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What one year of resistance looks like in the art world

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ALL IMAGES COURTESY OF THE UNTITLED SPACE GALLERY.

A fun game I used to play is: How numb can I become? The answer, it turned out, was very. The problem with constant exposure—even in the case of the most severe, tragic events—is that it seems there’s no limit to what we can become desensitized to, so long as we’re exposed to it enough times. And never has this fact seemed more daunting than in the face of President Trump.

Though we’re constantly reminding ourselves and others that our president is not normal, and that his behavior is entirely unacceptable, it’s hard to resist responding to yet another disgraceful remark from him with that knee-jerk, almost mechanical eye roll reaction. Which might explain why “One Year of Resistance,” the new exhibit at Untitled Space Gallery curated by Indira Cesarine, felt so powerful.

When there’s nothing more that can be said, when it starts to seem like there’s no number of protests that will bring any change, no number of mass shootings that will convince the GOP

to crack down on gun laws—it's time we find another form of resistance. And that's precisely what the 80-plus artists on display did. Here, eight of the 80 artists explain both the hope and the frustration that went into their works.

Miss Meatface, "Miss Meatface Household Chores" (Above)

MISS MEATFACE: I created this image as a direct, visceral response to what was going on in the world around me at the time and my desire to remove myself from its toxicity wholly and completely. So what did I do? I locked myself up in my grandmother's house and shot as much as I could, putting blindfolds over my eyes and a protective latex skin over my body in order to keep the world out. Going to my grandmother's house and shooting acted as a reprieve from the constant barrage of nightmare news from the outside world.

Within my work I enjoy playing with stereotypical gender roles and the push and pull of dominance and submission in relationships. Having fun is incredibly important throughout the entire artistic process for me and in my Meatface work I prefer to make social and/or political commentary in a playful, lighthearted way whilst also hopefully sparking little questions inside of people that lead them to ask larger questions about themselves and society as a whole.

Rosemary Meza-DesPlas, "Cry Die or Just Make Pies," (hand-sewn human hair on canvas)

ROSEMARY MEZA-DESPLAS: I have been sewing with my own hair since 2000. My decision to collect and sort my hair to utilize as a vehicle for making art is informed by sociocultural symbolism, feminism and body issues, and religious symbolism. I like the dichotomy of using hair because there's the idea that hair can be sexy and engaging to people, and then on the other hand it can be repulsive, like a hair in your soup or a hair on your hotel pillow.

This artwork refers to the ability to survive—to rise above difficult circumstances. At some point, each woman has a decision to make: she can cry about unfairness, she can choose to succumb to the societal injustices, or she can choose to weather the storm and survive during difficult times. The phrase "just make pies" is a play on the common phrase "to make lemonade out of lemons." The role of women in society is complex and multidimensional. While her primary roles are as wife and mother, it is imperative she become an agent of change during turbulent times that threaten her femininity and sexuality.



Toubia Alipour, "America 2017"

TOUBIA ALIPOUR: I'm from Iran, and this piece was inspired by the travel bans that were in place last year, banning people from six Muslim countries. Being from Iran, it definitely affected me in different ways. My friends planned a wedding for last year but with the travel ban, they had to push their wedding for a year. Still, you can't really get visas. Their parents are coming from Iran, and they might not be able to make it to her wedding. I've seen families

being torn apart, and they had green cards, they were living here, they just went to travel, and when they came back they were told they can no longer enter the country. Which doesn't make any sense.



Eleni Giannopoulou, "The Bed" (mixed media)

ELENI GIANNOPOULOU: I have been working sculpturally the last two years. I usually work with found objects, which I really enjoy because they have a history, they have a responsibility, and I like to play with responsibility and imagine the lives that people lived around those objects before I take them and I play with them.

