

Kathryn Andrews

Teaching Resource

Kathryn Andrews: Run for President | September 10, 2016 – January 8, 2017

About Kathryn Andrews

Los Angeles-based artist Kathryn Andrews (American, born 1973) mines the American cultural landscape to investigate relationships between popular culture and power structures, in particular how images and brands are used to establish authority. Andrews's work, which combines found objects, historic images, and references to art movements such as Pop Art and minimalism aims to show how meaning is contingent on context.

Run for President

Addressing the heightened sociopolitical climate of an election year, the exhibition—Andrews's first solo museum presentation in the United States—loosely weaves together narratives around historic and imaginary candidates, the campaign trail, sitting in office and the end of the presidential term.

Candidates

- Make a list of the skills or characteristics you think qualify someone to be president. Next, list the physical or personal qualities you think people look for in a candidate for president. How do these two lists compare?

In the *Historical Campaign Poster Painting* series, Andrews combines images of historical presidential candidates with memorabilia from Hollywood movie characters. The silkscreened images on these artworks were appropriated from original prints produced by Nathaniel Currier and James Merritt Ives in the late 19th century. (See the *Pop Culture Glossary* section of this guide for more information.) In the right side of each artwork, Andrews has created an inset space which holds a certified costume worn in a major Hollywood film, suggesting parallels between the qualities of the candidate and the qualities of the character who wore the costume.

- Divide into two groups and each select a fictional character who might serve as a presidential candidate (for example, Spider-Man and The Joker). Each group should prepare a list of reasons their candidate would be ideal and the other candidate would be a poor choice. Hold a mock presidential debate between the two groups.
- How might the qualities of each fictional character compare to real political candidates?



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Spider-Man for President aka Historical Campaign Poster Painting No. 5 (Backed to Win), 2015. Aluminum, paint, Plexiglas, and certified film costume 96 x 108 x 3 3/4 in. (243.8 x 274.3 x 9.5 cm). Courtesy of the artist and David Kordansky Gallery, Los Angeles, CA

Humor

In 1984, Larry Harmon, better known as children's performer Bozo the Clown, launched a satirical campaign for president hoping to promote "humor, love, peace and understanding" in the world. In addition to a photomural of Bozo's campaign, Kathryn Andrews has created sculptures bearing his image that are topped with stools meant to be a prop for occasional in-gallery performances by stand-up comedians.

Andrews shows another instance of a celebrity using humor to point out social inequality in the sculpture *Coming to America (Filet-O-Fish)*, which combines a McDonald's marketing character with prop coins from the Eddie Murphy film *Coming to America*. In the film, Murphy plays a wealthy prince from the fictional African nation of Zamunda who comes to the U.S. and experiences the American class structure firsthand by working in a fast food restaurant.

- How can humor be used as a tool for sharing a serious message?
- Think of an example of a comedian who has addressed an issue such as class, race, gender or other taboo subjects in his or her act. How would the audience's reaction be different in this context than if someone spoke directly about these issues?
- Can you think of instances when political candidates have used humor to get voters to accept their ideas?



Installation view, *Kathryn Andrews: Run for President*, MCA Chicago. Nov 21, 2015—May 8, 2016. Photo: Nathan Keay, © MCA Chicago.



Kathryn Andrews, *Coming to America (Filet-O-Fish)*, 2013. Stainless steel, paint, found object, and certified film props. 104 1/4 x 54 x 43 in. (264.8 x 137.2 x 109.2 cm). Rheingold Collection, Dusseldorf, Germany. Photo: Nathan Keay, © MCA Chicago.

Celebrity

- Think of an example of a current celebrity who uses his or her fame to promote a cause, a candidate or a product. When is this type of marketing successful? When might it be unsuccessful?

Andrews has included two photomurals of political figures meeting with celebrities in this exhibition.

- What is going on in each picture?
- Why would a political figure want to use a celebrity to promote a cause?
- Why would a celebrity want to align himself or herself with a politician?



Installation views, *Kathryn Andrews: Run for President*, MCA Chicago. Nov 21, 2015—May 8, 2016. Photo: Nathan Keay, © MCA Chicago.

