

## Phoenix New Times

### Fine Art Complex 1101 Vandalized in Tempe

FRIDAY, DECEMBER 2, 2016 AT 6 A.M. BY LYNN TRIMBLE



Old Habits Die Hard III (I wish it to be visibly invisible, there but not quite, always present but only for the ones who look for it and the ones who can't hide it) by Daniel Ruanova.

Tempe gallery Fine Art Complex 1101 was vandalized this week. When gallery director Grant Vetter drove past the gallery on Tuesday, November 29, he noticed a broken line of white spray paint running across a lower portion of the building's north-facing exterior along University Drive.

The line, which is several feet long, doesn't affect any artwork currently on view there. But, Vetter says, the intent is clear. "I'm not really sure when it happened, but I'm certain it's related to the exhibition we have up now," Vetter says.

The exhibition is titled "This Machine Kills \_\_\_\_\_." It opened on November 5. The title references the "This Machine Kills Fascists" sticker protest singer Woody Guthrie slapped on his guitar during the 1940s. On view through December 10 (instead of December 3, as originally planned), the exhibition explores protest, activism, and propaganda related to the 2016 presidential election through a diverse array of art. All works were created by artists from Arizona, California, and Mexico.

But controversy has swirled around one particular piece of art by Daniel Ruanova that's located on a window pane passersby see as they approach the gallery's front door. The work, titled Old

Habits Die Hard III, is a white vinyl decal installed facing the street so people can read it from outside the gallery. In lettering taken from a historical photograph, it reads, "We Serve White's Only – No Spanish or Mexicans."

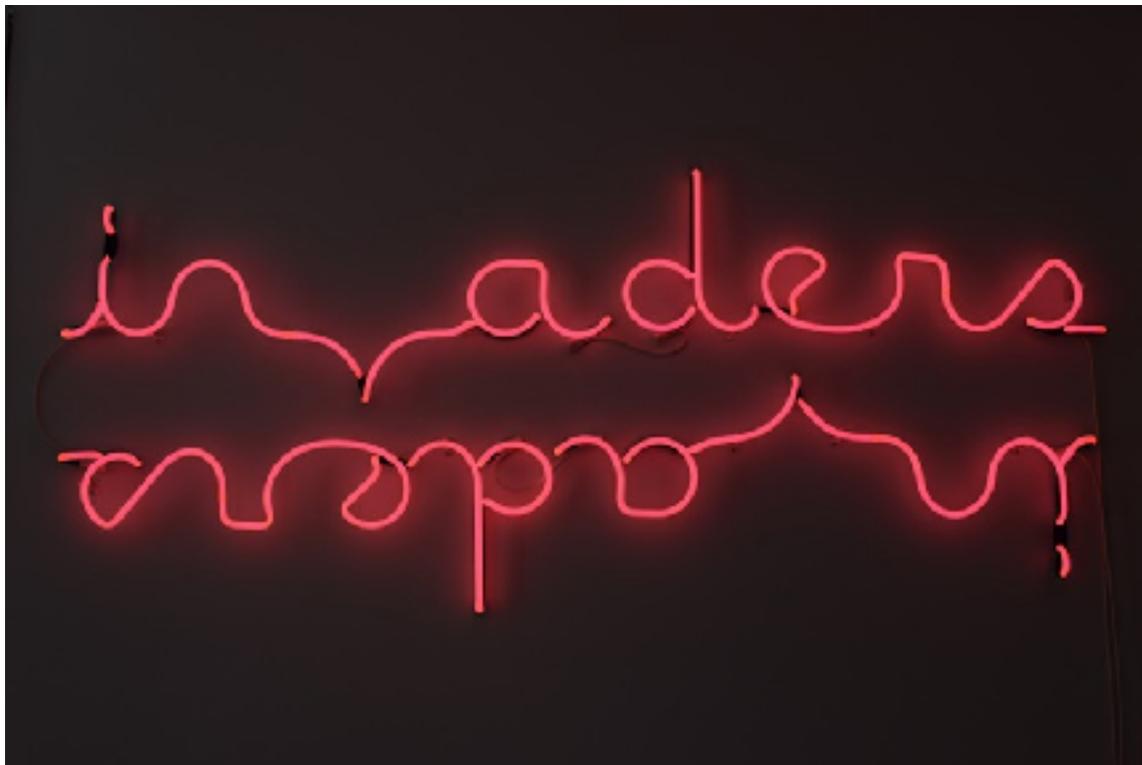
Ruanova holds both Mexican and American citizenship and is based in the borderlands between Tijuana and California. For those who recognize his work's indictment of bigotry, the decal reinforces the need to stay vigilant lest history repeat itself.

However, his message also has been misinterpreted.

