

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

THE 8TH FLOOR

THE SHELLEY & DONALD RUBIN FOUNDATION ANNOUNCES

WHEN ARTISTS SPEAK TRUTH...

AN EXHIBITION FEATURING THE WORK OF ANDREA BOWERS, TANIA BRUGUERA, MEL CHIN, EMORY DOUGLAS, SAM DURANT, SHEPARD FAIREY, FELIX GONZALES-TORRES, GUERRILLA GIRLS, YOKO ONO, ADRIAN PIPER, AND ANDRES SERRANO, AMONG OTHERS

NOVEMBER 12, 2015 TO MARCH 18, 2016

Opening Reception, Thursday, November 12, from 6:00-8:00pm



Andrea Bowers, *Workers' Rights Posters*, 2013, spray paint on giftwrapping paper, 32-24 x 18 inches.
Image courtesy of the artist and Andrew Kreps Gallery, New York.

New York, October 20, 2015 – The Shelley & Donald Rubin Foundation announces the opening of *When Artists Speak Truth...* an exhibition conceived as a multi-vocal dialogue about how artists contribute to specific political transformation—from Soviet Russia to U.S. presidential elections—and have helped shape an expanded and more nuanced understanding of human rights and social justice over several decades. The exhibition will be on view **November 12, 2015 to March 18, 2016** at **The 8th Floor** located at 17 West 17th Street, New York City.

Drawing from multiple generations and artistic sensibilities, featured artists include **ACT UP**, **Shimon Attie**, **Maja Bajevic**, **Luis Balaguer**, **Félix Beltrán**, **Adigio Benitez**, **Andrea Bowers**, **Tania Bruguera**, **Matthew Buckingham**, **Nancy Burson**, **Yoan Capote**, **Mel Chin**, **Emory Douglas**, **Sam Durant**, **Dyke Action Machine**, **Shepard Fairey**, **Charles Gaines**, **Rico Gatson**, **Guerrilla Girls**, **Edgar Heap of Birds**, **Sister Corita Kent**, **Hew Locke**, **Raul Martínez**, **René Mederos**, **Yoko Ono** and **John Lennon**, **Adrian Piper**, **Favianna Rodriguez**, **Alfredo Rostgaard**,

Dread Scott, Andres Serrano, Felix Gonzalez-Torres, and Jaro Varga.

From the art world to the real world, artists in the exhibition express a multitude of messages that collectively illustrate what happens when culture is used as will to power. Ranging from political posters, interactive installations, painting, drawing, and pedagogical display, to photography and sculpture, the selected works both enact and question the role artists play in communicating the issues affecting our broader culture.

When Artists Speak Truth... explores the ways in which artists engage in political messaging, borrowing methods from mass communication such as poster campaigns, graffiti, political portraiture and satire, public interventions, and varied forms of amplification, which demonstrate art's ability to transmit and facilitate protest and critique. These forms of objection and commentary are uniquely possible in the context of art and the work of many artists in the exhibition has a continuing presence and widespread impact on public life.

The selected artists touch on a variety of contemporary and historical socio-political issues, ranging from corporate power to religion and violence. In **Mel Chin's** *Cross for the Unforgiven* (2002), a Maltese cross—a symbol of the Crusades—is constructed from eight AK-47s, a weapon that signifies international resistance to the West.

From 1967 until the 1980s, **Emory Douglas** was the Minister of Culture for the Black Panther Party and his graphic artwork was featured prominently in issues of *The Black Panther* newspaper. Included in the exhibition is his illustration for the September 21, 1974 issue, which depicts the hand of corporate power—comprised of Pan Am, Gulf, PepsiCo, Chevron, IBM, Ford, The Chase Manhattan Bank, among others—pulling the strings of then-president Gerald Ford, "the 38th Puppet of the United States." **Sam Durant's** *Emory Douglas Suite (You pig)* is part of a larger series completed in 2004 in which Durant adapts Douglas' depictions of police aggression.

