

# D FrontRow

November 1, 2016

## The Nasher Puts Political Absurdity on Exhibit: Artist Kathryn Andrews' *Run For President* examines the electoral sideshow

<http://www.dmagazine.com/publications/d-magazine/2016/november/nasher-politics-dallas-kathryn-andrews-run-for-president/>

By Peter Simek



SPIDER-MAN FOR PRESIDENT aka Historical Campaign Poster Painting No.5 (Backed to Win), 2015

The artist Kathryn Andrews has found the perfect image to complement the 2016 presidential campaign. For her *Run for President* show at the Nasher Sculpture Center, Andrews covers the entirety of a gallery's back wall with a blown-up black-and-white photograph taken from a satirical presidential run by Bozo the Clown in the 1980s. The photograph shows Bozo standing at a podium in front of the neoclassical façade of Columbia University. He is flanked by three young men wearing sunglasses and serious-looking suits, arms crossed, mild smirks on their faces. Like Bozo, the "bodyguards" are all wearing red foam noses.

This year's presidential cycle has seemingly been one long sideshow, but this reminder of the all-but-forgotten campaign of Bozo the Clown helps frame this year's carnival-like fray within the long, proud history of absurdity in American politics. Paintings in the exhibition re-create political cartoons from the 19th century that sometimes poke fun at their forgotten candidates with scatological humor. Other floor-to-ceiling photographs dredge up more forgotten moments, like the time Nancy Reagan sat laughing on Mr. T's lap during his visit to the White House, or the official function where Sammy Davis Jr. cavorted with Richard Nixon. These are charged reminders that, in America, politics and entertainment have always been strange, if familiar, bedfellows.

But Andrews is up to more than simply pointing viewers to the ephemera of America's sometimes uncomfortable political past. Drawing aesthetic inspiration from everything from reclaimed Hollywood superhero get-ups to McDonald's playground equipment, Andrews reframes that history—sometimes literally, by embedding Spider-Man and Captain America costumes into the frames of her paintings. In doing so, Andrews forces to the surface complex histories that are hidden behind such images and symbols, but which, nonetheless, continue to exert influence on the present, media-saturated political moment.