

# FORT GANSEVOORT

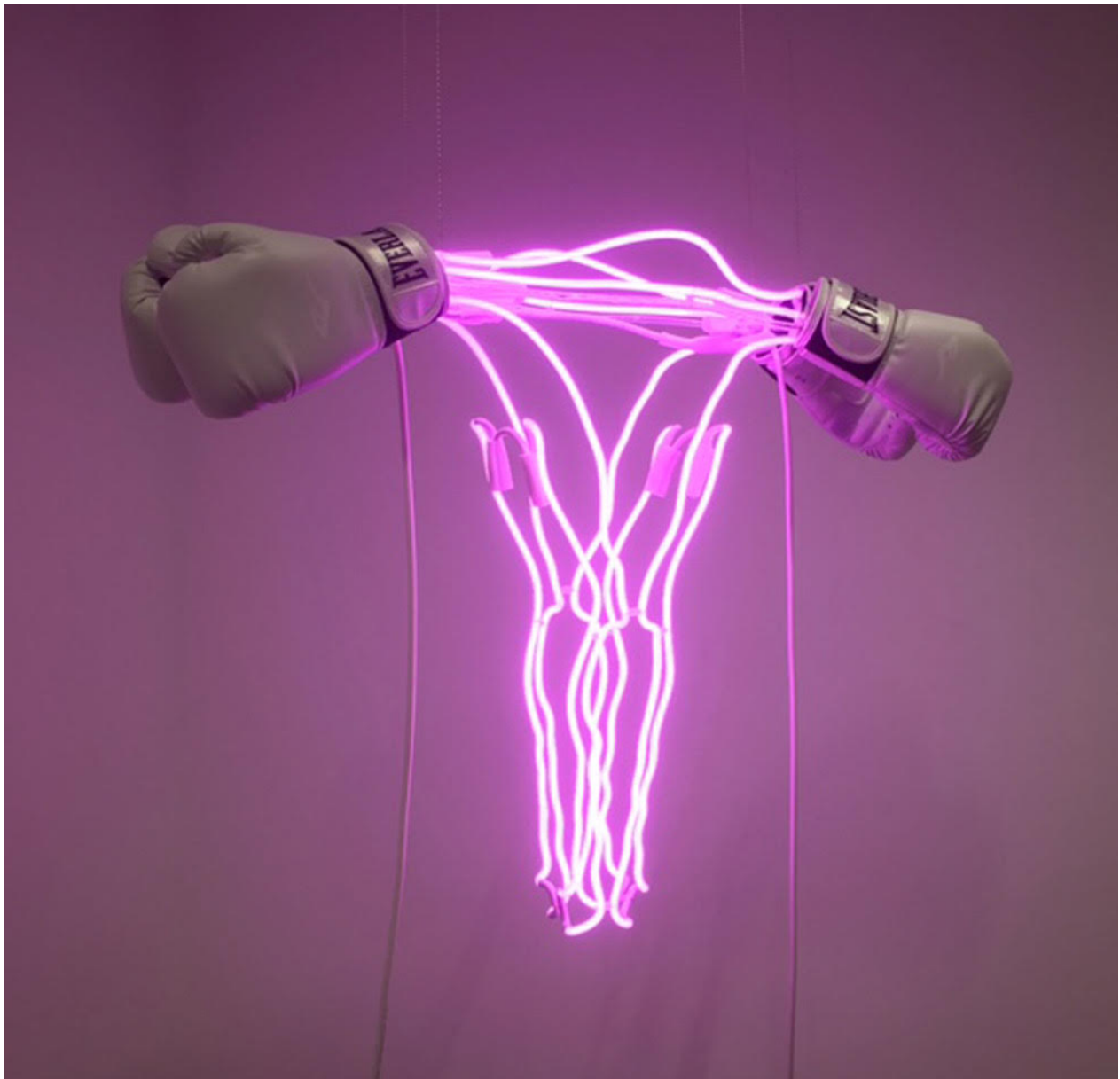
## The Creators Project

The First-Ever Artist-Run Super PAC Wants Your Vote

For Freedoms Political Action Committee is trying to redefine the 2016 Presidential Election.

