
Bay Area figures join call for Inauguration Day ‘art strike’

By Charles Desmarais

A number of Bay Area figures have joined a loose-knit coalition of artists, critics and scholars that has issued a call for a Jan. 20 “act of noncompliance on Inauguration Day.”

Among them are photographer David Maisel; arts faculty members Julia Bryan-Wilson (UC Berkeley), TJ Demos (UC Santa Cruz), Jennifer Gonzalez (UC Santa Cruz), Tirza Latimer and Julian Myers-Szupinska (California College of the Arts), and Pa-

mela Lee (Stanford); and Stanford artist-in-residence Trevor Paglen.

The J20 Art Strike, as the action is called, is meant to disrupt work, school and business “in solidarity with calls for general strike.” The call is directed to museums and galleries, as well as other visual and performing arts institutions. As of this writing, more than 250 had signed, mostly New York artists and critics. The petition can be found online at <http://bit.ly/2jftAAx>.

The signatories also include such national figures as Joan Jonas, Richard Serra and Cindy Sherman.

“We consider Art Strike to be one tactic among others to combat the normalization of Trumpism,” the petition states, “a toxic mix of white supremacy, misogyny, xenophobia, militarism, and oligarchic rule.

“Like any tactic, it is not an end in itself, but rather an intervention that will ramify into the future. It is not a strike against art, theater, or any other cultural form. It is

an invitation to motivate these activities anew, to reimagine these spaces as places where resistant forms of thinking, seeing, feeling, and acting can be produced.”

Not all critics are in favor of the action. Judith Dobrzynski, on the ArtsJournal website, wrote, “I do quibble with the idea that museums should join in — at least public museums. It’s going to be counter-productive in the long run. Museums will need public support in the four years — the broader the better.

“Besides,” she added, “it sends the wrong message. If the arts are to be inclusive, museums have to welcome people of all ideologies. Otherwise, they are just as bad as the other side.”

Many local galleries have announced they will close Jan. 20-21, including Altman Siegel, Brian Gross, Catherine Clark and Eleanor Harwood.

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