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WAM's Upcoming Artist-Led Programs Tackle Questions of Truth, Culture, and Power this Election Season

Minneapolis, MN, October 21, 2020: “If we were to choose the single most contentious word in the U.S.A. in the last four years, it would be the ‘truth,’” said Boris Oicherman, the Weisman’s Cindy and Jay Ihlenfeld Curator for Creative Collaboration. He went on: “Fake news, alternative facts, news echo chambers—the stuff of niche conspiracy theories and dark internet corners. All of it sprang into public consciousness and changed the way we think, talk, and, undoubtedly, vote.” The question: Is there a role for art museums in all this?

WAM’s response is an enthusiastic yes. Museums engage with culture, after all, and the very idea of *truth* is fundamentally a cultural one. Our sense of *true* and *false* is shaped by shared traditions, beliefs, and conventions developed over long periods of time: by the words, metaphors, colors, stories, and symbols used in books and articles we read; the speeches we hear, and the art we see. The stuff of culture alternately cultivates and suppresses our expressions of empathy, fear, love, hate, compassion, and anger. It also informs the way we vote. With this in mind, the artists and curators of the Target Studio for Creative Collaboration are leading a special series of programs that respond to the general election as a cultural moment: a full roster of timely, thought-provoking virtual events that dig deep into some of the pressing themes, concerns, and questions at the center of this year’s important electoral cycle.

While WAM has now re-opened to visitors, in an effort to help curb the spread of the coronavirus, WAM has taken its fall events season entirely online. Audiences can tune in to the museum’s programs from the comfort of home: artist talks, performances, topical conversations, and more. Can’t watch the event in real time? All of WAM’s virtual events will be recorded and posted to the museum’s YouTube channel for those who’d like to access these programs later on-demand. Note: Many of these events will be livestreamed simultaneously on a number of platforms, for maximum accessibility. To engage audience Q & A, however, visitors should register for and attend the event on Zoom when applicable. We hope you join us there— [after you vote!](#)

On-Site:



TURN UP THE TURNOUT is a non-partisan, grassroots voting initiative focused on raising awareness and encouraging Americans to cast their ballots in the upcoming presidential election – whether in person or by mail-in ballot. In the Riverview Gallery, the Weisman is screening a short film by **Maribeth Romslo** (4 min. 30 seconds) through Election Day, Nov. 3, which includes work by 22 local artists, activists, and community members, including: **Ta-coumba Aiken, Eyenga Bokamba, Anna Canfield, Christopher Deanes, Jim Denomie, Ayub HajiOmar, Christopher Harrison, Carly Jo, Eliesa Johnson, Seitu Jones, Anne Labovitz, Chris Larson, Chris McDuffie, Richard Moody, Teo Nguyen, Aaron**

Spangler, TAKARA, Ivy Vainio, Kazua Melissa Vang, Dyani White Hawk (Sičangu Lakota), Tou Yia Xiong, and Tetsuya Yamada.

Visitors will find free **Turn Up the Turnout local artist-designed buttons and stickers** at the front desk to take home. WAM visitors are encouraged to wear the buttons, snap a selfie, and share their photos, with the #TurnUpTheTurnout hashtag, on social media to help get out the vote.

Upcoming Virtual Events:



Artist Talk // **The Aesthetics of Fascism: Brooks Turner**

Wed., Oct. 28 at 7 p.m. | FREE

Watch: **Register for the Zoom webinar** for full access to audience Q & A OR watch the livestream on **WAM's YouTube channel**.

With the Teamsters Strike of 1934 and the success of the Farmer-Labor Party, Minnesota established itself in the 1930s as a U.S. center for progressive thinking and action across the political spectrum. But, just beneath the surface, a tangled web of Fascist activity connected American Nazis to prominent businessmen, lawyers,

and government officials. Over the last two years, artist and educator [Brooks Turner](#) has traced these connections through documents archived in the Minnesota Historical Society, existing scholarship, and aesthetic analysis, focusing in particular on the Silver Legion of America, a national Fascist organization that found considerable support in Minnesota. Through drawing and collage, Turner reassembled an aesthetic history of Fascism in Minnesota, the traces of which can still be seen throughout the Twin Cities and beyond.

*In conjunction with the related exhibition [Brooks Turner: Legends and Myths of Ancient Minnesota](#) (October 25, 2020—January 3, 2021) and print project with the *Star Tribune*, on view in WAM's Target Studio for Creative Collaboration.*

SEEN AT THE CEDAR



Performance // [SEEN at The Cedar: Collaborations by B, Sarith and Jeff, curated by Ritika Ganguly](#)

Thurs., Oct. 29, 7:30 p.m. | FREE
Watch the livestream on [The Cedar's Facebook](#) and [YouTube](#) channels.