By Antwaun Sargent

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Zoë Buckman | Champ, 2016 | Neon, glass and leather | 30 x 18 x 10 inches

Flying above Jack Shainman's gallery in NYC is a flag by the artist Dread Scott that reads: A MAN WAS LYNCHED BY THE POLICE YESTERDAY. Scott's flag, welcomes visitors to the politically charged, For Freedoms exhibition hosted by the For Freedoms Political Action Committee, the first of its kind run by artists. The concept was co-founded by artists Eric Gottesman and Hank

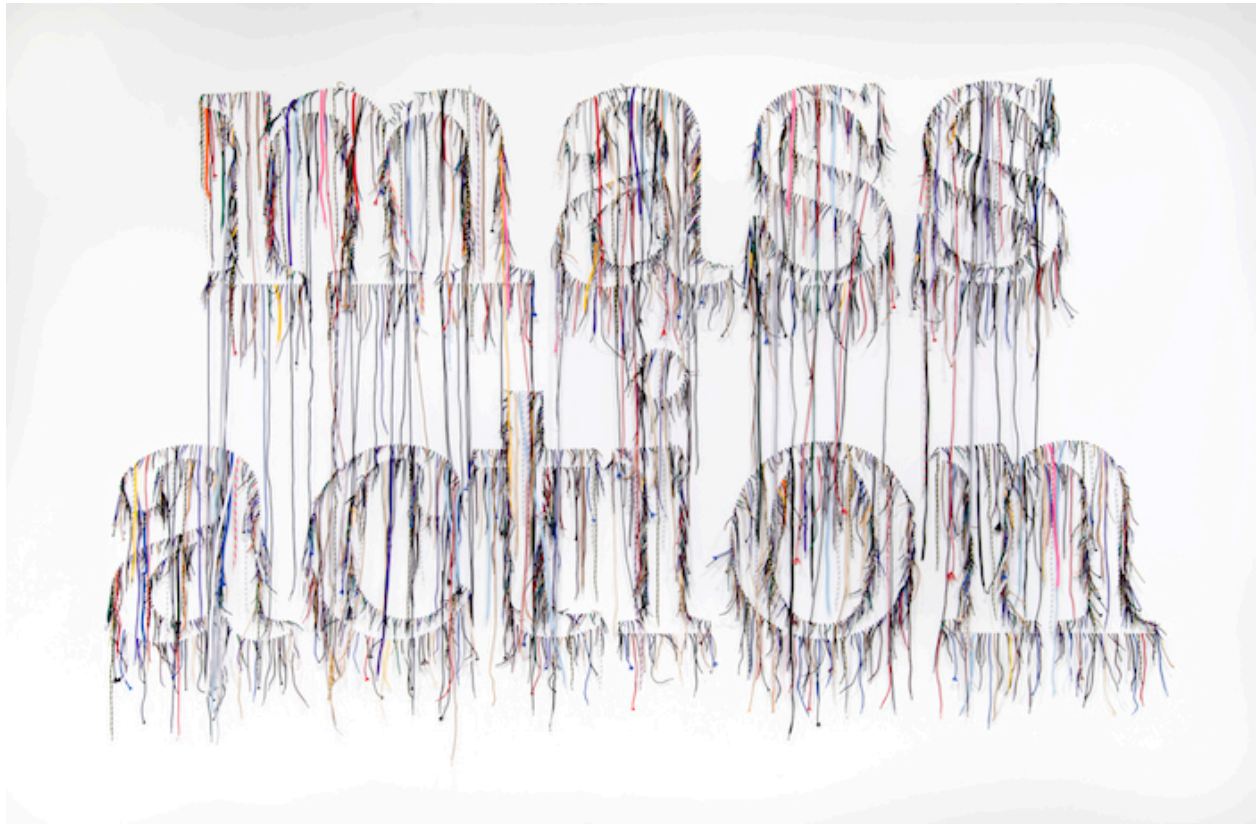
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Willis Thomas, and the Shainman gallery acts as both an exhibition space and campaign headquarters for the project.

“My mission is to get people to realize that art can be both good and political,” explains Thomas to The Creators Project. “And to get people who don’t necessarily see themselves interested in art to wrestle and interpret the ideas in it and to give artists who are often seen as passive members of civic society to be able to be involved in the political system.”

He adds, “The mission of this PAC is to try and affect the outcome of an election. We want to activate fine artists and fine artists’ work to affect the discourse around this election. We want the work to spark and elevate the conversations away from good-bad, right-left, black and white in thinking about the complicated issues that affect us all.”

