

A NERVOUS
SYSTEM

The title of the magazine 'A Nervous System' is a reflection of it's philosophy, in which the individual is examined as a part of a wider society, referring to the Nervous System of the body and as society itself as 'A Nervous System'.

A Nervous System approaches this philosophy by seperating it's content into 3 sections. 'Seeing' focuses upon the ways we see the world outside of ourself and explores different artists and designers approach to their work, in this issue specifically the content chosen reflects upon the issue of power - the power of our interpretation, the power of communication and the power that arises from a body of work. The second section, 'Society' explores the world around us and seeks to engage with current affairs through the perspectives explored in the first section. The final section 'Self' focuses upon culture and considers the tradtional ways of expanding ourselves through a greater emphasis on our own connection to society.

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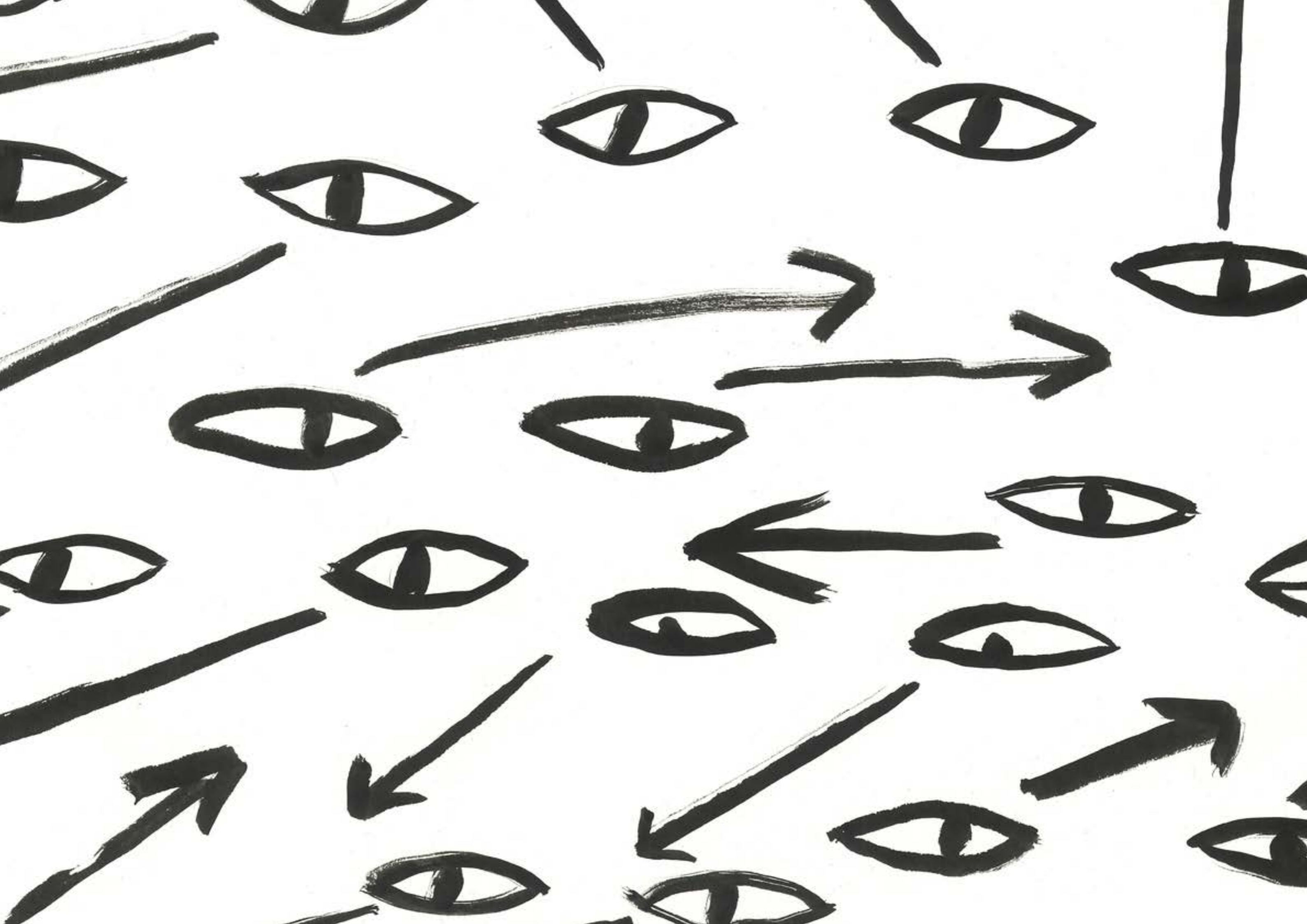
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A Nervous System



WAYS OF SEEING

John Berger's work blended Marxist sensibility with art theory and consistently sought to question the way we interact with art and what this relationship means to us. What follows is an excerpt from his 1972 essay, 'Ways of Seeing'.



Seeing comes before words. The child looks and recognizes before it can speak. But there is also another sense in which seeing comes before words. It is seeing which established our place in the surrounding world: we explain that world with words, but words can never undo the fact that we are surrounded by it. The relation between what we see and what we know is never settled. Each evening we see the sun set/ We know that the earth is turning away from it. Yet the knowledge, the explanation, never quite fits the sight.

The Surrealist painter Magritte commented on this always-present gap between words and seeing in a painting called *The Key of Dreams*. The way we see things is affected by what we know or what we believe. In the Middle Ages when men believed in the physical existence of Hell the sight of fire must have meant something different from what it means today.

“The relation between what we see and what we know is never settled,”

Nevertheless, their idea of Hell owed a lot to the sight of fire consuming and the ashes remaining – as well as to their experience of the pain of burns.

When in love, the sight of the beloved has a completeness which no words and no embrace can match: a completeness which only the act of making love can temporarily accommodate. Yet this seeing which comes before words, and can never be quite covered by them, is not a question of mechanically reacting to stimuli. (It can only be thought of in this way if one isolates the small part of the process which concerns the eye’s retina.) We only see what

we look at. To look is an act of choice. As a result of this act, what we see is brought within our reach – though not necessarily within arm’s reach. To touch something is to situate oneself in relation to it. (Close your eyes, move round the room and notice how the faculty of touch is like a static, limited form of sight.) We never look at just one thing: we are always looking at the relation between things and ourselves. Our vision is continually active, continually moving, continually holding things in a circle around itself, constituting what is present to us as we are.

Soon after we can see, we are aware that we can also be seen. The eye of the other combines with our own eye to make it fully credible that we are part of the visible world. If we accept that we can see that hill over there, we propose

that from that hill we can be seen. The reciprocal nature of vision is more fundamental than that of spoken dialogue. And often dialogue is an attempt to verbalize this – an attempt to explain how, either metaphorically or literally, ‘you see things’, and an attempt to discover how ‘he sees things’.

In the sense in which we use the word in this book, all images are man-made. An image is a sight which has been recreated or reproduced. It is an appearance, or a series of appearances, which has been detached from the place and time in which it first made its appearance and preserved – for a few moments or a few centuries. Every image embodies a way of seeing. Even a photograph. For photographs are not, as is often assumed, a mechanical record. Every time we look at a photographic, we are aware, however slightly,

of the photographer selecting that sight from an infinity of other possible sights. This is true even in the most casual family snapshot. The photographer’s way of seeing is reflected in his choice of subject. The painter’s way of seeing is reconstituted by the marks he makes on the canvas or paper. Yet, although every image embodies a way of seeing, our perception or appreciation of an image depends also upon our own way of seeing. (It may be, for example, that Sheila is one figure among twenty; but for our own reasons she is the one we have eyes for.)

Images were first made to conjure up the appearances of something that was absent. Gradually it became evident that an image could outlast what it represented; it then showed how something or somebody had once looked – and thus by implication how the subject had once been seen by other people. Later still the specific vision of the image-maker was also recognized as part

of the record.

An image became a record of how X had seen Y. This was the result of an increasing consciousness of individuality, accompanying an increasing awareness of history. It would be rash to try to date this last development precisely. But certainly in Europe such consciousness has existed since the beginning of the Renaissance. No other kind of relic or text from the past can offer such a direct testimony about the world which surrounded other people at other times.

In this respect images are more precise and richer than literature. To say this is not to deny the expressive or imaginative quality of art, treating it as mere documentary evidence; the more imaginative the work, the more profoundly it allows us to share the artist’s experience of the visible. Yet when an image is presented as a work of art, the way people look at it is affected by a whole series of learnt assumptions about art. Assumptions concerning: Beauty / Truth / Genius / Civilization / Form / Status ~ Taste, etc.

“In this respect images are more precise and richer than literature”

Many of these assumptions no longer accord with the world as it is. (The world-as-it-is is more than pure objective fact, it includes consciousness.) Out of true with the present, these assumptions obscure the past. They mystify rather than clarify. The past is never there waiting to be discovered, to be recognized for exactly what it is. History always constitutes the relation between a present and its past. Consequently fear of the present leads to mystification of the past. The past is not for living in; it is a well of conclusions

from which we draw in order to act. Cultural mystification of the past entails a double loss. Works of art are made unnecessarily remote. And the past offers us fewer conclusions to complete in action.

