

FORT GANSEVOORT

artnet[®]

ARTNET

June 27, 2018

Artist Hank Willis Thomas's Political Nonprofit Establishes Its Headquarters in New York Ahead of the Midterm Elections .

The artist-run political engagement organization takes over Fort Gansevoort.

By Henri Neuendorf



Exterior of the For Freedoms Headquarters at Fort Gansevoort. Photo: Evan Walsh. Courtesy of For Freedoms.

For Freedoms, the artist-run, non-partisan political engagement organization founded by Hank Willis Thomas and Eric Gottesman, is coming to New York. The nonprofit will establish its headquarters in Fort Gansevoort, an art space in Manhattan's Meatpacking District, as it prepares for the November midterm elections.

5 Ninth Avenue, NYC, 10014 | gallery@fortgansevoort.com | (917) 639 - 3113

FORT GANSEVOORT

The organization is behind the first-ever artist-founded political action committee (or PAC), and the “50 State Initiative,” which commissions artists to design billboards to encourage political participation across all 50 states.

“We started For Freedoms with the goal of really making a new space for creative people in civic life,” Thomas explained. “I think it’s important that every single person is invested in what’s going on politically because what happens on the political stage affects us. We can’t continue to try and fix the same old problems with the same old solutions.”

Additionally, Thomas continued, the scope and ambition of the group’s ongoing projects required a space to meet and organize. “The 50 State Initiative is the largest creative collaboration in the history in the country,” he said. “We’re doing exhibitions, town halls, and billboards with institutions in all 50 states, and we needed this space as a hub to connect organize with our collaborators.”



Artist Hank Willis Thomas. Photo: Bryan Bedder/Getty Images for ICP.

During its six-month occupancy of Fort Gansevoort, For Freedoms will transform the space into a platform for political discourse through a program of special exhibitions, talks, and dialogue, starting with a two-month solo exhibition by Paula Crown, which inaugurates the space on Thursday.

FORT GANSEVOORT

Speaking to artnet News, Thomas described Crown as an artist who “addresses marginalization and stereotyping.” Her show features oversized 3-D-milled alabaster golf balls, representing both the act of blackballing and casting a stone—a practice from ancient Greek politics indicating a negative vote against an opposing party’s political agenda.

Running concurrently with the opening of Crown’s show, For Freedoms will host a live phone bank session on Thursday to raise money for its 52 ongoing Kickstarter campaigns to place artist-designed billboards in every state, as well as in the District of Columbia and Puerto Rico. The campaign already has over 1,300 backers and has raised \$100,000 for the initiative. Organizers hope the phone bank session could boost donations before the Kickstarter campaign ends on July 3rd.