

Akim Monet Fine Arts, LLC



George GROSZ¹



Cliff JOSEPH²

OF MICE AND MEN George Grosz and the 2020 election

From October 5 to December 5, 2020 - Popcorn Gallery Akim Monet Fine Arts, Los Angeles

BY APPOINTMENT ONLY

Theaster Gates George Grosz Cliff Joseph Paul McCarthy Akim Monet
Sterling Ruby & Hiro McCarthy Weissman

Owing to my love for literature, I occasionally give to my exhibitions titles lifted from significant books. Although the references to the original writings are loose, I see the presentations themselves as "inspired visual essays." On the heels of "Sex is kicking death in the ass while singing" (Charles Bukowski), "The animal's conference" (Erich Kaestner), and "Bridge over chaos" (John Milton), I am delighted to present "Of mice and men" (John Steinbeck), the sequel to an exhibition I mounted in Berlin exactly four years ago entitled "Der Kandidat: George Grosz and the 2016 election."

When the idea for "Der Kandidat" came to me on the eve of Trump's nomination as the GOP's presidential contender during the summer of 2016, I could not have imagined that the character I saw as little more than an artful New York real estate swindler who was not above leaking "nudies" of his own wife to deflect public wrath over his racist call to block all Muslims from entering the United States, would actually make it to hold the highest office in the nation.

Not unlike George Grosz, who left Germany when Hitler was elected in 1933, I moved my family from Germany to the United States soon after the right-wing political party, "Alternative für Deutschland," won 94 seats in the Bundestag in 2017, instantly becoming the third-largest party in Germany.

Little did I know that in Donald Trump's America, I would find many racist, Islamophobic, anti-Semitic, and xenophobic tendencies linked to far-right movements such as neo-Nazism, also associated with the German AfD party. During the last two years, echoing the period in Germany that immediately preceded WWII, in horror, I have watched a display of racism, propaganda, and death unfold in America.

Building on the strength of the success of "Der Kandidat" I have increased my holding of George Grosz works by acquiring a number of exceptional ink drawings executed between 1923 and 1941 which, along with two superb drawings I kept from "Der Kandidat," I present here for the first time in "Of mice and men: George Grosz and the 2020 election."

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In addition to the conversation between eight Grosz works and the present context surrounding the upcoming presidential election, I have selected significant post-war and contemporary works by four pre-eminent American artists who have succeeded in adding a high degree of political activism to their sociologically relevant artistic practice.

Inspired by the courage of artists Theaster Gates, George Grosz, Cliff Joseph, Paul McCarthy, and Sterling Ruby, and hoping to live up to the ring of Martin Luther King Jr.'s below words, I have worked assiduously to mount an exhibition that opens on October 5, 2020, the first day of the early voting period, a month culminating in election day, Tuesday November 3, 2020.

He who passively accepts evil is as much involved in it as he who helps to perpetrate it. He who accepts evil without protesting against it is really cooperating with it.

Martin Luther King, Jr.

I leave the last word to First Lady Michelle Obama, an opening salvo, in fact, during this important moment in our history:

Going high means taking the harder path. It means scraping and clawing our way to that mountain top. Going high means standing fierce against hatred while remembering that we are one nation under God, and if we want to survive, we've got to find a way to live together and work together across our differences. And going high means unlocking the shackles of lies and mistrust with the only thing that can truly set us free: the cold hard truth.

Michelle Obama

In this spirit, I have created an Instagram campaign to accompany the exhibition. Every two days, during the month prior to the election, I am posting a series of composite images that juxtapose each work in "Of mice and men: George Grosz and the 2020 election," with instances relevant to the present context surrounding the presidential election. This suite of images is "Voter's Digest" the component of the exhibition.

Akim Monet, Los Angeles
September 5, 2020

N.B. The views expressed in the composite images subsequent to each work in the catalogue and in the Instagram posts are those of Akim Monet alone.

ILLUSTRATIONS

- 1 George Grosz, *Garantievorschlag des Reichverbandes der Deutschen Industrie (Offer of Guaranty by the Federal Association of German Industry)*, 1923, reed pen, and pen and ink on paper, 20 5/8 x 25 5/8 in. (52.4 x 65.1 cm.)
- 2 Cliff Joseph, *Southern Comfort*, 1965, oil on board, 16 x 16 in. (40.6 x 40.6 cm.)

ABOUT POPCORN GALLERY LOS ANGELES

Popcorn Gallery Los Angeles is the curatorial branch of Akim Monet Fine Arts, LLC. After a decade in Germany, where Akim Monet founded and operated the renowned Side by Side Gallery Akim Monet GmbH on Berlin's famed Postdamerstrasse, he moved his practice to Los Angeles in 2018, where he continues to develop his focus on thematically curated exhibitions that juxtapose modern and contemporary art.

ABOUT AKIM MONET FINE ARTS

Drawing on a lifetime of expertise in the art world, Akim Monet has forged lasting partnerships and constructed several innovative projects with preeminent organizations and artists. He has worked extensively with the Musée Rodin in Paris and subsequently formed a public-private partnership with the museum called "Rodin the Alma Project." Curatorial work continues with Popcorn Gallery Los Angeles, the current iteration of Side by Side Gallery Akim Monet, GmbH in Berlin. In addition to these activities, Akim Monet Fine Arts encompasses Akim Monet's art advisory business and his photography practice.

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