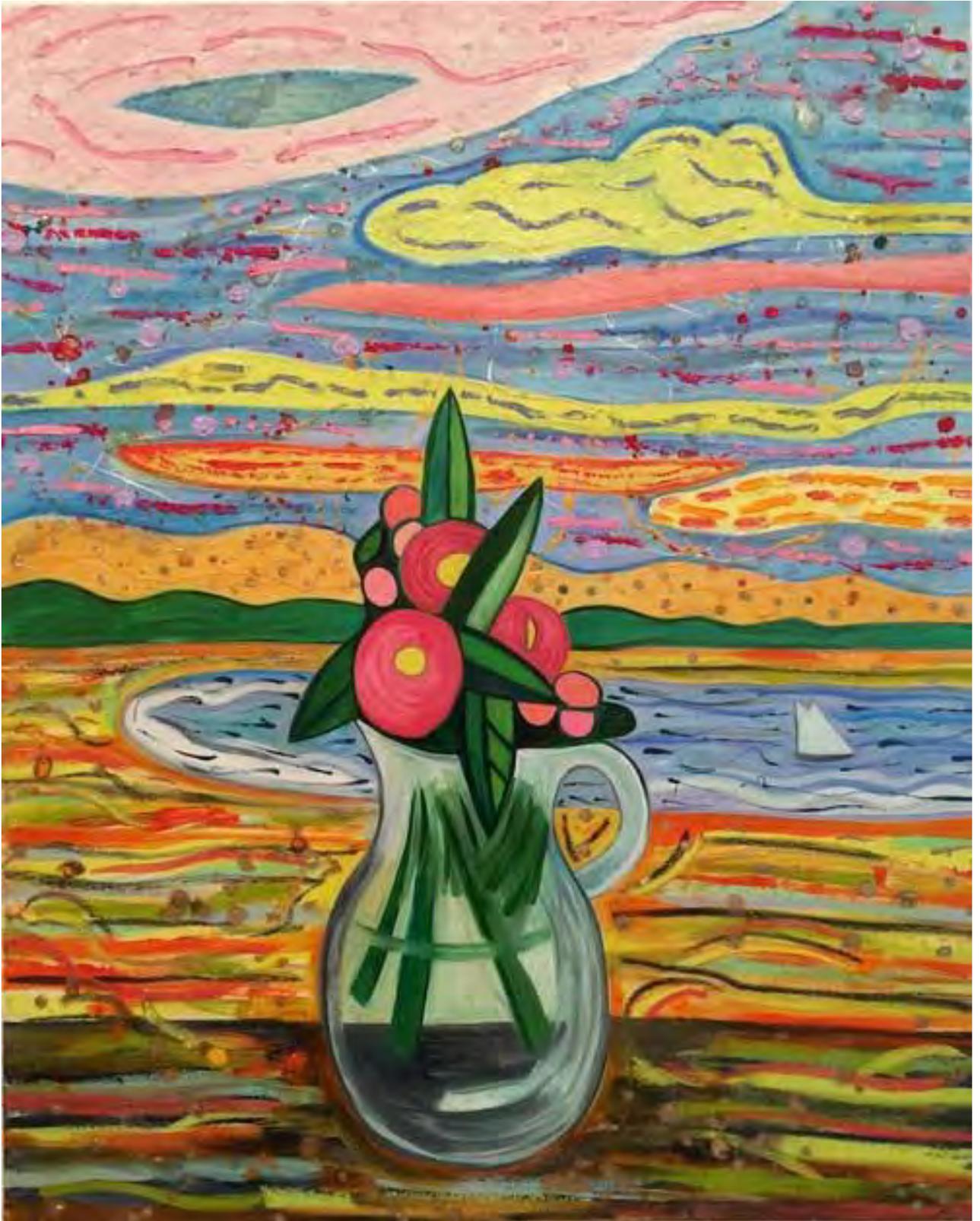
*Mira Schor, "The Self, The Work, The World," 2012. Oil and ink on gesso on linen, 18"x30"*

My sense of necessity to understand the changes in culture in the '80s led me to my critical writings and changed the course of my work as an artist, though my work has from the start had a political underpinning, primarily feminist. Some of my recent works have been visceral responses to the news. But I also think that other aspects of my artistic heritage and inclinations have political valence, though they might seem to be the opposite of political, that is, that the intimate, the modest, the private, though apparently recessive in a time of spectacle, can be construed as political acts. The artist is a filter between the world and the work, as I tried to indicate in a painting I did in early 2012 right after Occupy Wall Street as I was trying to diagram the place of the private artist during a political upheaval.



