

Firunts, Mashinka, "Kathryn Andrews: Chicago, at Museum of Contemporary Art," *Art in America*,  
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CHICAGO

**KATHRYN ANDREWS**  
Museum of Contemporary Art

ON VIEW THROUGH MAY 8

What are the classificatory criteria we use to distinguish celebrities from politicians, the orbit of Hollywood's heavenly bodies from the operations of elected officials on the ground? Or Ronald Reagan and Arnold Schwarzenegger from Angelyne the L.A. Billboard Queen, all entertainment personalities who made gubernatorial bids in California? Why did only the first two win the vote? Kathryn Andrews's "Run for President" organizes itself around such questions, suggesting that the answers have much to do with the coordinates of race, gender and sexuality on which we map these distinctions and thereby determine legitimacy in the political field. Throughout the

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exhibition, she deftly traces a visual history of the intersections of electoral politics, media and mass spectacle.

Placing unlikely interlocutors from the archives of Hollywood and American political history in conversation with one another, Andrews (b. 1973) presents the figure of the presidential candidate as a set of perceptual effects, distributed across a range of media technologies. A Los Angeles-based artist who lent her considerable talents to Mike Kelley's studio, Andrews combines Finish Fetish, Pop, Conceptualism and cinematic props in her work. The resulting alloy is ideally suited to visualizing the high-polish, overlapping zones inhabited by trademarked fictional personae, movie stars and would-be White House occupants.

"Run for President" is staged as a looping funfair that burlesques the political/entertainment complex. A 1984 black-and-white photograph of Bozo the Clown announcing his bid for presidency is stationed at the exhibition entrance at mural size, with Bozo acting as a silent circus barker. Nearby, in a series of modified campaign posters, Andrews reworks imagery from the 19th-century printmakers Currier & Ives. In one, *THE JOKER FOR PRESIDENT aka Historical Campaign Poster Painting No. 4 (An Available Candidate)*, 2015, she uses an 1848 lithograph showing a Whig presidential candidate and notorious war-monger reclining atop a mountain of skulls. Andrews bisects the source image with garish blocks of fuchsia and mustard, a higher-key version of the palette of the Joker's outfit in *Batman*. Sidestepping didactic strains of political critique, the piece courts spectatorial pleasure while pointing to the ways in which political candidates' lives are translated into filtered, Technicolor public biographies.

Three black-and-white photomurals are displayed on freestanding walls in the gallery's center. The first shows Richard Nixon posing alongside Sammy Davis Jr. In the second, Nancy Reagan (a former actress) strategically positions herself on the lap of Mr. T at a 1983 White House Christmas party. Both of these images are exactly staged; deploying racially marked bodies that have historically been excluded from the field of political visibility, they originally served as means for increasing approval ratings among black voters. The final photomural, covering a semicircular wall,

is a sweeping panorama of the Oval Office during Ronald Reagan's presidency. At its center is *Lethal Weapon* (2012), an upright stainless steel cylinder with a funhouse-mirror coating. When standing between the cylinder and the photomural, you see yourself distorted in the reflective sheen, set against the backdrop of the White House's formal interior. Projected into the position of president, you occupy the spot where official Oval Office addresses are delivered, with the sculpture placed where a camera might be.

On the other side of the cylinder, a small hole reveals a certified film prop: a decommissioned firearm from *Lethal Weapon's* prop house. Peering in and expecting to discover the kind of glossy, polychromatic pleasures that abound in "Run for President," you stare down the barrel of a gun to find they've been weaponized against you.

—Mashinka Firunts

View of Kathryn Andrews's exhibition "Run for President," 2015-16, at the Museum of Contemporary Art.