

## For Immediate Release

### ***FU@K OFF***

**Co-curated by Monica Lundy and Walter Maciel**

**25 January – 1 March 2025**

**Opening Reception: Saturday, January 25th, 5:00pm – 8:00pm**

Walter Maciel Gallery is pleased to present *FU@K OFF*, featuring the work of 22 contemporary artists whose practices portray personal experiences and concerns that are likely to be attacked, compromised and neglected during the second term of the Trump administration. Co-curated by Monica Lundy and Walter Maciel, the show gives a platform to artists who fight for human rights, equality and inclusivity as part of the BIPOC, indigenous, gay, trans, queer, immigrant and feminist communities as well as artists who are concerned about environmental issues like climate crisis and the unhoused community and women's rights to privacy and health. This group exhibition serves as an opportunity to share concerns and experience of vulnerable groups and their allies. The show will include works by gallery artists: Hung Liu, Maria E. Piñeres, Lezley Saar, Nike Schröder, Lisa Solomon, Nathan Vincent and Dana Weiser, as well as artists: Enrique Chagoya, Jonah Elijah, Francesca Gabbiani, Micol Hebron, Dave Young Kim, Mary Little, Willie Little, Monica Lundy, Amanda Maciel Antunes (Dama), Aline Mare, Yulia Pinkusevich, Matt Pipes, Daniele Puppi, Megan Reed and Sanjay Vora.

We are living in a moment of great political divide with our current authoritarian government overturning basic human rights, equality and justice for many Americans who do not identify as white, cis-male and heterosexual. Women's health continues to be in jeopardy with abortion being banned in many states as well as access to birth control and IVF treatments. The false promises of stabilizing the economy and helping the middle class will likely be met with greater inflation, imposing high tariffs, limiting affordable healthcare and medications and a possible recession, cutting government assistance for underprivileged and immigrant communities. The ongoing threat of ending social security benefits and support for many non-profit organizations looms over our communities. A higher percentage of unhoused residents in urban and suburban communities across our country could result from the unstable economy with a great divide between the super wealthy and those living in poverty. Issues of basic human rights for undocumented immigrants are inhumanely being challenged with the government's current action of rounding up undocumented residents for mass deportations and separation of families. Furthermore, laws and regulations continue to ignore the climate crisis with no plan to slow down or reverse the continuing effects of catastrophic weather and widespread natural disasters like the devastating recent fires that caused so much catastrophic damage in our Los Angeles communities. The diverse artworks included in this exhibition comment on shared experiences of identity, fascism, women's health, gay and trans rights, immigration, climate change and the unhoused crisis.

Enrique Chagoya includes a print from his codex work entitled *The Ghosts of Borderlandia*, referencing the borders that people build between themselves. These invisible borders create stereotypes that dehumanize the unknowing thus creating an "us vs. them" context. The subject evokes the fears and carelessness imposed by the Trump administration and the threat to build a new physical border wall while igniting the emotional borders of social classes, genders, religions, ethnicities and cultures.

Jonah Elijah celebrates the intricacies of Black identity through personal narratives and ideologies. His expression involves portraying cinematic scenes from his past and present life experiences delving into memories with a profound sense of nostalgia. One of his paintings in the show entitled *The Great American Bootlicker* depicts a black man in a shirt marked with the letters USA licking a boot adorned with the stars and stripes of the American flag holding the pant leg of military fatigues.

Francesca Gabbiani's work included in our exhibition comments of the effects of weather patterns in Southern California and the impending fire risks with a depiction of a utility pole in front of a burning palm tree. The image is made with gouache, ink and acrylic in her contemporary iconic style, commenting on the hazards of these outdated wires and their threat to causing urban fires particularly during the constant Santa Ana high winds.

Micol Hebron is a feminist artist whose practice focuses on the inequality of experience, participation and acceptance based on gender. Her newest series of work implements the use of AI to explore inherent bias in datasets and resulting images regarding depictions of women and women's rights. Her work in our show tests what restrictions and censorship are placed on text-to-image platforms featuring work that comment on the Equal Rights Amendment and different parts of female anatomy named specifically after the male doctors who studied them.

Dave Young Kim's work is an exploration of the tension between nostalgia and new beginnings. Growing up with Korean immigrant parents in Los Angeles, Kim was fascinated by the graffiti and neon signage through the urban and suburban landscape of the city. His works in the show combine figurative paintings connecting the nostalgia rooted in cultural history and collective memories with a smaller format neon metal box sign emulating an actual sign from a Korean owned business.

