

Post-election: Critical reflections on the Trump era dominate three-artist show at Artworks Gallery

TOM PATTERSON Special Correspondent 17 hrs ago 0

SALE! Subscribe for \$1/mo.



Lea Lackey-Zachmann's work will be on display as part of a three-person exhibit at Artworks Gallery in Winston-Salem.

Lea Lackey-Zachmann, provided

[f](#) [t](#) [e](#) [p](#) [b](#)

TOM PATTERSON Special Correspondent

The divisive politics that continue to roil the United States in the wake of the presidential election serve as the backdrop for the current exhibition at Artworks Gallery.

Ostensibly a group show, it comes off as three coinciding solo exhibitions, each comprising a separate body of work, and each with its own title. The selection is numerically dominated by a centrally installed array of Jessica Tefft's work under the title "May Cause Ongoing Harm."

Politically charged

In an accompanying wall text, Tefft traces that title and a recurrent theme in her work to the Mueller Report, former attorney general Robert Mueller's report to the U.S. Congress on Russian interference in the 2016 presidential election. In the version released to the public, many passages were "redacted" — blacked out to render them unreadable and flagged with the caveat "May cause ongoing harm."

Tefft's work encompasses a variety of mediums, and much of it relates directly to the Mueller Report and Donald Trump's presidential administration, which chose the passages to be redacted. Like many contemporary artists, Tefft is not a fan of the outgoing president, as is clear from her work on view here.

In "My Button is Bigger Than Yours," Tefft appropriates "The Son of Man," a widely reproduced surrealist painting by Rene Magritte, as the basis for a clever digital collage. It satirizes Trump's "bromance" with North Korean dictator Kim Jong Un, as well as the latter's aspirations to nuclear-arms superpower status.

Magritte's original painting was a portrait of himself wearing a dark business suit, an overcoat and a bowler hat, with a green apple superimposed over his face. In Tefft's repurposing of this iconic work, an enlarged image of a red, four-holed clothing button completely covers the figure's head. Strategically showing around the button and through the buttonholes are just enough details to identify Donald Trump's face.

Standing in front of and below the Magritte/Trump figure is a diminutive Kim Jong Un with a smaller red button superimposed over his face. He's instantly identifiable by his dark military uniform and his high flat-top hairstyle. Notwithstanding Tefft's use of clothing buttons, the title alludes to the popular perception of a superpower leader's ready access to a nuclear-strike button capable of exterminating any perceived enemy nation.

In a thematically related vein is "May Cause Harm to Ongoing Matter," a collage-format, black-and-white print that digitally combines images of Trump and Russian strongman Vladimir Putin to create a sinister-looking composite figure. In this stark portrait's periphery are tantalizing text snippets from charged names and phrases — "intelligence-gathering," "Russia" and "Republican Party platform," interspersed with silhouetted swinging-monkey icons that also figure in another of Tefft's digital collages.

The congressional hearings on the Trump administration's dealings with a newly installed Ukrainian president popularized the Latin term quid-pro-quo, which Tefft obliquely plays on in several images of a squid and a crow. The two become a friendly cartoon duo in a pair of unpainted ceramic sculptures that look like they want to be painted. Meanwhile, she has embroidered separate portraits of "Squid" and "ProCrow" in a pair of ornately framed miniatures.

Along with other tweaks at recent geopolitics, Tefft's display takes on issues including gun violence, police misconduct and global warming. Conspicuously missing is any apparent reference to the COVID-19 pandemic.

Printed charms

The stark political divide in this country isn't directly addressed in Woodie Anderson's portion of this show, but it certainly hovers in the upper background. She titled this group of images "Weary Heart," a clear allusion to heart-weariness from the seemingly non-stop culture-clashing noise of recent years.

Anderson's festively colored prints on cloth and paper are charms against inertia and hopelessness — icons of strength, endurance, and abiding energy. The thematic gist of her stylized imagery is reflected in the titles of individual pieces — "Eyes," "Fire," "Mindful," "Comfort." Inspiration is the name of the game.

A white bird reminiscent of the flying dove in Tefft's "Peace" is the graphic and thematic focus of Anderson's "Nolite te Bastardes Carborundorum," with that Latin slogan (meaning "Don't let the bastards grind you down") emblazoned across a white bird's wingspan.

Birds are recurring images in this group of Anderson's prints, as are wide-eyed faces, open hands, arrows and stylized flames. Several prints feature abstracted solar imagery in high-key colors.

Nature nurture

On the wall opposite Anderson's prints, Lea Lackey-Zachmann employs a darker and more subdued, earth-based palette in her five-part series of mixed-media monoprints. She's a resolute nature abstractionist, whose work typically has a neo-pagan undercurrent.

"Still Standing Like the Trees" is the title of this series, whose individual titles reference physical or psychological activities in the first person plural: "When We Breathe," "When We Muse," "When We Feel." Each monoprint attempts to visualize the activity referenced in the title through a number of verticality with features that suggest bubbles, water currents, flames and vegetation.

The tenor of the times and the tone of the other work in this group show encourages a political reading of the verb "breathe" in any context. It eventually calls to mind the phrase "I can't breathe" — a police-innured pedestrian's final plea morphed into a street-protest slogan — not to mention the breathing difficulties symptomizing COVID-19 and smoke inhalation from recent wildfires in the western United States.

The simple act of breathing has become a political statement, as has mentioning the act in an art context.

Leaving aside the titles, on their own as evocative markings on paper, these pieces extend Lackey-Zachmann's ongoing project of visualizing natural forces. It's a theme both limitless and imaginatively challenging.

Want to go?

What: Exhibit featuring art by Woodie Anderson, Lea Lackey-Zachmann and Jessica Tefft on display through Nov. 29

Where: Artworks Gallery, 564 Trade St., Winston-Salem

Gallery hours: noon to 3 p.m. Thursday through Saturday and by appointment

Information: 336-723-5890 or artworks-gallery.org

[0](#) comments

Tags [Jessica Tefft](#) [Show](#) [Donald Trump](#) [Politics](#) [Art](#)

Most Popular