The exhibition, features work by more than 40 artists including Mickalene Thomas, Alec Soth, Aida Muluneh, and Nari Ward. The works explore some of the most politically charged issues shaping the 2016 presidential election.



Nari Ward, Mass Action, 2016, Shoelaces. 84 X 130 X 2 Inches. All Images Courtesy Of The Artists And Jack Shainman Gallery, New York.

For Freedoms, takes its name from painter Norman Rockwell’s Four Freedoms war bond oil paintings. The works illustrate four American ideals—Freedom of Speech, Freedom of Worship, Freedom from Fear, Freedom from Want—that President Franklin Roosevelt spoke of in a 1941

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State of the Union address on the eve of American involvement in WWII. “We were very inspired by Roosevelt and Rockwell’s notion of freedom,” says Thomas. “But in the 40s the notion of freedom was easier to grasp, but in a much more heterogeneous American society, the question becomes much more complicated.”



Installation View Of Jack Shainman’s 24th Gallery. Above: Norman Rockwell’s Four Freedoms And Kameelah Janan Rasheed’s Prints.

In the 24th Street Shainman gallery, Rockwell’s portraits are mounted next to black and yellow text works by Kameelah Janan Rasheed. Rockwell’s Freedom from Want, depicting a white American family gathered around their dinner table as they are served turkey, is accompanied by Rasheed’s print that reads: “PURCHASE THE PROPER BOOTS WITH WHICH TO PULL YOURSELF UP BY THE BOOTSTRAPS.” Rasheed’s work is a play on the old American saying— “pull yourself up by your bootstraps” and stands in stark contrast to Rockwell’s vision of 40s America. The Rockwell-Rasheed pairing illustrates one of the basic principles of For Freedoms. The super PAC seeks to share a wide variety of political perspectives, even opposing ones.



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Cassils, Advertisement: Homage To Benglis, 2011, C-Print. 40 X 30 Inches (Print).

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Cassils' Advertisement: Homage to Bengils, is a c-print of the trans man in a white jockstrap, and red lipstick, posing proudly showing off his nearly nude body. Trans rights have captured the public's imagination in the wake of the ongoing killing of trans women of color and the North Carolina bathroom ordinances that seek to have folks use the restrooms that correspond with the gender they were assigned at birth. Andrea Bowers' Dignity Safety Justice: Woman With Raised Fist (Trans Latina Coalition, Blockade at the Beverly Center, L.A, CA, March 20th, 2015), also raises questions around trans rights and visibility. Gender politics are also explored in Zoe Buckman's Champ and Marilyn Minter's Mini Plush.



Rashid Johnson, Run, 2016, Oil Stick On Paper. 21 ¾ X 29 ¾ Inches (Paper).

Coby Kennedy's Supply and Demand (The Anti-Nigger Machine) is a gun vending machine that calls attention to the proliferation of guns, police, and white violence against black Americans. Rashid Johnson's Run Jesse Run takes the phrase that was popularly chanted for black sprinter Jesse Owens during the 1936 Olympics. In 1984, presidential supporters used the slogan to encourage Jesse Jackson on the campaign trail. Today, "Run Jesse Run," evokes the legacies of Owen and Jackson to explore just how far black men have come. In another work on view, Johnson writes with a black oil stick, "run." Carrie Mae Weem's American Monument II, of the artist photographed in a black dress inside the Lincoln Memorial, further raises the specter of race relations in America.

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Trevor Paglen, Vote War, 2016, Postcard On Voter Registration Form. 4 X 6 Inches.

The exhibition also includes art that makes more direct statements about the current presidential elections. On tables within the gallery, voter registration forms are clipped to postcards bearing Trevor Paglen's Vote War. The coupling suggests that the artist would like citizens to make informed decisions when they are filling in their ballots. On a whiteboard, artist Wyatt Gallery, who is also the executive director of For Freedoms, wrote in black marker, "Go Trump," then crossed it out. "One of our goals is to improve the way politics are ran as well as by creating more critical discourse," says Gallery.

Using the political action committee structure, For Freedoms, represents a modern evolution of artist activism. The organization is selling the work in the show, asking art collectors for financial support, and fundraising online so they can campaign for the myriad of issues the artists want American political leaders to address. The ways For Freedoms is raising money is a performance in itself, commenting on the links between how money in politics make issues appear before the American public and contribute to the passage of law.