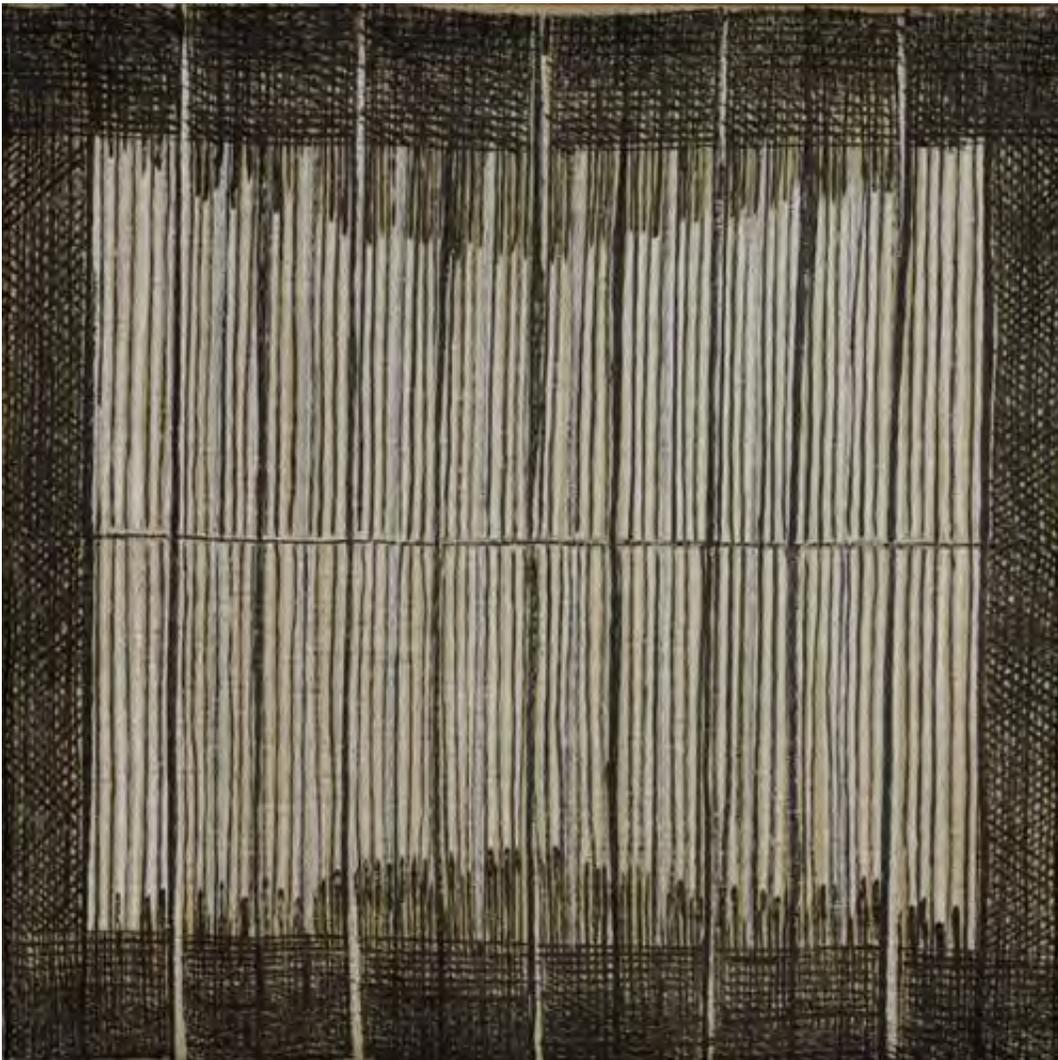
Mira Schor, "Power' Figure: Not Dead Enough," 2016. Ink and gesso on tracing paper, 17"x 22 1/2"

