Cultural Daily

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Satiric ‘Trump’ in Vicuña

Elisa Leonelli · Wednesday, November 9th, 2016

An extremely timely new play, *Vicuña* was written this year by Jon Robin Baitz and staged at the Kirk Douglas Theater in Culver City to coincide with the suspenseful ending of the 2016 Presidential elections (October 23-November 20).

Samantha Sloyan, Harry Groener, Ramiz Monsef, Brian George @ctgla-Craig Schwartz

The title refers to the prized wool of the vicugna, an Andean animal related to the alpaca. It is the material chosen by a masterful New York tailor to make an elegant suit for a Republican presidential candidate modeled after Donald Trump, so that he might win the third and last debate of his divisive campaign. The play articulates a powerful political debate between the Arab Jew immigrant tailor Anselm (Brian George), his Muslim apprentice Amir (Ramiz Monsef), son of Iranian immigrants, the xenophobic billionaire Kurt Seaman (Harry Groener), his daughter Srilanka (Samantha Sloan), and Kitty (Linda Gehringer), head of the Republican Party.

Robbie Baitz is both Jewish and gay, so he truly understands the grave dangers of Trump’s racist megalomania. He had written the screenplay for the 2015 film *Stonewall*, directed by Roland Emmerich, about the 1969 riots that started the gay and trans liberation movement in New York City. Baitz said that he felt a need to respond to “the madness of the presidential election,” that his play is about the “climate of fear and rage that has engulfed America.” He believes that “right now, art can examine and explore the level of sanity in our culture.”

Baitz added his voice and talent to the late-stage fight against the frightful possibility of a Trump victory. Michael Moore did the same with his “emergency movie” *Michael Moore in TrumpLand*, released in theaters on November 2, available on iTunes and Amazon. On November 2 Bill Maher, host of HBO’s Real Time, live-streamed on Facebook his stand-up set at Largo satirizing Trump. “Do the Republicans know women can vote now?” On November 6 Alec Baldwin and Kate McKinnon, who impersonated Trump and Hillary Clinton on *Saturday Night Live* for the past few weeks, broke character and hugged.

Personally I responded to emails from Elizabeth Warren, Al Franken, Robert Redford and Martin Sheen, donated funds to regain a Democratic majority in the Senate, and to Brave New Films to reach Latino voters.

Despite the opposition of women, Latinos, Blacks and progressives, Trump was elected President, the Republican Party maintained control of the Senate, Congress and the Supreme Court. The terrible outcome of this election will have dire consequences for climate crisis, universal health care, the rights of women, the status of immigrants, international relationships.

Being Italian I am horrified but not surprised that a misogynist billionaire like Donald Trump could have succeeded in becoming President of the United States, because Silvio Berlusconi was repeatedly elected to head of the government in Italy from 1994 to 2011.

Now we have to ask ourselves, what can we do to fight against this conservative takeover of the American government? We have to continue the political revolution started by Bernie Sanders, and, like Hillary Clinton said, “Make sure our voices are heard, never stop believing that fighting for what’s right is worth it,” support equal rights and opportunity for everyone, protect the earth and our oceans.

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