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In GOD We Trust

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Dedicated to my Grandma

Artist Statement:

"In GOD We Trust" remixes the political and economical hardships Barack Obama has to overcome within various religious contexts. In the series, the 44th US president keeps reincarnating into various prophets, spiritual leaders and deities in order to heal the world. The series uses the different religious pillars of belief, remixes the important stories and substitutes the key elements of the holy texts with those referring to the current political and economical climate. Rather than idolizing Obama, "In GOD We Trust" examines the hope and changes, the popular 44th US president promises to deliver and the obstacles along the way.

The title of the series appropriates the US national motto, but with a twist. In "In GOD We Trust" the word "GOD" is an abbreviation of "Global Obama Devotion". Contrary to the artist's previous works, which criticize the religious manipulation in politics, "In GOD We Trust" begins with religious' teachings and reinterprets moral values according to current affairs. The result is a spiritual journey that even Atheist cannot escape.

The Beginning:

Bush Monkey is dodging a shoe behind a podium with the name "Mohammad" in traditional Thuluth calligraphy by Ottoman calligrapher Hattat Aziz Efendi. Behind him there is a Saddam Hussein/ Arafat marble memorial from Palestine, a White House logo with the Black Stone on top, and the Burning Man.

In Depth Details:

The series is divided into seven different scenarios with every graphical element or character contributing to the overall meaning of the narrative.

Jesus Christ - Hope He Can Change This Shit!

Based on "Stations of the Cross" or the "The Passion", President Barack Obama as Jesus Christ the savior, is carrying a huge dollar sign on his back, he has a ball and a chain money bomb attached to his arm and is walking on Islamic pattern tiles. Behind him, Secretary of the Treasury, Timothy Geithner attempts to stop the falling dominos, which bare the logos of Citigroup, AIG, Lehman Brothers and Freddie Mac. Meanwhile Lawrence Summers, the Director of National Economic Council, is pushing a shopping cart with a cereal box of "Ben Bernanke Credit Crunch" while a downward stock index arrow is hitting his buttocks. Behind him is a strong hand squeezing money with falling Jenga blocks. On top of the collapsing Jenga game is a falling house constructed out of dollar bills, with a re-interpreted Star Spangled Banner Flag as an Eye of Providence prison. The backdrop is a foreclosure sign with logos of Wamu, Bear Stearns and Merrill Lynch.

At the lower left corner Attorney General Eric Holder, and Senior Advisor David Axelrod, are dressed as characters from a 1930's painting by Grant Wood, American Gothic which initially caused protests in Iowa - one of the most important swing states in 2008 presidential election. In their hands is a "Recession Special" poster and another "Credit Crunch" cereal box.

In the background, Secretary of State Hillary Clinton, is dressed like in J. Howard Miller's iconic WWII We Can Do It! poster, and is holding a pink Chanel 'Ligne Cambon' handbag. The cross "C" Chanel logo stands for Credit Crunch. Next to her, Senior Adviser Valerie Jarrett, Tom Daschle, Head of the Department of Homeland Security, Janet Napolitano and White House Chief of Staff, Rahm Emanuel are traveling on the Air Force One, flying over a nuclear reactor which is oozing out money.

In the center background there is a sitting Vice President Joe "the Amtrak" Biden, Obama campaign logo with wind turbine in it, a Bear, which symbolizes the stock market and the Flying Spaghetti Monster with a bag of cash.

Buddha - Siddhartha Obama

Obama as Siddhartha Gautama is dealing with global warming and renewable energy. The scene is based on Shakyamuni's first sermon at Deer Park, Northern India. Obama is holding solar panels in his hand, which set in motion the Wheel of Life (Bhavacakra), which has the Earth inside of it.

Divided into two panels, the left panel represents the renewable energy and the right panel represents the oil and coal industry. Elements on the "Clean" side include: Stephen Chu as Vajrapani - the protector and guide of the Buddha -using the wind turbine to fend off CO₂, the Al Gore Polar Bear riding a bicycle on a cloud, a Shinto shrine and a Free Tibet flag. On the "Dark" side Dick Cheney is driving a Patriotic Hummer and trying to attack Obama. There is a polluted coal and nuclear plant, burning oilrigs and drills, a gas pump on top of US military coffin, a deer with a gas mask and a bird drench in black oil.

