



Jonathan Horowitz, *Coke and/or Pepsi Machine*, 2007. Customized, operational vending machine, 72 x 33½ x 29¼ inches. Courtesy the artist and Gavin Brown's enterprise, New York.

Jonathan Horowitz: Your Land/My Land: Election '12 is organized by the Contemporary Art Museum St. Louis and curated by Dominic Molon, Chief Curator.

NORTH CAROLINA
PRESIDENT

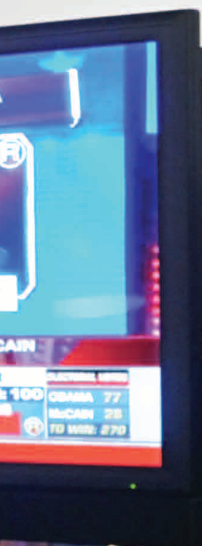
OBAMA

ROMNEY

ALERT FOX NEWS PROJECTS MCCAIN WINS OKLAHOMA

VERMONT		BALANCE OF POWER	
PRESIDENT	McC 41%	SENATE	Total 100
OBAMA	1,668 64%	90	CU
ROMNEY	798 29%	2	1





Jonathan Horowitz: Your Land/My Land: Election '12

Jonathan Horowitz's *Your Land/My Land: Election '12* actively engages CAM's lobby space to address the dynamics of our political process and the election of the President of the United States on November 6, 2012. The work revisits and reconfigures an installation the artist presented in 2008 titled *November 4, 2008*, which similarly split an exhibition space into two equal halves—one carpeted in blue to represent the Democratic Party and the other carpeted in red to represent the Republican Party. Two television monitors hang from the ceiling back to back, one continuously screening the Fox News Network—whose programming is strongly identified with the policies and rhetoric of the Republican Party—and the other CNN (Cable News Network), which is generally perceived to be more politically liberal. A portrait of President Barack Obama hangs on the wall to signify his status as the incumbent Democratic candidate, while a portrait of Mitt Romney, the

Republican candidate, leans against the wall to indicate his status as the challenger. On election night, should Obama be unseated, the position of the two portraits will be switched. Should Obama win, their positions will remain the same. The installation is completed by the text "YOUR LAND" and "MY LAND" rendered alternately in blue and red. This text alludes both to folk singer Woody Guthrie's popular 1940 anthem of American unity "This Land is Your Land"—which features the lyric "This land is my land, this land is your land"—and, conversely, to the United States' having become increasingly divided along party lines over the past few decades.

Horowitz's incorporation of blue and red relates directly to the color-coding of the two political parties in the mass media since the 2000 Presidential election. This distinction has come to signify the ideological character of the states of the union as being either "blue states" or "red states."



Jonathan Horowitz, *Culture Wars (CNN vs. Fox)* and *Your Land/My Land* (installation view), both 2008. Courtesy the artist and Gavin Brown's enterprise, New York. Photo: Thomas Müller

It also echoes the use of single colors in simple geometric forms that has characterized much of the abstract art created since the beginning of the 20th century and into the present, therefore demonstrating how even the most reductive use of color can be significant and meaningful. The carpet combines with the television monitors to create a situation that actively engages viewers, with their movement through the space shifting their relationship to the political orientation of the elements within the work. The viewer's physical experience of the installation prompts critical consideration of the importance of active participation in the electoral process.

Horowitz's calculated use of possessive adjectives—"Your Land" and "My Land"—evokes the growing

partisanship of the United States government as well as the nation overall. The erosion of a sense of a shared stake in the present and future of the country has seemingly created a split into two Americas—"mine" and "yours"—based on political, racial, social, economic, cultural, and religious considerations. The reference to the Guthrie song is particularly canny given the song's original reference to private property (an often deleted verse reads "As I went walking I saw a sign there / And on the sign it said "No Trespassing." / But on the other side it didn't say nothing, / That side was made for you and me"). Where issues of race and gender arguably defined the 2008 election, the differing economic policies of the two candidates has formed the crux of the debate in

the 2012 election. Horowitz's allusion to the song thus uses an example of a national cultural tradition to evoke how an understanding of shared "American" values has come to depend profoundly on one's individual situation and circumstances.

Your Land/My Land: Election '12 extends Horowitz's consistent engagement of subjects related to politics, celebrity, popular culture, and especially how all three entities inform and affect one another. The selection of Fox News and CNN as representative of divergent attitudes and discourse, for example, reminds us of the key role played by the mass media—and particularly television—in shaping political perspectives. As a result of its increasingly pervasive influence, the image that politicians present to the public has become as important as the policies they endorse or enable (if not more so). Horowitz's work—particularly in its presentation of round-the-clock television coverage of the election—underscores the extreme extent to which the political process has become as much a pop cultural spectacle as it is a transference or retention of executive governmental power and authority.

The staging of *Your Land/My Land: Election '12* in the inherently public site of a museum lobby further prompts consideration of how the election process connects us individually to a larger civic discourse. Just as our movements through the space make us physically aware of which side we are

literally on, so too do elections make us more conscious of how we relate to a community, a city, a state, and/or the nation as a whole. The effect of Horowitz's work—whether experienced during the time leading up to the election, or in its immediate aftermath once the results have been tabulated—is an important and necessary sense of perspective on the roles played by the individual, the mass media, and the overall political system in determining how and by whose authority our nation is governed. It also underscores the role that the museum plays in a democracy as a place that simultaneously heightens our consciousness of the political process and serves as a social space for the experience of the election.

Your Land/My Land: Election '12 is being presented concurrently this fall at the Contemporary Arts Museum Houston, Texas; the Hammer Museum, Los Angeles; the Contemporary Art Museum Raleigh, North Carolina; the New Museum, New York; the Telfair Museums, Savannah, Georgia; and the Utah Museum of Contemporary Art, Salt Lake City.

In conjunction with the presentation of *Your Land/My Land: Election '12*, CAM will host screenings of select debates and election night as well as provide information on voter registration.