

I was delighted when Prof Barsky invited me to paint these two iconic moments, in American history captured in the title “The Mittens and the Dove”. Having heretofore painted mostly personal subjects, I was honored to have an opportunity to represent a figure with as widespread a positive influence as Bernie Sanders. Despite an increasingly polarized political climate, Bernie has remained staunchly committed to addressing the issues that plague both American society and the international community. From protesting segregation in schools to advocating passionately for health care for all, from creating sister cities beyond US borders and combatting climate change, he not only speaks with admirable conviction, but he has proven, time and time again, his willingness to take action.

The viral mittens photo is loved by many people, with good reason. A visibly-cold Bernie sits bundled in an olive-green coat with his mitten-covered hands crossed closely over each other. The occasion was historical, but Bernie’s humble outfit reminds us that there are matters of much greater importance than the inauguration itself, and that our sights should be set on the future. In my interpretation of the image, I wanted to maintain my style of painterly brush strokes, while still capturing the humility and weight of the moment through both muted colors and the focused expression across Bernie’s face. While the mittens and dove instances occurred separately, the addition of the bird on his shoulder speaks to his empathetic and compassionate character that has led him to sit in that very position.

For the second painting, I was inspired to be a little more playful and illustrative in style, color, and subject matter to complement the more serious, albeit a bit humorous expression in my other piece. Bernie’s mittens are in action, sending a “dove” into the air. While we can’t see his expression, this work aims to showcase Bernie Sanders’s forward-looking mindset, and his perseverance in the sometimes frustrating challenge to pursue positive changes in American policy.

I am beyond grateful for this opportunity to share one of my greatest passions, and to direct my love of painting through these depictions of awesome moments in American history. This opportunity, created through classroom work with Prof Barsky, has convinced me to never stop painting.

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