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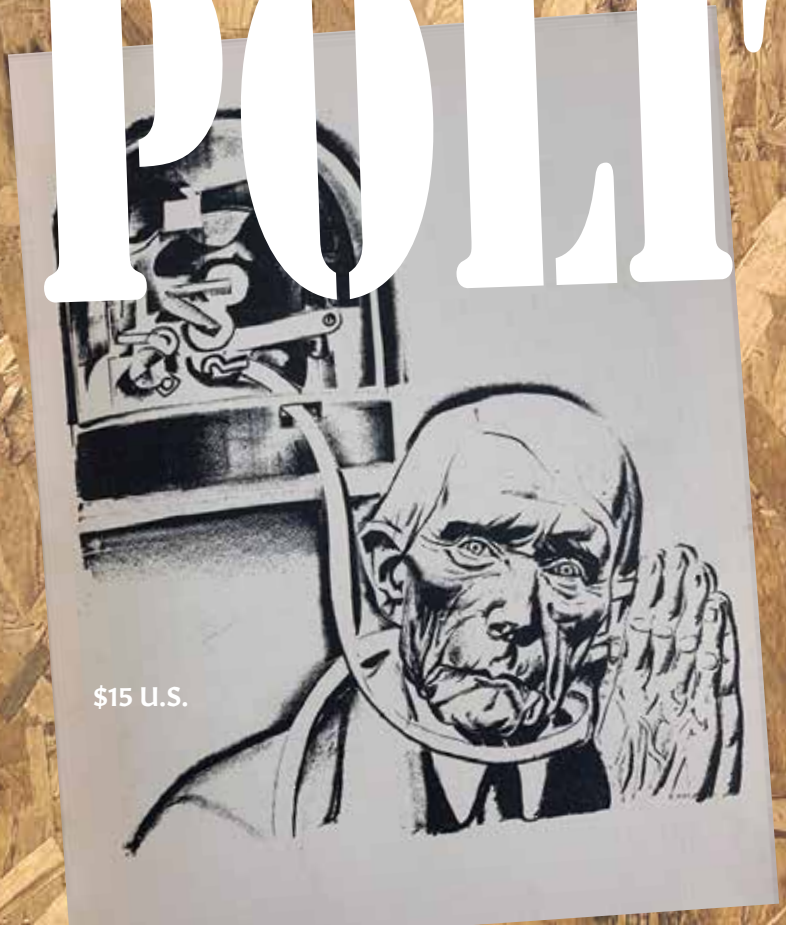
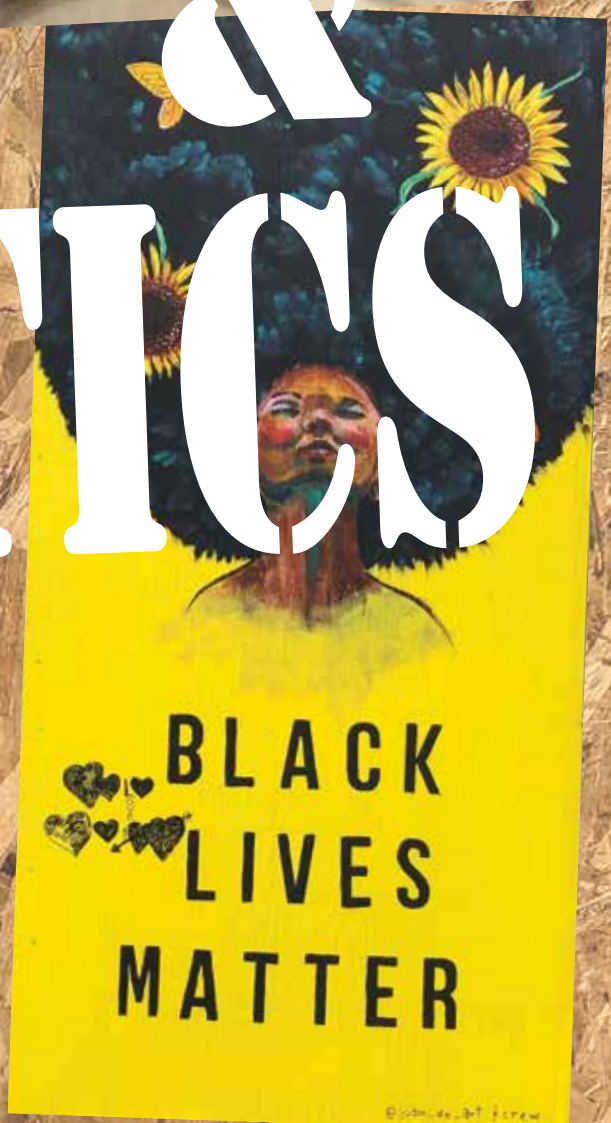
ART & POLITICS





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ART AND POLITICS

COVER CREDITS
Front: Gran Fury, *When A Government Turns Its Back On Its People;* Joan_de_art & crew, *Black Lives Matter;* Hugo Gellert: P*rimary Accumulation 16*

Back: Chris Burke and Ruben Alcantar, *Breonna Taylor, Say Her Name!!!*, Milwaukee; Sue Coe, *Language of the Dictator;* Lexander Bryant, *Opportunity Co$t,* Gran Fury, *Kissing Doesn't Kill.*

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NEW ART EXAMINER

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STATEMENT OF PURPOSE

The *New Art Examiner* is a publication whose purpose is to examine the definition and transmission of culture in our society; the decision-making processes within museums and schools and the agencies of patronage which determine the manner in which culture shall be transmitted; the value systems which presently influence the making of art as well as its study in exhibitions and books; and, in particular, the interaction of these factors with the visual art milieu.

WANTED: WRITERS

The *New Art Examiner* is looking for writers interested in the visual arts in any major metropolitan area in the U.S. You would start with short reviews of exhibition in your area. Later, longer essays on contemporary visual art issues could be accepted.

Please send a sample of your writing (no more than a few pages) to:

Michel Ségard
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Art and Politics—Introduction

For our last quarterly edition, we covered art in the Age of COVID-19. So much has happened since then. Shootings by police, economic decline, peaceful protests being broken up with tear gas and "non-lethal" projectiles, riots and looting, the rise of right-wing and left-wing extremist groups, and the ratcheting up of political turmoil, disinformation, and raw tribalism during an election year are really just the broad strokes that color the state of American culture right now.

Little did we know that in covering art and culture during COVID-19 that we were on the threshold of a new era of upheaval in politics and discourse that would be defined by a such a pronounced degree of upheaval. We learned a lot about what people can do as individual artists and collectives to strengthen their communities and speak out against injustice. We also learned about the different ways people think, feel, and respond to crisis when they have the time and space to think and act.

This time it is different. COVID-19 is still here along with all the other problems we face as a country and as a global community of creatives. Any message of unity is lost in the noise of the profit-driven media space, and quite frankly, it is understandable that many Americans do not have the patience for optimism right now. For this issue we have revisited some of our earlier interviews from the quarantine while also lending our pages to critical thinkers grappling with politics and art. Thomas F. X. Noble takes a deep dive into the nature of iconoclasm to provide some context for the recent destruction of controversial statues, while Kelli Wood opens up on a more personal level to analyze protest art in her home base of Nashville. Stephen Eisenman and Sue Coe do the important work of looking at parallels in history so that we can better understand our current moment—as does Paul Moreno in his brief history of the work of Gran Fury, the ACT UP-affiliated artist collective that fought against political indifference to the AIDS epidemic during the 1980s. These are just a few examples of the work our contributing writers and editorial team have assembled to explore the theme of art and politics.

