

Exhibition Organized by Artist Jonathan Horowitz Explores Artists' Responses to Social Injustice from the Early 20th Century until Now

Works by Horowitz as well as Huma Bhabha, Robert Colescott, Adrian Piper, Ben Shahn, Kara Walker, Andy Warhol, Max Weber, and Others on View

We Fight to Build a Free World: An Exhibition by Jonathan Horowitz
Coming Soon

New York, NY, March 26, 2020 — The Jewish Museum will present ***We Fight to Build a Free World: An Exhibition by Jonathan Horowitz*** which looks at how artists have responded to the rise of intolerance and authoritarianism, addressing issues surrounding immigration, assimilation, and cultural identity.

Jonathan Horowitz (b. 1966, New York City) is an artist working in a wide range of mediums, including video, installation, painting, sculpture, and photography, exploring subjects ranging from environmentalism to the American political process. He regularly appropriates imagery from commercial media and art history, engaging critically with politics and culture. *We Fight to Build a Free World*, Horowitz's curatorial project for the Jewish Museum, includes select artworks of his own interspersed with those of others.

The exhibition will feature works of art primarily from the early 20th century until now, including examples of American social realism from the 1930s and 1940s, new works by Jonathan Horowitz, and newly commissioned political posters by contemporary artists. The nearly 80 works draw connections between historical oppression and today's political and cultural challenges. A range of media — video, sculpture, painting, photography, and prints — is represented.

"Three years ago, the Jewish Museum invited me to develop a project that responded to the resurgence of anti-Semitism," Jonathan Horowitz said. "I chose to address the subject within a broad context, looking at how artists have historically responded to the rise of authoritarianism and xenophobia, including anti-Semitism and other forms of bigotry."

The exhibition's title, *We Fight to Build a Free World*, is from a series of World War II propaganda posters designed by Ben Shahn for the United States Office of War Information. The designs incorporate imagery by four other artists – Edward Millman (Suppression), Käthe Kollwitz (Starvation), Yasuo Kuniyoshi (Torture), and Bernard Perlin (Murder), as well as by Shahn (Slavery). Like much of Shahn's work for the OWI, most of the posters were never produced. Shahn's painting, *We Fight for a Free World!*, c. 1942, which incorporates images of the five posters, will be on view.

Included in the exhibition are works by Asco, Huma Bhabha, Enrique Chagoya, Robert Colescott, Philip Evergood, Luis Jiménez, Rebecca Lepkoff, Glenn Ligon, Abraham Manievich, Bernard Perlin, Adrian Piper, Fritz Scholder, Jaune Quick-to-See Smith, Henry Sugimoto, Kara Walker, Andy Warhol, Max Weber, and Charles White, among others. Horowitz's installation uses pointed juxtapositions of artworks to raise questions and foster discussion.

The exhibition will feature an installation inspired by Shahn's *We Fight for a Free World!* painting of newly commissioned political posters by 36 contemporary artists, including Judith Bernstein, Marcel Dzama, Rico Gatson, Kim Gordon and Jason Smith, Cheyenne Julien, Christine Sun Kim, Guadalupe Maravilla, and Marilyn Minter. The posters will hang on a brick wall graphic across from Shahn's painting.

A new wallpaper work by Horowitz, "*Ten Portraits of Jews of the Twentieth Century*" *plus ninety-two more* (2020), is based on Andy Warhol's series of silkscreen paintings "Ten Portraits of Jews of the Twentieth Century," which the Jewish Museum debuted in 1980. Warhol's work features celebrated figures such as Sigmund Freud, Albert Einstein, and Gertrude Stein. Horowitz's wallpaper, which will cover the walls of the exhibition's first gallery, is comprised of images of every portrait of a Jewish subject that Warhol is known to have painted. In many cases, the portraits are of people whose Jewish background is invisible or negligible as a part of their public persona.

Another work in the exhibition is *Orthodox Boys*, a 1948 painting by Bernard Perlin of two Jewish youth on a New York City subway platform. The painting is expressive of an adolescent self-consciousness amplified by the lived reality of being visibly Jewish in postwar America. The graffiti on the wall behind the two boys includes recognizably Jewish names, along with swastikas and the letters KKK.

In the 1975 painting *George Washington Carver Crossing the Delaware: Page from an American History Textbook*, Robert Colescott recasts Emanuel Leutze's 1851 painting *George Washington Crossing the Delaware* with the African-American agricultural scientist George Washington Carver standing in place of America's first president. The crew that accompanies Carver is a reminder that throughout much of American history, black Americans have been represented in white culture by racist stereotypes. The satirical painting is conceived by Colescott as his "bicentennial statement on American history."

Horowitz's work, *Untitled (Arbeit Macht Frei)* (2010) refers to the sign bearing the German slogan "Arbeit Macht Frei" – "work sets one free" – which hangs above the entrance to the Nazi concentration camp at Auschwitz in Poland. In 2009 the sign was stolen and later found in a field, cut into pieces. It was eventually restored to the site. Horowitz's work recreates the sign in the cut-up state in which it briefly existed. The work reflects on the volatility of historical memory, asking what it means to preserve a symbol of evil, to destroy it, or to copy it.



For an installation of works from the 1930s and 1940s, Horowitz incorporates as a backdrop a monumental photographic reproduction of a Thomas Hart Benton 1942 painting, *Invasion*, with the color removed and the image tinted sepia. In Benton's work, enemy soldiers are depicted as grotesque caricatures committing atrocities against a rural white American family. The painting and others in Benton's *Year of Peril* series became some of the best-known American propaganda images of World War II. As an ideological counterpoint to the Benton image, works by Charles White, Robert Gwathmey, Gordon Parks, Philip Evergood, and Henry Sugimoto cast a critical eye on racism in America.