Since the election I've noticed the pleasure, indeed the gratitude people have expressed if someone shares a beautiful work of art on social media, not necessarily an outwardly political one. We recognize and value the works that use representation, figuration, and language to openly announce their political intentions, but a painting of a flower, a small abstraction, or an ancient vase can evoke as much humanity as anything more overt and the importance of such works as heroic human activity can be intense.



*Susan Bee, "A Not So Still Life," 2016. Oil, sand, and enamel on linen, 30" x 24"*

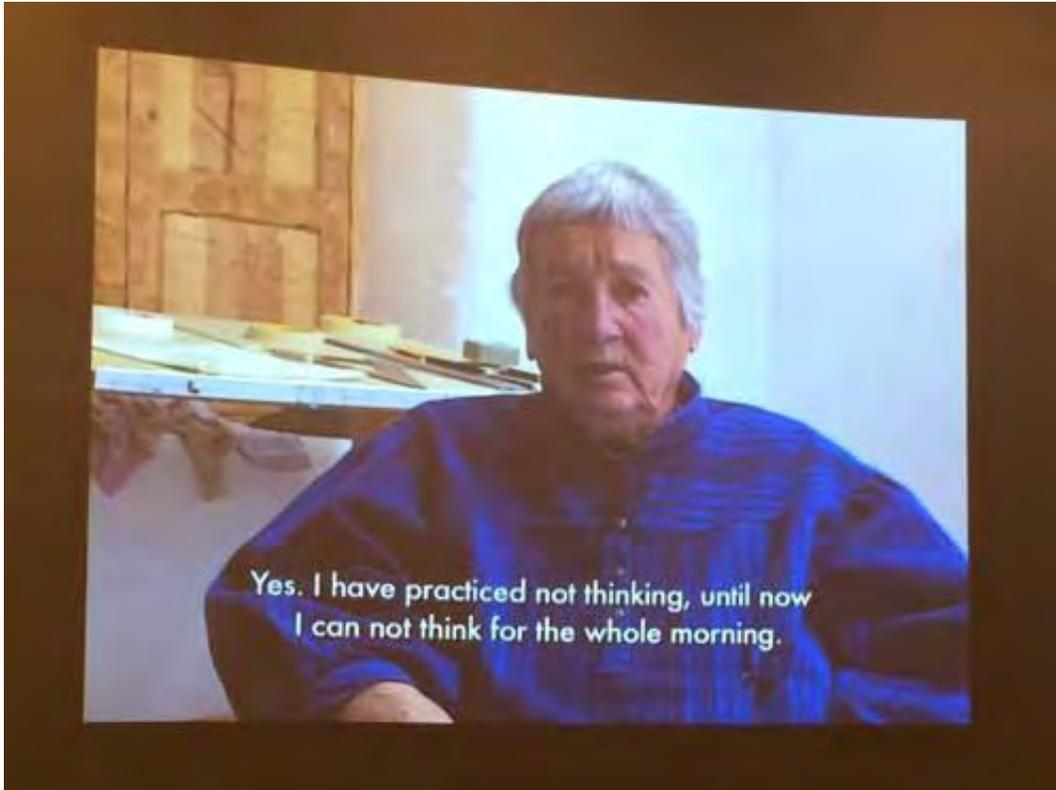
We conceived of this final issue a few days before I stood in that cold rain, during a visit right after the election to the Guggenheim museum to see the [Agnes Martin exhibition](#). I was particularly interested in one small early painting of narrow vertical black and white lines of uneven length. In the face of the impulse, in response to the political atmosphere, for artists to start churning out *Guernicas*, the smallest of Martin's abstract paintings packs as much of a punch about human endeavor and heroism as anything that would will itself to make a political statement. Though small, the painting has great tension and drama. To me it represents as much of the power of the universe as a model of the atom and it is heroic in the way that artworks can be, evidence of one individual artist's search for perfection in a realm that seemingly has no specific utility to daily life.

