

Letter From the Editor

Two months ago I was joined by several of our *Carla* writers in a shared letter from the editor. Stricken and made heavy by the election results, I felt an imperative to respond in writing to our community of creative thinkers. Several writers joined me in voicing a mutual sentiment: now is not the time to wallow or divide, but to stand up, to create, to engage.

As I marched through the streets of Los Angeles last month with 749,999 others, I was struck by the symbol of unity, solidarity, peaceful democracy, and love that we were jointly creating. All over the world, the power of bodily presence, and the impact of sheer numbers, all peacefully unified for equal rights—civil, reproductive, gender, et al.—felt staggeringly significant. Yet, how do we move that momentum—that impact of joint cause made physical—forward?

“I want, now as much or more than ever, complicated, messy, sensuous, probing criticism that revels in uncertainties,” Catherine Wagley wrote in our shared Letter from the Editor that *Carla* published last November. She goes on, “Which great? Whose great? Nothing worth having comes ‘easily.’”

As the new presidential administration rails against the press and sees truth as precariously subjective at best, I am so proud to be part of an independent critical magazine that encourages probing criticism and messy, sensuous dialogue. Text has a wonderful plasticity to it—an agile ability to float around its subject, honing in or sometimes wafting through. Yet, language has its shortcomings. So, how do we as writers approach art writing through the lens of our political reality? While criticism is always shaped by the current moment and its discourse, it seems unavoidable to

review work without our pressing American politics on the tip of the tongue.

This issue, we get political. Catherine Wagley discusses alternative platforms for art and understanding, while Travis Diehl delves into the ethos of Dynasty Handbag and her use of humor to expel and express political anxiety. Reviews on Karl Haendel, Wolfgang Tillmans, *Creature at the Broad*, and *Human Nature* in West Adams brush against art’s role—and sometimes complicity—in engaging with political discourse. What can art do to expose, understand, or wade within this ever-changing space? Is all art political? Does it have to be?

With people marching in the streets, how does a pencil to paper or brush to canvas register impact? It begins to feel a bit moot to anguish over compositional aesthetic decisions when our basic human rights are being threatened daily. Yet, freedom of voice is an essential tenet of our country. And art is a vital medium with which to expand the rigidity of conservative thought.

Art, in its essential form, is nonlinear—it seeks to ask questions, to sink into the unknown, to revel in uncertainty. Even work that doesn’t overtly engage in political themes teaches us to slow down and to look; to accept an array of meanings and understandings. Joseph Albers said, “Instead of art I have taught philosophy. Though technique for me is a big word, I never have taught people how to paint. All my doing was to make people to see.” As writers, critics, artists, and citizens, we urge you to engage with us as we wade through the complications that critical discourse might incite. Nothing worth having comes easily.

Lindsay Preston Zappas
Founder and Editor-in-Chief