When we “see” a landscape, we situate ourselves in it. If we “saw” the art of the past, we would situate ourselves in history. When we are prevented from seeing it, we are being deprived of the history which belongs to us. Who benefits from this deprivation? In the end, the art of the past is being mystified because a privileged minority is striving to invent a history which can retrospectively justify the role of the ruling classes, and such a justification can no longer make sense in modern terms. And so, inevitably, it mystifies.

John Berger, *Ways of Seeing* 1972

SILENCE = DEATH

How an iconic protest poster came into being

Resistance is a core feature of designer and activist Avram Finkelstein's principles. Here he discusses the iconic Silence = Death poster, his role in its conception and the nature of the political poster.

In essence and intention, the political poster is a public thing. It comes to life in public spaces, and outside them, is academic. Individuals design it, or agencies or governments, but it belongs to those who respond to its call. Once it hits the street, if it manages to tap into the zeitgeist, it may have its "moment," and when it does, it's the audience that determines that rare cultural nanosecond. Authorship takes a back seat, and the public sphere resembles the exercise in collectivity we hope it to be.

For public discourse to pierce through the churning perpetual motion machine of the American commons, it needs to come in bursts. Manifestos don't work. Sentences barely do. You need sound bites, catchphrases, crafted in plain language. The poster is exactly that, a sound bite, and vernacular to the core. The poster perfectly suits the American ear. It has a power. If you've ever stopped in front of

one or turned your head for a second look, that power was at work. You may barely have been aware of it because of its hammer-and-nails simplicity, but you were caught up in it just the same. It's not art, if art is for museums. It's far more robust than that. It comes for you in ways art simply can't. The poster comes for you where you live. Because of my upbringing, the political poster had always played a role in my understanding of social change. But by the time I was 17, posters, demonstration flyers, and meeting announcements papered Eighth Street between the East and West Villages. It was how we found out what we needed to know, the things no media outlets would cover. Before smartphones, when young people needed to communicate with each other, we used the streets. AIDS didn't feel at all different to me. People's lives hung in the balance, as they had in Vietnam. Some-

thing needed to be done, and I could see we'd have to circumnavigate existing channels to do it. It felt completely familiar. When people need to communicate with one another, I reminded myself, there is always the street.

So I proposed to what would become the Silence = Death collective that we design a poster about AIDS, to try to push the community into political action. We had constituted ourselves through political tenets and were not an art collective, but five of us came out of art school, four were graphic designers, and two were art directors. No one was remotely perplexed by the suggestion; no one spoke

against it. It was instantly and unanimously agreed on. I had one very clear political objective in mind, and posed it to the collective in the form of a marketing problem. The poster needed to simultaneously address two distinctly different audiences, with a bifurcated goal: to stimulate political organizing in the lesbian and gay community, and to simultaneously imply to anyone outside the community that we were already fully mobilized. Everything, from the paper we chose to the walls it would be hung on, took into account these seemingly opposite strategic ends.

Charles, who was raised in the Village and also remem-



From *After Silence: A History of AIDS Through Its Images*, 2017 by Avram Finkelstein.

bered how the streets were used as a means for communication, cautioned us that the 60s were an intensely political moment, and the 80s were not, so a text-heavy manifesto might be easily disregarded. Chris agreed and felt there should be very little text at all. To "sell" activism in an apolitical moment, the poster needed to be cool and to intone "knowing." It needed to be both rarified and vernacular at the same time. It needed to give the impression of ubiquity, and to create its own literacy. It needed to insinuate itself into being. It needed to be advertising.

Exposure to printed matter in New York is serendipitous, so we knew the poster

"The poster comes for you in ways art simply can't. The poster comes for you where you live."

had to be gripping. And the streets of New York are some of the most diverse public spaces in the world, so the poster's message needed to be broad enough to bridge wide gaps between audi-

ences, and also leave room for unintended viewers. The dollar was strong, so Manhattan was not flooded with European tourists yet, Lower Broadway was not yet a developed commercial center, the East Village was still rough, the Meatpacking District was still mostly artists, sex clubs, and wholesale purveyors, and the redevelopment of Times Square had not been completed.

Street life in Manhattan is also class stratified by transportation means, so audiences can differ wildly. Most locals traveled by subway or on foot, and very few Manhattanites in those neighborhoods kept cars at the time. Still, many took cabs, car services, or

buses, and people from the outer boroughs and suburbs frequently traveled by car. Most New Yorkers commute to work, but tend to prefer neighborhood leisure and support services, and they also walk a great deal. So we surmised it would mostly be local audiences who encountered the poster up close if they lived or worked near a poster site, and everyone else would come across it through a vehicle window. As a result, I insisted we apply a "Can you read it from a moving vehicle?" test for the font, and we tiered the messages to both points of discovery. In addition, some levels of meaning would need to be explicit, and others distinctly coded.



Like all messages in the public sphere, “Silence = Death” was context driven. The subsequent formation of ACT UP is the primary modifying factor in our understanding of this image, and it can now barely be imagined without it. But it was conceived a year before ACT UP’s inception, and since one of the areas targeted was Times Square, we knew many viewers would not be local and might have limited exposure to the

issues. The tagline was crafted to be provocative and alarming and to stimulate a political response in a setting that was not necessarily political. It was also intended to imply authorization. It was the voice of the insider and, by surface appearances, was declarative. But it was meant to stimulate curiosity, and questions. In that regard it was a Trojan horse. While considering the content, we talked about other political poster campaigns,

like the Art Workers Coalition And Babies poster from 1969. Charles also suggested we study the Guerrilla Girls, who managed to stage complex gender critiques on the sidewalks of New York in the vernacular. We tossed around the pluses and minuses of text versus image. We debated which issues to tackle and how to depict them. Our first poster concept was an attack on William F. Buckley’s 1986 call for the

surveillance tattooing of all HIV-positive people, but as we considered using a tattooed body as an image, Chris warned us about how inherently exclusionary it would be. We tried, but couldn’t conquer the questions of representation. Would a black-and-white image successfully obfuscate the subject’s race? Could an extreme close-up of a tattoo make the subject’s gender ambiguous enough? This exercise convinced us that

“When People Need to Communicate with Each Other, There is Always the Street”

any image we chose would need to be pictographic, so we moved to a discussion of what that might look like, thinking that what it should say might naturally follow. In advertising, all images are coded, but the image we sought needed to act as a signal beacon to its lesbian and gay audience without excluding other audiences. An icon would not only liberate us from the complexities of representation but also enable us to draw on existing

queer codes. In some ways, this might have been easy, since to be queer is in many ways to coexist with codes. But it was not easy at all. We tore through, debated, and rejected every agreed-on symbol for the lesbian and gay community: the rainbow, the labrys, the lambda, and the triangle. All of them had baggage, and on some level we were uncomfortable with each of them. During this process, we became somewhat rattled by the lack of

an agreed-on symbol for the lesbian and gay community. It seemed, in a way, as if this might be one of the roots of the issue. The pink triangle seemed an obvious way to connect Buckley’s suggestion of tattooing to the concept of genocide, but to the extent it might be a signifier of victimhood, it felt potentially disempowering to us. In the context of fears about segregation, quarantine, and internment of HIV-positive



people, even a strategic appropriation could become a double-edged sword. We were uncomfortable with this aspect of the pink triangle.

We liked the inclusiveness of the rainbow. But it also had a little hippie baggage, and its brightness seemed inappropriate and somehow lacking in gravitas. Ultimately, however, it was the graphics that disqualified it. We decided it would make an ugly poster. We preferred the feminist empowerment tonalities of the labrys, but we knew many men would be unacquainted with it, and it would be hard to connect to some of the issues at hand. We felt the lambda was not known well enough to younger lesbians and gay men. During this process, we became somewhat rattled by the lack of an agreed-on symbol for the lesbian and gay community. It seemed, in a way, as if this might be one of the roots of the issue. We even debated designing a new symbol, but became immediately lost in it and realized we'd be embarking on a separate campaign before we could even get to the more pressing issues we were trying to address. So we resigned ourselves to the use of the pink triangle, convincing ourselves that the codes activated by the triangle were open-ended enough to be useful, signifying lesbian and gay identity to some audience members, maleness to others, and referencing the historical meanings of genocide to audiences familiar with that history. But we gave the familiar symbol a makeover. Changing its color from pale pink to a more vivid fuchsia, Pantone 212 C, seemed an acceptable reinvention that reflected graphic trends and suited the poster's aggressive tone. Turning it upside down was another gesture of reinvention that was inadvertent



“We became somewhat rattled by the lack of an agreed-on symbol for the lesbian and gay community”

but worked out in our favor. Chris, who had recently visited Dachau, was certain it pointed upward. Oliver volunteered to “research” it and later confirmed the direction without actually checking it. We discovered it was incorrect after the printing, but

decided it answered one of our concerns, superimposing an activist stance by borrowing the “power” intonations of the upward triangle in New Age spirituality, further skewing its relationship to the death camps.