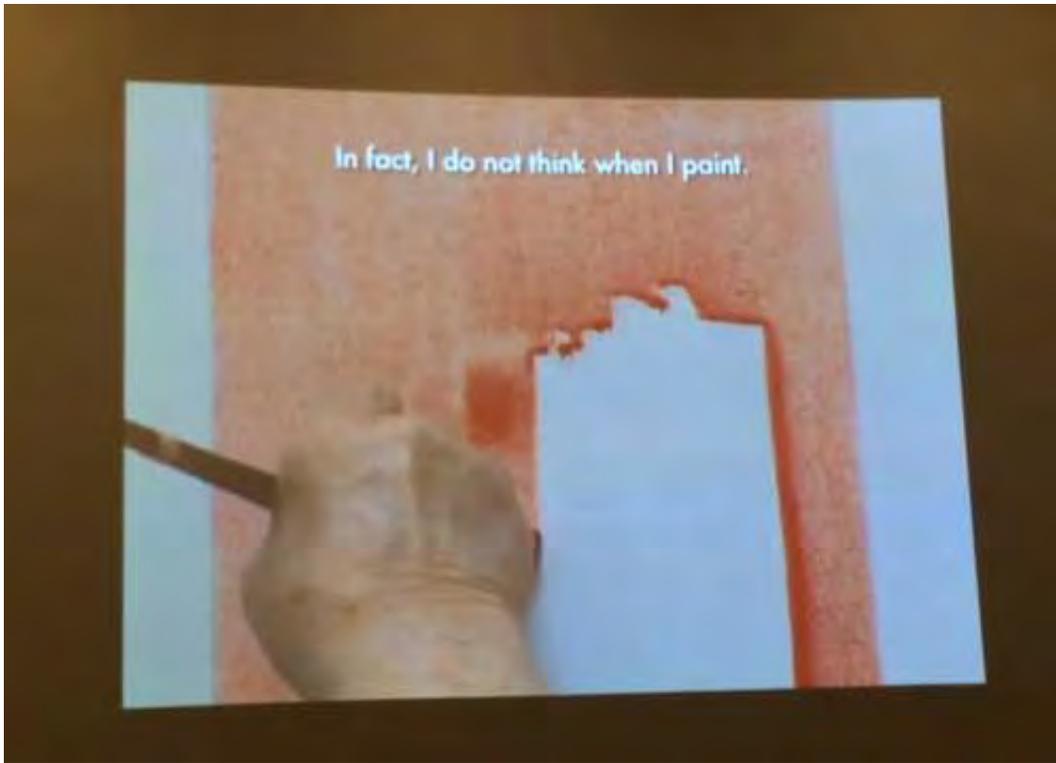


*Agnes Martin, Untitled, 1960. Oil on canvas, 12 x 12 inches. Museum of Art, Rhode Island School of Design, Providence, Gift of the Bayard and Harriet K. Ewing Collection*

On our way up the ramp, we slipped through the keyhole-shaped door into the study

library to watch two short films of interviews with Martin, filmed late in her life. It was very intimate to listen to her words in a small room. She spoke about her desire not to work from negativity, her efforts to empty her mind entirely when working, and about the role of inspiration.





In one film she is shown carefully applying a thin reddish pink wash to the canvas. The soothing concentration on this simple activity generated enough calm and clarity for me that suddenly the puzzle of how to celebrate the 30th anniversary of *M/E/A/N/I/N/G* which had eluded us earlier in the year was solved: I have a blog, we could use my blog as an initial platform for a spontaneous, short deadline, final issue. I looked at Susan and mouthed, I have an idea. So we end as we began, with a Mickey Rooney and Judy Garland “let’s put on a show” production. It is the small activism of giving a few people a place for their voice, and we are grateful to all the artists and writers who found the time to respond to our call.

\*\*\*



*Susan Bee and Mira Schor, M/E/A/N/I/N/G, December 1986-December 2016*

\*\*\*