

## ***What Are You Voting For?***

### ***Juror Statement by Karen Gutfreund and Sherri Cornett***

In this crucial election year, WMG asked self-identified women artists to share what they are voting for. From the prospectus, “There is so much at stake in the November 2020 elections and there are so many issues that polarize and define us: racism, Black Lives Matter, women’s rights, abortion, the ERA, intersectionality, power, privilege, the Covid19 pandemic, masks, the climate crisis, unemployment, education, health care, jobs, the economy, voting, surveillance, privacy, constitutional rights...”

We, (Sherri Cornett and Karen Gutfreund), were thrilled to be a part of this important visual discussion. The artist responses were strong, pointed and had an underlying thread of tenacity, resilience, courage and hope—even in the face of so many calamities occurring right now in the USA. These 37 artists have displayed they will not go quietly into the good night...

Our democracy is being shredded and is held together by threads—the country is falling apart on so many fronts, with more chaos dished daily. From a woman-centric point of view, saving our democracy means scrutinizing and working towards what we, as a nation, still hold dear—lifting up girls and young women, protecting women and children from sexual predators, reuniting families who fled atrocities in their homelands, and making our voices heard above the patriarchal subjugation by lifting the disproportionate weight on women, who work more and earn less. The works in this exhibition are a call to action to get to the polls. Women will not be gaslighted or sidelined any longer on issues that matter to them, their families, communities, the country and the world at large. Our existence, and the quality of life for our future generations, depends on it.

Skin tone, culture, family history, identity, country of origin, and other perceived differences are only surface distractions to our common humanity. The silence and inaction of many white people, a silence afforded them by the privilege of their skin color, is unacceptable. The memory of those who have been unjustly killed by law enforcement underlies our demand for a reorganization and support of emergency responses in our country. Our rich, textured mosaic of cultures, knowledge, experiences, spiritualities, and histories makes our country strong. We need to believe in science, whether related to health issues, or climate and the environment. These ideas were clearly portrayed in visual form by the artists in the exhibition.

The works we chose for this exhibition best identified an understanding of the prospectus, combining both the artist statement and the quality of the individual works of art. The works in *What Are You Voting For* clearly illustrate principled ideals, paired with a vision for a better future addressing themes of agency, the environment, education, immigration, minorities and women, healthcare, Black Lives Matter, income inequality and for all voices to be heard. We sought art that illustrated the many issues affecting us in this country before the election on November 3rd. The artists, through their works and statements, delivered! Key statements include:

“Art can be a powerful tool for change. I believe it is the responsibility of the artist to bear witness to injustice and to hold a mirror to and shape reality. My work aims to build community around recognizing and celebrating our differences, while perhaps finding common ground in the process.” ~ Alicia Decker

-More-

“I am voting to reignite what is left of our democracy for my children, grandchildren and students. I’m voting to restore dignity and pride in a country that is on the verge of collapse under the inept leadership of a self-centered tyrant.” ~ Christine Giancola.

“The global pandemic has laid bare systemic inequalities, including the significant domestic burdens placed on women, forcing many to leave the workforce as they are unable to balance homeschooling, childcare, and careers.” ~ Holly Ballard Martz

“One hundred years later women are STILL waiting—for pay equity, for equal representation in legislatures and boardrooms, for the end of patriarchal culture. This triptych features screen-print portraits of women who are waiting—waiting in line to vote, literally, but also waiting to take their rightful, equal place in society.” ~ Gigi Salij

We, along with the artists in this exhibition, both individually and collectively, believe that art can be a bridge to understanding. It can bear witness, exclaim hope, and motivate action. The best decisions for our nation involve as many intersectional voices as possible to work in collaboration. Overarching all of this is a belief in community, that, standing strong together, we can address these concerns with dignity, compassion and generosity for all. And lastly, that thoughts and prayers are not enough, we need to think ahead, reimagine, revision...we must VOTE!

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