We had settled on that icon, but we didn't have our tagline. After weeks of debating the holocaust analogy, the volley that led to the final turn of phrase and the key component of the poster, the equal sign, took barely sixty seconds, and it played out at our holiday dinner in December 1986 at Jorge's apartment as he heated his vegetarian entrée. It went like this:

“What about ‘Gay silence is deafening?’” I said, reading a note I had made in my journal. The New York Times had used the phrase “deafening silence” in a news article about a different political question, and I'd written it

down.

“How about ‘Silence is death?’” Oliver immediately called out. I remember how this phrase sounded in his southern accent. “No, no, it should be ‘silence equals death,’” I believe either Charles or Chris blurted out. “Wait! Wait! What about an equal sign, ‘silence = death?’” Everyone jumped up at the same time in such an instantaneous clamor of agreement, I can't say for sure who shouted that out, but I am positive you could hear the ruckus from Jorge's living room window all the way down to Avenue A. It was the exact shorthand we had been hoping for during the months we spent scrounging for an iconographic visual. It signaled the inevitability and certainty of calculus and was perfect branding shorthand. I dubbed the equation “New Math for the Age of AIDS.”

There was no doubt about the line, but we still broke into debates about the positive and negative uses of moral equivalencies and about instances when disagreements about political certainty can be rendered moot by catastrophe, such as times of war. We talked about the deadly effects of passivity in crises, communal silence and the nature of political silencing, silence as complicity, and scenarios where bystanders became participants without intending to be. We debated whether the equation was clear enough without offering more context, and decided a rejoinder to the tagline would be needed for that reason. And there was a conversation about the neutralization of deeper meanings that might accompany our use of advertising shorthand. But the phrase was too good to pass up.

By Avram Finkelstein, December 1, 2017

Interview

Jenny Holzer Made Good Things Out of Horror

American artist Jenny Holzer is interviewed about the nature of power, how she feels it is held in her work and the sacrifices she has made to wield it.

ABUSE OF POWER
COMES AS NO
SURPRISE

Jenny Holzer, the 68-year-old Conceptual artist who, in the late 1970s, began papering lower Manhattan with posters bearing “Truisms” she’d written — aphoristic sayings like ABSOLUTE SUBMISSION CAN BE A FORM OF FREEDOM and AMBIVALENCE CAN RUIN YOUR LIFE — has become an idol for our online era. On Twitter, various Holzer bots tweet out her maxims, which read as though they anticipated the medium. (Holzer has nothing to do with the accounts but says she

appreciates their humor.) On Instagram, where she appears as a hashtag more than 38,000 times, you can see her words as they appear in the world: on benches, movie marquees, LED panels, light projections. In real life — which is where Holzer, who does not use social media, prefers to exist — she gave permission last fall for We Are Not Surprised, a #MeToo offshoot, to use her “Truism” ABUSE OF POWER COMES AS NO SURPRISE in an open letter, signed by 9,500 non-male artists, writers,

and curators, condemning entrenched sexism in the art world. In January, Lorde appended one of Holzer’s “Inflammatory Essays,” the more aggressive screeds she wrote after the “Truisms,” to the flaming-red dress she wore to the Grammys.

It’s easy to account for Holzer’s contemporary appeal. We’re a culture swimming in indiscriminate words — text messages, news feeds, words on screens, words on billboards — and her old-school maxims slyly lay language bare in all its guises: as cliché, harangue, manipulation, seduction, survival tactic, discomfiting bringer of truth. At a time when hashtags and slogans and memes have never had more power to go viral, her art co-opts the authoritative language of advertising, internet culture, and self-help and asks us to question the power it has to define us.

On a late-September afternoon, Holzer sits across from me at an oak table in her Dumbo studio, narrating projects past and present as they flash by on a TV screen. There is the 1985 Times Square LED sign that made her famous: PROTECT ME FROM WHAT I WANT. There’s Lady Pink, the mural and graffiti artist, wearing an ABUSE OF POWER COMES AS NO SURPRISE shirt. We watch her spectacular 2017 display at Britain’s Blenheim Palace, Winston Churchill’s ancestral home, where, in stark white letters, she beamed firsthand accounts of war. (One reviewer, writing in the Guardian, called it “coldly magnificent and brutal, like being caught inside ... the searchlights of helicopters or prisons.”)

In the beginning The “Truisms” were anonymous. “I have made much of my work sex-blind

and anonymous so that it wouldn’t be dismissed as the work of a woman,” Holzer said in a 1992 interview. She tells me something similar now when I ask about her uniform of black jeans, nondescript black sneakers, and a gray men’s button-down. “I’m kind of a cross-dresser,” she says. “I don’t want to be looked at or dismissed, or even attract anybody, as a female. It’s like, ‘Hey, look at the work. What do you think?’ or ‘Talk to me.’”

She grew up among horse people in Ohio (her mother taught riding), and there is something solidly midwestern about her: pragmatic, understated, straightforward. “I’m glad to be useful,” she says simply, when I ask about lending her work to the Not Surprised letter. “I have a complex about not being useful.”

Since the early ‘90s, Holzer has done mostly LED signs and stone benches as well as light projections on the façades of culturally or architecturally important structures. A street artist at heart, she occasionally engages in anonymous public actions. Last year, in response to the Parkland shooting, she created LED billboards (STUDENTS WERE SHOT; THE PRESIDENT BACKS AWAY) and put them on trucks she sent to cities around the country. She also collaborated with Drake at the Toronto International Film Festival premiere of Monsters and Men, a movie about police brutality. In the atrium of the theater, Holzer projected the names of people killed by police between 2015 and 2018. Names appear and

disappear in violent, rapid succession, like lives snuffed out by a gun.

Her writings have always been socially conscious, concerned with power and its manipulations, as well as the satellites that orbit it: money, sex, violence, sexism, love, death. Indeed, hanging all around us are abstract paintings that reproduce redacted declassified government documents from the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan. Political art can often feel limited, the conclusions we’re meant to draw all too obvious. But Holzer leaves the dot-connecting to us. The “Truisms” were written in multiple, often contradictory voices and registers and are both funny and unsettling.

“I don’t want to be looked at or dismissed, or even attract anybody, as a female.”

“It’s not so much left, right, center as it is about what happens to people in the world,” Holzer says of her work. “People do the same ghastly and good things time and time again.”

Three weeks before Holzer and I meet, she speaks with me by phone from her home in Hoosick Falls, New York. She is about to leave for Spain to prepare for a retrospective that opens at the Museo Guggenheim Bilbao in March, so she has pulled an all-nighter. “My apologies for idiocy,” she says.

She was born in 1950, the oldest of three children (her brother was killed in a motorcycle accident in his early 20s), in the small town of Gallipolis, Ohio.

Her father owned a car dealership that his father-in-law (“a small-time Buckeye magnate” who also owned gas stations) had given him. Holzer describes her father as “sort of there and not there” — the result of a head injury. He came home from boarding school one day “and took a running dive off the board, but there was no water in the pool yet,” Holzer recounts. As a child, she found him confusing: “Here was this great big handsome man who was just not quite right.”

She remembers her mother, with whom she was close, as “quite bright” but unfulfilled. “My mother really should have had, oh, four or five jobs, given her energy,” Holzer says. She spent a lot of time deadheading roses and “using Roundup, which is ex post facto terrifying,” she says. “She’d kill every weed in any number of acres, and the second a rose would start to lose a petal, it would have to be lopped off immediately.”

As wry as she is about her mother, Holzer grows serious when talking about her childhood’s darker aspects. When I ask why she signed the We Are Not Surprised letter, she says that as a girl she was repeatedly assaulted. “It started before firm memory,” she says, “and he continued until I was old enough to remember.” She is quiet. “I had that experience, and it’s dreadful, and it’s horrifying that there’s no equality between the sexes — in pay, in respect. It wasn’t hard to sign on for

something like that.”

She tells me that around age 4, she began to wear a carpenter’s belt, in which she placed a slingshot, a Swiss Army knife, and other weapons. “I felt good, going around the backyard with that,” she says. “I wanted to have the tools, given what I knew about what people do. Irrational rages, assaults, and so on.”

Still, she believes “good things can be made” of her horrific experience. “I had to do a lot of thinking early on about power relations, and independence of thought, of living.” She resolved to make her own money to control her fate. I ask how old she was when she decided this. “Oh, 5, 6. Again, I saw my very smart, extremely capable mother attacking roses.”

When she was a child, Holzer’s only exposure to art was Life magazine; she remembers seeing photos of Georgia O’Keeffe and Pablo Picasso “in his bathing suit.” Although she drew avidly as a young girl, she dropped it in grammar school “to be a regular person,” she says. She remembers a dedicated junior-high art teacher who encouraged her nonetheless, allowing her to make “real art,” like painting and sculpture, “as opposed to embroidered tea towels.” She got a glimpse of what might be.

She attended three colleges in four years: Duke, the University of Chicago, and Ohio University, where she transferred to concentrate on art. During

graduate school at the Rhode Island School of Design, she made abstract paintings while experimenting with conceptual projects. She shaped bread crumbs into triangles and octagons, then photographed “pigeons eating geometry.” She sliced up her unsuccessful paintings and turned them into “long, like half-mile-long, ropes,” then photographed them by the ocean — she calls that endeavor “romantic and pointless.”