We are very grateful and proud to share these insights and experiences with our readers and hope you find them as valuable and powerful as we do. In these trying times, it becomes more difficult but even more important that artists continue to produce their work and use their platforms to address these issues, which in many cases are complex, but which in many other instances are really quite simple, particularly when it comes to civil rights and equal protection under the law. We look forward to seeing how this new era in American art and culture unfolds and will be here covering it.

Thank you and stay safe everyone.

The Editors

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Art of the Black Lives Matter Movement

Compiled by Michel Ségard

Street Murals

Started in Washington D.C., the Black Lives Matter street mural phenomenon took hold all over the country. The artists' community effort put forth in creating many of these street murals resulted in a number of outstanding results. Below are some of the more noteworthy efforts and, when available, the names of the artists who created them.

The original BLM street mural in Washington D.C., commissioned by Mayor Muriel Bowser.

The Black Lives Matter street mural in Brooklyn, NYC. Yellow paint on black pavement is the most common variation and was done all over the country.

Mayor Bill de Blasio, Al Sharpton, and First Lady Chirlane McCray helped paint the Black Lives Matter street mural in front of Trump Tower, one of eight Black Lives Matter street murals in New York City. Photo credit: AP:Associated Press.

(As these murals popped up all over the country, a number of them have been vandalized—the Trump Tower one, three times.)

Street Mural Variations

Other communities came up with much more elaborate street murals that were done by ad hoc groups of local artists. Here are sevwen that I though were particuarly noteworthy. There artists who worked on them are listed when their names were known.

Community activists painted the Black Lives Matter street mural on Linwood Avenue in Baltimore's Patterson Park neighborhood. Photo by Jerry Jackson.

Charlotte, North Carolina's mural created by: Dammit Wesley, Dakotah Aiyanna, Matthew Clayburn, Abel Jackson, Garrison Gist, ARKO + OWL, Kyle Mosher, Franklin Kernes, Kiana Mui, Marcus Kiser, Georgie Nakima, Zach McLean, Frankie Zombie, CHD:WCK!, John Hairston, and Dari Calamari.

The Black Lives Matter street mural in Seattle, Washington, in the Capitol Hill Autonomous Zone, organized by Takiyah Ward, Joey Nix, and Japhy White.

The Black Lives Matter street mural in Chicago's Uptown neighborhood was painted by a group of 18 artists. The lettering was done by Heart and Bone, and each letter was painted by a different artist. Photo by Carson Cloud.

The Black Lives Matter street mural in front of Cincinnati's city hall was created by 17 teams of African-American artists, with each team handling one letter of the design.

Palo Alto's Black Lives Matter street mural was painted by Adam Amram and Stuart Robertson, Masuma Ahmed, Urna Bajracharya, Nico Berry, Shiraaz Bhabha, Briena Brown, Cece Carpio, Sarah Joy Espinoza-Evans, Ruth Feseha, Janet Foster, Elizabeth Daphne Foggie, Richard Hoffman, Ann McMillian, Sasha and Ben Vu, Demetris Washington, high school students of The Harker School Art Club of San Jose. Photo courtesy of Benny Villarreal.

In Indianapolis, 18 artists joined forces to paint the street mural on Indiana Avenue. All their names are not listed, but they did take a group picture show below. Mural photo from indianapolismonthly.com; both photos by Ted Somerville Photography.

Left: The George Floyd Mural where he died at 38th Street and Chicago Avenue South in Minneapolis.

Right: The artists who painted the mural—Niko Alexander, Cadex Herrera, Greta McLain, Xena Goldman, Pablo Helm Hernandez. Photo by Cadex Herrera.

BLM Wall Murals and Painting

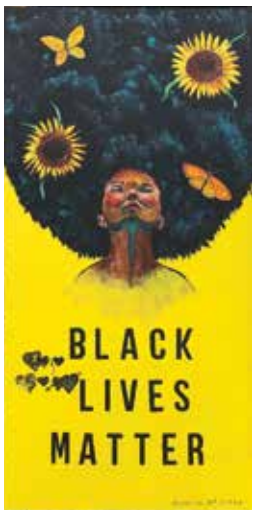
Street murals were not the only artistic expression of the BLM movement. In the wake of the killing of George Floyd, murals started to appear in most major cities commemorating the incident and expressing the views of the artists and activists involved. Below are just a few, starting with the George Floyd Mural in Minneapolis that became a shrine for the movement. Following the violence that ensued in Chicago, among other cities, Chicago artists used the plywood window coverings as canvases to express their feelings. Six examples of their work are included in this photo essay. Our Nashville correspondent, Kelli Wood, also sent us picture of murals in her area that related to the politics of the BLM movement, most of which were created prior to the current political events.

Middle Right: Cere Carpio, *We Got Us*, located in downtown Oakland, CA.

Lower Right: Carpio and friends in front of *We Got Us*. Photos from *Elle* magazine.

Lower Left: *Láolú Senbanjo, I can't breathe*, watercolor and charcoal painting. Photo credit: Láolú Senbanjo.

BLM Movement Wall Murals in Chicago



Upper Left: Artist–Joan_de_art & crew, *Black Lives Matter*; location–Broadway, north of Bryn Mawr. Photo by Michel Ségard.

Upper Middle: Artist–Maguire Illustrations, Alexis Lauren, Devin Doran, Jess B, Apple, Tuck Zobernathy, Stacey Elizabeth, *BLM*; location–1360 N. Milwaukee Ave.

Upper Right: Artist–Mary Fedorowski @ overbite studio, *Color Is Not a Crime*; location–1909 W. Division St.

Center: Artist–Squeak Starzula and Mario Mena, *End Racial Injustice*; location–South Loop Petco. Photo by Barrett Keithley via the *Chicago Reader.*

Lower Left: Artist–Christina Vanko, *No pride for some of us without Liberation for All of us*; location–1645 W. North Ave.

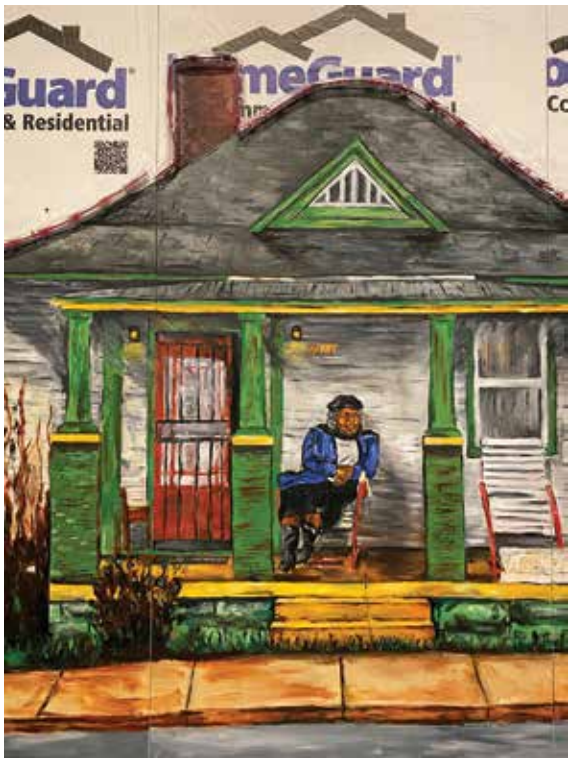
Lower Right: Artist–Anthony Medrano, *United We Stand or Divided We Fal*l; location– 1436 N. Milwaukee Ave.

BLM Movement-Related Wall Murals in Nashville, TN

Upper Right: Elisheba Israel Mrozik, *Maari Usio*, 808 19th Avenue North, Nashville, TN.