The [Cedar Cultural Center's](#) Artist Collective member [Ritika Ganguly](#) has partnered with [We Are All Criminals](#) (WAAC) and [Weisman Art Museum](#) (WAM) to curate and present an evening of three new artistic works-in-progress created by incarcerated artists who are part of We Are All Criminals' **SEEN** project. [SEEN](#) is a poetry and portrait project by Emily Baxter and We Are All Criminals that challenges and disrupts mass incarceration by clearing the pathways for people behind bars to have their voices heard, faces seen, and humanity recognized. The program will feature poetry and visual art to explore and express the chaos of the cell, as well as dance and personal interviews that shed light on the artists' experiences of incarceration.

This program is part of the [Cedar Public Access Channel](#) series of events, streaming this summer and fall, and is in conjunction with collaboration between We Are All Criminals and WAM to create a museum-based collaborative residency program for incarcerated artists.



Conversation // [States of Control: Who's In Control?](#)

Tues., Nov. 3, 12 noon | FREE
Watch: [Register for the Zoom webinar](#) for full access to audience Q & A OR watch the livestream on [WAM's YouTube channel](#).

On U.S. election day, November 3, WAM is partnering with the [TOK collective](#) for an online debate about the future of choice among an international line-up of expert voices. We are inviting audiences worldwide to join in this afternoon conversation, to revisit the notion of elections as a platform for representation of the people's will and views, in the past, present, and future. While observing the U.S. elections live, sociologists, political analysts, artists, writers, and performers will discuss alternatives to the current voting procedures on the global scale. The conversation will also reflect upon the topics of manipulation and suppression of voters and election procedures, which is highly relevant for the current U.S. social and political environment, as well as recent election cycles in Russia, Belarus, Israel, and others.

Moderators: **Anna Bitkina** and **Maria Veits**, [TOK collective](#)

Participants:

- **Greg Yudin**, Russia, sociologist
- **Stephen Duncombe**, USA, media researcher and activist
- **Ayşe Çavdar**, Turkey, journalist, writer
- **Tali Keren**, Israel/USA, artist
- **Idris Goodwyn**, USA, writer, playwright
- **Paul DeMain**, USA, journalist, activist



Performance // [Amreeka: Election Night Comedy Special](#)

Tues., Nov. 3, 8 p.m. | FREE

Watch the livestream on election night via [WAM's Facebook](#) and [YouTube](#) channels

Tune in on the night of 2020 Presidential election, for an evening of live comedy by **Theater of Public Policy** and stand-up comics **Suzie Afridi**, **Usama Siddiquee**, and **Amer Zahr**. The comedians will comment on the incoming election news coverage, as it

happens, and reflect on the state of “Amreeka,” as the word is pronounced in Arabic.

Created by WAM Target Studio [artist-in-residence Wafaa Bilal](#) and the [Theater of Public Policy](#)



Conversation // [How Do We Know Fascism When We See It?](#)

Wed., Nov. 18, 7 p.m. | FREE

Watch: [Register for the Zoom webinar](#) for full access to audience Q & A OR watch the livestream on [WAM's YouTube channel](#).

In the absence of clear signifiers, such as swastikas or overt references to Hitler, do we recognize fascism when we see it? This pecha

kucha-style program features presenters whose work focuses on the omnipresence of fascism and its effects in the American landscape: from architecture to print media, to digital algorithms and human rights. Presenters include artist **Brooks Turner** (Target Studio artist-in-residence), **Caroline Sindors** (machine-learning-design researcher and artist), **Lorenzo Fabbri** (assistant professor of Italian and moving images studies, University of Minnesota Twin Cities), and **Christopher Lehman** (professor of ethnic studies, St. Cloud State University). Moderated by **Boris Oicherman**, Cindy and Jay Ihlenfeld Curator for Creative Collaboration at the Weisman.

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About the Weisman Art Museum

Since its origin in 1934, Weisman Art Museum has been a teaching museum for the University of Minnesota. Today, education remains central to the museum's mission to create art experiences that spark discovery, critical thinking, and transformation, linking the University and the community. The Weisman is located at 333 East River Road, Minneapolis, on the University of Minnesota campus. Gallery admission and membership are always free.

For additional [press images](#) or to arrange an interview contact Susannah Schouweiler, Director of Communications and Marketing, at susannah@umn.edu.

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