She painted her studio, every inch, in a blue acrylic wash, her favorite project she’d done to that point, but her teachers, mostly men, didn’t agree. “A group of professors almost threw me out of RISD when I was pretty vulnerable and quite sincere about trying art,” she says. “One said to me something like, ‘You’re the sort of person who would’ve worked on the nuclear bomb.’ Can you imagine?” She recalls “almost falling down the steps” after leaving her critique with him. She became suicidal. “More desperate and speedy than depressed,” she says. “That was my flavor. Self-loathing.”

Salvation came in the form of acceptance at the famed Whitney Independent Study Program. (She graduated from RISD in absentia.) At the Whitney, her “painting was going away,” as she puts it, and she realized the “way forward was to drop the image, which was just abstract color, and go whole hog with the content.”

The “Truisms” were

YOU MUST DISAGREE WITH AUTHORITY FIGURES

ANGER OR HATE

CAN BE USEFUL

MOTIVATING FORCE

YOU ARE RESPONSIBLE
FOR CONSTITUTING
YOUR OWN MEANING

partly inspired by the Whitney's critical-reading list, which was heavy on philosophy, Marxist texts, and cultural criticism. A series of Burma-Shave billboards from her Ohio girlhood also played a role. "They'd have maxims," she says. "You'd get them one at a time on interminable car trips with your parents" — e.g., NO LADY LIKES / TO SNUGGLE / OR DINE / ACCOMPANIED BY A PORCUPINE / BURMA-SHAVE. Holzer distilled Enlightenment ideas into the epigrams of advertising and self-improvement: "Derrida and Burma-Shave," she says.

In 1989, when she was 39, Holzer had two prestigious solo shows, at the Dia Art Foundation and the Guggenheim, and was chosen for the 1990 Venice Biennale, the first woman ever selected to represent the U.S. In the lead-up to the shows, she was also pregnant and gave birth to her daughter, Lili. "This all took place over two years, and Lili had her second birthday in Venice, so it was gruesome. Kind of glorious and gruesome," Holzer says.

Her selection for the Biennale was not without controversy, especially among more traditional-minded male critics, many of whom thought her writing was banal and her involvement with mass-media technology and techniques not the stuff of art. In *The New Republic*, Robert Hughes called her work "failed epigrams that

would be unpublishable as poetry ... their prim didacticism so reminiscent of the virtuous sentiments that the daughters of a pre-electronic America used to embroider on samplers." But she won the Golden Lion for Best Pavilion for work that included a new series called "Mother and Child" — programmed into 12 LED signs, it was distinctly female and more personal than usual. (When she is criticized now, which is not often, it's generally for retreading familiar ground; in 2006, *New York Times* critic Roberta Smith called photographs documenting her public pieces "snoozy.")

The Biennale text drew in part on Holzer's experience as a new mother. When I ask about a mistake that still haunts her, she tells me it's having a baby and doing all three shows at once (her pregnancy was a surprise). "I couldn't be in the moment and calm for my daughter," she says, "and I know she suffered. I'm really sorry about that." She especially regrets working at home while she prepared. "I tried to work in the house so that even though she was with the babysitter, I could walk through. I think maybe that made her feel like I was an insect, something that flies in and out." Still, she spins the period in her characteristically bleak yet optimistic way: "I wouldn't care to repeat it, but it's funny to think that no man has had a C-section, a baby, and done those three shows in two years. Hey."

The day we meet, she has just returned from Spain and is suffering from jet lag. "I'm sleep-deprived, so please plan to write all my answers," she emails me.

"Make them a bit quirky yet deep, moving, indelible." When I arrive, she takes me on a tour of the "Redaction" paintings hanging around her studio. The obscured lines of text have been painted over in blocks of palladium and gold leaf. The colored rectangles evoke Suprematist paintings, early Frank Stella, and the work of Ad Reinhardt.

"When she is criticized now, which is not often, it's generally for retreading familiar ground"

She began combing through the National Security Archive online during the Iraq War, trying to understand the decision-making process behind an engagement that confounded her. Now it's her "midnight reading material," as she suffers from chronic insomnia. One quite beautiful painting is based on a firsthand account from an Afghan man who was forced at gunpoint to kneel in the snow; layers of palladium cover the man's handwritten memory of interrogation. In another, all the redacted material is overlaid in gold,

save one line: "THEN THE OPTIC BECOMES HOW LEGALLY DEFENSIBLE IS A PARTICULAR ACT THAT PROBABLY VIOLATES THE CONVENTION, BUT SAVES LIVES." It's like a creepy "Truism." Holzer has created shiny aesthetic objects out of words so awful or secretive they had to be blotted out. Do the paintings draw us in and make us look? Or distance us from the horror? She doesn't tell us how to think about it. Which means, of course, that we do.

By Amanda Fortini for *The Cut* Oct, 18 2018

KIND. LOOK OVER YOUR SHOULDER.
SOMEONE IS FOLLOWING. THE
POOR YOU HAVE ROBBED AND
IGNORED ARE IMPATIENT.
PLEAD INNOCENT, YOUR SQUEALS
INVITE TORTURE. PROMISE TO BE
GOOD, YOUR LIES EXCITE AND
INFLAME. YOU ARE TOO DEPRAVED
TO REFORM, TOO TREACHEROUS
TO SPARE, TOO HIDEOUS FOR
MERCY. RUN. JUMP. HIDE.
PROVIDE SPORT FOR THE HUNTERS.

TAKE COURAGE
HARBRINGER OF
DIRE CIRCUMSTANCES
THE OVERTHROW
OLD AND CO
WASTE BEFORE
OPPOSITE
ISOLATES THE
OF INTEREST
WHAT IT IS
PALLIATIVE G
THE PEOPLE AN
CONFRONTA
TOLERATED F
WELL-BEING

DESTROY SUPERABUNDANCE. STARVE
THE FLESH, SHAVE THE HAIR, EXPOSE
THE BONE, CLARIFY THE MIND DEFINE
THE WILL, RESTRAIN THE SENSE, LEAVE
THE FAMILY, FLEE THE CHURCH, KILL
THE VERMIN, VOMIT THE HEART, FORG



why we need a socialist

It's not enough for Labour leadership candidates to just say they'll support radical policies. They need to prove they'll fight for them - against big business, the political establishment and the billionaire-owned press.

In the aftermath of the general election Jeremy Corbyn met with widespread ridicule for saying that the party had "won the argument" in policy terms. After such a crushing defeat, the line went, how could a Labour leader credibly claim that his policies were popular?

Less than a month on, however, the situation has changed. Polling released in the aftermath of the election showed that key pillars of Labour's policy platform were extremely popular. Support for nationalisation of rail, energy and water had grown massively - even since the 2017 general election. This backed up evidence from the campaign, which found large majorities in favour of things like taxing the rich and giving workers a share of companies. Even the Telegraph had to admit that Corbyn's platform had substantial appeal.

It's easy to forget just how far this all is from Labour's 2015 manifesto. Then,

instead of nationalising the rail Labour was promising only to review franchising and freeze some fares. Similarly on energy the extent of Labour's ambition was to freeze bills until 2017 and give regulators more powers. Only the really 'exploitative' zero hours contracts were to be banned, plans for an investment bank paled in comparison to what we've seen under Corbyn and instead of a pledge to end the privatisation of the NHS, profits were merely to be "capped." The list could go on.

There were many good aspects of Labour's 2015 manifesto. It made some effort to respond to growing dissatisfaction at inequality and austerity (although it also promised to "cut the deficit every year"). But it is a document that symbolises a Labour Party that was responding, often meekly, to public opinion - instead of trying to shape it. Jeremy Corbyn lost last month's election, but in four years his leadership of the Labour Party profoundly transformed the public debate over the economy. The candidates to replace him as Labour leader have inherited this new consensus, so much so that even the Tories are pretending to support left-wing policies.

We can see the impact of this shift in Keir Starmer's promise to support "radical"

policies if he were to win in April. But the real test is not whether a candidate says they support a set of policies today - it's whether they are willing to fight for them against the vested interests who defend the existing order. If they're not, pledging support means very little.

It's easy to make promises to Labour's left-wing membership during a campaign, but what happens the day after a candidate wins the election? Those promises will come under siege from factions in the party who have never supported a transformative economic agenda. They will be attacked by business lobby groups and by the Tories, they will be assailed in the media. Members should ask themselves, who do we trust

"The task is to fight better, to fight smarter"

to stand up for them?

A lot of former Corbyn supporters find Keir Starmer's pitch in this election appealing. Much of this is down to the idea that he 'feels' prime ministerial in a way that Jeremy Corbyn never did. Maybe he can win an election, the logic goes; maybe he won't be

torn apart in the same way.

