

Passionate Red-State Manifesto
by David Pagel

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Miss America, Lisa Anne Auerbach and Aleksandra Mir. Organized by Miss Sarah Gavlak.

Rental Gallery, 936 Mei Ling Way, Chinatown, LA.

A long time ago, avant-garde artists wrote manifestoes. Then specialization set in: Artists let their work speak for itself as movements and schools splintered into a cacophony of individual expressions.

Today that's changing. A polarized political climate and increasing Internet access are leading artists to make more vocal and social claims.

At Rental Gallery, a two-person, three-piece exhibition titled "Miss America" identifies Lisa Anne Auerbach as a talented manifesto-iste. Her "Take Red Back" is a love poem to the color and a fiery assertion that the United States is too complex a nation to be divided into red and blue states.

In various shades of pink and red, Auerbach has knit a big U.S. flag. Its stripes contain her incantatory polemic. It begins: "Red is ours and we want it back. Red, the color of passion, anger, love, and whores, was stolen out from under our feet, replaced with the serenity of ninny blue."

The diatribe leaps from angry workers to stormy skies, hot sex to homegrown tomatoes, blood to justice. Extolling excitement, danger, speed and power, it links aesthetics and politics in a volatile cocktail that recalls manifestoes by the Italian Futurists, Wyndham Lewis and Claes Oldenburg. Philosophically, it is rooted in the work of George Orwell, Rosa Luxemburg, Jack Kerouac and Martin Luther King Jr.

On another wall, Aleksandra Mir has hung a huge black-and-white drawing of a Valentine heart set within the borders of the United States. Both are surrounded by a border of small hearts.

A third wall displays Auerbach's 4-by-5-foot photograph of a sorority house. Competent but too tight-lipped, these pieces are overshadowed by Auerbach's reworking of Betsy Ross' masterpiece, which was also born in rebellion.