Middle Left: Detail of Elisheba Israel Mrozik's *Unmask 'Em*, 2019.

Middle Right: Nuveen Barwari, Marlos E'van, and Courtney Adair Johnson, with Opportunity NOW, *Where We Were, Where We Are, Where We Are Going*, 2019.



Bottom Left: Omari Booker, *The Writing's on the Walls*, 2019.

Bottom Right: Lexander Bryant, *Opportunity Co$t*, 2019 (This is a series of posters, not a mural per se.)

All photos on this page by Kelli Wood.

Michel Ségard is the editor in chief of the *New Art Examiner*.

It Can Happen Here—
An Anti-Fascism Project

by Stephen F. Eisenman and Sue Coe

Preface: No Theory Required

When in May 1930 John Heartfield created for the German workers magazine AIZ (*Die Arbeiter-Illustrierte-Zeitung*), *Whoever reads bourgeois newspapers becomes blind and deaf*, he didn't care about Constructivism, Productivism, Cubism, Dada, Surrealism, Socialist Realism or montage theory. What Heartfield cared about that Spring was the fact that the National Socialist (Nazi) Party just landed a ministry in the state of Thuringia and gained electoral strength in Saxony. Later that year, the Nazis became the second leading vote getter in federal elections.

We know what followed: In 1933, Hitler assumed national, dictatorial power, at which time Heartfield fled the country, literally jumping out of a widow to escape from Nazi clutches. In August 1934, Hitler became "Führer" and undertook a series of extrajudicial executions to further consolidate his power. Those are the things Heartfield cared about during the excruciating years from 1930-38 when he was creating his annihilating photos and montages for *AIZ* and its successor *VI*.

To be clear, Heartfield's works were not the product of mere intuition. Far from it. *Whoever reads bourgeois newspapers* was probably inspired by Francisco Goya's etching and aquatint *Los Chinchillas* from the album *Los Caprichos* (1799). Both described the idea that the rich and powerful feed the unwary with prejudice, rendering them blind and deaf to the truth.

Heartfield's famous photomontage, *The Meaning of the Hitler Salute: Little Man Asks for Big Gifts* (October 1932) was also built upon a solid art historical foundation. His first inspiration was the caricaturist Honoré Daumier to whom every politically engaged artist must pay homage. Daumier's lithograph titled *Gargantua* (1831) shows French King Louis-Phillippe as Rabelais' character sitting on a giant toilet. Fed by the weak and destitute at the lower right, Gargantua/Louis Phillippe shits out favors for the wealthy and well-connected at bottom left. (Publication of the print earned its creator a six-month prison sentence.)

Heartfield inverted the relationship of scale in Daumier's print. In his version, the political leader is diminutive,

Left: John Heartfield, *Whoever reads bourgeois newspapers becomes blind and deaf*. Collection of the author.

Right: Francisco Goya, *Los Chinchillas*, 1799. Etching. Metropolitan Museum of Art.

Edgar Degas, *Portraits at the Stock Exchange,* 1879. Oil on canvas. Musé d'Orsay, Paris.

and his financial backers are gigantic. The second likely source was Edgar Degas' painting *Portraits at the Stock Exchange* (1879, Paris, Orsay Museum)—Heartfield would have seen it at the Louvre—which shows the prominent banker Ernest May standing on the floor of the Bourse, receiving a stock tip conveyed by a shoulder tap and a whisper. As with Heartfield's photomontage, it suggests the corruption engendered by finance capital.

Like all great artists, Heartfield learned from other artists. But his purpose in creating *The Meaning of the Hitler Salute* wasn't to manifest his own genius by standing on the shoulders of giants. It wasn't even the "alienation-effect"—his friend Brecht's name for the process of making the familiar seems strange in order to awaken political consciousness. It was to expose Hitler's viciousness and corruption and forcefully argue that there was nothing socialist about the party of National Socialism. The artist himself described his purpose: "If it is my task to provide a jacket for a book or a brochure for our Front [the Communist Party of Germany], then I try to organise it so that it has the greatest attraction for the broadest mass, so that it guarantees the widest circulation of revolutionary ideas, best represents the content, and beyond that, is an independent page that serves our purposes." You might quarrel with Heartfield's supreme confidence in the German Communist Party (and the Soviet Comintern), but it was at the time the most focused and powerful anti-fascist party.

Other artists in the 1930s, including many in the U.S., confronted fascism and its enablers in just as direct and compelling a manner as Heartfield. Hugo Gellert was a Hungarian-born American painter and graphic artist, as well as a communist organizer. His book, *Karl Marx Capital*

Honoré Daumier, *Gargantua*, 1831. Lithograph.

Right: Hugo Gellert: P*rimary Accumulation 16,* 1933. Lithograph. National Portrait Gallery. © Estate of Hugo Gellert.

Left: John Heartfield, *The Meaning of the Hitler Salute: Little Man Asks for Big Gifts*, October 1932. Photomontage. Collection of the author.

in Lithographs was an attempt to abridge and illustrate a complex opus so that everyone could understand it. His illustration for the page "Origin of the Industrial Capitalist" shows John D. Rockefeller, founder of the Standard Oil Company and the richest man in the country. He has a stock ticker tape wrapped around his neck and his hands are clasped in prayer. He was a devout Northern Baptist, but his real faith, Gellert suggests, was capital. Rockefeller was also a major investor in I.G. Farben, the German chemical giant that helped bankroll Hitler's rise.

Ollie Harrington was a cartoonist and illustrator for a number of chiefly African-American newspapers and magazines, and his work confronted lynching, Jim Crow and systematic discrimination in housing, education, transportation, and health care. His illustration, titled *The American Crackerocracy and the Polish Ghetto* for the Harlem-based *The People's Voice* (February 28, 1942), graphically linked the lynching of African Americans to the fight against fascism.

In the left panel, a Jewish woman lies slumped against a wall, the apparent victim of a firing squad. Bullet holes pockmark the wall, and the swastika names the perpetrators. In the right panel, a Black man is slumped at the base of a road marker that reads Sikeston MO. U.S.A. A noose around his neck reveals the means of his death and the reason: racism. The actual lynching of Cleo Wright occurred about a month earlier, followed by threats to dozens of other black men in the community. In response, the U.S. Department of Justice opened its first ever review of a lynching. No one, however, was ever indicted. Later, Harrington wrote an exposé titled "Terror in Tennessee" about illegal arrests and racial violence in the city of Columbia, Tennessee. In 1951, he went into exile in Paris, where he became friends with Richard Wright. Fearing reprisals by the CIA, Harrington in 1961 settled in East Berlin.

Heartfield, Gellert and Harrington were just a few of the artists who, during a period of crisis, had their priorities straight; it was to fight fascism. Others who did the

Oliver Harrington, *The American Crackerocracy and the Polish Ghetto*, from *The People's Voice*, February 28, 1942.

same include William Gropper and Ben Shahn in the U.S. and George Grosz in Germany. (Grosz emigrated to the U.S. in 1933.) And in an era of neo-fascism, political art and commentary must again "[represent] the content" of our time and try to persuade the "broadest mass" to fight fascism. That's the purpose of *It Can Happen Here*.

1. Trump: Republican, Fascist or Both?

Donald Trump's election in 2016 took almost everybody by surprise: an aging real estate conman, funded by inherited wealth and TV celebrity, ascended to the presidency on a wave of racist vitriol and vulgar machismo. He then proceeded to flout the gravitas of the office by using it for financial gain and staffing it with corporate shills and right-wing ideologues. The list of the former is long and includes Steve Mnuchin (Treasury), Wilbur Ross (Commerce), Scott Pruitt (Environment, replaced by Andrew Wheeler), and Betsy DeVos (Education). The latter group includes Steve Bannon (fired for taking up too much airtime) and Steven Miller, who advises on immigration and quietly provides the president entree to the blogs, chatrooms and slogans of the racist and neo-Nazi alt-right.