Mary Little takes an experimental and sculptural approach to her minimal works presenting forms that allude to the female body. Her practice explores the interaction between light, surface and gravity using unbleached cotton canvas and testing the elasticity, volume, scale and texture. The sculptural work in our show includes a panel sewn together in the middle with two protruding folds creating a crevice in the vulnerable surface.

Willie Little's sculptures are part of his *Nodder Doll/Living Doll* series commenting on social justice. The assemblages include found Pickaninny bobble head dolls overtly revealing the subversive nature of racial tropes in both their past life marketed to white America as trinkets to insult, degrade and belittle and their present existence as a reminder of this racism. Little reclaims this assault on Black culture in his work by presenting them as affirmations to the strength and resilience to the modern-day Black woman.

Hung Liu's painting depicts a joyful young boy depicting a photograph taken in hiding during her time forced to live in the countryside for four years during the Cultural Revolution. A friend gave Liu a camera for safe keeping and she began to photograph portraits of local farmers and their families. Her paintings in this series are depicted using these images as reference and rendered into her signature painterly style with areas of heavily applied pigment balanced with thin washes on linen.

Monica Lundy is known for her portraits of female inmates who have been imprisoned in various facilities from traditional jails and prisons to mental institutions. Lundy's work is based on extensive archival research, and her portraits explore the notions of private versus public identity, who finds themselves on the periphery of society based on sociopolitical structures, and how that concept evolves as society evolves. Her painting, *Visage X, No. 19: Red, White & Blue*, is a part of the series *Visage X* which explores the notion of archetypes cast upon women. This portrait is based upon a mugshot of a young anonymous woman, as and intentionally represented in the colors of the American flag.

Amanda Maciel Antunes is known as Dama and uses her experience of growing up in a modest mining town in rural Brazil as her subjects often executed in photographs. Her work includes a group of small square images displayed like a crucifix engaging in the appropriation of symbols by fascist, authoritarian and totalitarian governments. Each image is a combination of photographs stitched together as a daily ritual to document personal thoughts and experiences about migration, ambition and love in relationship to violence, illness, birth and death.

Aline Mare paints on digital photographs of specific locations affected by extreme weather conditions connecting issues of the environment to global warming. Her image of *Tulare Lake* was taken after a series of storms that battered Central California resulting in the overflow of water from broken levees, flooding crops while refilling a previous lake used by Native Americans. The newly formed lake has now grown to cover more than 113,000 acres, an area nearly as large as Lake Tahoe.

Matt Pipes tells the visual story of being queer in his expressionistic paintings. He uses both historical and personal photographs to depict gay subjects interacting in various moments of their social lives finding a link to his own culture and identity. Queer culture is unique in that it encompasses the entire spectrum of humanity, all sexes, races and creeds, but queer people are often born into a heterosexual family and culture and must seek each other out. Both paintings in our show are from his *Fair Oaks Hotel* series: one depicts a young man in roller skates kneeling down with feathered hair from a 70s gay rag and the other shows a frolicking man seen with a mask in drag being fondled by his shirtless partner.

Maria E. Piñeres depicts an image from her naturalization card as an immigrant from Colombia where she was born before coming to the US with her mother as a toddler. The portrait is done in Piñeres's signature medium using embroidery and follows the scale used in our previous show about the then projected fears of Trump's first term when we invited artists to do small portraits of an immigrant in protest. The image captures her youth and naïve spirit as a young teenager exploring the world.

Yulia Pinkusevich's work comments on issues of global warming including three small format paintings displaying the effects of fire, a particularly tragic subject with the recent fires in Los Angeles. The shape of each canvas is reminiscent of a gothic window as if looking into an architectural space that has been started to burn from within. A diptych painting of a submerged iceberg is also included in the show showing the effects of inevitable melt from the rising temperature around the globe.

Daniele Puppi uses video projectors, synchronizers, amplifiers, speakers and microphones to activate and amplify powers of perception, especially our visual and auditory ones. Our show includes *American Song* from his *ReAnimated Cinema* series inspired by the famous film *Easy Rider*, which follows the journey of the protagonists as they ride their choppers across America in search of themselves and a new sense of freedom. The film is re-edited with the lead characters remaining unharmed and not fatally wounded by their attackers. Furthermore, the audio is replaced with a rhythmic song from a Native American ceremony with shifts in the pictorial field with every beat of the drum and gunshots. This work raises questions about the notion of "freedom", from individual freedom to cultural freedom in the context of the American culture and history.

Megan Reed's installation comments on issues of homelessness in Los Angeles using concepts of *bricolage*, the use of everyday materials as a form of creating elevated, new mythologies from the old. Upon entry to the gallery alcove, Reed creates a version of her abstract sculptures stacked loosely upon one another. The structure reveals its precarious nature while acting as metaphor for the fragile experience of becoming unhoused in expensive urban cities. The show also includes a larger color photograph documenting her experience of setting up these forms in abandoned buildings often inhabited by the unhoused community.

