

Laurie Munn's First Ladies

Posted on December 24th



The artist Laurie Munn with her portraits of former First Ladies



Laurie Munn in front of the Barneys window

As the saying goes, "Behind every great man, there's a great woman." How fitting then, that Simon Doonan, creative director for Barneys, called on talented artist Laurie Munn to contribute portraits for his timely First Ladies window display for the New York department store this fall. Debuting in late October, the display both rallied the American spirit and inspired a fondness for fedoras all at once.

As endearing as the woolly headgear was, the real stars of the show were the beautiful portraits of former First Ladies (including potential 2009 contenders) by New York-based Munn. We loved her use of brilliant color and fluid strokes, in stark contrast with the typically serious portraits we often see of political figures. For her portrait of Mrs. O, Munn chose October's *More* magazine cover shot for inspiration. Wearing a punchy pink Maria Pinto sheath for the cover, it was a look that embodied Mrs. O's signature style: bold colors, body-conscious fit and classic silhouettes.



Interestingly, there was quite an uproar about Barneys's implicit political leaning from its window displays - that while Michelle Obama's portrait was highly flattering, Cindy McCain looked angular and amid shrill laughter. Ultimately, Barneys chose to take down the two portraits in question due to pressure from its sponsors. When we caught up with Munn, she shrugged off the allegations, relaying that she wanted to make all of the women look beautiful. While she found some of the subjects were harder to paint, such as Barbara Bush and Pat Nixon, no political bias was intended.

In the two months that have passed, Mrs. O is of course now set to become our First Lady. When we spoke with Munn, we asked her the question on many of our minds: What should Mrs. O wear for the Inaugural Ball? Munn envisions something sweet and simple, in purple or off-red, perhaps channeling Jackie Kennedy.

A portrait artist by training, Munn's First Ladies series was not her first foray into political art. She had previously completed a series of portraits of former U.S. presidents. In another recent project, Munn painted all 220 students from the 1965 graduating class of Emerson High School in Union City, NJ. She had found the school's yearbook in 1978, tossed aside in a heap of belongings on a Chelsea sidewalk. The series, named "The Altruist" after the yearbook's title, also includes a video that traces Munn's quest to locate and interview the former students. See all of Munn's brilliant work on her website, lauriemunn.com.

Images used with kind permission from Laurie Munn
Posted by Mrs. L

Join Mrs.O

[On Twitter](#)
[On Facebook](#)
[On Flickr](#)
[With RSS](#)

[About Mrs.O](#)
[Our Writers](#)
[Press Coverage](#)
[Contact Us](#)

Coutorture member

Ads by Google

Dressing Michelle O
Read Jason Wu's thrill at winning Michelle's choice for inauguration!
www.WWD.com

Michelle Obama in J.Crew®
Inauguration Style: Get Looks Like Those Worn by the First Lady.
www.JCrew.com

First Lady of Style
Get the Stylish Looks She Loves at Spiegel Without the High Prices!
www.Spiegel.com

Spring Fashion Trends
What Will Be Your Spring Style? Read Out The Biggest Trends For 09!
TheFrisky.com/SpringFashion

Election Night In Chicago
Limited edition pop art print of Obama's Grant Park celebration
billytokyo.com/

Latest Mrs.O

- [The World's First Lady of Style](#)
- [One Last Inaugural Ball](#)
- [Hostess Gift Mystery Revealed](#)
- [Behind the Scenes of the Inaugural Balls](#)
- [Mrs.O-Inspired Style Discovery](#)

Categories

- [Art \(3\)](#)
- [Designers \(17\)](#)
- [DNC 2008 \(5\)](#)
- [First Lady Fashion \(9\)](#)
- [Inauguration 2008 \(12\)](#)
- [Jewelry \(14\)](#)
- [Media \(20\)](#)
- [Misc \(23\)](#)
- [Outfits \(96\)](#)
- [Shoes \(5\)](#)

Blogroll

- [A Fashionable Life](#)
- [All The Rage](#)
- [Always in Style](#)
- [Budget Fashionista](#)
- [Glam Goddess](#)
- [Gorgeous Black Women](#)
- [Heard on the Runway](#)