Trump has torn up previously agreed treaties (the Paris Climate Accords, the Iran de-nuclearization framework, and the Intermediate-Range Nuclear Forces agreement with Russia), reduced Muslim and Latin American refugee immigration to a trickle; gutted environmental and workplace protections; slashed taxes for corporations and the rich; handed the courts over to unqualified or corrupt jurists; and attempted to blackmail a foreign leader to undercut the political prospects of his rival. He was thwarted in the last by a whistleblower and impeachment, but his apologists in the Senate enthusiastically formed a protective backstop. (Only Mitt Romney voted for conviction.) And why shouldn't Republicans have fallen in line? Nearly all the president's initiatives and policies (tariffs excepted) were theirs too!

Even Trump's approach to the COVID-19 pandemic is consistent with Republican goals: By limiting the duration of support for the unemployed and strictly controlling the availability of testing and protective equipment, the administration and its congressional allies further weaken the working class, especially its most vulnerable Black and brown sections.

The clear intention is to ensure the highest possible post-pandemic rate of profit for banks, investment firms, extractive industries, technology companies, entertainment conglomerates, real estate businesses, transportation, and tourism. Already, the CARES Act passed by Congress, combined with resources from the Federal Reserve, has distributed almost $4.6 trillion to many of the nation's biggest and richest companies. Admittedly, passage of the relief bill was bipartisan, but the strongest emphasis on corporate relief—along with limits on accountability—came from Republicans.

So, is Trump a radical outlier in American politics, or simply the boorish expression of one of the two main political parties? Given the harmony of viewpoint between the Republican Party and its leader in the White House,

Left: Sue Coe, *The Dim Reaper*, 2020. Linocut. Image courtesy of the artist .

Right: Sue Coe, *IMPOTUS*, 2020. Linocut. Image courtesy of the artist.

Sue Coe, *Execution of a Resistance Fighter*, 2019. Linocut. Image courtesy of the artist.

the answer appears to be the latter. But as Trump's grip on his office tightened in the wake of his acquittal in the Senate, as his control of the courts and bureaucracies deepened under the guidance of Bill Barr and Mike Pompeo, as his racism and vindictiveness was further exposed in the wake of national protests over the killing of George Floyd and the toppling of Confederate memorials, and after his dispatch of Homeland Security and ICE shock troops to Portland to assault and detain protesters, a new consensus has emerged: that he is a fascist enabled by ideologically pliant members of Congress, agency heads and judges. To evaluate the claim, it's necessary to go back and briefly review the origins and development of European and American fascism and Nazism, before returning to the current crisis.

2. A Very Brief History of Fascism and Nazism

The origins of European fascism are found in the political rubble left by the First World War (1914-18). The conflict killed more than 20 million people, but when it ended in 1918, little was settled. National struggles for control of resources and markets resumed, industrial capacity remained bloated, and social inequality—exacerbated by postwar recession and unemployment—created a dynamic and volatile class struggle.

The successful Bolshevik Revolution in 1917, plus a string of failed insurrections in Germany, Hungary, Italy and elsewhere in the early 1920s, cleaved Europe in two. On the one side were progressive forces (mostly social-

Left: Sue Coe, *Language of the Dictator*, 2019. Linocut. Image courtesy of the artist.

Right: Sue Coe, *Enemy of the People*, 2019. Linocut. Image courtesy of the artist.

Sue Coe, *The Total Eclipse of Rationality*, 2017. Linocut. Image courtesy of the artist.

ist and communist) that favored parliamentary elections and equality, and on the other, conservative groups who upheld traditional hierarchy and endorsed the continued reign of private over communal property. The latter were sometimes Social Democrats (what we'd today call liberals), and more ominously, fascists in Italy and Nazis in Germany. The Italians were led by Benito Mussolini (*Il Duce*) following his appointment as prime minister in 1922; and the Germans by Adolph Hitler (*Der Führer*), after his appointment as chancellor in January 1933. Both of them soon secured nearly complete authoritarian control. That was when John Heartfield in Germany, as well as a legion of other German artists, musicians, and intellectuals, fled the country.

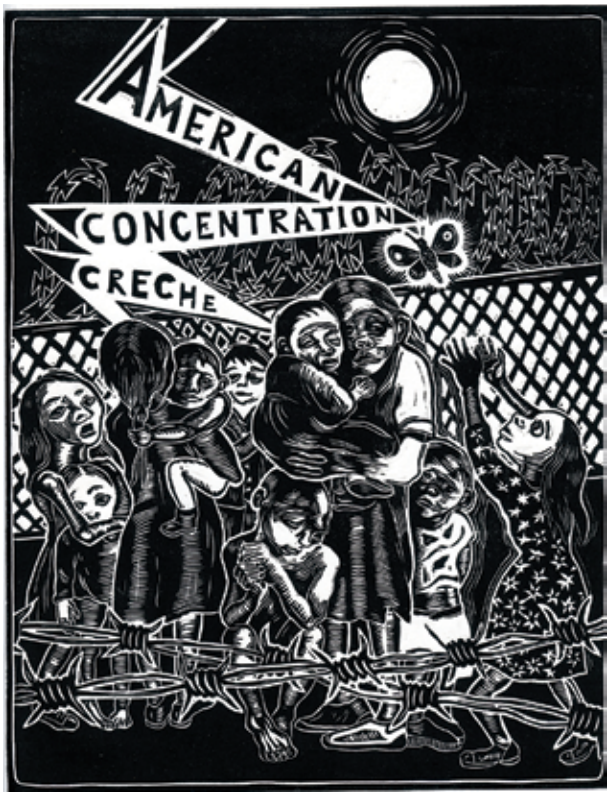
Fascist and Nazi leaders were ruthless. At first, they employed thugs, often former soldiers, to intimidate and even murder the leaders of leftist organizations and independent unions. Later, they maintained their own corps of shock troops to undertake larger scale intimidation and violence. Their stated goals often sounded mythic: to purify the social body, restore a plundered national glory (making Germany great again), and establish a global empire that would last millennia. In addition, they perpetuated the lie that humanity was composed of biologically distinct races, with some innately superior to others; and they celebrated war and violence as purifying. But they were also pragmatic when they needed to be. Soon after gaining power, Mussolini and Hitler passed laws to suppress wages and subsidize big business. To succeed, they needed the cooperation and financial support of industrial and agricultural leaders such as I.G. Farben, Friedrich Thyssen and Alfred Krupp as well as hereditary elites, and for the most part, they got it.

The drive for national and racial glory was thus also a drive for capitalist profit. Rearmament in particular functioned as a huge economic stimulus, especially needed after the stock market crash of 1929 and subsequent Depression. In fact, it was the economic growth stimulated by war preparations that earned the Fascists and Nazis the support they enjoyed among the lower middle and middle classes. (Industrial workers were more suspicious of far-right parties in the interwar period.) Majorities in Italy and German were willing to accept constraints upon the rights of speech, assembly, and political participation in exchange for economic security. They even sanctioned, for the most part, the moral outrages and crimes of the 1930s and '40s, including the harassment, arrest, imprisonment and execution of Communists, Jews, Homosexuals, Roma, Slavs and others. By the end of World War II in 1945, and the defeat of the fascists and Nazis, the death toll of soldiers and civilians was about 80 million, four times greater than World War I.

