

## ARTS &amp; CULTURE

## What It Means To Be An Artist In The Time Of Trump

21 artists express their hopes, their goals, and their advice to fellow activists.



Being an artist today means something very different than it did just two weeks ago. As the nation collectively struggles to come to terms with what a Donald Trump presidency means, we call upon artists as activists, optimists, truth-tellers and revolutionaries, to resist the normalization of hate and prejudice, to stand up for the communities that have been marginalized, and advocate for an America that serves all of its citizens.

Shortly after the election, we reached out to artists whose work we admire, asking their opinion on the role of an artist over the coming four years. Our questions were simple: What is your mission as an artist today and what is your advice to others in the field?

The answers we received are full of the emotions many of us have been grappling with over the past week. Feelings of pain, anger, sadness, fear - but also of hope, unity, compassion, motivation and strength. We have compiled the responses and artwork of 21 artists, ready and willing to accept to challenge of making artwork today.

Their words and their visions are important reminders of the creativity, energy and resilience that make this nation worth fighting for.

## 11. Aaron Johnson



“The Trumpocalypse came as a severe shock to me. How could the people of America be so duped by this conman? I spent the first few days after the election just glued to my couch, paralyzed, reading countless articles online, trying to make sense of it. Is this alt-right-embracing sociopath going to start WWII? How much is his regime going to squash our freedom of speech, freedom of the press ... how soon until my access to empowering myself with information is revoked? How soon, if history repeats itself, will degenerate artists come under assault by the government? It's nothing short of horrifying.

“

**It's time for artists to be activists, I truly believe that.**

”Getting into the studio was hard. I began by spending Friday painting protest signs, and Saturday handing out signs to fellow protestors as we marched up from Union Square to Trump Tower. It's time for artists to be activists, I truly believe that. Personally I'll be following Shaun King's Trump resistance platform, Bernie's Our Revolution, and Michael Moore as directives for how to fight back. It's also time for artists to keep making art. Keep painting, otherwise the fascists win! I'm trying, today, a week after the election, to get my painting will back. The visions are dancing in my head. I can take on this autocrat monster and his cabinet of hate mongers in my paintings, and I can be vicious.

“If this oncoming Trump blood bath is as brutal as it threatens to be, I can go right there with them and retaliate in my paintings. At the moment I'm a little scared to even put those gloves on, or reluctant to fill my head with all that evil. The other road, escapism (certain modes I work in when I'm turning away from the political) has its allure as well. To be decided. This week it's one day at a time in the studio.” - Aaron Johnson, painter