



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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The Weight We Carry at [CONTAINER]

SANTA FE, NM – [April 5, 2024] – **May 3 through July 21, 2024.** *The Weight We Carry* is a group exhibition that brings together some of our time's most influential political and street artists, including Shepard Fairey, Nadya Tolokonnikova, Douglas Miles, Clarence Heyward, and Swoon. The idea of this exhibition is to highlight an activism that is born in youth, made with materials close by, and in a surroundings that formed the artist's "world." The exhibition explores the humanity of these artists, how they found similar forms of expression despite their different backgrounds, and the resulting sublime beauty of their artworks. This type of artistic social impact is less trodden ground than activism blatantly portraying "disaffection" and thus far has been left out of the curatorial conversation. At [CONTAINER] we believe artwork often has the power to change people in a deeper way through subtlety than through aggression. Artists provide half the meaning of art with their imagery; it is up to the viewer to filter the artists' imagery through her/his own doors of perception and complete the loop of individualized meaning.

Shepard Fairey is one of the most well known humanitarian and social justice artists in the world. Creator of the iconic Obama HOPE poster, Fairey puts his own idealistic spin on political issues. It is no wonder he is close friends and has collaborated with other artists in *The Weight We Carry*, including Caledonia Curry/Swoon and Nadya Tolokonnikova, artists who share Fairey's commitment to changing the world for the better, through their multimedia artistic expression. [CONTAINER] founders Tonya Turner Carroll and Michael Carroll first met Fairey in January 2024 at Nadya Tolokonnikova's wedding to husband John Caldwell, and this exhibition was formed the instant Turner and Carroll told Fairey that Apache artist Douglas Miles had withdrawn from an exhibition Fairey, Swoon, and Miles were supposed to hold in Mesa Arizona, after a city manager had intervened in attempts to censor one of Fairey's images having to do with police brutality.

Fairey's artworks have been exhibited in museums and collections throughout the world, and his iconic imagery and political activism are globally well-known. Through his art, Fairey encourages viewers to question authority and the status quo, and to find a voice for justice.

Nadya Tolokonnikova is the Siberian-born founder of the feminist punk collective Pussy Riot—a movement she named to evoke both the "cute" and the "dangerous." Using any

available medium, including foraged car stereos and electric guitars, colorful minidresses and balaclavas, pink fur, dancing, magic and ritual, Tolokonnikova creates performative and physical artworks that challenge gender stereotypes and promote freedom of expression. She and her Pussy Riot collective won the hearts of people everywhere with their exuberant, inspirational performances outside Aleksei Navalny's prison and inside Moscow's Cathedral of Christ the Saviour. Tolokonnikova suffered greatly during her two years in prison and a Siberian penal colony, yet she continues to believe that she can use everyday objects, humor, and intellect acumen to provide hope to the oppressed and inspire them to change society for the better. Turner and Carroll were the very first collectors of Tolokonnikova's visual artworks, and have gone on to help place her works in the collections of the Brooklyn Museum of Art, the New Mexico Museum of Art, Ackland Museum of Art, and Museum of Art, and Dallas Museum of Art.

Douglas Miles, a member of the San Carlos Apache tribe and founder of Apache Skateboards, draws on his cultural heritage to create beautiful and politically charged art. His works in *The Weight We Carry* explore issues such as identity, colonization, and environmentalism and offer a unique perspective on the state of the world today. Miles' first skateboard was made of plywood, by his father. It meant so much to Miles that he founded Apache Skateboards to provide the thrill and adventure of skating to the youth in his community. Apache Skateboards has grown to collaborate with huge brands such as Volcom, et al. Miles uses media evoking Apache culture of mobility, including vintage suitcases in addition to skateboards.

Turner Carroll and Carroll first met Miles in 2023 in Arizona, after he had withdrawn his work from an exhibition dealing with Social Justice, at the Mesa Museum of Contemporary Art. The full museum exhibition was to feature an exhibition of Swoon's artwork curated by Tonya Turner Carroll, as well as an exhibition of works by Fairey. Miles pulled his works from the museum on principal, after the Mesa city manager requested the removal from the exhibition of Fairey's work titled "My Florist is a Dick," which dealt with issues of police brutality. When the curator refused to remove the artwork, the exhibition was indefinitely "postponed." When it was finally rescheduled, Miles chose not to participate, but he voiced disappointment that he had not had the opportunity to exhibit his work alongside Fairey's and Swoon's—artists he respected and looked forward to showing with.

Artist Clarence Heyward resides in the American South, and he conveys realities of being a Black man, husband, and father in his artworks. His poignant monumental "Family Matters" painting portrays himself, wife, and two daughters watching television together at first glance. But on closer inspection, we see that the painting is constructed as a dyptich, with Heyward alone on one panel; his family members occupying the other panel. When asked why, Heyward explained that he wanted his family to have a happy family portrait without him, if he were taken out of the picture like so many Black men he sees being shot on the television news every night. Turner Carroll and Carroll first encountered Heyward's works at

the Nasher Museum of Art in 2021, and have helped place his works in several other national museums since that time.

Caledonia Curry, aka Swoon is known for her intricate and immersive installations that blur the boundaries between art and life. Her works in the exhibition are a testament to the power of art to connect people and build communities, even in the face of adversity. Not only has she paved the way for women street artists, but she has healed her own life and whole communities by her compassionate depictions of people who have suffered from addiction and displacement. Swoon burst onto the international art scene when she and her band of artist friends sailed their homemade piratesque art raft up the Adriatic sea and into the Grand Canal during the Venice Biennale. The sight brought joy and awe to all who observed it, and inspired Swoon to undertake humanitarian social practice artworks such as her Konbilt Shelter sculptural residence and community center, created from found materials after Haiti's massive earthquake.

Shepard Fairey, Nadya Tolokonnikova, Douglas Miles, Clarence Heyward and Swoon are from different backgrounds, cultures, geographies, and races, yet all these artists began their activism in an idealism rooted in youth. The weight they carry is the determination to preserve that idealistic activism even in the face of modern day tyranny, drug addiction, wrongful incarceration, violence, and societal inequities. During this 2024 election year, we hope this exhibition will offer an activist path forward that inspires people to vote and to take a stand for what is just, based in an affection for democracy.

ABOUT [CONTAINER]

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