Historians have described the measures taken by fascist and Nazi regimes to consolidate power and advance their aims. They may be taken to be diagnostic of fascism in general. They include:

1. Bringing independent units of government to heel.
2. Using violence and subversion to cripple opposition parties and bias elections.
3. Intimidating and then controlling the press and other media.
4. Sponsoring mass rallies and military parades and militarizing society.
5. Upholding the leadership principle (*Der Führer; Il Duce*).
6. Mocking justice, while offering unlimited legal protection to financial elites.
7. Rescinding women's political, reproductive, and property rights.
8. Denying the expression of any non-reproductive sexuality.
9. Denigrating science and promoting lies (what Hitler called "the big lie").
10. Endorsing white "Aryan" supremacy and making it the basis of foreign and domestic policy.

The imposition of these measures differed in the various European fascist regimes, with Germany being the most consistent and relentless, and the Hungarian and Romanian governments being the most zealous imitators.



Sue Coe, *American Concentration Creche*, 2018. Linocut. Image courtesy of the artist.

3. Is Trump a Fascist?

Detailed discussion of these fascist principles and postures is unnecessary here. What's important now is to consider their current revival. The forced resignation of career officials at the State Department, Environmental Protection Agency, and Justice Department, and their replacement by Republican political appointees, is part of the effort to bring independent units of government into conformity with Trump's will. The establishment of Fox News as a quasi-official state news service (a marriage lately frayed), and attacks upon information from other sources as "fake news," exemplifies the fascist desire to intimidate and control the press.

Trump's insistence that he has the right to interpret laws however he wants or simply ignore them and to grant pardons to his criminal cronies mocks the rule of law. His denial of the facts of human-caused climate change and the COVID-19 pandemic are examples of the "big lie." And of course, Trump's repeated racist and antisemitic canards, including calling countries with majority Black populations "shitholes"; telling Black and brown legislators to "go back where they came from;" and saying that Jews are greedy ("brutal killers") and disloyal to Israel if they vote against him, are open expressions of a racism and antisemitism that recalls earlier generations of American fascism: the state-sanctioned terror of the Ku Klux Klan from about 1915 to 1925; the popular antisemitic and pro-fascist radio broadcasts by Father Charles Coughlin from 1936-1939; and the isolationist and antisemitic America First Committee, formed in 1940 and famously endorsed by aviator Charles Lindbergh. (The onset of war with Germany and Japan in 1941 destroyed the reputations of Coughlin, Lindbergh, and the America Firsters.) Trump has been at pains to revive the once reviled slogan, "America First."

History never repeats itself. Setting statements and policies from the Nazi past beside contemporary ones and then claiming equivalence, is an act of selective memory and shaky history. What about the many earlier utterances and events for which no contemporary parallel may be found? And what about current policies for which no historical precedent may be identified? Nevertheless, the actual impact of current programs and policies that recall fascism and Nazism are visible to all. We know very well what happens when asylum applicants are forcibly returned to their home (they are often killed); when immigrant children are housed in cages (they experience emotional and educational deprivation); when the facts of climate science are denied (the planet continues to warm); when racists are described or accepted as good people (some of them are emboldened to violently enact their hatreds); when casual sexism and sexual abuse is tolerated (it grows); when the rule of law is denied (injustice and impunity reign); when free and fair elections are undermined (the public loses faith in representative democracy); and when the press is routinely denigrated as an "enemy of the people" (they are no longer trusted).

Sue Coe, *Inciter in Chief,* 2020. Linocut, Image courtesy of the artist.

4. What's to Be Done?

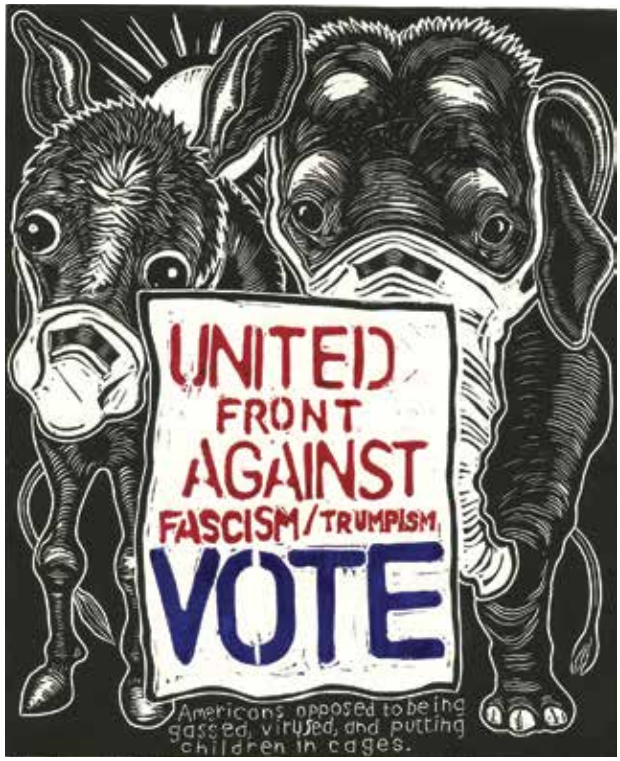
The purpose of political art now must be inoculation and clear warning. It's to alert individuals and communities that something dangerous is happening and that actions must be taken to stop it. Anti-fascist resistance might include mass protests and rallies, like those still underway across the country against racism and police violence. It also includes the simple act of voting in November for Joe Biden. That Trump can still be voted out of office is a sign that the dictatorship he and his supporters aim to create has not yet been established. (After fascists attain power, elections are the first things to go.) However, if Trump is re-elected, a democratic solution to the crisis caused by the new, American fascism may no longer be available, and the art that aimed to stop it will appear to future generations, like the photomontages of John Heartfield, poignant relics of a failed resistance.

Afterword

That Trump may fairly be called fascist doesn't mean that elements of fascism were not present in U.S. politics and society in the years before his presidency—and among Democrats and Republicans alike. Indeed, fascism in its broadest definition has been with us from the start. The slave society that existed prior to emancipation and the system of racial segregation following Reconstruction were both built upon white (Aryan) supremacy and racial violence. During World War II, Japanese-Americans were interned in concentration camps. A decade later, leftists and queers in government, education and other professions were targeted for abuse and dismissal. And of course, U.S. militarism and intervention, especially since 1945, may be seen as expressions of what the Nazis called "Lebensraum." But until recently, most Americans believed that disturbing history was receding from sight, not rapidly advancing.

British-born American artist Sue Coe has from the start of her career explored the strong, recessive trait of U.S. fascism. It's there in her disturbing explorations of male sexual violence, her examination of the criminally inadequate response to pandemics (AIDS and now COVID-19), and especially violence against animals. In her print, *Auschwitz Begins When Someone Looks at a Slaughterhouse and Thinks They are Only Animals* (the quote is from Theodor Adorno), she highlights a form of cruelty–meat consumption–that most people participate in with hardly any thought. The idea here is not only that cruelty toward animals preconditions humans to violence toward each other, but that Auschwitz is present in every slaughterhouse.

In *Language of the Dictator (They Are Just Animals)* from *It Can Happen Here*, Coe abbreviates the Adorno line, allowing the viewer to remember how often the U.S. president has referred to immigrants as "animals." (At the now infamous Tulsa rally, it was his surrogate Eric Trump who



Sue Coe, *United Front Against Fascism/Trumpism: VOTE*, 2020. Linocut, Image courtesy of the artist.

described BLM protesters as animals.) The print shows men with nightsticks beating down hundreds of animals. One of the men wears a badge recalling the SS. These animals might be human protesters in the dozens of U.S. cities where police and national guard troops used violence to prevent the exercise of protected constitutional rights. Or they might be animals in a slaughterhouse subject to same cruel fate—actually, much worse—than BLM protesters. The composition and figural exaggerations recall Northern Gothic art as it was re-interpreted by the German Expressionists.

