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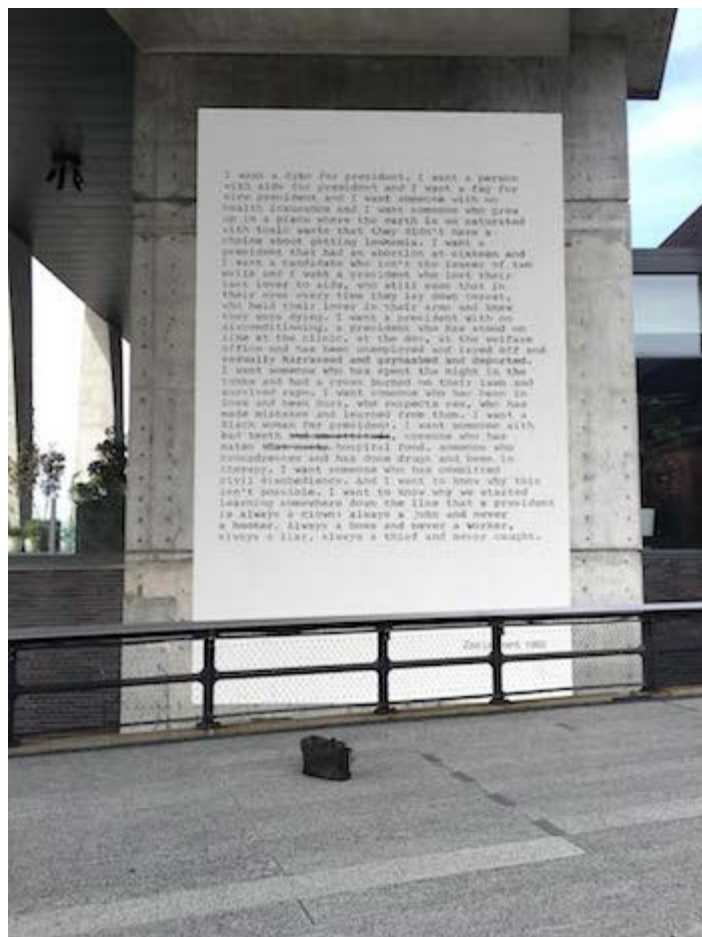
## AS U.S. ELECTION NEARS, ZOE LEONARD'S 'I WANT A PRESIDENT' WILL BE INSTALLED ON NEW YORK'S HIGH LINE

BY **Alex Greenberger** POSTED 10/06/16 12:07 PM

When Zoe Leonard wrote her manifesto-like essay *I want a president*, the Democrats were running Bill Clinton. Now, with another Clinton campaigning to be president, Leonard will install that text as a 20-by-30-foot wheat-paste installation on New York's High Line. Leonard's piece, which will appear on the western pillar of the Standard hotel, between West 13th and Little West 12th Streets, will be on view from October 11 through November 17.

"It's very do-it-yourself, very private and yet immediately public, almost declamatory—it's like turning the High Line into a speakers' corner, with very simple, immediate means of communication," Cecilia Alemani, the curator and director of High Line Art, told *ARTnews* in an email.

Clinton's opponents in the year *I want a president* was as originally published (it was



A rendering of Zoe Leonard's *I want a president* (1992) on New York's High Line.

COURTESY HIGH LINE

commissioned by a now defunct queer magazine) were, of course, Republican George H.W. Bush and Independent Ross Perot. As it happens, the lesbian poet Eileen Myles also ran for president that year in a number of states, as an “openly female” write-in candidate.

Leonard’s text asks for a president whose views more accurately capture the anger that many queer Americans and women faced during the rise of identity politics. It begins, “I want a dyke for president. I want a person with aids for president and I want a fag for president and I want someone with no health insurance and I want someone who grew up in a place where the earth is so saturated with toxic waste that they didn’t have a choice about getting leukemia.”

In the intervening years, *I want a president* become a cult hit. After being circulated by Leonard’s friends, it was published in 2006 as a postcard by LTTR, a feminist genderqueer art journal. Activists and others have since recited *I want a president* as a form of protest—performance artist and rapper Mykki Blanco recently [read the text](#) for a YouTube video.

“Although written 24 years ago, Zoe’s piece seems even more relevant and urgent today, given the current political and social climate,” Alemani said. “It’s a text that oscillates between a heartfelt confession and a militant manifesto, between poetry and politics. It’s very moving and so deeply personal. I think it will really affect many people on the deepest emotional level.”

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