The image on the right captures a photo-op between performer Sammy Davis Jr. and President Richard Nixon, who was known to have negative opinions about African Americans.

The image on the left shows former first lady Nancy Reagan at a White House Christmas party sitting on the lap of actor Mr. T, who was a spokesman an anti-drug campaign that coincided with Reagan's "Just Say No" initiative. Andrews has placed a sculpture containing prop gift boxes rented from a Hollywood studio near the image.

- What might shiny but empty boxes suggest about the promises candidates make during campaigns?

Power

Andrews has included a large photomural of the Oval Office as it appeared during Ronald Reagan's administration in the 1980s.

- Look closely at this image. What aspects of the room convey power or presidential authority?
- Stand facing the reflective cylinder with your back to the mural. How does the image change? What else do you now see in the Oval Office?

Andrews has stated that she often uses reflective surfaces in her art because they "turn the viewer's gaze away from me, [the artist], and back towards themselves."

Inside the cylinder is a prop gun from the film *Lethal Weapon* which points at the viewer when he or she looks into the small opening in the front of the sculpture.

- What does the placement of the gun suggest about the power held by the occupant of the Oval Office?

The sculpture *October 16* is made up of a metal structure and a set of balloons which may be replaced with freshly inflated balloons each year on the anniversary of the artwork's creation.

- How might the cycle of inflation and deflation in this artwork relate to the power of a political figure during an election cycle?



Above: Installation view, Kathryn Andrews: *Run for President*, MCA Chicago. Nov 21, 2015—May 8, 2016. Photo: Nathan Keay, © MCA Chicago.



Left: *October 16*, 2012. Chrome-plated steel, magnets, and balloons. Steel component: 66 x 56 1/2 x 10 in. (167.6 x 143.5 x 25.4 cm). Overall dimensions variable. The Eugene Sadovoy Collection. Photo: Nathan Keay, © MCA Chicago

In the Classroom

In small groups, select a fictional character or celebrity as a candidate for president.

- Make a list of the qualities that make your candidate a good choice.
- Find or create an image of your candidate.
- Create a short, catchy campaign slogan.

Use the elements of art and principles of design thoughtfully to create a campaign poster promoting your candidate. Think especially about color, balance, line and repetition in your design.

Display your posters in a public place and ask other students to vote for the candidate of their choice. As a class, discuss how the campaign posters conveyed a message about each candidate and how they contributed to the winner's election.

Suggested Curriculum Connections (TEKS)

Fine Arts: Historical and Cultural Heritage, Critical Evaluation | §117.52. Art, Level I (c) (3) and (4)

Social Studies: U.S. History Since 1877 | §113.41. (c) (3), (8), (9) and (10)

Kathryn Andrews: Run for President

Pop Culture Glossary

Hobos



Ill-tempered man
lives here



Go this way



Keep quiet



Crime committed
here. Not safe



Good place to
catch a train



Kind woman lives here.
Tell a pitiful story

“Hobo” is a term for a traveling worker that first came into use at the end of the 19th century. With the completion of the transcontinental railroad system in 1869 came a wave of unemployed men who traveled the country in boxcars seeking work. Some hobos left marks known as “hobo code” to give their peers information about the opportunities and dangers of an area.

Coming to America



Coming to America is a 1988 film starring actor and comedian Eddie Murphy as Prince Akeem, the monarch of the fictional African country of Zamunda. Akeem travels from his luxurious home to Queens, New York hoping to find a woman to be his queen. While there, he takes a job in the McDonald's-like restaurant, McDowell's, where he does janitorial work and looks for a woman who will love him for who he is even if she thinks he has no money.

Video: Theatrical trailer for *Coming to America*
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=fqfJqLFQSIk>

Captain Crook



Captain Crook is a character used in marketing by McDonald's restaurants. The character, who tried to steal Filet-O-Fish sandwiches from Ronald McDonald and his friends, appeared in the “McDonaldland” series of advertisements in the 1970s. Captain Crook's image also appeared atop McDonald's PlayPlace slides.

Currier and Ives



Printmakers Nathaniel Currier and James Merritt Ives took advantage of the newly formed U.S. postal system in the late 19th century to distribute America's first mass-produced news images. Currier and Ives were known for images of idyllic domestic life and also political images featuring commentary on candidates and the Civil War.