Coe's work has more in common with early Max Beckmann and George Grosz than it does with Hugo Gellert. She appreciates their complexity and dialectics, as is apparent in *The Language of the Dictator*. But she often just wants to hit hard, without much ambiguity. No dialectics required —just a punch to the gut. The prints included in *It Can Happen Here* (and many more not included) are mostly of the second type. Maybe when the fascist in the White House is gone there will be more room for theory.

Stephen F. Eisenman is Professor Emeritus of Art History at Northwestern University and the author of *Gauguin's Skirt* (Thames and Hudson, 1997), *The Abu Ghraib Effect* (Reaktion, 2007) and *The Cry of Nature: Art and the Making of Animal Rights* (Reaktion, 2015) among other books. Eisenman is also a curator, critic, activist and co-founder of the non-profit Anthropocene Alliance. He has collaborated with Sue Coe from time to time since about 2000.

Have you given up hope for a cure?

by Paul Moreno

In the last four years of the '80s, which I spent as a high school student in Reno, Nevada, my aesthetic sensibility was being shaped in part by the work of fashion photographer Oliviero Toscani, who shot images that filled *Elle* magazine, *Esprit* catalogs, and perhaps most notably, the advertising photos for Benetton. The clean, crisp world of 'United Colors' that he created for Benetton depicted a bright and well-knit world in which a quirky brown kid like me, with a love of layered shirts and slouchy cardigans, could be as happy as the white folks around him.

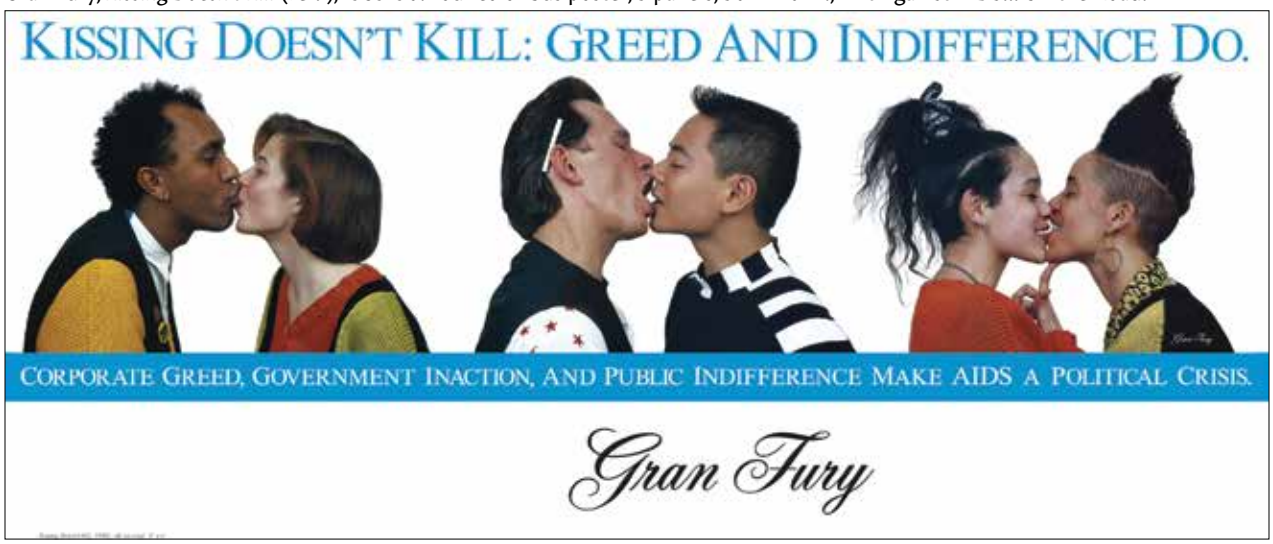
In 1990, I moved to San Francisco to attend college. It was there that I saw what I would much later learn was the *Kissing Doesn't Kill* project by Gran Fury. This long, narrow ad that was designed for the sides of buses depicts a Black man kissing a red-haired white woman; what I will call a vaguely non-white man kissing an Asian man; and two women of color kissing each other. Shot in the style of Toscani, brightly lit, sharply graphic, model-as-still life, the poster was the manifestation of the eroticism my teenage mind had found in those Benetton ads. The text of the poster—which had become a matter of some controversy and was not always included in its entirety—read

KISSING DOESN'T KILL:
GREED AND INDIFFERENCE DO.

I knew what this meant. I was eighteen years old. I was terrified of sex despite being as horny as an eighteen-year old. Meanwhile, my brother, who also lived in the Bay Area, who is just nine years older than I, and who is also gay, was seeing his friends die of AIDS.

Gran Fury was an artist collective that flowered out of the grassroots AIDS activism organization ACT UP. It is perhaps most commonly associated with the *Silence=Death* Project. Technically, *Silence=Death* was an independent project that predated both ACT UP and Gran Fury. It is important to look at *Silence=Death*, however, because it is linked to Gran Fury through a common founding mem-

Gran Fury, *Kissing Doesn't Kill* (ver.1), 1989-90. Four color bus poster, 3 panels, 30 x 140 in., "Art Against AIDS... On the Road."



Left: *Silence=Death*, The Silence=Death Project, 1987, 33 ½ x 22 in.

Right: Gran Fury, *Wall Street Money*, 1988. Handbill, photocopy on paper, printed recto-verso (3 versions), 3 ½ x 8 ½ in. ACT UP; Wall Street Demo.

ber, Avram Finkelstein, and because *Silence=Death* was the seed of the urgent, icon-making, and no bullshit aesthetic that Gran Fury would cultivate. The *Silence=Death* project appeared as offset lithograph posters wheatpasted to walls throughout New York and other cities. The black field is all-encompassing, inclusive of all genders, sexualities, and races. The simple message

SILENCE=DEATH

appears in a bold white typeface, easy to read from any distance, heftily fills the bottom of the black field. When you get close enough to read the fine print, the poster indicts the government and the church and begs the reader to help save the lives of the queer community. The pink triangle—a technological design advancement on the triangle used to brand homosexuals during the Holocaust—is an elegant and angry retort to the idea, proposed controversially by William F. Buckley, Jr. in the *New York Times*, that people with HIV/AIDS should be tattooed on their arms and ass to warn others and help stop the spread of the virus. The visual skill of the design of the poster was evidenced in how its symbols permeated queer culture. Even if you missed the posters around New York in the late '80s, you saw or heard LGBTQ people marching in the street while carrying signs based on this poster, you saw a button with the pink triangle and knew that it was a symbol of queer power even without the words SILENCE=DEATH.

The strength of the design became stronger each time someone wrote, saw, or heard the words SILENCE=DEATH.

This, however, raises a question: what happens if no one writes, sees, hears, or repeats these words? When I started work on this article and started chatting with folks about it, I was not necessarily surprised at how many did not know Gran Fury; but I was shocked by how many were not familiar with *Silence=Death*. Unless someone was roughly my age or older, or was deeply knowledgeable about queer history, they simply did not know. But a funny thing happened: if I shared with them an image of Gran Fury's 1988 *Wall Street Money*, the viewer found it poignant and prescient. In this piece, slips of green paper were printed so that one side resembled the obverse of $10, $50, and $100 bills. The other side, in a bold oblique type, had one of three messages:

FUCK YOUR PROFITEERING.
People are dying while you play business.

WHY ARE WE HERE?
Because your malignant neglect KILLS.