Several works look critically at how minority groups have been represented by the Hollywood film industry. These include a selection of photographs by the collective Asco, who take Chicano representation into their own hands in their "No Movie" photographs from the 1970s — stills for films which do not exist. Also included is a new video work by Horowitz, *Best Picture* (2020), focused on the 2019 Academy Awards. In that year's Oscar telecast, minority representation was mostly relegated to presenters, and the best picture award was given to *Green Book*, the latest in a long line of Hollywood "white savior" narratives — movies where a white lead character comes to the rescue of a non-white character, whose plights are the purported subject of the film.

Another new work by Horowitz is the monumental sculpture *Untitled (August 23, 2017-February 18, 2018, Charlottesville, VA)*, (2020). The work recreates the statue of the Confederate general Robert E. Lee at the center of the 2017 "Unite the Right" rally in Charlottesville, as it existed after the rally for six months, shrouded in a black tarp. For many Americans, the "Unite the Right" rally signaled a resurgence of anti-Semitism and white supremacy in American society. The August rally, which brought together hundreds of self-described neo-Nazis, white nationalists, and Ku Klux Klansman, was met with a vigorous counter-protest. In the days following the violent confrontations, the city council ordered that the Lee statue be covered by a black tarp. Six months later, in a lawsuit verdict, a judge ordered that the shroud be removed, declaring the statue to be a war memorial protected by state law. Horowitz's sculpture powerfully marks this crisis point in American history.

The exhibition is a project by artist Jonathan Horowitz, organized in consultation with Ruth Beesch, Senior Deputy Director, and Shira Backer, Leon Levy Assistant Curator, The Jewish Museum. The exhibition and graphic design are by Topos Graphics, and lighting design is by Clint Ross Coller.

Artists in the Exhibition

* Commissioned poster artist

Asco; Lisa Anne Auerbach*; Lou Beach*; Thomas Hart Benton; Katherine Bernhardt*; Judith Bernstein*; Huma Bhabha; Erwin Blumenfeld; Tania Bruguera*; Elizabeth Catlett; Enrique Chagoya; Sue Coe*; Robert Colescott; Jeremy Deller*; Gerardus Duyckinck; Marcel Dzama*; Philip Evergood; Sam Falls*; Nicholas Galanin*; Harry Gamboa Jr.; Eric J. Garcia*; Rico Gatson*; Jeffrey Gibson*; Kim Gordon and Jason Smith*; Robert Gwathmey; Jonathan



Horowitz; Marc Hundley*; Luis Jiménez; Cheyenne Julien*; Baseera Khan*; Christine Sun Kim*; Zohar Lazar*; Cary Leibowitz*; Lynn Hershman Leeson*; Rebecca Lepkoff; Glenn Ligon; Abraham Manievich; Guadalupe Maravilla*; Marilyn Minter*; Malaquías Montoya; Hương Ngô*; Ernesto Oroza*; Frida Orupabo*; Gordon Parks; Bernard Perlin; Pat Phillips*; Adrian Piper; Puppies Puppies (Jade Kuriki Olivo)*; Edel Rodriguez*; Guadalupe Rosales*; Kay Rosen*; Wilhelm Sasnal*; Fritz Scholder; Ben Shahn; Xaviera Simmons*; Tuesday Smillie*; Jaune Quick-to-See Smith; Sable Elyse Smith*; Henry Sugimoto; Tabboo!*; Kara Walker; Andy Warhol; Max Weber; Charles White

About Jonathan Horowitz

Jonathan Horowitz (b. 1966, New York) has made art that engages critically with politics and culture for three decades. His early work — primarily in video — reflects the influences of both experimental film and Hollywood movies. In subsequent years, Horowitz turned to other mediums — installation, painting, sculpture, photography — to explore subjects ranging from environmentalism to the American political process. *We Fight to Build a Free World* is one of several instances in which Horowitz has involved others — whether fellow artists or members of the public — in the making of a project. Recent solo exhibitions include *Pre-Fall '17*, Sadie Coles HQ, London, UK (2019); *Leftover Paint Abstractions*, Xavier Hufkens, Brussels, Belgium (2018); *1612 DOTS*, Oculus World Trade Center, New York, NY (2017); and *Occupy Greenwich*, The Brant Foundation Art Study Center, Greenwich, CT (2016). Recent group exhibitions include *Brainwashed*, Haus der Kunst, Munich, Germany (2020), and *Never Again: Art Against War and Fascism in the 20th and 21st Centuries*, Museum of Modern Art, Warsaw, Poland (2019).

Public Programs

In conjunction with the exhibition, the Jewish Museum will present a series of public programs featuring lectures, discussions, and gallery talks reflecting on the issues and ideas raised by the art on view.

Support

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About the Jewish Museum

Located on New York City's famed Museum Mile, the Jewish Museum is a distinctive hub for art and Jewish culture for people of all backgrounds. Founded in 1904, the Museum was the first institution of its kind in the United States and is one of the oldest Jewish museums in the world. Devoted to exploring art and Jewish culture from ancient to contemporary, the Museum offers diverse exhibitions and programs, and maintains a unique collection of nearly 30,000 works of art, ceremonial objects, and media reflecting the global Jewish experience over more than 4,000 years.



Location: 1109 Fifth Avenue at 92nd Street, New York City
Hours: Saturday, Sunday, Monday, and Tuesday, 11am to 5:45pm;

Thursday, 11am to 8pm; and Friday, 11am to 4pm.

Admission: \$18.00 for adults, \$12.00 for senior citizens, \$8.00 for students, free for visitors 18 and under and Jewish Museum members. Free on Saturdays and select Jewish holidays.

Information: The public may call 212.423.3200 or visit TheJewishMuseum.org

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