But Jeremy Corbyn wasn't demonised by the powerful because he couldn't win. He was demonised because he might win - and they were determined to protect their interests against that possibility. Any Labour leader who similarly challenges them will meet the same fate. In fact, even middle-of-the-road leaders like Gordon Brown or soft-left ones like Ed Miliband couldn't shake it. Keir Starmer will be presented as prime ministerial only until such a point as he rocks the boat.

The task for socialists in the Labour Party today is not to shy away from the fight that Jeremy Corbyn waged - against big business, the political class and the billionaire-owned press. That fight is our only hope of changing the country. They won't hand us the change we want on a platter; things are the way they are because it's in the interests of the powerful to keep them that way. The task is to fight better, to fight smarter, to fight with more people on our side.

That's why the next leader of the Labour Party has to come from the party's Left, they have to bring with them not just the policies of Corbynism but its spirit. They have to be a socialist. Right now, that candidate looks like Rebecca Long Bailey.

By Ronan Burtenshaw - 06.01.2020 for Tribune



Defending Our Unions

Another Tory government means another wave of attacks on our unions, beginning with transport workers. There's only one way to respond – building a mass movement to fight for workers' rights.

Parliament is back for the first time since the general election. We now face nearly five years of a Johnson government – but with an election manifesto thin on detail, what can we expect?

We saw hints in the Queen's Speech: "To ensure people can depend on the transport network, measures will be developed to provide for minimum levels of service during transport strikes." Blink and you miss it, but this rather innocuous sentence conceals worrying implications for workers' rights. The new government is attempting to bolster its own power by diminishing the collective power

of workers. Initially impacting

transport workers, there is a real threat to the entire union movement.

In 2015, Sajid Javid – then secretary of state for business, innovation and skills – put forward a bill imposing severe limitations on the power of trade unions. The original bill suggested some draconian restrictions, including allowing agency workers to replace striking workers; restricting unions' use of social media; and requiring unions to provide picket plans to police and employers two weeks in advance of strike action. These more draconian aspects of the bill were dropped when it was eventually passed into law, but the act did introduce a requirement that for a strike to be legal, 50% of union members must vote for it in a ballot. The new government's proposed approach looks like a return to form.

Since Margaret Thatcher was prime minister, successive governments

have weakened the collective power of workers in the economy. A series of legislative attacks have placed severe limitations on the ability of workers to organise through trade unions in order to change the things that matter to them. In 1998 Tony Blair boasted that "the changes that we do propose would leave British law the most restrictive on trade unions in the Western world." The effects of these restrictions have been substantial. Last year, there were only 273,000 working days

lost due to labour disputes, the sixth-lowest annual total since records began in 1891. Despite this, it looks like the government is determined to limit unions even further.

The new proposals would

force rail employers and unions to enter into Minimum Service Agreements. These agreements would set in advance the number and nature of staff who would remain at work during any strike. Strike action reducing the transport service to below-minimum levels of service would be deemed unlawful. There is clearly a lot of room here for a government to establish a very high minimum level of service, and so render any strike action essentially ineffective. The law would compel workers to work. They would have no democratic right to effectively challenge low pay, insecurity, or poor working conditions. They would become workers with no agency – forced by the coercive power of the state to work.

More worryingly, these proposals targeting the transport sector could work as the thin end of the wedge when it comes to clamping down on strike action more generally. Mandating a min-

imum level of service could easily be extended beyond the transport industry to all other essential public services, which means restricting the strike rights of health, education, fire, border security and some nuclear workers. The Centre for Policy Studies has specifically recommended the creation of a commission that would define and adjudicate on the required minimum service standards during a strike for all public services deemed important or essential.

By focusing its efforts on transport workers, the government is employing classic divide-and-rule tactics. Targeting a single sector aims to prevent a coordinated response from the rest of the union move-

ment. Mick Cash, general secretary of the RMT, has said, "an attack on transport workers today will soon become an attack on the rest of the organised working class tomorrow". Crucially, the government is also pitting transport workers against the general public. The Transport Secretary Grant Shapps made this tactic clear, "it is a basic right for workers to be able to get to work. The ability of a few people to prevent everyone from being able to earn a living has to come to an end."

Democracy is not just the one vote we cast every few years – it is a continuing process and unions form a vital part of it. Withdrawing our labour is a fundamental part of a functioning democracy. Without it, we would have no power, choice, or control over our working lives. Without the threat of strike action, wages would go down, insecure contracts would proliferate, and working conditions would deteriorate as employers seek to push cost and risk onto workers in order to squeeze out higher profits.

Despite decades of legislative attacks, one in

four workers are a member of a trade union. Unions are the largest democratic institutions in the country; we should be loosening their restrictions, not tightening them. In addition to harming our democratic rights, the repression of trade unions has actively hampered overall economic development. At the New Economics Foundation, our work has made the case for increased involvement of trade unions in workplaces, communities, and the economy more broadly. Workers should have the power to collectively decide what happens in their immediate workplace and the economy more broadly – especially as part of a Green New Deal.

Grassroots movements to defend trade union rights are needed more than ever. This government is intent on further limiting workers' rights at the very moment they need to expand. It's time to build the broadest possible coalition for the alternative: fully repeal existing anti-strike laws to ensure a right to take industrial action over any issue a workforce sees fit.

By Aidan Harper, for Tribune 28.01.2020

LET'S GET OFF OUR KNEES AND ABOLISH THE MONARCHY

Andrew wasn't just a bad apple: he comes from a royal orchard of them. It's time Britain matured as a republic.

I grew up terrified that the Queen would pop round to our house. My grandparents, who brought me up, had lived near Sandringham and knew many ordinary staff on the estate. They thought this gave them special access to royalty, as much access as a working person could possibly have. "When the Queen comes round," they used to say, "if she says she likes something, you have to give it to her." You also had to walk backwards, apparently. The fear was in me. This strange woman would come round and take my Tressy doll, maybe even my felt tips. A horrific thought.

"I grew up terrified that the Queen would pop round to our house."

Needless to say, my grandparents were monarchists and talked of the sacrifices the royals made during the

second world war. They had all the special plates and cups. My mum had a pash for Margaret, princess of smoking and turbans.

I grew up and became politicised, thought about democracy, and everything changed. I assumed everyone else would think the way I did. Surely anyone with firing synapses would feel that no advanced society could be ruled by people of no discernible talent, intelligence or life experience? The idea that an accident of birth determines the head of state and church – and the public then has to fund this genetic lottery? Madness.

But over the years I have seen many sensible people of leftist persuasion scuttle off to the palace for a garden party or to accept a gong. They do it not for themselves, but for their mums. Wear a fascinator to get feudal, dears. (Although all men need is a suit.)

Would an elected head of state be better? Yes, actually. Only saddos like me, the sort of people who tell small children Santa isn't real, moan about the monarchy as well as the Lords now. (Admittedly, the Lords often

has better discussions than anything that goes on in the Commons – but then so do most sixth forms.) We all know how the argument goes: you don't like hereditary privilege? Well, do you think an elected head of state would be better?

Yes, actually, although yes, it's also great that the Queen can get on a horse at 93. At least she isn't a menace on the roads.

Even at 14, I assumed most people would not want to live in the utterly infantilised state of being a subject. At one stage, I went to lots of meetings about republicanism and dry constitutional shakedowns and I was patronised by experts who told me Diana's disruption was not the right kind: she was disturbing the narrative by not accepting its rules, that Charles could have an affair. The way to get rid of the monarchy had to be highbrow and political; it should never be personal. Or, actually, cultural.

By then we were all ready to embrace Blairite meritocracy, at a time, ironically, when social mobility had stalled. The tabloid press was locked into a symbiotic

relationship with the royals, which meant the monarchy had to operate absolutely as an embodiment of virtue/vice and as a soap opera of dysfunction. What it cannot survive now is indifference.

"What [the monarchy] can not survive now is indifference"

about his inhumanity. Remember that when you start defending his mother. Meanwhile, Meghan has been treated as a villain for combining princessiness with stardom and being biracial.