White Heterosexual Men Can't Get AIDS...
DON'T BANK ON IT.

These bills were dropped on the floor of the New York Stock Exchange at the opening bell as well as dispersed on the street around the Stock Exchange.

As our present-day government fumbles the response to the COVID-19 virus while Wall Street simultaneously rakes in profits, the urgency of our current moment re-ignites the fuse of *Wall Street Money*.

Taking the poster-design technique practiced in *Silence=Death*—making a poster that provides different readings from different distances—and appropriating the advertising and art vernacular of the late '80s and early '90s, Gran Fury honed a messaging style that was visually seductive and brutally frank. They appropriated the type style of Barbara Kruger—who herself had appropriated it from Madison Avenue. They made factual statements in a journalistic tone and then politely asked the pointed questions that any thoughtful editorial in any respected newspaper should have been asking. They sounded a call to arms. Lastly, they branded themselves. "Gran Fury" was printed at the bottom of each poster, in modestly sized, elegant script, not calling too much attention to itself. This signature implied that there were those already in the know but that this poster exists for those who did not seem to get it yet, or worse, those who did not care, or cared too quietly. This whispered name broke the governmental silence that surrounded AIDS.

When he accepted the presidential nomination at the 1988 National Republican Convention, Vice President George Bush had spent eight years in the Reagan administration, which barely had the decency to even say the word "AIDS" and was even more reluctant to talk about gays. The Watkins Commission had released its report on the AIDS epidemic, which called for anti-discrimination protection for victims of HIV/AIDS but did not call for protection of LGBTQ people. Azidothymidine (AZT) had become available on the market, but its benefits were limited to dubious. In 1987, the Helms Amendment was overwhelmingly approved by Senate, preventing funding of any AIDS education effort that promoted safe sex between homosexuals. Queers were rightfully angry. How could the government address this disease and not acknowledge the community whom it most decimated and who had been in the streets fighting for action? To combat the inherent homophobia in the government's latest latent response, and the general homophobia that was felt in America, ACT UP organized a nine-day nationwide series of actions and protests in April of 1988.

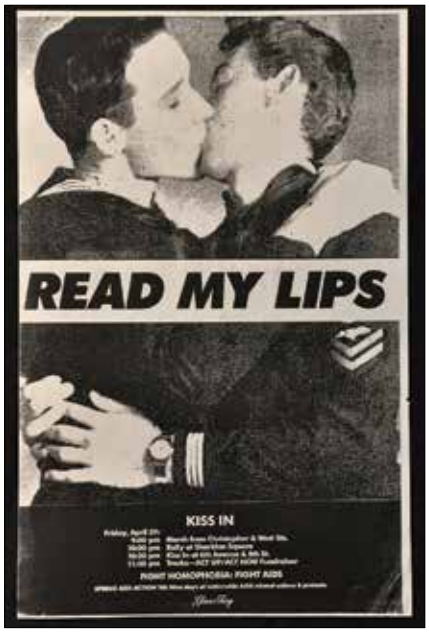
One of the actions that was planned was a kiss-in. This almost sounds quaint today, and thankfully so; but in 1988, openly same-sex expressions of affection or sexuality on the street or in media was still incredibly taboo. The flyers Gran Fury designed for the event tell a complex story. The male version reproduces a cropped-for-family-viewing, vintage photo of a male/male couple in sailor outfits embraced in a kiss. The female version had two distributed permutations. The first, used for a flyer, also features a reproduction of a vintage photo: two women in flapper attire, one using her hand to pull the other's face closer to her own. It is elegant but timid. A later permutation, used for postcards and t-shirts, reproduces Gran Fury's own image of the female/female kiss from *Kissing Doesn't Kill*. In every version, the phrase

READ MY LIPS

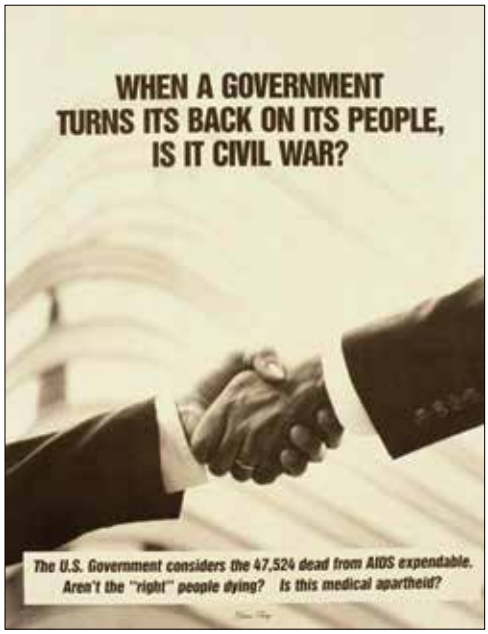
demands that the viewer look and see queer people being queer, being intimate, showing, embodying sex.

Gran Fury knew the value of repetition. Paste lots of posters everywhere. Make a poster one year and then make a variation of that poster a year later. The efficacy of this technique is clear in advertising and in politics.

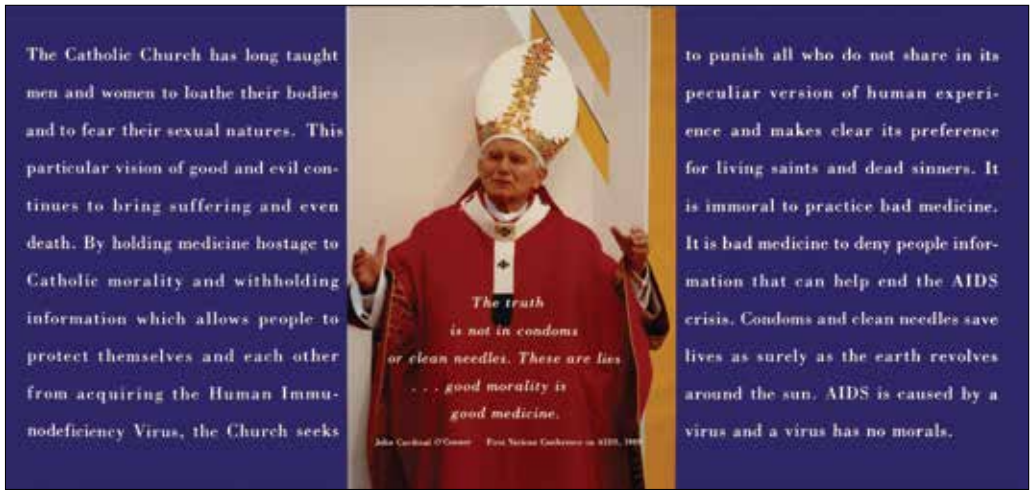
"READ MY LIPS" is taken indirectly from George Bush at the 1988 National Republican Convention. In his infamous speech there, he promised, "Read my lips. No new taxes." Though that line is now credited to speechwriter Peggy Noonan, Bush uttered these words throughout his stump speeches, trying through repetition to affect a tough-guy demeanor. In the long run, it was the fags and dykes marching in the streets whose lips moved with gen-



Left: Gran Fury, *Read My Lips* (Men's version), 1988. Poster, photocopy on paper, 16 ¾ x 10 ¾ in. ACT UP, Spring AIDS Action '88.



Right: Gran Fury, *When A Government Turns Its Back On Its People*, 1988. U-bahn poster, offset lithography on paper, 90 x 120 in. NGBK, West Berlin, West Germany.



