



a year of positive thinking

DECEMBER 5, 2016

M/E/A/N/I/N/G: The Final Issue on A Year of Positive Thinking-1

The first issue of M/E/A/N/I/N/G: A Journal of Contemporary Art Issues, was published in December 1986. M/E/A/N/I/N/G is a collaboration between two artists, Susan Bee and Mira Schor, both painters with expanded interests in writing and politics, and an extended community of artists, art critics, historians, theorists, and poets, whom we sought to engage in discourse and to give a voice to.

We published 20 issues biannually over ten years from 1986-1996. In 2000, M/E/A/N/I/N/G: An Anthology of Artists' Writings, Theory, and Criticism was published by Duke University Press. In 2002 we began to publish M/E/A/N/I/N/G Online and have published six online issues. Issue #6 is a link to the digital reissue of all of the original twenty hard copy issues of the journal. The M/E/A/N/I/N/G archive from 1986 to 2002 is in the collection of the Beinecke Library at Yale University.

Our 25th anniversary issue came out in November 2011, sparked by the transformative moment of Occupy Wall Street. During the past year, we considered marking the 30th anniversary of our collaborative project by publishing a final issue in hard copy, a format we still cherish. Entropy and life intervened. Now, in the wake of the recent election, when the optimism of Occupy is dramatically reversed, we have decided to produce our final issue as a series of posts on A Year of Positive Thinking. Subsequently all the material will be permanently posted and archived on the M/E/A/N/I/N/G Online site.

We have asked some long-time contributors and some new friends to create images and write about where they place meaning today, as we stand weeks before the official inauguration of the right-wing government takeover that has so many of us depressed, terrified, grieving, angry, and trying to figure out what activism we can engage in and how we can balance our dedication to our art with our existence as citizens, local and global. In keeping with the contingency of the time, they have chosen to submit a text, a poem, an image or video clip, a painting, drawing, photograph, or collage, that expresses their

MORGAN LEHMAN

534 West 24th Street, New York, New York 10011

views, desires, fears, and thoughts at this time. Hopefully, something that will burrow into people's consciousness, appeal to their humor, educate, enrage, or inspire.

Because we have always focused our publication on a broad range of issues deeply relevant to the arts community, and because this is our final issue, we also have welcomed reflections on the impact of our entire project over thirty years, including our forums on meaning, on motherhood and art, on racism, on feminism, on resistance, on collaboration, on privacy, on trauma, and on art making over a lifetime from youth to older age. As ever, we have encouraged artists and writers to feel free to speak to the concerns that have the most meaning to them right now.

Every other day from December 5 until we are done, a grouping of contributions will appear on *A Year of Positive Thinking*. We invite you to live through this time with all of us in a spirit of impromptu improvisation and passionate care for our futures.

Susan Bee and Mira Schor

Sharon Louden—Artists: Calling for a Mandate



Oceti Sakowin Camp, Standing Rock Reservation, North Dakota on Thanksgiving Day, November 24, 2016.

MORGAN LEHMAN

534 West 24th Street, New York, New York 10011

As I write this essay on a plane from Minneapolis to Miami, I am looking forward to seeing all kinds of art this week. I carry with me the memories of my time with the incredible people I met at Oceti Sakowin Camp, Standing Rock Reservation in North Dakota last week. Hyperallergic editor Hrag Vartanian had the idea to visit Standing Rock over the Thanksgiving holiday. We (with Veken Gueyikian and Vinson Valega) were there to support the water protectors, talk with artists, and stand in solidarity at the front lines of demonstrations against the Dakota Access Pipeline. My perspective is one from an artist embraced in the strong and always welcoming artists' community which I found at Standing Rock.



Artist Yatika Starr Fields (second from the left near his painting) poses with admirers of his work at Oceti Sakowin Camp, North Dakota.

Entering the camp, I thought there may be some resistance to our visit. I couldn't be more wrong about that initial trepidation. The actions and conversations that took place at the camp were coming from a peaceful, loving place. What the police and military were doing was not. They were systematically and aggressively taking human rights away from Native Americans.

MORGAN LEHMAN

534 West 24th Street, New York, New York 10011

As artists, some (if not most) of us have been misunderstood and not accepted most of our lives. And often times, we are censored. What I learned at Standing Rock was a reaffirmation of the strength of our community. Given our current political climate, there is a clear urgency to preserve creativity as a human right. Thus, I'm calling for a mandate that all artists share their wealth.

What does it mean to share "wealth" while so many of us are struggling? As artists, we are privileged and have a tremendous amount of assets that we often do not recognize. These assets include managing and bouncing back from failure, naturally creating things from nothing and sharing our most intimate truth in the way we know how. And we do it well by sharing it with others, in exhibitions, performances, or just in simple conversation. By showing up and being present in any situation, we become sources of validation for those seeking creativity. Because we carry so many assets within us, we can create opportunities for our fellow artists and the general public.

Our visit to Standing Rock reinforced that there will inevitably be human rights violations under a Trump presidency. We have a responsibility to our fellow artists to share every opportunity that is received. If you have an exhibition, why not suggest others to show with you? If you receive a grant, perhaps use the profits to create a project with others. If you can write about another artist's work, do it and circulate it widely. If you can hire artists, pay them a living wage. Refer artists to others who can open doors for them or simply inquire about their work, which can go a long way. I know this fluid practice will be an example for others to be able to speak freely in a compromised society.

Surrounded by capitalism at the fairs and away from the kindness and strength of the Native artists in North Dakota, I'm reminded that anywhere there is creativity, it must be recognized. If all of us shared each other's work, inevitably doors will open. At the end of the day, it's the natural assets that all artists embody that will further our growth no matter what obstacles are put in front of us. This is an opportunity to use our power, which should never be underestimated.

MORGAN LEHMAN

534 West 24th Street, New York, New York 10011



Oceti Sakowin Camp, Standing Rock Reservation, North Dakota, the day after Thanksgiving, November 25, 2016.

MORGAN LEHMAN

534 West 24th Street, New York, New York 10011



Sharon Loudon, "Windows" (detail) 2015. Aluminum and steel screws, dimensions variable, at the Tweed Museum of Art, Duluth, MN.