

HYPERALLERGIC

In Response to Trump's Election, Artist Asked the Whitney Museum to Turn Her Work Upside-Down

“Left Right Left Right (1995), a piece by Annette Lemieux at the Whitney Museum that consists of 30 images of raised fists, has been turned upside-down at the artist's request.

Carey Dunne November 17, 2016



Annette Lemieux, “Left Right Left Right” (1995), 30 photolithographs and 30 pine poles, dimensions variable (Whitney Museum of American Art, New York; purchase, with funds from the Print Committee; courtesy the Whitney Museum of American Art)

In light of the outcome of last week's US presidential election, artist Annette Lemieux asked that her 1995 work “Left Right Left Right” — which consists of 30 pictures of raised fists

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mounted on pine poles — be reinstalled upside down by the Whitney Museum, where it is currently featured in the exhibition *Human Interest: Portraits from the Whitney's Collection*.

“Lemieux’s gesture suggests a commitment to individual agency, the continuing power of protest, and a feeling, in her words, that the ‘world has turned upside down,’” the Whitney wrote in a statement.

“Left Right Left Right” reflects on the role of protest in democracy. Printed on thick museum board and mounted on poles, the images resemble picket signs at a demonstration — one whose purpose appears ambiguous. Lemieux appropriated the pictures of fists from newspapers and magazines dating from the 1930s to the ’50s. Some fists depicted belong to famous political and cultural figures of diverse ideological persuasions, including Martin Luther King Jr., Richard Nixon, Jane Fonda, and Miss America. Others are anonymous — there’s the fist of a woman at Woodstock, the fists of a sailor and a preacher. Several of the images are flipped, so that the same fist shows up twice, facing opposite directions.

The work and its title, “Left Right Left Right,” reflect the zig-zagging nature of politics, particularly in the United States. Turning the work upside down suggests a departure from this usual pattern of power transferred back and forth, from right to left; it evokes a capsized vessel, a collapse of the fulcrum on which opposing parties both pivot.