

Pratt Manhattan Gallery
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Gallery hours:
Monday–Saturday
11 AM–6 PM
Thursday
11 AM–8 PM

Party Headquarters: Art in the Age of Political Absurdity



Pratt ¹²⁵

September 28–November 10, 2012

Pratt ¹²⁵

Exhibition Checklist:

All works and photos
courtesy of the artist
unless otherwise noted.

Donna Catanzaro

Oil Zombies, 2011

Digital collage, 14 x 14 inches



Also in the exhibition:

*Attack of the Tea Bag
Zombies*, 2011

Digital collage, 14 x 14 inches

Wall Street Zombies, 2011

Digital collage, 14 x 14 inches

Enrique Chagoya

The Head Ache (after George
Cruikshank), 2010

Digital etching and chine collé,
15.5 x 19.5 inches



Courtesy of the artist and George
Adams Gallery, NYC

Also in the exhibition:

Return to Goya No.9 (after
Goya's *Los Caprichos*), 2011

Aquatint etching and letterpress

stamp, 11 x 14.5 inches

Courtesy of the artist and ULAE

*No Se Puede Mirar/Cannot
Watch* (after Goya's
Disasters of War), 2012

Aquatint etching, 14 x 15 inches

Courtesy of the artist and Red Press
Editions at Boston University

*Con Razon o Sin Ella/With or
Without Reason* (after Goya's
Disasters of War), 2012

Aquatint etching, 14 x 15 inches

Courtesy of the artist and Red Press
Editions at Boston University

Michael D'Antuono

American Pie, 2010

Oil on canvas, 42 x 46 inches



Also in the exhibition:

Court Blanche, 2010

Oil on canvas, 38 x 54 inches

Sally Edelstein

Oils Well That Ends Well, 2011

Collage, 29 x 39 inches



Jerry Kearns

One Trick Pony, 2012

Acrylic on canvas,
72 x 92 inches



Ian Laughlin

Stuffed Vote, 2012

Mixed media installation,
variable dimensions



Pictured: Detail from *Stuffed Vote*,
2012, ink on paper, 2.75 x 6.5 inches

Kara Maria

Gluttony (after Ensor), 2012

Ink and watercolor on paper,
18 1/8 x 21 7/8 inches



Courtesy of the artist and Catherine
Clark Gallery, San Francisco. Photo:
John Wilson White / Studio Phocasso

Greta Pratt

Liberty Wavers, 2010–2012

Photographic installation,
6 images at 20 x 28 inches
and 1 image at 40 x 56 inches

Pictured: "Rodney Parker,"
from the series *Liberty Wavers*,
20 x 28 inches



Duke Riley

ηλίθιος-ocracy (from the
Greek 'idiot'), 2012

Artist modified pop-up tent, luan,
paint, toga and laurel wreath,
5 x 5 x 10 feet

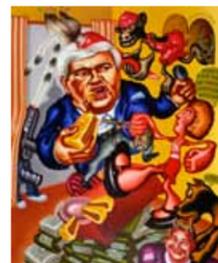


Study for pediment of temple

Peter Saul

*Newt Gingrich vs. Orphan
Annie*, 1995

Acrylic and alkyd on canvas,
82.5 x 67.5 inches



Courtesy of the Hall Collection
Photo: Courtesy of George Adams
Gallery, NYC

Federico Solmi

Douche Bag City, 2010

Video installation, 8 x 15 feet

In collaboration with 3-D artist
Russell Lowe



Courtesy of Conner Contemporary
Art, Washington, D.C.; Luis De Jesus
Gallery, Los Angeles; Jerome Zodo
Contemporary, Milan

Also in the exhibition:

*Dick Richman Portrait of a
Scam Artist*, 2011

Video shown on LED TV
with a baroque black frame,
35 x 45 inches

In collaboration with 3-D artist
Russell Lowe

Courtesy of Conner Contemporary
Art, Washington, D.C.; Luis De Jesus
Gallery, Los Angeles; Jerome Zodo
Contemporary, Milan

Jade Townsend

Hooray For Progress, 2011

Installation/sculpture,
130 x 48 x 68 inches



Detail of Installation. Photo: Kitty Joe
Sainte-Marie

Mark Wagner

Blood in the Water, 2011

Currency collage on panel,
12 x 16 inches



Courtesy of Pavel Zoubok Gallery
Photo: Courtesy of the artist and
Pavel Zoubok Gallery, NYC

Also in the exhibition:

Bout, 2008

Currency collage on panel,
24 x 24 inches

Collection Glenn and Amanda
Fuhrman, New York; Courtesy of
The FLAG Art Foundation, NYC

Gaming the System, 2011

Currency collage on panel,
12 x 16 inches

Courtesy of Pavel Zoubok Gallery, NYC

Game Over, 2011

Currency collage and mixed
media on panel, 12 x 16 inches

Courtesy of Pavel Zoubok Gallery, NYC

White Flag, 2011

Currency collage on panel,
18 x 24 x 1 inches

Courtesy of Pavel Zoubok Gallery, NYC

Martin Wilner

American Rodeo, 2006–2007

Ink on paper, 16 x 22 inches



Collection of Zachary Aarons and
Camilla Gale, NYC

Also in the exhibition:

*Remaking History:
January 2009*, 2009

Pen and ink (recto) and
graphite (verso) on paper,
11.25 x 11.25 inches

Collection of Tod Williams
and Billie Tsien

Art in the Age of Political Absurdity

GUEST CURATORS: ELEANOR HEARTNEY AND LARRY LITT

In conjunction with this exhibition, a New York Mobile Voter Registration Center, designed by artist Duke Riley (M.F.A. '08), will tour the streets of Brooklyn, Manhattan, and Queens.