If the monarchy is supposed to represent this deeply divided country, its representatives are failing dismally, unless you count owning half of Scotland. In

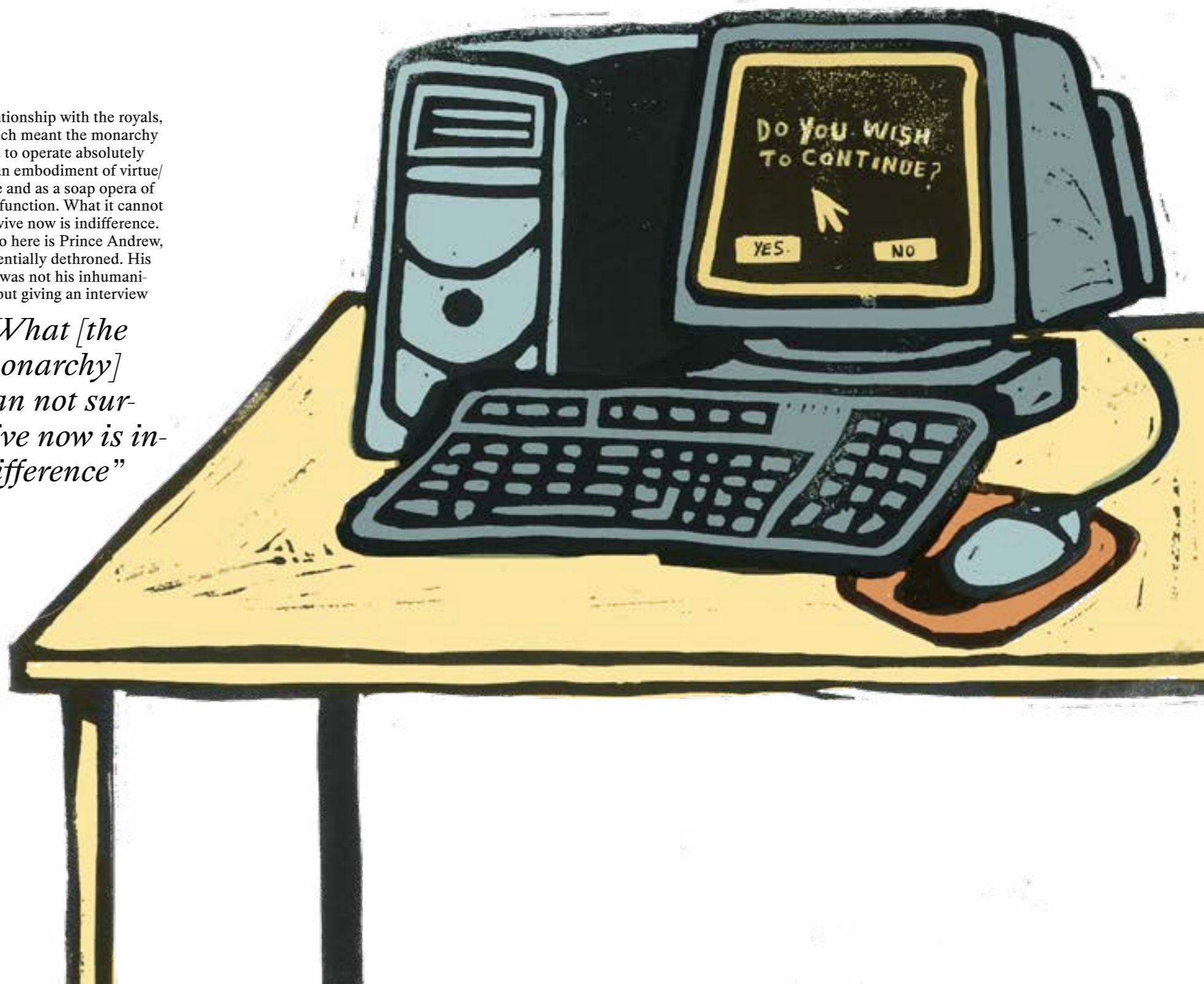
an age when we no longer like billionaires, the queen's net worth is £20bn. If the old are to be blamed for Brexit, they also support the monarchy, which, according to YouGov polls, only 41% of 18-to-24-year-olds do. Power tends to shapeshift and if a new country is struggling to be born out of this election and the broken political system that has produced it, then at some point

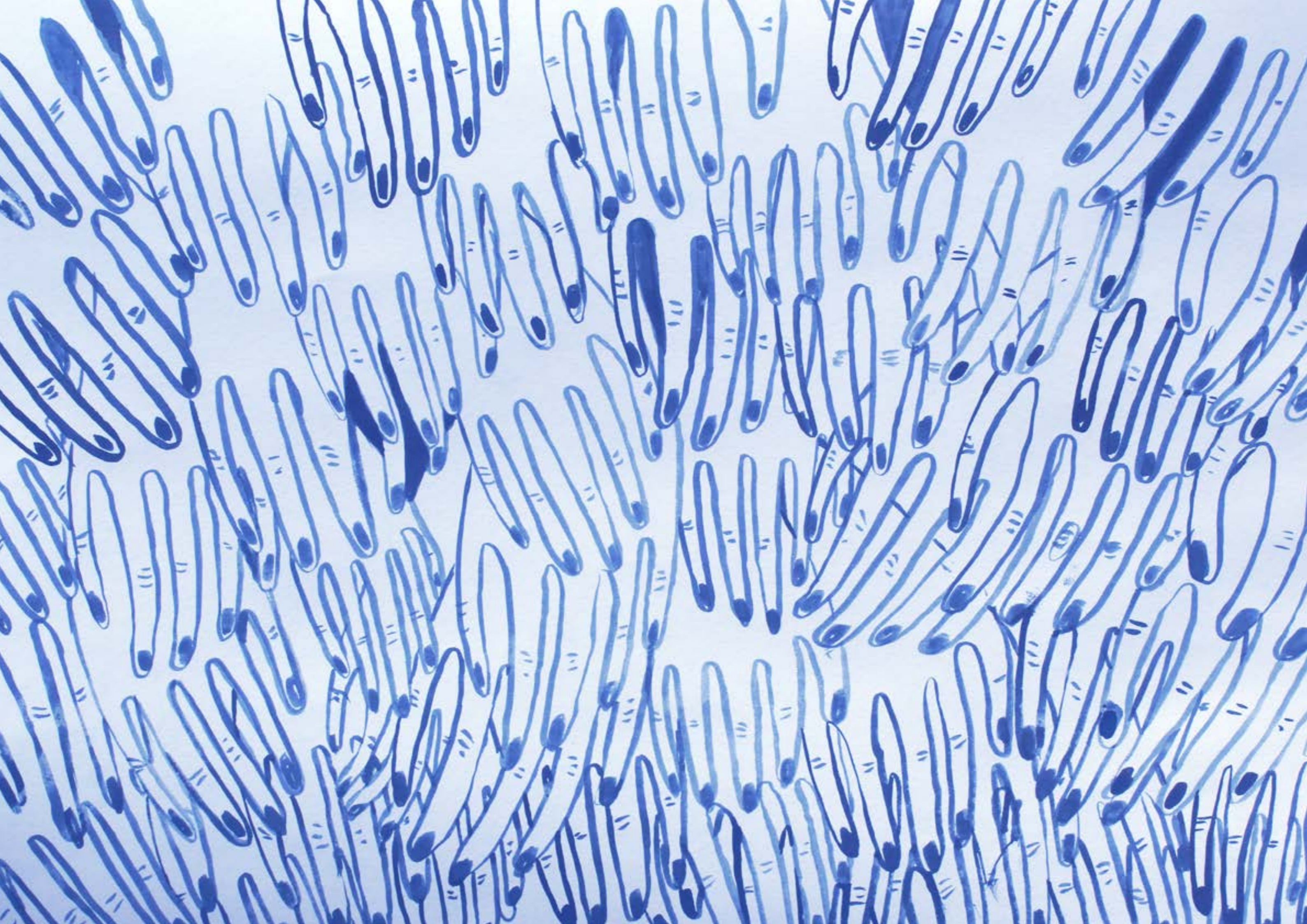
"In an age when we no longer like billionaires, the queen's net worth is £20bn."

dots need to be joined. Andrew was not one bad apple. He comes from an orchard that produces them.

The undeserving rich. When the Queen goes we could decide to grow up, become a mature democracy and move into a world that is truly post-empire. The presence of a United Kingdom could give way to something truly great. We could, finally, get up off our knees.

Suzanne Moore - Mon 25 Nov 2019 for The Guardian





menace too society

Cancel culture suggests we can change the world from the outside in, but the misogyny and racism are coming from inside the house.

It's taken two years for #MeToo to wake up France, but at least it did. The country appears to finally see the men it has created, which is more than can be said of North America, trapped in the cancel culture stage, calling out everyone except itself. That lack of self-awareness is easy to miss, though. There's a lot of wokeness floating around these parts — we even have a “woke” princess, although Meghan Markle's self-appointed royal defection alone could never really loosen the monarchy's grip on Britain. And for all the hand-wringing by Hollywood stars over diversity, there is once again

an established structure above them that resists the change they represent, one that inevitably rears its head in heavily white male awards seasons. France appears to know this now, but only because it was told so by a woman it nearly destroyed. “I'm really angry, but the issue isn't so much me, how I survive this or not,” French actress Adèle Haenel told *Mediapart* in November. “I want to talk about an abuse which is unfortunately commonplace, and attack the system of silence and collusion behind it which makes it possible.” The 31-year-old *Portrait of a Lady on Fire* star was talking about her alleged abuse

from the ages of 12 to 15 at the hands of her first film director, Christophe Ruggia, who was in his 30s at the time. In a follow-up sit-down

“We talk about it as though it were from the outside, whereas it's from the inside.”

interview with the same site, Haenel emphasized that she wasn't canceling anyone; this wasn't about censoring individuals, but about calling attention to an entrenched society-wide ill and the culture that upholds it. It was this depersonalization that seemed to free up France to reflect, something still largely missing from U.S. conversations — from #MeToo to inclusivity in entertainment to royal affairs — that are all rooted in a foundational hierarchy the entire population is complicit in preserving. “When we come up against the control of the patriarchy,” explained

Haenel, “we talk about it as though it were from the outside, whereas it's from the inside.”

