

It's all a show Kathryn Andrews mashes politics and showbiz at Broad Museum

Los Angeles-based artist Kathryn Andrews exhibit runs Dec. 16 - Feb. 11 at the MSU Broad Art Museum

By Dylan Tarr | December 14, 2017



Kathryn Andrews, *National Flower*, 2017

opens the door to serious questions about the way media juggernauts run roughshod over fragile shoots of thought. "I was interested in exploring where individuals can exist, if at all, in the face of such overwhelming power structures and how we can be more than image-consuming zombies," said Andrews. The local angle adds extra appeal. "It will be interesting to see what people who were present during the filming of the movie take away from the exhibition," she said. Taking her ideas beyond movies to the theater of politics, Andrews' newest work revolves around the intersection between the individual and the state in a post-election America. "The two works on view look at what it means to exist in a world of disinformation, surveillance and governmental coups," Andrews said. "They also point to beauty and poetry and how their production and consumption can function as resistance to systematic oppression."

Born in Mobile, Alabama, Andrews pursued a degree in fine arts at Duke University and continued her training at the Art Center College of Design in Pasadena, Calif., earning a master's in fine arts. Since then, she has shown her work both nationally and internationally. Andrews' upcoming installation at the Broad has roots that connect back to the work she did two years ago at the Museum of Contemporary Art in Chicago, entitled "Run for President." In some ways, her installation at the Broad is a sequel to her 2015 exhibit. "The exhibition I made at the MCA in Chicago in 2015 came before

Politicians have been blurring the divide between Washington and Hollywood, mashing theater and policy-making together, for years. Artist Kathryn Andrews has jumped into the melee with a multi-genre display of eclectic complexity and intelligence. Andrews' genre-bending exhibit, including two new sculptures, goes on display Friday at the Eli and Edythe Broad Art Museum as a part of the Broad's "Field Station" series.

Sculpted specifically for the Broad, Andrews' pieces incorporate elements of the building's role as a location for 2016 blockbuster "Batman v Superman." The Broad itself hosted a world-class cultural mashup when it was chosen as a location for "Batman v Superman." Andrews could not resist using such a spectacular collision of contemporary art and architecture with mass culture as a point of departure for her latest work. "I have been working with objects from Hollywood films for some time," said Andrews. One of her pieces is based on old Batman and Superman films. It was fun for locals to see mass-market mythmaking appropriate the Broad Museum for a week or so, but the encounter

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the election and had a lot of humorous elements exploring the absurdities of the American electoral process and its historical relationship to the entertainment industry," Andrews said. "This exhibition follows up on what has happened afterwards and is darker in tone." Andrews' partnership with the Broad was a long time coming. Steven Bridges, an associate curator at the Broad, spent an entire year working with Andrews at a former position at the MCA in Chicago, readying "Run for President." "I was just really blown away by her intelligence, her creativity and the ways in which she imbeds poignant commentary in her works," Bridges said. "She's one of these amazing artists that's able to layer so many different things into her work. The way in which you can approach and make connections within her work seem never ending."

While Andrews' work is very much governmentally engaged, the Broad serves only to provide a space for her pieces and the dialogue they create. "What we do is try to present the topics of today," Bridges said. "We're a contemporary art museum, we deal with contemporary issues. What we try to do, especially myself as the curator of the show, is present work in a way that is purposely meant to be somewhat open ended." The work has a life of its own, Bridges asserts, independent of its creator's intentions. "Good artwork should have the ability to speak on many levels and in many different ways," he said. "It's my hope that people will find meaning in it no matter how they're approaching it, their relationship with politics, their social life, or our current social and political landscape in America." While Bridges' invitation to the exhibit exudes institutional diplomacy, Andrews takes a clear enough stance with regard to her work.

"As the U.S. moves more towards an oligarchic structure, the presence of artists becomes more important, even though the challenge of being one increases," Andrews said. "Artists continue to model ways out of the quagmire, despite everything. I find this to be incredibly hopeful." And while Andrews rallies against the political swamp we've found ourselves in, she understands success as a working artist is never certain, especially in the United States. "Being an artist is difficult," Andrews said. "There is no guaranteed demand for your work and there is no governmental support in the U.S., unlike in other developed countries. It remains a radical position." Her vision elicits a range of responses from audiences, as all good art does. "That's always the question when opening an exhibition," Bridges said with a smile. "How are people really going to interact with this, how are they going to read into this, what are they going to see and how are they going to feel?" Bridges said, for some, the exhibit's references to blockbuster superheroes might be the draw, but he hopes they leave with more. "It's not up to me to define people's' experiences of the work," Bridges said. "But my hope is that people will come and consider the other layers that are imbedded in those works and not simply take them at face value."



Kathryn Andrews

For Andrews, these varying viewpoints are far from discrepancies, but the thesis of her work. "I'm always interested in bringing awareness to how we perceive our surroundings and in pinpointing how we prioritize certain kinds of seeing over other kinds," Andrews said. "I hope viewers will see the works and will think about the ways in which we, as individuals, can change the present through simple acts."

Field Station: Kathryn Andrews, MSU Broad Art Museum, Opening reception and artist conversation Fri., Dec. 15, 6-8 p.m.