In an October, 2020 op ed for The Progressive, Jacques Servin reminds us that progressive legislation such as Social Security, the New Deal, and the 1965 Voting Rights Act all happened thanks to pressure from mass movements shortly after presidential elections. It follows that now is the time—to use Martin Luther King’s words—to “get this president some power.” Bushel’s ResponseSpace window installation, THE WIND IS AT OUR BACK, is both a celebration of recent voter-turnout efforts and a call to action to compel this country’s new centrist regime to fulfill the dreams fuelling those efforts.

Organized by Sam Liebert of Eureka House! (Kingston, NY) along with Mary Tremonte, Willa Goettling, Kevin Caplicki, and Molly Gore, and in collaboration with Koren Martin and Brad Trent, Fletcher Street Stables in Philadelphia, NYC Federation of Black Cowboys, the Center for Artistic Activism, Unstoppable Voters, Justseeds Artists’ Cooperative, Desiree Aspiras of Printmakers Against Racism, Lilah Friedland at Invisible Hand Press, Draft Animal Power Network, NYFC Greater Catskills Chapter, and Bushel Collective, this show marks the beginning of a series of actions and programs designed to promote the work of evolving justice movements in our rural political landscape.

Black Cowboys and Land Access

The windows highlight an exemplary movement from the 2020 voter activation efforts: that of multiple groups and individuals across the nation mobilizing to reclaim and extend the visibility and iconic place of the Black Cowboy. From Philadelphia to Houston to Los Angeles, groups with names like the Compton Cowboys and the Arizona Black Rodeo joined in their cities’ protests against police brutality, embodying a suppressed historical fact—that in contrast to the image long presented by the media, textbooks and Hollywood, the country’s first cowboys were Black. The installation documents recent acts and activations of these groups but also turns to the future by underscoring a rising threat to their existence: In the northeast, NYC and Philadelphia cowboys’ stables and resources face the increasing pressures of gentrification. At risk is yet another forced erasure of the black rural experience—even if that experience takes place on concrete.

(continued...)
The National Young Farmers' Coalition recently issued this appeal:

“For farmers of color and indigenous farmers, the disappearance of family farms has not simply been economic, but systemic. These farmers have faced disproportionate rates of land loss, and the drop in numbers of their farms over the last century has been attributed in part to decades of discriminatory practices by the USDA, which the department itself has been forced to admit and begin to address. Congress must significantly increase support for programs that help historically underserved farmers and ranchers gain access to land and government services.”

While the exhibition’s west window celebrates the Cowboys’ calls to action alongside other art created to activate voters in 2020, its east window sets an intention for a future where BIPOC communities’ agricultural pursuits are finally resourced upstate and down, all along the rural/urban continuum. This is a working vision of the Northeast Farmers of Color Land Trust (NEFOC) and is represented by a neon sign illuminating the connection between reparations and regenerative agriculture.

**Funding the vision**

A grant supporting this show was used to donate directly to the Fletcher Street Riding Club, NYC Federation of Black Cowboys, the NEFOC, and Sylvanaqua. In addition, prints from the show will be sold online as a fundraiser for the Fletcher Street Stables in Philadelphia, the NYC Federation of Black Cowboys, and NEFOC. And, in an act of solidarity from local fellow workhorse folk, the NY contingent of the Draft Animal Power Network will be making and donating hay with the cowboys later this summer. Prints from the show will be sold online as a fundraiser for the Fletcher Street Stables in Philadelphia, the NY Federation of Black Cowboys, and NEFOC, and in solidarity from local fellow workhorse folk, the NY contingent of the Draft Animal Power Network will be making and donating hay with the cowboys later this summer.

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**Organizers and actions represented:**

The Center for Artistic Activism helps people use their creativity and culture to effect power. They train and advise organizations, artists and activists to help them increase the efficacy and efficacy of their artistic activism. They also conduct innovative research to figure out how, exactly, creativity and culture can improve impact. Work produced in partnership with Mary Tremonte, Willa Goettling, Someoddpilot and Eureka! House, are represented here.

Unstoppable Voters was a campaign started in October 2020 to combat voter suppression in the U.S. Center for Artistic Activism worked with over a dozen artists to create experimental actions in 15 states. The actions ranged from circus performances to lighten up the voting line experience, to black equestrians riding down highways to draw attention to voter suppression problems. These materials are a sampling of the dozens of flags, bandanas, posters, flyers, stickers and other materials that were distributed throughout the U.S. Learn more at https://c4aa.org/2020/10/unstoppable-voters-projects.

For more information:
Fletcher Street Riding Club: http://fsurc.com
NYC Federation of Black Cowboys: https://nycfederationofblackcowboys.com
Unstoppable Voters Projects: https://c4aa.org/2020/10/unstoppable-voters-projects.
Norteast Farms of Color Land Trust: https://nefoclandtrust.org/
Sylanaqua: https://www.sylvanaqua.com/
https://www.draftanimalpower.org/

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Open for viewing day and night at Bushel Collective
106 Main Street, Delhi, NY. Media: pr@bushelcollective.org
BUSHELCOLLECTIVE.ORG