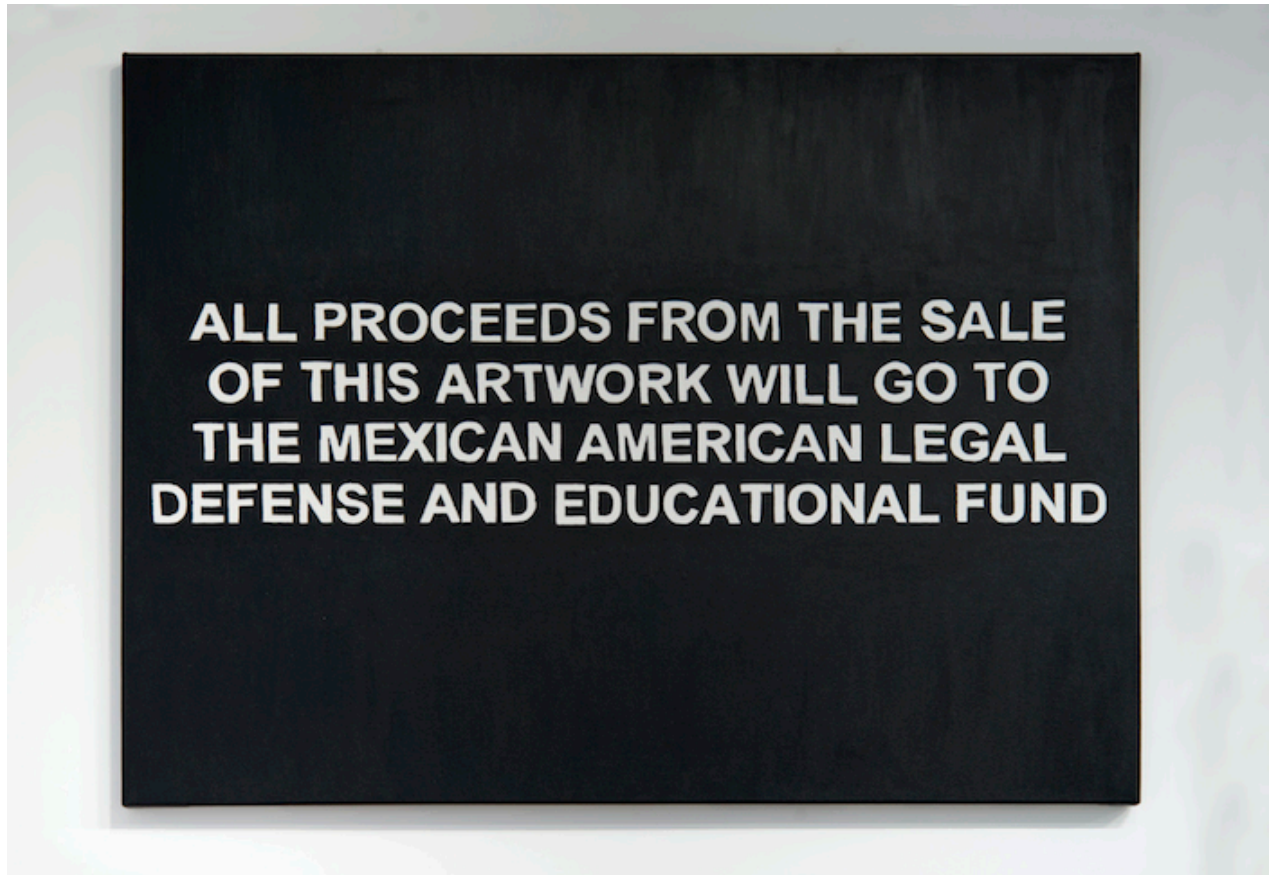


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Andres Serrano, America: Donald Trump, 2004, C-Print. 65 X 54 ½ Inches (Framed).

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Pablo Helguera, All Proceeds, 2016, Acrylic On Canvas. 36 X 48 Inches.

As the election season rolls on, the PAC will turn the mounted works into bus, subway, and billboard ads to take their messages to the streets. Dread Scott, has already cut a one-minute ad structured like a traditional political ad campaign. Scott calls the spot, “an anti-political ad,” that attacks both presidential candidates.

“Great art ask questions and it doesn’t give answers,” says Thomas. “One of the translation struggles people have is trying to actually look at this through an art lens. You can say that elections are about votes but fundamentally if we do live in a democracy and we care about freedom we should be really investigating what we are saying.”

For Freedoms continues through July 29 at Jack Shainman Gallery.