



THE ART NEWSPAPER

Artist-designed billboards opposing Donald Trump and supporting Kamala Harris go up in battleground states

The campaign, organized by the non-profit People For the American Way, includes images by Carrie Mae Weems, Deborah Kass, Alyson Shotz, Christine Sun Kim, Hank Willis Thomas and others

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A billboard designed by Deborah Kass
Courtesy People for the American Way

With the 2024 US presidential election less than four weeks away, and early voting already underway in some states, artist-led efforts to engage voters—and campaign for the Democratic nominee, Vice-President Kamala Harris—are kicking into high gear.

This week, as part of its Artists For Democracy initiative, the non-profit People for the American Way launched a voter engagement campaign featuring artist-designed signage in seven large cities (including Houston, Miami, Atlanta, Las Vegas and Philadelphia) as well as billboards opposing former president Donald Trump and supporting Harris in five of the critical battleground states (Arizona, Michigan, North Carolina, Pennsylvania and Wisconsin). The latter campaign includes billboards featuring art by Carrie Mae Weems, Shepard Fairey, Deborah Kass, Amalia Mesa-Bains, Beverly McIver, Cleon Peterson, Christine Sun Kim and Hank Willis Thomas, among others.



A billboard designed by Cleon Peterson
Courtesy People for the American Way

“Billboards, street art and other mediums for visual art leave impressions and move people to action in a way that conventional political messaging cannot,” Rio Tazewell, People for the American Way’s director of campaigns, said in a statement. “Through this campaign, we seek to inspire as many people as possible to fully participate in the 2024 election and beyond.”

Svante Myrick, People for the American Way’s president, added: “We have less than a month before the historic 5 November elections, and participating artists will be a part of getting out the vote with images that stir deep emotions and inspire voters to take action.”



A billboard designed by Derrick Adams
Courtesy People for the American Way

The voter engagement imagery, including contributions by Derrick Adams, Wangechi Mutu and others, primarily consist of non-partisan messages of encouragement to vote. The more partisan campaign in support of Harris and opposition to Trump includes pointed imagery like a work by Peterson that features a large besuited figure looming over the US Capitol, brandishing a “T”-branded sneaker and a bible, accompanied by the text “Beware of false prophets (and false profits)”. Shotz’s contribution bluntly features the text “Done with Trump” against a jail cell backdrop. Weems’s offering echoes the Harris campaign’s forward-looking messaging, with a sequence of five images of the vice-president and the text “leading with compassion, not complaint”.

In the lead-up to the 2020 US presidential election, People for the American Way launched a similar campaign opposing Trump, with contributions by Weems, Jeffrey Gibson, LaToya Ruby Frazier, Ed Ruscha and others.



A billboard designed by Carrie Mae Weems
Courtesy People for the American Way

A separate art-led effort in support of Harris, Artists for Kamala, has organised an online art sale and auction to raise funds for the vice-president's campaign.

No comparable campaign featuring contemporary art appears to exist in support of Trump's candidacy, neither originating from the former president's own campaign nor organised by an outside group.

Many influential artists, collectors and philanthropists have very prominently pledged their support for Harris's campaign. Many of the more right-leaning collectors and arts philanthropists in the US put significant funds towards supporting Trump's opponents in the Republican primaries earlier this year.

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