“How else to exercise your opposition to a patriarchal empire than to forsake its number one emblem?”

Barely a week into the new year, two of the most celebrated members of the most prestigious institution in the U.K. turned their backs on it. On January 8, the Sussex Instagram account dropped a shot of Prince Harry and Meghan Markle with 195 words that defied centuries of British tradition. “After many months of reflection and internal discussions, we have chosen to make a transition this year in starting to carve out a progressive new role within this institution,” it read. “We intend to step back as ‘senior’ members of the Royal Family and work to become financially independent.” The announcement, which also stated the couple plans to split its time between the U.K. and North America, came not long after the airing of an emotional ITV documentary in which Markle admitted, “I never thought that this would be easy, but I thought it would be fair.” Anyone who watched her say that, who saw the same defeat in her face that they saw in Princess Diana's decades prior, who saw Harry's frustration at the thought that it could all happen

again, who saw the royal family barely ripple in response to Prince Andrew's association with a registered sex offender, would not only understand this separation, but expect nothing less. How else to exercise your opposition to a patriarchal empire than to forsake its number one emblem?

But the media took it personally — it was a door slammed and shut tight in the face of their badgering, which had become as much of a presence as the royals themselves, a constant reminder of British society's supplication at the feet of an outdated overlord. Piers Morgan expressed his preference for the old prince, the fratty drunk who cosplayed a Nazi, amid reports that Madame Tussaud's had swiftly relocated the royal couple's wax figures from its esteemed collection. The local response reeked of personal injury, as though the duo had turned its nose up at the greatest gift the country had to offer, rather than what they actually did: kicked off a long-awaited internal confrontation with the colonial inheritance of a populace that insists on running on its fumes. As Afua Hirsch, author of *Brit(ish): On Race, Identity and Belonging*, told NPR, “Instead of taking this as an opportunity for introspection as to what is it about the upper strata of British society that is hostile for a person of color like Meghan Markle, what we're seeing now is the British media just lashing out again and blaming everyone except themselves.” “Everyone” being “non-aristocratic, non-white interlopers,” which is to say, the people who actually populate Britain. If Prince Harry is the future, Prince William is the past, and it's fitting that he not only presides over the kingdom (or will,

one day) but its version of the Oscars. The day before his brother's adios, the BAFTAs announced that for the seventh year in a row, no women were nominated for best director, and in addition, all 20 of the acting nominees were white. In an internal letter, the British Academy of Film and Television Arts' chief executive Amanda Berry and film committee chair Marc Samuelson called the lack of diversity “frustrating and deeply disappointing,” as though it were entirely out of their hands. Yet the 8,000-member committee is chaired by Pippa Harris, who cofounded a production company with Sam Mendes nearly two decades ago, which may explain why 1917, the war epic Mendes directed and coproduced with Harris, was the only nominee for both best film and best British film.

This sort of insularity may be unspoken but it is not inactive, it has repercussions for which films are funded and how they are marketed and ultimately rewarded. “BAFTA can't tell the studios and the production companies who they should hire and whose stories should get told,” Samuelson told *Variety*, deflecting the blame. But the academy's site claims it discovers and nurtures new talent and has a mission that includes diversity and inclusion, so why does its most recent Breakthrough Brits list appear to be three quarters white? As former BAFTA winner Steve McQueen observed, there were plenty of British women and people of color who did exceptional work in film this year — in movies like *In Fabric*, *The Souvenir*, *Queen & Slim*, and *Us* — and were nonetheless overlooked, implying a more

deeply ingrained exclusion, the sort that permeates British society beyond its film industry and keeps the country from actually perceiving non-white, non-male stories as legitimate art. Snubbed Harriet star Cynthia Erivo confessed to Extra TV that she actually turned down an invitation to sing at the BAFTAs, evoking Markle's absences from a growing number of royal engagements. "It felt like it was calling on me as an entertainer," Erivo said, "as opposed to a person who was a part of the world of film."

Awards as a whole are representative of industry-wide limitations, which, as ever, are tied to the dominance of a particular

"It's about opening the discussion more on how the decisions were made"

group in the larger society. The Oscars, dating back to the '20s and established to garner positive publicity for Hollywood (while extinguishing its unions), seem to persist in the belief that that is tied to white male supremacy. I probably don't have to tell you the Academy of Motion Picture Arts and Sciences just

elected another middle-aged white man as its head (David Rubin) and has a member base that is 84 percent white and 68 percent male. And that's an improvement after April Reign's viral 2016 #OscarsSoWhite outcry. "It's not about saying who is snubbed and who should have been nominated," Reign told The Huffington Post at the time, "it's about opening the discussion more on how the decisions were made, who was cast and who tells the story behind the camera." And yet the response, as always, has been tokenism — one black nominee here, an Asian one there, a one-for-one reaction to cancel culture which provides momentary relief but no real evolution. The individual successes of Moonlight and BlacKkKlansman and even Parasite, not to mention Spike Lee being named the first ever black Cannes jury head, can't ultimately undo more than 100 years of white male paternalism. The Oscar nominations this year, dominated by four movies that are very pale and very violent — Joker, 1917, The Irishman, and Once Upon a Time...in Hollywood — encapsulate the real soul of Hollywood and the society in which it was forged. It is no mistake that, as The Atlantic outlined, the ceremony neglects "domestic narratives, and stories told by women and people of color." Harvey Weinstein, who turned awards campaigning into a brutalist art form while allegedly brutalizing women behind the scenes, may no longer be the Oscars' figurehead, but his imprint endures.

À propos, Les Misérables, a gritty drama about a bunch of men facing off with a bunch of other men (oh, and some boys too) in a poor neighborhood in Paris, was

the French submission to this year's Oscars instead of Haenel's critically preferred film, Portrait of a Lady on Fire, a lush period romance about two women in love. It was that film's director, Céline Sciamma, for whom Haenel returned to acting in 2007 with White Lilies (and with whom she had a romance off-camera) years after her experience with Ruggia drove her from the industry. Though she opened up to Sciamma about being sexually abused, Haenel didn't go public until she was firmly established with two Césars (the French Academy Award equivalent) to bolster her legitimacy — she knew that otherwise society, French and otherwise, sides with men. "Even if it is difficult to fight against the balance of power set out from early adolescence, and against the man-woman relationship of dominance, the social balance of power has been inverted," Haenel told Mediapart in November. "I am today socially powerful, whereas [Ruggia] has simply become diminished." This was a crucial but deemphasised aspect of the shift in America which took place after a slew of A-list white actresses — women who were held up by society and thus listened to — accused Weinstein of abuse, a shift which did not take place after a slew of lesser known women, many of them women of color, accused Bill Cosby. (That the latter is black no doubt also played into the country's lingering racist belief that all black men are latent criminals, so obviously he was a predator, right?) With none of these longstanding prejudices addressed, however, they risk being repeated, as the system which permitted these men to abuse their power prevails.

"What do we all have

as collective responsibility for that to happen. That's what we're talking about," Haenel said in her sit-down interview. "Monsters don't exist. It's our society, it's us, it's our friends, it's our

"We're not here to eliminate them, we're here to change them."

fathers. We're not here to eliminate them, we're here to change them." This approach is in direct opposition to how #MeToo has been unraveling in the U.S., where names of accused men — Woody Allen, Michael Jackson, Matt Lauer, R. Kelly, Louis C.K., Weinstein — loom so large on the marquees that they conveniently block out reality: that they were shaped by America, a place that gives golden handshakes to abusers, barely takes them to trial for their alleged actions, and sometimes even cheers them on. It's not that women here have not been saying the same thing as Haenel, it just seems to be that their message is lost in the cacophony of proliferating high-profile cases themselves. Haenel's resonance sources from not only the relative anomaly of a French woman of her stature making such claims, but also the fact that she is so much more famous than her alleged perpetrator and that her age at the time makes it a clear instance of abuse. Perhaps it also has to do with her disclosure coming amidst the ongoing yellow vests movement, which has primed France's citizens to call for all manner of accountability.

Haenel's alleged abuser has since been charged with sexual aggression against a minor, though she initially refused to go through the justice system, which she saw as part of a deeper systemic bias that resulted in her abuse. UniFrance, which promotes French films internationally, has openly backed the actress and is in the process of creating a charter to protect actors, and, in a historic move, the French Society of Film Directors dropped Ruggia, its former copresident. Meanwhile, Gabriel Matzneff is also being investigated following the publication of a memoir in which the publishing head describes her teen sexual encounters with the then-50-something-year-old French writer who has always been open about his affinity for underage girls and boys. And the same country that supported Roman Polanski in the aftermath of child sexual assault allegations several years ago is now protesting him in the wake of Haenel's disclosure. As she said when asked about the Oscar-winning filmmaker on Mediapart, "the debate around Polanski is not limited to Polanski and his monstrosity, but implicates the whole of society." The French media calls Haenel's #MeToo story a turning point, one which highlights not the individual — even she expressed regret that it fell on one man — but on a society which believes victimization is in any way excusable.