Elegua/ Eshu - The Crossroad of Conflicts

Obama as a re-constructed Yoruba Orisha Trickster God Elegua/ Eshu is wearing a half red and half black Uncle Sam hat with the number three on it. His left hand is holding a gigantic condom; his right hand is holding a waterborne disease filter device Lifestraw and a PermaNet mosquito net, which both are manufactured by Swiss company Vestergaard Frandsen. An Elegua medallion is hanging from his chest, with the 75,000 year old Nassarius shell beads from Blombos Cave, South Africa, in the place of the eyes and mouth. The surroundings are filled with numerous HIV viruses and malaria infested mosquitoes.

He is combating malaria and AIDS epidemics as well as civil wars while trying to balance himself on a blood diamond at the center of a crossroad. On the crossroad there are following elements: "Brown Brown" - a cocaine/gun-powder mixture, AK-47 baring child-soldiers, Somali pirates; burning oil field; Zimbabwean \$250 million dollar bill, three eggs, a Robert Mugabe wanted poster, and a logo of the microloan organization KIVA; there is also a lion, an elephant and a rhino crying blood tears and are surrounded by signs with selling prices of illegal poaching; also there is a Sudanese IDP refugee camp; an illustration of an African kid holding a Louis Vuitton bag from Simple Living; a kid inside a mosquito net from NothingButNets.net; a racist cartoon from 1858 The Man Who Won The Elephant At The Raffle picturing General Godfrey Weitzel in New Orleans; a U.S. poster circa 1897 The War in the Soudan depicting British and Mahdis armies in battle, produced to advertise a Barnum & Bailey circus show titled "The Mahdi, or, For the Victoria Cross."

The background is composed of a traditional Ghanaian Kente pattern and Kenyan tribal pattern.

Guadalupe - Obamamacita!

Obama as Our Lady of Guadalupe is dealing with Mexico/US border issues, which include drug trafficking, violence and the illegal immigration policy. He is holding a green bong that resembles a gun. Behind him there are the Minuteman Project fundraising coins and fictitious North American Currency Union Amero coins. Next to him is a Day of the Dead skull musician who is standing on a huge Marijuana bud placed atop the \$207 million cash pile; the money was seized from Zhenli Ye Gon's house in Mexico City. Obama is standing on an American flag; he is protected by fences, border patrol camera towers, a "Mary Jane" National Park logo and a Minuteman with a Day of the Dead Sugar Skull mask. In front of the fence stands the Tijuana San Diego border death monument, a protest against the Operation Guardian that caused over 3,000 Mexican deaths.

An image appropriated from Diego Rivera's mural depicts an immigrant with the Immigrant Solidarity Network logo on his basket, trying to enter the US territory, while being searched by a DEA agent.

On the Mexican side, the leader of Sinaloa Cartel Joaquin "El Chapo" Guzmán dressed as "Narcos Libre" is holding a M4-Carbine, shooting marihuana buds at Obamacita, while standing on top of a huge pile of cocaine packages. In front of him, Felipe Calderón, disguised as Juan Diego, is wearing a Zapatista hat and featuring a logo of PEMEX on his chest. Although he is kneeling down, he is holding a squirting gas nozzle pointing towards Obama.

The desert background contains the following elements: "Weed'mas" trees, oil drills, border patrol mobile watchtower units, truck filled with packaged drugs, human skeletons, the Dramatic Prairie Dog and a flyer on a cactus, which says "America is a Continent, Not a Country."

Krishna - Odharma/ ODharmaśāstra

Based on chapter 11 of the Sanskrit Hindu scripture Bhagavad Gita, Obama reincarnates as Krishna, an avatar of Vishnu and shows his Vishvarupa (Universal Form) of Arjuna (an American Eagle) on the battlefield of Kurukshetra. He is wearing a United Nations IAEA button, an AIDS ribbon and the new redesigned radioactive warning signs. Mutated fish with three eyes and frog legs attack Obama while he is trying, with his numerous arms, to catch all of the nuclear missiles coming from around the world, including the Pakistani Ghauri nuclear missile, the Indian Agni III missile, the North Korean Taepodong missile,

the Russian R-36/ SS-9 SCARP missile, the American Minuteman III, the British Trident II, the French M45 SLBM, and the Chinese Dongfeng missile. Obama takes all the nuclear weapons, and then turns the Odharma wheel.