Lezley Saar's large banner painting on fabric is part of her recent series, *Black Garden* depicting portraits inspired by Antonio Artaud's poem. The portrait is not literal translation of the poem, but rather a personification of the lines of the poem which serve as the title. The painting juxtaposes images of nature, biology, anatomy and assorted objects as metaphors for the subject's thoughts, consciousness and truth. Ongoing issues of colorism are explored with differences in skin tone, eye color and hair type. In addition, the subject in her small painting on a found book also includes a mystic woman with features of being mixed race.

Nike Schröder's diptych is part of her series, "*inzwischen*" which translates to "meanwhile" or "since that time" from her native German. Her portrait of two German soldiers kissing during World War II is the subject that is repeated as a large painted images on the surface of each canvas as well as several smaller stitched versions. In this series, Schröder uses provocative found images of male and female soldiers engaged in playful activity. The freedom and naïve instinctiveness of the nudity is juxtaposed with the harshness and reality of war.

Lisa Solomon's mother emigrated from Japan in 1971 after meeting her Jewish American father and she had some affiliation with the Japanese American community in Southern California as a child growing up in Los Angeles. Her sympathy and interest in the experience of these Japanese Americans lead to her exploration of the human repression, fear and racial bias associated with the incarceration during World War II. The intimate drawings in our show are depictions of racist photographs found online after Solomon researched the unruly experience.

Nathan Vincent's knit and crocheted sculptures explore gender roles and the challenges that arise from prescribed norms. Having grown up the son of a conservative pastor in the Midwest, he learned to crochet from his mother much to her dismay as a young boy. Vincent's deliberate selection of these stereotypically gendered mediums questions our assumptions around objects and activities, calling attention to the impact on our beliefs and the ways we define ourselves through the lens of what is culturally appropriate based on the gender we were assigned at birth.

Sanjay Vora's upbringing with East Indian immigrant parents with steeped in learning and enjoying Indian Classical music. His paintings are layered, experiential constructions that are ultimately a collective reckoning with life experience leading towards mortality. Both Hindu and atheistic principles from his American-born childhood pervade his continuous wonder, confronting time, loss, and the unattainable. The painting included in our show reveals his father dressed in a traditional Indian coat seen beneath a net-like layer of pigment as a metaphor for the textural residue left by my endless seeking for meaning, truth and comfort.

Dana Weiser's ceramic vessel utilizes conventional techniques, Hanbok fabric and pearl beads inspired by the Goryeo Dynasty (918-1392AD) pottery. Weiser creates a personal narrative by utilizing and employing traditional Korean imagery and objects to establish a broader historical context for her missing ethnic identity as a Korean adoptee into a Jewish American family. The sculpture included in our show is a funerary piece dedicated to the atrocious death of Christina Yuna Lee who was attacked in her apartment and stabbed to death as part of the growing hate crimes against Asian Americans since the Trump presidency and the early start of the pandemic. Her self-portrait is part of the series, *Enacting My Koreanness, Self-portrait performance* where she painted her face a different version of a traditional Korean mask sold as tourist souvenirs in Korea. Based on a memory from her childhood, the Korean dance crowns worn on Weiser's head speak to cultural disruption and racial authenticity while acknowledging the duality and inconsistencies of her identity.

In conjunction with this exhibition, we have a collaborative film project entitled *(FU) Filmmakers Unite* produced by Jay Rosenblatt and Ellen Bruno and curated by filmmaker Anne Alvergue. The series is projected in Gallery 4 and includes eight short films made in response to Trump's first presidential term in 2017 ranging in topics from immigration, activism, the political divide and racism. The series is presented as a time capsule reiterating the ongoing threat to democracy while acting as a reminder of our resistance and resiliency in Trump's first term. Alvergue curated her first short film series for our gallery in 2010 and we featured her film, *The Great Outdoors* as a solo show at our gallery in 2015. Her latest film, *The Martha Mitchell Effect* was nominated for an Academy Award for Best Documentary short in 2023.

Monica Lundy, Walter Maciel and Hung Liu curated the show, *With Liberty and Justice for Some* inviting over 80 artists to make a small-scale portrait of an immigrant in protest against Trump's first inauguration which was on view at our gallery from January 7 through March 4, 2017. The show traveled to the San Francisco Arts Commission Gallery and the Berkeley Art Center through the end of 2017. Our new show, *FU@K OFF* is dedicated to Hung Liu who passed away from pancreatic cancer in the summer of 2021. Like before, we encourage support within our community as we transition into the next four years protecting basic human rights and equality.