Drawing on the surreal collage and graphic design sensibility of Emory Douglas, **Favianna Rodriguez's** political posters highlight causes such as immigrants' rights, abortion rights, and voters' rights with slogans like "*I'm a slut. I vote. So does everyone I sleep with...Keep ur government off my pussy.*" Many of Rodriguez's recent posters have centered on the poetic symbol of the butterfly, which in her work is a reminder that living beings have the right to move freely, embodying the determination of immigrants who come to America in search of their dreams.

Working with text and archives respectively, **Maja Bajevic** and **Jaro Varga** will create immersive site-specific installations in the gallery. Varga's *Library* series (begun in 2008) is a room-sized print of a library in which the book spines have been left intentionally blank. The viewer is invited to write in titles of personal import, literally penning the names of books onto the spines, generating a collective and participatory notion of what constitutes essential knowledge. Bajevic's *To be continued* was first staged in 2014 at the National Museum in Oslo. For her performance in conjunction with the exhibition, Bajevic will fog the southern windows

of the gallery, handwriting political inscriptions into the frosted windows and extending the exhibition's visibility to the outside world.

Andrea Bowers' *Workers' Rights Posters* (2013) and **Edgar Heap of Birds'** ongoing mono-print series *Dead Indian Stories* face off with past and present stories of the loss of laborers' rights and Native American communities across the United States. **Matthew Buckingham** also addresses the politics of Native land ownership, as he looks to the history and projected future of Mount Rushmore with his 2002 project *The Six Grandfathers, Paha Sapa, in the Year 502,002 C.E.* He questions the current perception and geologic future of the monument, which hosts portraits of the four founding fathers, carved into land stolen from Sioux Indians by an active member of the Ku Klux Klan.

Artworks in the exhibition also generate new forms of commemoration for political leaders and movements. **Rico Gatson**, **Dread Scott**, and **Andres Serrano** create alternative forms of political portraits. Serrano's *Portrait of Fidel* from his *Cuba* series features a photograph of Fidel Castro on the wall of a modest bedroom of an unidentified Cuban. Gatson's graphic portraits of Nina Simone, Gil Scott-Heron, James Baldwin, and Amiri Baraka (2014-2015) are expressions of the power that emanates from radical artists and thinkers. Paintings from Dread Scott's *Revolutionary Archive* (2010-2012) draw on vintage photographs from the arc of Communist uprisings, including the Paris Commune, the Russian Revolution and the Chinese Cultural Revolution. Each of the works from the series exhibits a conceptual underpinning that examines how artists engaged with the exchange of ideas that led to transformative revolution.

When Artists Speak Truth... is curated by Sara Reisman, Artistic Director of the Shelley & Donald Rubin Foundation, and is part of a continuing series of exhibitions centered on the newly focused mission of the Rubin Foundation, with an emphasis art and social justice. A series of accompanying public programs that explore the intersection between social justice, activism and contemporary art practices will be announced shortly.

About The Shelley & Donald Rubin Foundation

The Foundation believes in art as a cornerstone of cohesive, resilient communities and greater participation in civic life. In its mission to make art available to the broader public, in particular to underserved communities, the Foundation provides direct support to, and facilitates partnerships between, cultural organizations and advocates of social justice across the public and private sectors. Through grantmaking, the Foundation supports cross-disciplinary work connecting art with social justice via experimental collaborations, as well as extending cultural resources to organizations and areas of New York City in need. sdrubin.org

Join the conversation with the Shelley & Donald Rubin Foundation on Facebook ([The Shelley & Donald Rubin Foundation](https://www.facebook.com/TheShelley&DonaldRubinFoundation)), Twitter ([@rubinfoundation](https://twitter.com/rubinfoundation)) and Instagram ([@rubinfoundation](https://www.instagram.com/rubinfoundation)) with the hashtags #The8thFloor and #RubinFoundation #WhenArtistsSpeakTruth

Contacts

For further information, members of the media may contact:

Andy Ptaschinski
Blue Medium Inc.
1.212.675.1800
andy@bluemedium.com

George Bolster
The Shelley & Donald Rubin Foundation
1.646.738.3971
gbolster@sdrubin.org