Wee Man



Jason Acuña, known by the stage name Wee Man, is a stunt actor and professional skateboarder known for his work on the MTV series *Jackass*. The series, which featured a variety of people performing stunts and pranks, ran for three seasons and spawned four feature films.

Video: Theatrical trailer for *Jackass: The Movie*
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=FD5JulSi4RQ>

W. S. Hancock



Winfield Scott Hancock was a U.S. Army General known for service in the Mexican-American War and U.S. Civil War. Hancock unsuccessfully ran for President in 1880. The Currier and Ives image of Hancock creates a pun on his name by showing a hand holding a game-cock with his face on it.

Trinity



Trinity, played by actress Carrie-Anne Moss, is the female lead in the 1999 science fiction film, *The Matrix*. In the film, a computer programmer learns that humanity has been trapped in a simulated reality called "the matrix" because sentient machines have taken over the real world.

Video: Theatrical trailer for *The Matrix*

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=vKQi3bBA1y8>

Lewis Cass



Lewis Cass was the Secretary of War under President Andrew Jackson and Secretary of State under President James Buchanan. During an unsuccessful candidacy for president in 1848, Cass campaigned for the U.S. to expand its territory in the wake of victory in the Mexican-American War. The belief that the U.S. was destined to expand across North America was known as "Manifest Destiny."

The Joker



The Joker, played by actor Jack Nicholson, is the primary villain in the 1989 film *Batman*. In the film, The Joker is disfigured by exposure to chemical waste, and goes on a deadly rampage in Gotham City while wearing a permanent smile.

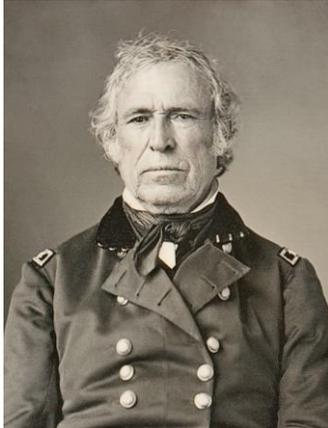
Video: Theatrical trailer for *Batman*

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=dgC9Q0uhX70>

Video: The Joker vandalizes an art museum

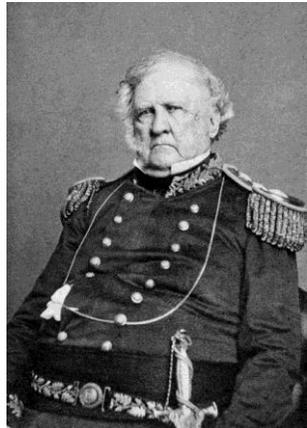
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=EB-fSOds9AU>

Zachary Taylor



Zachary Taylor was the 12th President of the United States. Taylor's term as president, beginning in 1849, was cut short by his death in 1850. Taylor's political career was built upon the fame he gained as a major general in the U. S. Army for victories in the Mexican-American War.

Winfield Scott



Winfield Scott was a U. S. Army general who commanded forces in the War of 1812, the Mexican-American War and the American Civil War. In 1852, he unsuccessfully ran for President as a candidate of the Whig party.

Spider-Man

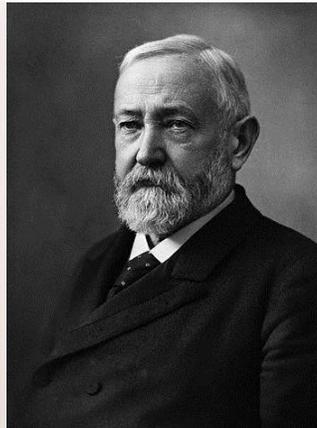


Spider-Man is a 2002 superhero film starring Tobey Maguire as the title character. The film follows high school student Peter Parker on his journey to become a hero and accept responsibility for his actions after being bitten by a radioactive spider.

