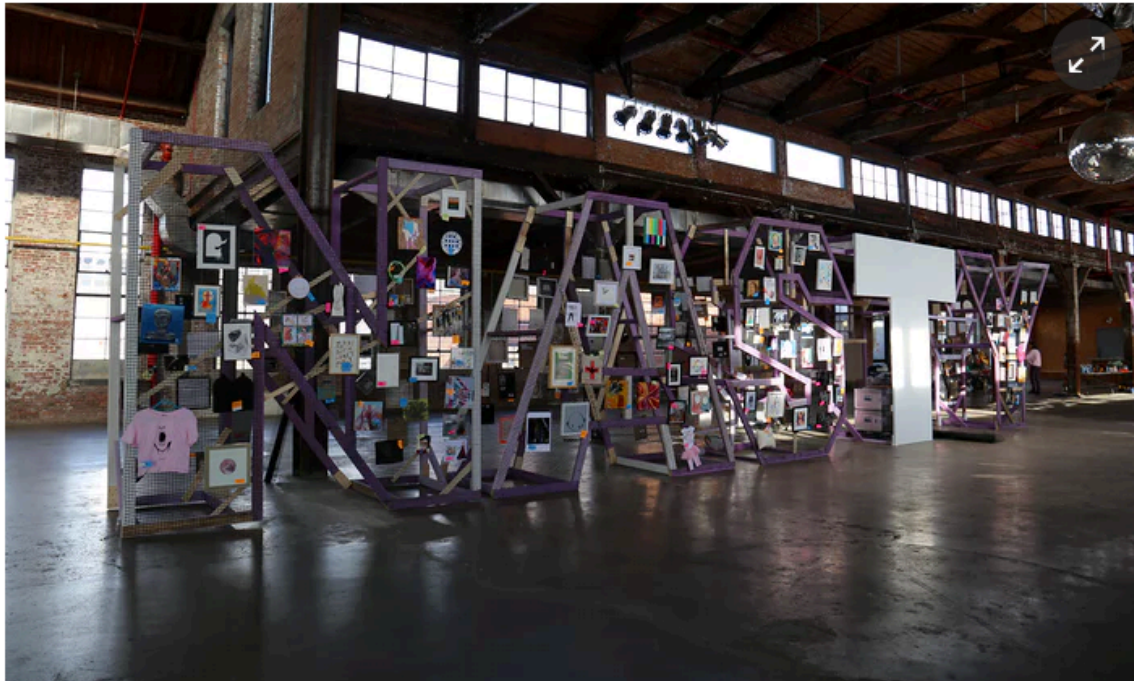


the guardian  
January 13, 2017

theguardian

## Nasty Women art exhibit aims at taking power back from Trump

A collection of pieces from more than 700 artists celebrates femininity and strength in the face of adversity



**i** 'We will not tolerate any move backwards in time in terms of the policies that affect my body, my health, my quality of life, my freedom' ... installation in progress at Knockdown Center in Queens. Photograph: Jessamyn Fiore

**Anna Furman** 

Friday 13 January 2017 16:13 EST

**Y**esterday, while the French far-right leader [Marine Le Pen](#) was sipping coffee at [Trump Tower](#), volunteers gathered at a converted factory building in Queens to put the finishing touches on the [Nasty Women](#) installation, an art exhibit staged as a visual protest. More than 700 female-identifying artists contributed works to the show, which was named after the slur that [Trump](#) called [Clinton](#) in the third presidential debate. It's a powerful callback to the misogynistic messaging of Trump's campaign, and a demonstration of solidarity among artists worldwide.



### Gee Vaucher's Oh America: hip-hop artwork turned anti-Trump meme

→ [Read more](#)

The project came into being several days after the presidential election, when the Brooklyn-based sculptor [Roxanne Jackson](#) posted a Facebook status that went viral. It read: “Hello female artists/curators! lets organize a NASTY WOMEN group show!!! Who’s interested???

We need a venue!!!!” [Jessamyn Fiore](#), a curator on the advisory board at the Knockdown Center, eagerly joined in to plan the ambitious, cross-country recruitment effort and, finally, on-site installation.

“This exhibition has been put together in a kind of egalitarian spirit,” Fiore explained. It was an open submission process, and 100% of the money raised is going to [Planned Parenthood](#). The organizers are proud to feature artists’ works from 40 different countries and over 42 states.

One issue the organizers came up against was the lack of wall space in the venue, which is sprawling but has more windows than solid walls. They enlisted the help of [Clive Murphy](#), an artist friend who devised a plan wherein ten 12ft-tall letters spelling out N-A-S-T-Y W-O-M-A-N would serve as the structural supports for hundreds of artworks. As Fiore explained: “We didn’t have to put emphasis on individual pieces, because no matter what it is, when they’re hung together, they are given equal weight and are unified, which I love.”



**i** Nasty Woman. Photograph: Naoko Tadotsu



After painting the letters purple, Murphy and his team wrapped cross-sections in a mesh material from which they could hang embroidered Polaroids and evocative word collages. Also on view: video projections, freestanding objects and first-edition signed photographs. On shelves built to host three-dimensional works, there is a vagina dentata-like sculpture; a glossy pink, anthropomorphic blob; a carved hand recalling a Louise Bourgeois sculpture; and underwear stitched together from discarded cat food wrappers. The wildly eclectic artworks, all priced at \$100 or less, are a sight to behold.

“I feel the power of our collective strength and determination and creativity and compassion. We will not tolerate any move backwards in time in terms of the policies that affect my body, my health, my quality of life, my freedom,” said Fiore. To Jackson, a nasty woman “does not shrink in silence to threats and bullying, especially from bigoted, sexist men; instead, she faces them head on. She fights for what she believes in - the rights of women and the rights of humans. And she will not stop.”

On Thursday night at the kick-off event, the core organizers sported purple sashes with the golden hand-painted word “NASTY” on them; volunteers wore black-and-white T-shirts screen-printed with “Nasty Woman”. A large disco ball suspended over the room radiated orbs of light and purple floodlights set the letters aglow. “Letter attendants”, as they were called, directed eager buyers with “dance cards” to various stations with stickers and stamps to lay claim to works that, within an hour, were nearly all snatched up.



 Ungrabbable. Photograph: Priscilla Stadler



[Katie Holten](#), a mixed-media artist who volunteered with the installation team, said that the intent of the show was to “take the word ‘nasty’ back, flip it, and run with it. We can’t take the power of words for granted.” As she explained: “I’ve been so frustrated with language that I’ve started making my own alphabets. Words are failing us, or we have failed them.” Her contribution was Pussy Alphabet, a black-and-white drawing of nude figures forming all 26 letters of the alphabet.

DJ sets, a tattoo session, panel discussions, a comedy show and a sign-making workshop will all be held at the Knockdown Center over the course of the weekend. Protesters looking for sign slogans for the Woman's March can take cues from several especially memorable artworks that exclaim: "Power to the Girls", "Ungrabbable" and, in the fierce spirit of resistance, "F U".

- The [Nasty Women Art Exhibition](#) runs from 12-15 January at the Knockdown Center in Queens, New York. Other [Nasty Women shows](#) are being held around the country and abroad this spring.