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The Dallas Morning News

Not politics as usual

'Run for President' show offers wry commentary on election process

By DANIELLE AVRAM
Special Contributor

In 1984, TV personality Larry Harmon, also known as Bozo the Clown, announced his run for the American presidency.

Running under slogans such as, "Put the Real Bozo in the White House," and "What's Another Clown in the White House?", Harmon's campaign was part publicity stunt, part attempt to draw out voters, and part statement about the American political system.

An example of the golden marketability of political outliers and reactionary politics, Bozo's campaign forms the backbone of Kathryn Andrews' exhibition, "Run for President," which opened Saturday at the Nasher Sculpture Center.

Presciently timed and eerily paralleling the circusesque plotline of the 2016 presidential election, "Run for President" is an amalgamation of ready-made Hollywood film props, found imagery and Andrews' signature polished-steel pieces. The resulting exhibit has an atmosphere that is at once over-the-top, yet melancholy and even a little foreboding.

Although Andrews originally designed the show (first exhibited earlier this year

at the Museum of Contemporary Art, Chicago) to follow a linear narrative through a fictitious election, a term in office and the end of a presidency, the layout of the Nasher galleries caused her to reconfigure the objects in relationship to one another, resulting in a narrative abstraction.

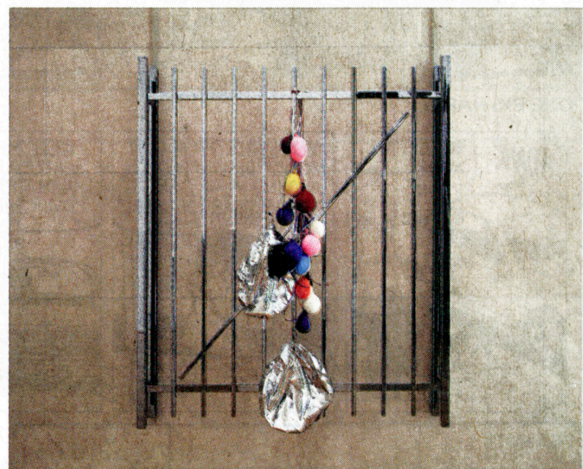
The effect is one of being able to see the electoral process laid out from beginning to end, and experience the emotional push-and-pull of each stage — from the initial swells of excitement, through resignation to reality, to the final "lame duck" days of a term — simultaneously.

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Photos by Nan Coulter/Special Contributor

The "Run for President" exhibition by Kathryn Andrews continues at the Nasher Sculpture Center through Jan. 8. Bozo's 1984 campaign is the backbone of the show.



October 16 is made of chrome-plated steel, magnets and balloons. The balloons are replaced annually and left to deflate.

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ART REVIEW



Nan Coulter/Special Contributor

Artist Kathryn Andrews appears in a reflection of the work *Die Another Day*, 2013. It's made of polished stainless steel, glass, brass and certified props, with the Oval Office during the Reagan administration reflected in the background. Her show is at the Nasher.

Can just any clown run for office?

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It is happiness and sadness, bloat and deflation, seduction and rejection, rolled into one.

While echoing the current American political climate, "Run for President" is uncannily attuned to the environment of Dallas, particularly as it concerns our presidential history. It is worth noting that

the exhibition opens on the heels of *The Dallas Morning News*' recommendation of Hillary Clinton, the first time in more than 75 years the newspaper has backed a Democratic presidential candidate.

Andrews acknowledges that installing the show in Dallas has raised some new thoughts about the exhibition. "The recent police shootings

here and the city's history of presidential assassination invite a closer reading of some of the works, particularly those with a violent subtext."

Visitors enter the gallery on a long red carpet, celebrity-for-a-moment as the shiny metallic surfaces of various sculptures bounce their visages across the room. At one end looms a photograph of Bozo

announcing his run for president: standing at a podium, flanked by Secret Service-style men wearing clown noses. Drained of all color, the image feels anarchistic and menacing.

Across the room, large black-and-white prints of Sammy Davis Jr. with Richard Nixon, and Nancy Reagan sitting in the lap of Mr. T, tower over the space, amplifying the celebrity lunacy that surrounds the presidential office.

Large-scale replicas of 19th-century Currier & Ives political cartoons, printed on bold, color-blocked backdrops, adorn the walls, the colors referencing Hollywood villains and superheroes — suggestive of the duality with which we view presidential candidates.

The supports of these pieces are stuffed with costumes worn by the likes of Jack Nicholson and Tobey Maguire, a nod to the image commodification of political figures: think Hillary Clinton's pantsuits, Michelle Obama's biceps or Donald Trump's cloud of hair.

A large, arcing photograph of the Oval Office dominates one-half of the gallery, punctuated in the middle by *Lethal Weapon*, a shiny, cylindrical sculpture with a lone hole in its

surface. Standing in front of this piece places the viewer in direct relationship to the desk of the president, while staring into the hole reveals a gun hidden within the cylinder's hollow interior, the barrel pointed directly at the viewer's face.

Yet it is two quieter pieces that most poignantly underscore the myth of the American presidency. *Gift Cart* features a stainless-steel cart adorned with festively wrapped gifts rented from a Hollywood prop shop. *October 16* is a chrome-plated gate strung with helium balloons, which are replaced annually and left to deflate over time. Both are indicative of the facade of the presidency, a vaulted position occupied by a never-ending string of predecessors and successors, each one playing the role for a specific amount of time.

Andrews notes, "Seeing the works in person is important. It gives way to really considering how material forms, such as the balloons in *October 16* which cyclically inflate and rot, not unlike the idealism surrounding new leaders and what comes to pass."

Danielle Avram is a curator and writer based in Dallas. She is currently gallery director at Texas Woman's University.



A large black-and-white image of Nancy Reagan sitting in the lap of Mr. T helps amplify the celebrity lunacy that surrounds the presidency.