Video: Theatrical trailer for *Spider-Man*

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=TYMMOjBUPMM>

Benjamin Harrison



Benjamin Harrison was the 23rd President of the United States. He defeated incumbent President Grover Cleveland in 1888 only to lose the election of 1892 to him after one term. During his time in office, Harrison enacted the McKinley Tariff and the Sherman Antitrust Act in addition to establishing America's National Forests.

Bozo the Clown



Bozo the Clown was a character who was featured in children's television programs from the 1960s through the 1990s. Bozo was originated by Larry Harmon, but played by various actors on local television stations throughout the U.S.

In 1984, Bozo launched a presidential campaign that was part protest, part marketing ploy and part performance art. He described his decision to run as a response to media calls to "put a real Bozo in the White House."

Video: Bozo for President

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=0vDCA5tQZpE>

Richard Nixon



Richard Nixon was the 37th President of the United States. After an unsuccessful run against John F. Kennedy in 1960, he was elected president in 1968 and re-elected in 1972. Nixon resigned office in 1974 in the face of impeachment due an investigation of a break-in at Democratic Party headquarters known as the Watergate scandal.

Sammy Davis Jr.



Sammy Davis Jr. was a singer, dancer, actor and comedian who began his career in vaudeville and was known for being working with entertainers such as Frank Sinatra and Dean Martin in the 1960s. In 1933, at age 7, Davis starred in a film called *Rufus Jones for President*, in which his character is elected president of the United States only to find out he was dreaming. Davis was a supporter of the Civil Rights movement, but drew criticism for his appearance with President Richard Nixon, who did not support the cause. In 1973, under Nixon's administration, Davis became the first African American invited to spend the night at the White House.

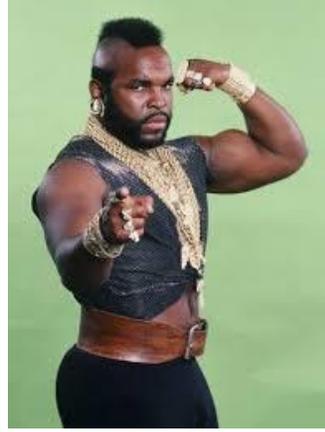
Video: News footage featuring Sammy Davis Jr. from Nixon's election night

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=rHX7WKWVpSE>

Video: Rufus Jones for President

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=FCTlwGAP3oM>

Mr. T



Laurence Tureaud, known as Mr. T, is an actor and former professional wrestler known for his roles in *The A-Team* and *Rocky III*. One of 12 children who grew up poor on Chicago's South Side during the civil unrest of the 1960s, Tureaud went on to become a beloved public figure and spokesperson for numerous PSA campaigns.

Video: Mr T. anti-drug PSA

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=W3BMkHg9_Pg

Nancy Reagan



Nancy Davis Reagan was First Lady of the United States from 1981 – 1989. A former Hollywood actress, Reagan had an interest in high-end fashion and initiated major renovation and redecoration of the White House to restore a sense of glamour to the presidency. In 1982, she launched the "Just Say No" campaign, appearing on talk shows, television comedies and dramas, and in a music video to spread an anti-drug message.

Video: Nancy Reagan "Just Say No" PSA with Clint Eastwood

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=QALu_tj1skU

Ronald Reagan



Ronald Reagan was the 40th President of the United States. A Hollywood Actor in the 1940s and 50s, and Governor of California from 1967 – 1975, Reagan was elected President in 1980 and re-elected in 1984. During his time in office, Reagan championed supply-side economics, escalated the War on Drugs, and sought to end the Cold War with the Soviet Union. In 1981, Reagan survived being shot during an assassination attempt.

Lethal Weapon



Lethal Weapon is a 1987 action film starring Mel Gibson and Danny Glover as a reckless young detective paired with a veteran officer to stop a gang of drug smugglers. The film's title alludes not only to the many firearms that appear onscreen but also to the deadly fury of Gibson's character as he pursues his targets.

Video: Theatrical trailer for *Lethal Weapon*

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=bKeW-MGu-gQ>

Die Another Day



Die Another Day is a 2002 James Bond film starring actors Pierce Brosnan and Halle Berry. The film centers on a plot by North Korea to invade South Korea and features a number of double agents and impostors.

Video: Theatrical trailer for *Die Another Day*

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=GTznf1x4khc>