

Sandow Birk  
*Triumph of Hate*



January 10 – February 9, 2019  
Opening Reception: January 10, 6-8 PM

**P·P·O·W** is pleased to present *Triumph of Hate*, the gallery's fourth exhibition with Sandow Birk, featuring new paintings, woodblock prints, and lithographs. Birk is best known for his politically-minded work that presents contemporary takes on history paintings and historic texts. While he creates works in a variety of media and scales, Birk unites his practice through social commentary. The presentation in *Triumph of Hate* illuminates injustices and inspires empathy in today's political landscape, and continues the artist's investigation of using traditional practices to offer a new perspective on contemporary events.

The exhibition marks a return to painting for Birk, who has primarily focused on creating large-scale drawings in recent years. These chaotic scenes depict recent events in American culture. Populated with crowds, they are not immediately legible. Upon further scrutiny, however, it becomes clear that the subtle political thread running through the series reveals sinister or tragic events in contemporary life. The subjects of these paintings include the 2017 school shooting at Stoneman Douglas High School in Parkland, Florida; the 2017 mass shooting at the Route 91 Harvest Festival in Las Vegas; and the white supremacists' march in Charlottesville, Virginia; among other events.

*The Horrible & Terrible Deeds & Words of the Very Renowned Trumpagrue* is a series of prints made while Birk was Artist-in-Residence at Auckland Print Studio in New Zealand in June and July of 2017. The works feature a caricatured, larger-than-life President Trump, focused on his phone, surrounded by manipulating political allies in various moments of victory and defeat. *Triumph of Hate* will include eleven of these lithograph prints. Birk was inspired to create the project by the books *Gargantua and Pantagruel*, written by François Rabelais in the sixteenth century about the adventures of two bumbling giants. This project marks Birk's first venture into stone lithography, made in collaboration with master printer John Pusateri in Auckland. Created in the aftermath of the 2017 U.S. Presidential inauguration, the immediacy and spontaneity of the medium allowed Birk to quickly capture his feelings of anger and sadness in the days following the event.

*Triumph of Hate* also features Birk's *American Procession*, the largest work he has created to date. *American Procession* consists of three monumental woodblock prints made in collaboration with artist Elyse Pignolet and Mullowney Printing in San Francisco. The left and right panels measure three-feet high by seventeen-feet long, with a central panel at four feet by six feet. Together, they span nearly forty feet. The series depicts a fictional parade of figures from American history whose influence significantly shaped their times, for better or worse. Instead of including well-known historical figures like Abraham Lincoln, Martin Luther King, Jr., or John F. Kennedy, the majority of processional participants are lesser-known figures on opposing sides of the political spectrum. Progressives from American history march to the right on one panel, and conservatives march toward the left in another, heading toward confrontation in the central panel. There, a triumphal arch stands in ruins, among scattered debris of Americana, including a police car, the Statue

of Liberty's torch, pieces of the "Hollywood" sign, an electric chair, a noose, a rural home, and an old tire, with a helicopter and blimp hanging over a power plant spewing smoke. Spanning our nation's history from colonization to present day, the prints present an alternate framing of history that suggest how we arrived at this moment.

**Sandow Birk** received his BFA in Painting from Otis Art Institute, Los Angeles in 1988. Birk has received prestigious awards and honors including an Honorary Fellowship in the Dante Society of America; a Fulbright Fellowship; a Getty Fellowship; a Guggenheim Fellowship; a National Endowment for the Arts Grant; an Artist Research Fellowship at the Smithsonian Institution, Washington D.C.; and, in 2014, he was named a United States Artist Knight Fellow. His work is represented in the collections of the Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York Historical Society, New York Public Library, the Fine Arts Museums of San Francisco, San Francisco Museum of Modern Art, J. Paul Getty Museum, Los Angeles County Museum of Art, Laguna Art Museum, Lucas Museum of Narrative Art, Art Gallery of Ontario, Biblioteca Nazionale Centrale di Roma, Crocker Art Museum, Crystal Bridges, Norton Museum of Art, and Städtisches Kunstmuseum. In 2001, Birk began collaborating with Elyse Pignolet. Pignolet attended California State University, San Francisco, and graduated in 2007 with a Bachelor of Fine Arts from California State University, Long Beach.