

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

off the wall

FOR FREEDOMS

September 1 – November 30, 2016

This fall, Monique Meloche Gallery is pleased to present our third annual [off the wall](#) exhibition, featuring works from the first ever artist-run super PAC, *For Freedoms*. Scheduled over the course of the 2016 presidential election season, works by Zoë Buckman, Paula Crown, Maria Gaspar, Nari Ward, and Carrie Mae Weems will be displayed on public bus benches throughout Wicker Park Bucktown, for this exclusive engagement with a Chicago audience. Concurrently, Dread Scott will exhibit a new video work in our [porcelain projects](#) space, and gallery artist Rashid Johnson's RUN JESSE RUN will be displayed high above the city on a digital billboard during the month of September.



Founded by our 2014 inaugural [off the wall](#) artist Hank Willis Thomas and Creative Capital Awardee Eric Gottesman, *For Freedoms* uses art to inspire deeper political engagement for citizens who want to have a greater impact on the American political landscape. The organization's intentions are not to sway the public's interest toward one party or the other, but to encourage new forms of critical discourse surrounding the 2016 presidential election. Their aim is to turn the political process itself into a work of art. "Our medium for this project is American democracy, and our mission is to support the effort to reshape it into a more transparent and representative form."

British multi-disciplinary artist Zoë Buckman marries the stereotypically masculine to the feminine, through the use of polarizing iconography. In this instance, the artist's own boxing gloves are joined with a neon diagram of the uterus, thereby transforming a traditional image of fragility into a symbol of resistance. A continuation of Buckman's ongoing series *Mostly It's Just Uncomfortable*, the piece raises questions about healthcare, sex education, and women's rights, while promoting female positivity.

After a successful career as an investment banker, Paula Crown abandoned the finance industry and found her vocation for art practice, graduating with an MFA from the School of the Art Institute of Chicago in 2012. Crown's multimedia work investigates the theme of virtual and physical landscapes, and in this case, the alteration of landscapes due to climate change. She seeks a sense of place and horizon in unexpected objects, often intersecting the flatness of painting and drawing with sculpture and technology, creating "dimensionalized drawings".

Born in Chicago, Maria Gaspar is an interdisciplinary artist who negotiates the politics of location and geography. In her ongoing project *96 Acres*, the artist explores the social and political implications of incarceration on communities of color through installation, sculpture, performance, community-engagement, and audio. She examines contested spaces and their embedded power structures to create interventions and actions that are generative and pedagogy that draws from community-based participation and local scholarship. Recently, Gaspar was awarded a Creative Capital Award, and a Joan Mitchell Foundation Emerging Artist Award

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p 773.252.0299 www.moniquemeloche.com

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Internationally recognized Jamaican artist Nari Ward's work examines contemporary issues that include citizenship, cultural consumption, discrimination, and poverty, which reflect his experiences and observations growing up in Jamaica and his working life as an artist in Harlem. Composed of material collected from his urban neighborhood and the discards of consumerism (in this instance, a colorful array of unwanted shoelaces), Ward's dramatic sculptural installations reveal the numerous emotions inherent within found everyday objects, serving as a link to personal connections and the ambiguity of language.

Steeped in African-American history, Carrie Mae Weems's works explore issues of race, class, and gender identity. Activism is a central concern of her practice—specifically, looking at history as a way of better understanding the present. In her opinion, “photography can be used as a powerful weapon toward instituting political and cultural change”. In her recent series of photographs, *American Monuments*, Weems positions herself in front of the camera, before historical sites that have mixed meanings for Americans of color. In this image, produced for *For Freedoms*, the artist stands before the Jefferson Memorial, clad in all black.

[off the wall](#) is a public art initiative that invites artists to produce site specific installations throughout the Wicker Park Bucktown neighborhood. The impetus for this project is to provide a more open platform for contemporary art that engages with the public at large on a daily basis. The series reaches a demographic much larger than the standard gallery-goers and provides an open-armed invitation to discover the arts and the potential they have to influence everyday life. The project is inspired by the success of the gallery's [on the wall](#) project, which has been produced in the storefront windows of moniquemeloche since 2010. Both projects are generously supported by a grant from the Wicker Park Bucktown SSA #33.

Exhibiting alongside *For Freedoms'* bus bench project during EXPO Chicago, DCASE will present a digital billboard featuring the work of moniquemeloche artist Rashid Johnson. Created exclusively for the super PAC, Johnson's *Run Jesse Run* speaks to black excellence in times of political upheaval. The work recalls track and field star Jesse Owens' four gold medal wins during the 1936 summer Olympics in Nazi occupied Berlin, as well as civil rights activist Jesse Jackson's presidential runs in the 1980s. The invitation to exhibit with the super PAC provided Johnson, a Chicago native and former Bucktown resident, the opportunity to realize this piece that he was inspired to make over a decade ago.

Also presented in conjunction with this year's [off the wall](#), SAIC alum and *For Freedoms* artist Dread Scott will exhibit his latest video project, *Anti-Campaign Ad*, in the gallery's [porcelain projects](#) viewing space. Using the language and style of US presidential campaign commercials, the video asks people to look at the social issues confronting humanity while offering an implicit critique of how political campaigns frame issues and deploy the media. Scott's renowned for his controversial, politically-charged artworks, and most recognized for his 1989 performance *What is the Proper Way to Display a U.S. Flag?*, which George H. W. Bush denounced and resulted in the United States Senate passing legislation to “protect the flag.” In response, the artist burned flags on the steps of the US Capitol, triggering a Supreme Court case and a landmark First Amendment decision.

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