The fifth annual "Pratt Falls" political cabaret, produced by Larry Litt, will take place in the gallery on October 16, October 30, and November 6 at 7 PM

Do election years bring out the worst in our nation's character? Candidates question each other's patriotism and charge the other party with driving the country off a cliff. Supporters threaten doom and destruction if their candidates fail. The talking heads caught up in the horse race focus on biographical minutia, incidental gaffes, and oversimplified polarities. Campaign advertisements flood the airwaves, at least in the so-called battleground states. A startlingly high percentage of the electorate, turned off by the din, takes a pass, allowing the more extremist factions to prevail.

What's the good news? Well for starters, election years also provide grist for political humor, caricature, and parody. The fact that we can lampoon our leaders and question their policies is evidence of the continuing strength of our democracy. In fact, the most thoughtful political commentary generally stands outside partisan bickering. Instead, it often comes wrapped in wit and irony, reflecting the fact that these are forms of address that resist political pieties and defy the worship of sacred cows.

"Party Headquarters: Art in the Age of Political Absurdity" is a politically themed exhibition timed to coincide with the 2012 presidential election. In the grand tradition of political satire stretching from William Hogarth to Jon Stewart, this exhibition brings together visual artists who draw on both vernacular styles of political address and contemporary communication systems. They employ these to address the larger questions that often go undiscussed when candidates descend into full-bore political attack. These artists reveal the continuity between traditional political commentary purveyed by political posters, broadsheets, and cartoons and the expansive new possibilities opened up by the digital revolution. Employing everything from painting and sculpture to Photoshop, etching, installation, performance, and video animation, they point up the social consequences of greed, the corrosive effects of money and religion in politics, the dire state of the environment, the contradictory aspirations embodied by the American Dream, and the destructive outcome of unquestioning faith in American exceptionalism. But they also affirm the continuing vitality of America's finest values, among them the belief in democracy, free speech, opportunity, and liberty.

Many of the works look at our uncertain future through the lens of history. Peter Saul brings up the ghosts of elections past with a satirical portrait of once-and-future presidential candidate Newt Gingrich and his stalwart opposition,

represented here in the person of a fist swinging Little Orphan Annie. Enrique Chagoya links absurdist past with absurdist present, reworking the dark political satires of Goya and 19th-century caricaturist George Cruikshank to reveal the perennial sleep of reason and the ongoing battle of the powerless against the powerful. In a similar mode, Kara Maria uses the language of political caricature to contrast the complacency of the Republican political class with the militancy of the demonstrators associated with the Occupy Wall Street movement. Michael D'Antuono takes on the corpocracy with a pair of modern-day history paintings that suggest the dire implications of a political order bloated with court-sanctioned corporate money.

Other artists draw on the language of popular culture. Donna Catanzaro borrows the over-the-top graphic language of retro horror movie posters to suggest how mindless greed and



Greta Pratt, "Rodney Parker" from the series *Liberty Wavers*, 2010–2012. Photograph, 20 x 28 inches.

opportunism have invaded and subverted our discussions about energy, finance, and politics. Appropriating the format of first-person-shooter video games, Federico Solmi creates an apocalyptic portrait of the shenanigans of a Wall Street Master of the Universe. Jade Townsend mimics the American folk art tradition to build an anti-monument to our culture of material excess waste. Martin Wilner creates diaristic drawings that link subjective experiences and objective news events to create maps of specific moments and places in our political and social landscape.

Many of the works here play familiar American symbols off each other in ways that undermine their false reassurances. Mark Wagner uses U.S. currency as raw material in collages that underscore the degree to which money has become the game changer, kingmaker, and saboteur of our political and social worlds. With *Liberty Wavers*, a series of photographs of greeters hired by an outfit named Liberty Tax, Greta Pratt documents the commercialization of one of America's most beloved icons.

Sally Edelstein digs deep into American mythology, collaging iconic symbols culled from vintage advertising into a monumental tableau that highlights the strange convergence of the language of patriotism and oil consumption. In a similar way, Jerry Kearns points to the melding of religion and militarism as it underlies some of our more unfortunate overseas adventures.

Ian Laughlin and Duke Riley present timely reminders that the vote is the essential emblem of democracy. Laughlin's installation presents two versions of the ballot box, one stuffed with the cash of lobbyists and campaign contributors, the other filled with the hopes and dreams of the American majority. Riley goes back to the origins of democracy in ancient Greece to remind us that from the beginning those who refused to participate were branded "idiots."

In an age of political absurdity, it seems to be up to artists and political satirists to remind us of the yawning chasm between our political rhetoric, our social realities, and the ideals to which we as a nation claim to adhere. Taken together, the works here suggest both the strengths and the follies of America. Their larger message is that the strength of our American-ness lies in our ability to question, to look frankly at the nation's past and present, and to ask if we are living up to our own best selves.

—Eleanor Heartney, September 2012