"It's possible for society to act differently," Haenel said. "It's better for everyone, firstly for the victims but even for the torturers to look themselves in the face. That's what being human is. It's not about crushing people and trying to gain power, it's

about questioning yourself and accepting the multi-dimensional side of what a human being is. That's how we build high society." Up until this point we have been primarily concerned with identifying the bad seeds and having them punished and even removed, without really wrestling with the environment in which they have grown — doing that means facing ourselves as well. We name names and call out institutions — like Hollywood awards and the British royal family — and

then what? What remains is the same system that produced these individuals, these same individuals simply establishing new institutions with the same foundations. Identifying what's wrong doesn't tell us what's right. It wasn't until Haenel was introduced to a filmmaking crew that was entirely female, that listened to her and supported her, that she could identify not just what shouldn't be, but what should. "What society do we want?" she asked. "It's about that too."

Soraya Roberts for Longreads, January 2020



ONE PAN

SHAKSHUKA

Traditionally served at breakfast, this simple spiced tomato and veg sauce with eggs is a great easy weeknight meal and perfect for sharing. We recommend serving with garlic toasted sourdough or fresh pita breads. 2 - 4 servings

Method

Drain contents of tinned tomato in a colander set over a medium bowl.

Heat the olive oil in a large pan with a lid and add the onions, pepper and jalapeño. Season with salt pepper and chilli flakes before adding drained tomato solids. Cook for 6-8 minutes stirring occasionally so veg softens and tomato darkens in colour.

Add the garlic and cook for two minutes before adding spices.

Gently mash the tomato solids with the back of a wooden spoon to form a thick paste, add tomato puree and stir to combine. Cook for two minutes before adding the liquid from the cans of tomato, stir again to combine and then let simmer for 10-15 minutes as flavour develops. Add a splash of water if the sauce becomes too dry.

Stir in the herbs and then make small wells in the sauce. Crack the eggs into these wells and season with salt and pepper. Cook the eggs with the lid on but cracked to release steam.

Eggs will continue to cook in the sauce after serving so take the pan off the heat a little before they are cooked to your taste and enjoy!

Ingredients

- 3 tbsp Olive Oil
- 1 Large Onion (diced)
- 1 Red Pepper (diced)
- 1/2 Jalapeño Pepper (diced)
- 4 Garlic Cloves (finely chopped)
- 2 tsp cumin
- 1 tsp cayenne
- 1 tbsp tomato purée
- 2 cans whole peeled tomatoes
- 1 small bunch of roughly chopped parsley
- 1 small bunch of roughly chopped coriander
- 1 egg per person
- Salt, Pepper and Chilli flakes to taste



SPICY

HALLOUMI KATSU

SANDWICHES

This vegetarian take on a chicken katsu sandwich, has a wonderful crisp and fiery kick toned down by the watery iceberg lettuce. We recommend Frank's Red Hot or Sriracha for the hot sauce. Makes 4 sandwiches

Method

In a small bowl combine mayonnaise, pickles, crushed garlic and 2 tbsp hot sauce, season with salt

Combine flour, cayenne, garlic powder, and remaining 1 tsp salt in a medium bowl.

Whisk egg and remaining 1/4 cup hot sauce in another medium bowl. Spread panko across a large plate.

Carefully dip halloumi slices into flour, cover and turn to coat. Shake off any excess. Submerge in egg mixture until coated, shaking off excess. Transfer to panko, turning to coat. Set aside and repeat process.

Heat the oil in a large pan over medium-high until shimmering. Working in 2 batches, cook the halloumi, until golden and very crisp on both sides, about 3 minutes for each side. Reduce heat if the panko browns too quickly. When cooked transfer to a wire rack to cool

Spread the hot sauce and mayo mix on one side of each slice of bread. Top with halloumi and shredded lettuce and the second slice of bread - serve immediately and enjoy!

Ingredients

- 1/2 cup Japanese mayonnaise
- 1/4 cup pickles (finely chopped)
- 2 garlic cloves (crushed)
- 2 tbsp + 1/4 cup hot sauce
- 1 tsp salt, plus more for taste
- 1/2 cup all-purpose flour
- 3 tbsp cayenne pepper
- 2 tsp garlic powder
- 1 large egg
- 2 cups panko
- 225g halloumi (sliced)
- 1/4 cup extra-virgin olive oil
- Brioche loaf (sliced)
- Shredded iceberg lettuce



Adapted from Chris Morocco's Spicy Chicken Katsu Sandwich for Bon Appetite

Review Silver Sparrow

by Tayari Jones

A tale of two sisters

Following the success of Tayari Jones's 2019 Women's prize winner *An American Marriage*, her 2011 third novel *Silver Sparrow* is published for the first time in the UK. It's a tale of two sisters: part Bildungsroman, part homage to 1980s Atlanta. "My father, James Witherspoon, is a bigamist," Dana Yarboro tells us in the novel's opening line, before she narrates what it was like to grow up as the secret daughter, given "second pick for everything", consoled only by the slim satisfaction of knowing all about her father's other family while her sister Chaurisse knows nothing about her.

A chance encounter between the two girls at a science fair, wearing identical rabbit-fur coats (gifts from their "double-duty daddy"), knocks Witherspoon's two families into each other's paths. Chaurisse is drawn to Dana, whom she sees as "silver" – one of those "girls with looks and hair" who "move in different circles than ones like me" – but little does she know that Dana is obsessed with her. Every interaction is undercut by Dana's ulterior motives: Chaurisse tells Dana her father smokes two packs a day and she responds,

"Mine too"; when Dana visits Chaurisse's house, she quizzes her on where her father sits when they eat dinner. Her coming of age consists in large part of inserting herself further into her unwitting sister's life.

At the midpoint, the novel splits into two and events are narrated from Chaurisse's point of view. We see that although the girls have a father in common, what really draws them together

is their deep, overlapping loneliness. Far from being idyllic, as Dana imagines, Chaurisse's life has been burdened with its own share of pain. (Dana's mother may have had to put up with being a "concubine", but Chaurisse's mother, pregnant at 14 after a drunken double "date", asks Witherspoon on their wedding night: "James, did you rape me?") And while the novel is driven by the question of

whether the two sisters can ever accept the truth of one another, it is also propelled by shrewd observations about how they survive the unsteady terrain of young womanhood, that time when "a man looking at you can make you feel chopped into pieces". This book is as moving, intimate and wise as *An American Marriage* on the topics of marriage, family and womanhood, and deserves similar acclaim.



What's On

Power and progress

Birmingham Revolutions – Power to the People

*Birmingham
Museum and Art
Gallery*

"This display will explore Birmingham's vibrant and varied history of protest and activism, and the role the city has played in some of the most important campaigns and movements in British history.

From the Priestley Riots of 1791 all the way through to the LGBTQ+ campaigns of today, 'Birmingham Revolutions – Power to the People' is a chance to discover the different voices and ideas that have contributed to the fight for a better Birmingham.

We will look at campaigns such as voting reform, nuclear disarmament, trade unionism, anti-racism and human rights.

'Birmingham Revolutions' aims to show all the different ways in which a person can protest and campaign, what we can learn from past protests, and show everything we as a city have achieved so far.

Art, music, literature, clothing and objects will be used in each section of the Gallery for you to discover the long history of gatherings, riots, strikes and campaigns that have occurred in the city."

Social Revolution: women's liberation and gay liberation in the 1970s and 80s

*London School of
Economics and
Political Science*

"Our spring exhibition marks 50 years since the beginnings of two significant social movements in the UK: the first women's liberation conference in Oxford and the first UK meeting of the Gay Liberation Front at LSE.

This exhibition explores how both movements mobilised thousands of people to believe that they could change the world through speaking out and challenging the status quo.

The exhibition displays material from the Hall-Carpenter Archives and the Women's Library and, in particular, it shows how activists used and transformed publishing, performance and visual imagery around gender."

The Enchanted Interior

*Guildhall Art
Gallery*

"The Enchanted Interior explores the recurring motif of female subjects in art, as depicted in enclosed, ornate interiors. Such images are inherently alluring yet sinister, carrying implications of enforced isolation. This theme is prevalent in nineteenth-century British painting, with many Pre-Raphaelites and Orientalists showing a fascination with the so-called 'gilded cage'. Visitors will encounter work by a breath-taking variety of artists from the high Victorian through to Art Nouveau, Aestheticism, Surrealism, and pieces by contemporary female artists, who 'speak back' to the historic tradition.

The exhibition features works by artists including Edward Burne-Jones, Evelyn De Morgan, James Abbot McNeill Whistler, Emma Sandys, Jessica Woodman, Fiona Tan, John William Waterhouse and Clementina Hawarden."

Public Faces / Private Lives

*The Weston
Gallery, YSP*

"Public Faces / Private Lives brings together work by a diverse range of artists who explore how we protect and manipulate our identities. The exhibition takes as its starting point the idea that we often present a different version of ourselves publicly. The exhibition looks at what we choose to make visible and what is concealed behind literal and metaphorical masks. It also reflects on perceptions of diversity and otherness, such as the emphasis on 'unmasking' by coming out in the LGBTQ+ community. The exhibition considers individual myth-making as well as societal and cultural norms associated with beauty, representation and visibility."