It's easy to mistake Ruanova's work for a sign promoting racism and segregation, given the way the gallery is situated. Fine Art Complex 1101 takes up two-ground floor units of a condominium complex, along a busy strip of University Boulevard where it's the only art venue. It's located next door to a soon-to-open Mexican restaurant, and those walking by the building might not know they've stumbled onto an art gallery.

The vandalism isn't the first negative response to the show. Vetter says he's gotten at least a dozen calls from people angered by the show's content, especially the vinyl decal and works featuring images of Donald Trump. "People are misreading the intentions behind the work," Vetter says.

He's posted explanatory text in two gallery windows visible from the street, hoping it will help people realize the decal is a work of art rather than a racist sign. It's a way to let people know the art is there to prompt dialogue, not cause discord.



Invaders by Julio Cesar Morales.

Typically, Vetter doesn't include explanatory text with artwork, because he wants people to bring their own interpretations to the work. But after people expressed hostility about the decal, Vetter decided to post the text, which went up on November 13. Essentially, it's an artist statement Ruanova wrote to help people understand why he created the piece.

Vetter also serves as galleries director for ASU's School of Art, which has student galleries on ASU's Tempe campus and two galleries inside Grant Street Studios in the Phoenix warehouse district. Although Fine Art Complex 1101 isn't officially affiliated with ASU, it often exhibits works by artists with ASU connections.

"I didn't know what the reaction to the show would be, but I didn't think it would be this," Vetter says. "I just provided a platform for people to think about the election and what is going on in our larger culture."

Vetter turned to curators outside Arizona for this exhibition — inviting a trio of artists who started a project called the MexiCali Biennial in Mexico during 2006 to create a show relevant to the nation's focus on the presidential election.



From left: Tremendous Lier HUUUUGE Comb-over, Heil Trump, and Devil Piggy Trump by Gomez Bueno.

Curators Ed Gomez, Luis G. Hernandez, and April Lillard-Gomez selected every work featured in this exhibition, hoping it would prompt conversation and reflection. So did Vetter, who invited them to curate the show last spring, long before anyone could have predicted the outcome of November's election.

The show also includes Trump Bully Pulpit by Robbie Conal, a double-sided poster offset lithograph featuring Donald Trump's face. He's smiling on one side, but thrusting a finger forward as he screams on the other. And there's a trio of drawings of Trump created by Gomez Bueno with permanent marker and ink on paper. One gives Trump a Hitler-style mustache, and reads "Heil Trump!"

On one wall, viewers see a pink neon sign with a single word presented two ways: invaders. It's the work of Julio Cesar Morales, chief curator for ASU Art Museum, which often presents exhibitions exploring border-related issues. It's up to the viewer to assess who's the invader, and who or what was invaded – and what period or periods of time the work might reference.



Seat of the Secret Society by Ann Morton.

There's also an installation by Phoenix artist Ann Morton, who was recently honored with a 2016 Mayor's Arts Award. Her Seat of the Secret Society, inspired by George W. Bush's presidency, comprises a traditional upholstered chair with a doily-style panel draped atop the back, which reads simply "Secret Society."

Other artists featured in "This Machine Kills \_\_\_\_\_" include Chris Vena, Luis G. Hernandez, Jeff Chabot, Temoc Camacho, Victoria Delgadillo, Cristian Franco Martin, Veronica Duarte, Sean Deckert, Carlos Hernandez, Karla Diaz, Mely Barragan, Cindy Santos Bravo, and the artist collective Radio Healer.

The exhibition includes paintings, drawings, video projection, digital art, neon, mixed media, silkscreen, and archival pigment print. There's even a work created with Post-It notes and a gold Sharpie.



Capitalism by Carlos Hernandez is part of "This Machine Kills \_\_\_\_\_."

Gallery-goers who venture into a room called the New Media Arts Center will find two videos that aren't part of the exhibition, but share many of its themes. Rembrandt Quiballo's 13-minute YOU.S.A. (Red White & Blue Edition) features bold swaths of red and blue splashed across footage of an actual Trump rally, accompanied by music from a YouTube USA Freedom Kids performance of a song titled Freedom's Call.

Far East of Eden by Karen Finley and Bruce Yonemoto explores parallels between Trump's rhetoric and that of James Duval Phelan, a former California senator who espoused racist views and promulgated discriminatory legislation during the early 20th century. It's filmed at three locations, including the Montalvo Arts Center situated at the site of his former estate, and the Japanese American National Museum in Los Angeles.

*"This Machine Kills \_\_\_\_\_" continues through Saturday, December 10. The gallery will be open from 1 p.m. to 4 p.m. on Friday and Saturday. Find more information on the Fine Art Complex 1101 website.*