This specific piece has to do with the kind of two-sided feeling of being a woman: it's sensitive and beautiful and there is sheltering and a princess feeling about it, your parents nurture you, your society nurtures you, and then there are choices in your life that are so difficult and hard and it's always like a balance. This piece has to do with abortion. I had an abortion when I was pretty young—in Italy, actually. It was a very difficult process, I had to go see psychologists. And I knew I wanted to have it; I was very young, I had no doubts. But it was a really hard decision and it stays with you—no matter if you know that you want it. That's what a lot of people don't understand, that a woman decides it, but she still has to carry it and it's a

difficult choice. So I don't think all the rest is needed. Like, it's very simple. When you need to do it, you need to do it, and you have to live with it, and it's not easy.



Desire Moheb-Zandi, "Fences" (weaving)

DESIRE MOHEB-ZANDI: I wanted to raise questions about what [role] borders play in relation to human rights. Especially with Donald Trump saying he's going to tighten the immigration control more and more and considering all the refugee camps and all the people that die crossing the Mediterranean Sea.

I used a lot of steel wire, which was used in building fences, especially in the refugee camps. And it's a question that we need to ask today because I think the future is that we're going to become more and more global nomads and the world will have to find a new solution to all of these borders that we have. It's the biggest human crisis today. It's a global crisis.

I used thread, steel wire, and found rubber materials that I keep using in my work. The warping is four colors—black, red, orange, white—which, to me, represent a sense of explosiveness, which is pretty much the situation we have today. So they're very dramatic colors in a way, but I wanted it to be dramatic because it is a dramatic topic. I made it on a four-harness floor loom, a very traditional way of making textiles, but I wanted to use nonorthodox materials to be more nontraditional.



Ann Lewis, "White Lies #1"

ANN LEWIS: It's basically a documentation of every lie or false statement that Donald Trump made since he started office. So January 20th to December 31st. I literally hand-wrote every single lie on one side of the flag—so the whole white side of the flag was the same as the backside, [it looked exactly like the American flag], and after fifteen different layers of writing on top and on top and on top, it became totally opaque. I went chronological—I started from the inauguration all the way through the end of the year. And some lies he would say, like, 85 times, so I'd have to write every single one of them out; I didn't want to just write it down once. I really wanted to document the perpetuation of all of this bullshit and lies that people believe because he's the president. People are carrying around these false ideas and false narratives and basing their decisions and their understanding of the president and our country on things that aren't real. It's very dangerous to democracy. If you look at the flag, you see that the symbol of our country has become entirely obfuscated by his lies, and ultimately using white ink is a reference to his obvious allegiance to white supremacy groups and organizations.

[I used fabric ink, and went through, like, 240 markers. I'm also doing another one in bleach pen, so the whole flag will just disintegrate. It'll be a whole series; I'm trying to do one for each year that he's in office. Hopefully, I won't have to do more than one.



Cabell Molina, "How Could I Have Known"

CABELL MOLINA: My piece is about seeing Lichtenstein in a different context, basically looking at it in a different light with regards to how we deal with women's issues now. It's similar to a Lichtenstein, painted over a bunch of Trump front pages from *The Daily News* and *The New York Post*. [And the woman in the painting] is crying.



Bradford Scott Stringfield, "Liberty"

BRADFORD SCOTT STRINGFIELD: I was homeless before, so I can relate to that guy. It's double exposure of The Statue of Liberty and a homeless man. I got the idea in the darkroom; I saw both images and decided to put them together and see what happens. To me, it's sad, a very sad image. I overheard a lady tell her daughter [about the homeless man], "He's very sick. That man is very sick," she said. That was a different perspective. It's a sad piece. But it's honest enough. Liberty only backs it up to say, look, give us whatever you want, come to our country. Even this man has the liberty to lay there in the street like that.



ONE YEAR OF RESISTANCE IS ON SHOW UNTIL FEBRUARY 4, 2018 AT THE UNTITLED GALLERY. TEN PERCENT OF ALL PROCEEDS WILL BE DONATED TO THE ACLU.

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