

Deborah Faye Lawrence

“Strumpet of Justice” Bonfire Gallery, Seattle, August 3-6

Essay by Susan Noyes Platt, Ph.D. www.artandpoliticsnow.com



In the window of Bonfire Gallery, DeeDeeLorenzo (the artist's alter ego) cries. Wearing her signature flag dress, but now in somber dark shades, she surveys the shambles of disheveled flags around her.



Although the window suggests grieving, the exhibition's small title piece *Strumpet of Justice*, gives us a determined female playing an accordion emblazoned with a heart. She stands in the midst of stars in a

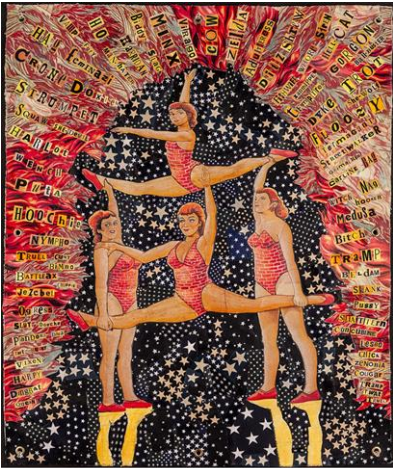
blue field cut from flags. According to the artist, “a strumpet is a slovenly woman, a strumpet of justice puts aside loveliness in her efforts to change the world.”

On every wall we see Deborah Faye Lawrence’s outcry against abuse of both people and planet. Collaged flags form the starting point for many works, but these flags are cut, stressed, segmented into collage; they do not suggest a facile patriotic gesture. Rather they speak to the artist’s strong message of opposition to what is happening in our country.

For years, Lawrence has bluntly spoken out. In “Strumpets of Justice,” she has included some of her more crucial older works: the two part *Assassination Day Trays* 2004 recalls a personal experience on the day of Martin Luther King’s assassination; *Leonard Peltier Tray* 2000 “honors the Native American activist who has spent most of his life in U.S. prisons” as the artist explains. *American Amnesty Tray* 2015 ironically declares amnesty for white people by Native Americans.

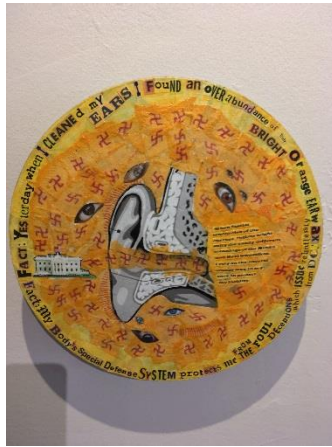


Several themes appear repeatedly including feminism, concern for the planet, corporate exploitation, gun fanaticism, and manipulation of language. Sometimes the artist defiantly exposes evils, such as the ongoing destruction of the planet by corporations. In *Targeting the American Dream*, 2011 the target painted on an animal dominates a landscape littered with corporate logos and set in a centrifugal arrangement of flag stripes. See *How We Are*, 2011 echoes the simplistic children’s book *Dick and Jane* but what we “See” are Corporate Logos everywhere.



On the theme of feminism, *Eighty Words*, (2014) declares that no matter how many crude expressions insult women, they still defy them all with an exuberant energy and solidarity. *Under the Banner*, 2014 documents the many ways that a woman's body can be occupied by corporate poisons.

The manipulation of language, a favorite theme of the artist, appears in *Original Pledge*.2009. It documents the source of the Pledge of Allegiance as written by Ralph Bellamy, a utopian thinker of the 19th century. The spiral lines of *Revisionism* 2017, painted on a vinyl record, explain in detail how documents and principles have been "rewritten to the advantage of dictators." Finally, Lawrence spells out (literally and figuratively) the manipulation of the second amendment in two works on gun fanaticism, *Open Carry* 2016, and *NRA Sweepstakes*. 2016.



But without question, a small recent work hits the nerve of our present moment most precisely. Called *Ear Wax*, it depicts a large ear on a yellow ground that can be read as a grotesquely distorted face. Also on a vinyl record, text around the outside describes the "overabundance of orange ear wax" that came out of her ear and explains it as follows: "Fact: My body's special defense system protects me from the foul deceptions which issue relentlessly from D.C."

Thank you Deborah Faye Lawrence! You speak so clearly for all of us.



