

We The People
GAVLAK Palm Beach
November 5, 2024 - November 30, 2024

Opening on the day of the U.S. presidential election, GAVLAK Palm Beach presents *We The People*, a group exhibition exploring the American political landscape in all its vibrancy, complexity, and urgency.

The exhibition highlights the necessary role artistic production plays in democracy. Through various media, including painting, sculpture, photography, ceramic, and mixed media installations, the featured works constitute a nuanced account of contemporary American politics by way of race, class, sexuality, and gender. The diversity of artists featured in the show functions as a synecdoche for the American people and their various political convictions and desires.

Many of the included artists take a polemical approach to pressing issues, such as does Simone Leigh with her sculpture *Untitled- Cowrie 63* (2012), which speaks to the exploitation that ungirds American economics. In this work, Leigh—who represented the United States at the 59th Biennale di Venezia in 2022—renders salt-glazed porcelain into the form of a massive Cowrie shell, the currency once used to buy slaves in Africa. Similarly, Maynard Monrow makes a criticism of the American status quo in his signature textual wall-sculptures. In *Untitled / Without Permission (Silver/Red)*, he questions the idea of a social contract and the ethics of governance in view of the history of the American Revolution.

Other artists employ the aesthetics of presence to speak to the rich heterogeneity of the American people, such as Elizabeth Catlett and Lisa Edelstein do in their figurative works. Catlett's *Young Woman* (2002) is a dignified portrait in pencil and graphite on buff wove paper, and is an illustrative example of the artist's confrontational practice. Catlett's retrospective *Elizabeth Catlett: A Black Revolutionary Artist and All That It Implies* is presently on view at the Brooklyn Museum. Similarly, Lisa Edelstein offers a view of American-Jewish life in *The Conversation*, inviting the viewer into a social space they might otherwise not encounter.

The show also features a multigenerational and multidisciplinary variety of artists, including Lindsay Adams, Jose Alvarez (D.O.P.A.), Lisa Anne Auerbach, Judie Bamber, Whitney Bedford, Elizabeth Catlett, Kim Dacres, Lisa Edelstein, Viola Frey, Taha Heydari, LaToya Hobbs, Deborah Kass, Amani Lewis, Robert Peterson, Michele Pred, Jose de Jesus Rodriguez, Betty Tompkins, T.J. Wilcox, James Williams II, and Monsieur Zohore.

Taken together, these diverse forms and artistic strategies urge us to think of our current political moment—the presidential election—as a question of community. *We The People* reminds us that the American people are not an abstraction, but a concrete collective bound by the same dream.