The backdrop is beautiful scenery of the conflicted Kashmir region: Chitta Katha Lake in Shonter Valley of Azad Kashmir, Srinagar in Jammu and Kashmir and Ladakh Monastery India.

On the ground barrels are leaking radioactive waste and a mutant lamb with five legs is standing in the toxic green spill. Iranian president Mahmoud Ahmadinejad is holding an oil lamp with Vladimir Putin as the Genie giant. Other elements include a found protest portrait of Indian Prime Minister Manmohan Singh as an animal with George W Bush; the Iranian Grand Ayatollah Ali Khamenei and a Benazir Bhutto's shrine, North Korean Kim Jong Il, the Ryugyong Hotel with a huge Camel Spider climbing it and the Taj Mahal and a Fat Man gravity bomb.

Mohammad - The Nightmare Journey

Based on the Islamic story Isra and Mi'raj (Night Journey) from Qur'an chapter 17, Obama as Mohammad is resting in Kaaba in Mecca with his body appropriated from Siyar-i Nabî. When the Archangel Gabriel comes to him, and brings him the winged steed Hillary Clinton Buraq that wears the Iranian Pahlavi crown jewels and an Islamic US flag. Together they travel from Mecca to Jerusalem and back. He is holding a "VETO" rubber stamp with United Nations logo on it.

During the journey they fly through different regions in the Middle East. The passed-by elements include a Hamas militant shooting a bazooka, Edward Said, a United States of Islam dollar bill, Sling Shot boy character from the Under Siege PC game, protesters from Saudi Arabia and Palestine, a hand Peace Sign with the fingers cut off, the Hira cave, and a MeccaDonald's sign.

When they arrive at Jerusalem they are greeted by Mickey Mouse George J. Mitchell, the US special envoy to the Middle East. They are being blocked by the Israeli West Bank Barrier, which raises an Israel/ US hybrid Flag and has a "Caution Palestine" sign that resembles the illegal immigrant sign on US Southern border. On the wall there is a Yankees logo with a M-16 rifle and Banksy graffiti at the far back. The Dome of the Rock is heavily guarded by the Israeli IDF D9 "Teddy Bear" Armored Bulldozers, Merkava Tanks and F16 fighter jets shooting GBU-28 "Bunker Buster" bombs. Godfrey of Bouillon from the First Crusades is standing in the corner witnessing the whole scene.

The backdrop is composed of a Sefer Torah on the left and Qu'ran on the right.

Abraham – YHWH – Yankees High With Hope

After Mohammad gets destroyed by Israel, Obama appears as Abraham wearing the Obi-Wan Kenobi costume from Star Wars. His beard is appropriated from Michelangelo's Creation of the Sun and Moon at Sistine Chapel. He is attempting to shoot a basketball hoop. The backboard of the basketball board is a world map, being supported by Tower of Babel, a painting by Flemish painter Pieter Brueghel the Elder. St John Coltrane and the Flying Spaghetti Monster sit next to the tower with the new Freedom Tower behind them.

In front of the basketball hoop there is the Western Wall of Temple Mount with many surveillance camera installed. The Wailing Wall consists of three murals – the cartoon from Ma'ariv, an Israeli newspaper, showing Obama painting the White House black, the Danish Jyllands-Posten controversial Muhammad cartoon and its internet counter response. On the inside of the wall there are: selected details of The Garden of Earthly Delights by Hieronymus Bosch, a Sefer Torah, pies of skull from Apotheosis of War by Russian painter Vasily Vereshchagin, Russian icon of Moses with Burning Bush, a painting of Adam and Eve playing an electric guitar and tambourine, Diamond Skull by Damien Hirst on top of Jeff Koons' Michael Jackson and Bubbles sculpture, Banksy's graffiti pigeon wearing a bulletproof vest, Shalom Salem Peace sign and the Ten Commandments stones. Outside the wall there are: a Hanukkah menorah blocking the gate a protesting dove is trying to enter through, a Black Moses wearing a US peace sign on his head, WAR IS OVER poster by John Lennon and Yoko Ono, a Hamas grandma holding a rocket launcher. The background contains a big 3d rendering of Tetragrammaton (YHWH) and the Dead Sea Scrolls.

At the end, Obama takes all the shit that happened, turns it into a basketball with a peace sign and jumps over the Western Wall slam dunking in the style of Michael Jordan, turning the peace basketball into light and doves that fly out from the basketball net.