



Run for it: Art installation puts you in the presidential race



Photo by Stefano Giovannini

And a Charizard in every pot!: Young candidate Bailey Eckert–Chu tells voters why he is the right choice for President at the “Campaign Office” installation in Dumbo, while his father and campaign manager Joshua Eckert–Chu looks on.

By Dennis Lynch
Brooklyn Paper

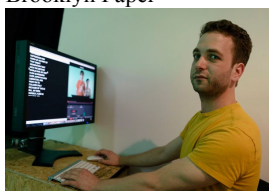


Photo by Stefano Giovannini

Campaign manager: Artist Jeremy Olson gives prospective candidates all of the paperwork they need to run as write-ins for President of the United States of America.

Tired of the Donald and Clinton campaigns? Maybe you can do better!

A Dumbo art installation encourages everyday Americans to run for President of the United States. “Campaign Office,” happening every weekend in July at the Smack Mellon gallery as part of its election-themed “Of the People” exhibit, lets participants record a computer-generated campaign speech declaring their candidacy. The creator of the piece says that getting behind the podium gives people a glimpse of life on the campaign trail.

“Most people say it’s really challenging, and talk about being carried away by the language. It’s a powerful and impressive thing,” said artist Jeremy Olson. “That’s a common thing — there’s a sense of comfort and excitement and for a moment you really are up there, speaking to a huge crowd about America.”

Prospective candidates fill out a questionnaire about their political beliefs, receive a semi-random speech from a computer loaded with declaration speeches from 18 real presidential aspirants, and deliver their historic address in front of a green screen. Olson said he is most interested in how people respond to the speeches.

“You can see them change when the topic is something very meaningful to them and how some words take on a different meaning spoken by one person than by the candidate who originally spoke them,” he said. “In other cases it’s quite clear they are saying something completely against what they believe in.”

Olson, who became a notary public for this project, then helps the Presidential hopefuls file paperwork to become a write-in candidate in the state of New York. Olson also posts the speeches to the site www.campaignoffice.org.

Olson is one of 19 artists in the “Of the People” exhibit, chosen from more than 200 submissions. The show’s curator says that she leaned toward pieces that went beyond the individuals dominating the campaign.

“I thought about how artists could engage with political platform issues, such as immigration, metadata collection, campaign finance, and income inequality,” Erin Donnelly said. “I’m really interested in that and not just the political personalities in this election cycle — the idea was to take a broader look at the political process in America in 2016.”

Other exhibits include Isabella Cruz-Chong’s sound installation “Line of Breath,” a giant metal wall outfitted with speakers emitting the artist’s breath, symbolizing the barrier some want between the United States and Mexico, and Esteban Del Valle’s massive mixed-media mural of a podium weighing down a bull’s boat — a comment on the relationship between financial markets and political speech.

“Of the People” at Smack Mellon [92 Plymouth St. at Washington Street in Dumbo, (718) 834–8761, www.smackmellon.org]. Open through July 31, Wed–Sun, noon–6 pm. “Campaign Office” open Sat–Sun. Free.

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