Gran Fury, *The Pope and the Penis*, 1990. First of two billboards and one text panel. 10 x 25 ft. ea. billboard. "Aperto 90," XLIV Venice Biennale, Italy.

uine conviction. There were new taxes—but the queers did not back down

When Gran Fury plucked the phrase "READ MY LIPS" out of the political landscape of 1988, they were in essence cultivating an incident of looking which operated in a style similar to that described in *Camera Lucida*, the 1980 Roland Barthes book about looking at photography. Barthes describes an image containing both *studium* —the broadly shared cultural elements of an image—and *punctum* —a detail of the image that pricks the viewer and evokes poignancy and seduction. In the case of Gran Fury, the sleek and straightforward design of the moment, combined with the governmental and societal head-turning, was the *studium* in which Gran Fury operated. The *punctum* is the urgency of a life or death crisis in progress. In Barthes' description, the *punctum* is a small visual detail, but Gran Fury twists that and says, "Turn around, the poignant detail is not in the picture. It is all around you."

In bold sans serif type, a 1988 poster firmly asks

WHEN A GOVERNMENT TURNS ITS BACK ON ITS PEOPLE, IS IT CIVIL WAR?

The query floats above a benign image of two arms in suit sleeves reaching out to shake each other's hands, an image that could easily be a stock photo. It is of note that, although they are clearly men's hands, the race of the hands is unclear, but one does wear a wedding band. In smaller type at the bottom of the poster:

The U.S. Government considers the 47,524 dead from AIDS expendable. Aren't the "right" people dying? Is this medical apartheid?

The camaraderie and confidence expressed in these two hands reaching out to each other suddenly suggest the collusion between government, church, and corporate America to monetize AIDS and to let the epidemic kill people they view as wretched perverts and addicts. Of course, there is also the possibility that these same hands are those of quasi-straight guys who are both part of the corporate machine and part of closeted liaisons between men who don't use condoms and who don't think straight men can get AIDS—those whose silence equals death.

It is already apparent that it is impossible to discuss Gran Fury without talking about the world in which it operated. It is challenging to write about Gran Fury as an artistic endeavor without emphasizing their activist goals. Though it is exciting to parse their communicative strategies, their work resists the sort of open interpretations of meaning that less politically direct artwork invites. The posters, though very considered in their design, are not asking you to think about their formal attributes. They are telling you what to think about the world around you.

In 1988, Gran Fury made a poster that read

WITH 42,000 DEAD ART
IS NOT ENOUGH
TAKE
COLLECTIVE
DIRECT
ACTION
TO END
THE AIDS
CRISIS

It is important to note that Gran Fury sprung out of an offer from the New Museum to have ACT UP occupy the windows at their old Broadway location, which perfectly situated the artist-activists who became Gran Fury in a liminal spot between the privileged space of historicization and the dirty streets where queer people were getting sick and getting angry. The New Museum installation was activism, not exhibition. Museums by their very nature work to preserve and contextualize artifacts and moments for later reflection. Gran Fury by their very na-

Gran Fury, *The Pope and the Penis*, 1990. Second of two billboards and one text panel. 10 x 25 ft. ea. billboard. "Aperto 90," XLIV Venice Biennale, Italy.

Gran Fury, *Four Questions*, 1993 (detail). Poster, 24 x 20 in.

ture was yelling that the fire was still burning and was not yet able to be looked back at.

Gran Fury was also included in the 1990 Venice Biennale. Gran Fury's grassroots activism in the context of this most elite art world milieu may be hard to square until you realize that Gran Fury skillfully took the prestige of inclusion in the event, which is used to laud participating artists and nations, and turned into a spotlight on organized religion's useless notion of concern in the matter of AIDS. Gran Fury's use of an image of Pope John Paul II caused an uproar which forced Vatican officials to physically come and read Gran Fury's message that the Church's condemnation of needle exchange and safe sex practices was an immoral condemnation to death for those whose lives could be saved by these simple acts. (Acts as easy and effective as putting on a mask.)

Gran Fury made this work with money it struggled to find. Despite the New Museum and Biennale installations, Gran Fury existed outside the gallery and museum system that props up the art market, which is inherently tied to the same economy that was booming as gays were dying. They did not have gallery representation, nor did they produce work for sale. They were not a business. They were town criers who called out Barbara Bush for posing with babies and children with AIDS, propping them up as innocent victims while the government ignored the health and needs of the babies' mothers with AIDS. They called out the systemic sexism in HIV research, where studying the particular effects of HIV on women was not prioritized. They made work about HIV's particular impact on folks of color.

Finally, it is important to know HIV/AIDS isn't over. According to UNAIDS in 2019 [bracketed numbers indicate uncertainty bounds]:

38.0 million [31.6 million–44.5 million] people globally were living with HIV.

1.7 million [1.2 million–2.2 million] people were newly infected with HIV.

690,000 [500,000–970,000] people died from AIDS-related illnesses worldwide.

Women and girls accounted for about 48% of all new HIV infections.

Risk of acquiring HIV is 13 times higher for transgender people.

These numbers are hard to visualize, and the visual landscape of 2020 does not provide immediate images of what it looks like to die of AIDS-related illness—which is

why I would like to direct you to two works not by Gran Fury. David Wojnarowicz's photo triptych, *Untitled (Peter Hujar)*, 1987, portrays Wojnarowicz's companion and mentor, Peter Hujar, at the moment he succumbed to AIDS. Similarly, AA Bronson's *Felix Partz, June 5, 1994*, 1994/1999, is a portrait of artist and Bronson's collaborative partner, Felix Partz, at the moment of his death from AIDS. These two portraits roughly bookend the period of time that Gran Fury was active. Both these pieces portray the way AIDS whittled away at the bodies of its victims, and when one sees them, one cannot help but mourn the loss of these lives and feel the depth of circumstance in which these deaths occurred.

Gran Fury's work activates a different impulse than these two portraits. Gran Fury took their name from the model of automobile frequently used by undercover police in New York and other cities. Automatically the word "Fury" registers the emotions fueling the fire of this artist/activist collaborative. Simultaneously, the name conjures up the stealthiness of an undercover police vehicle, an apt metaphor for the surprise attack nature of the work Gran Fury was planning as well as the silence Gran Fury was combating. Although their work portrays, with a gut punch, the feelings of loss associated with the initial wave of HIV/AIDS, it also begs, pleads, demands us to get up and fight to save the lives of the living. Gran Fury inspires us to be our own secret agents and our own private army. There is a time to mourn and there is a time to march. There is the virus you fight and there is the virus you ignore—and by ignore, they mean perpetuate.

Paul Moreno is an artist and designer based in Brooklyn, New York. He is the organizer of the New York Queer Zine Fair. His first solo exhibition, previewed previously in NAE, has been postponed until 2021 due to the Covid 19 pandemic.

NOTES:

For further information about the twin concepts of *Studium* and *Punctum*, see Roland Barthes, Camera Lucida, 1980.

For further information about Gran Fury, see *Gran Fury: Read My Lips,* Gran Fury and Michael Cohen, 2011. See also *After Silence—A History of AIDS through Its Images*, Avram Finkelstein. 2017.

Above: David Wojnarowicz, *Untitled*, (1987). Three gelatin silver prints. Whitney Museum of American Art, New York; purchase with funds from the Robert Mapplethorpe Foundation and the Photography Committee 2007.122a-c, © the Estate of David Wojnarowicz & P.P.O.W.-New York.

Below: AA Bronson, *Felix Partz, June 5, 1994*, 1994/1999. Whitney Museum of American Art. Inkjet print on vinyl. 84 × 168 in. AP | Edition of 3. Gift of Mark J. Krayenhoff van de Leur. © 1999 AA Bronson.

In Tennessee, Art Itself Is Protest

An Open Letter from One Southerner to Another: We Must Fight for Change. Now.

By Kelli Wood

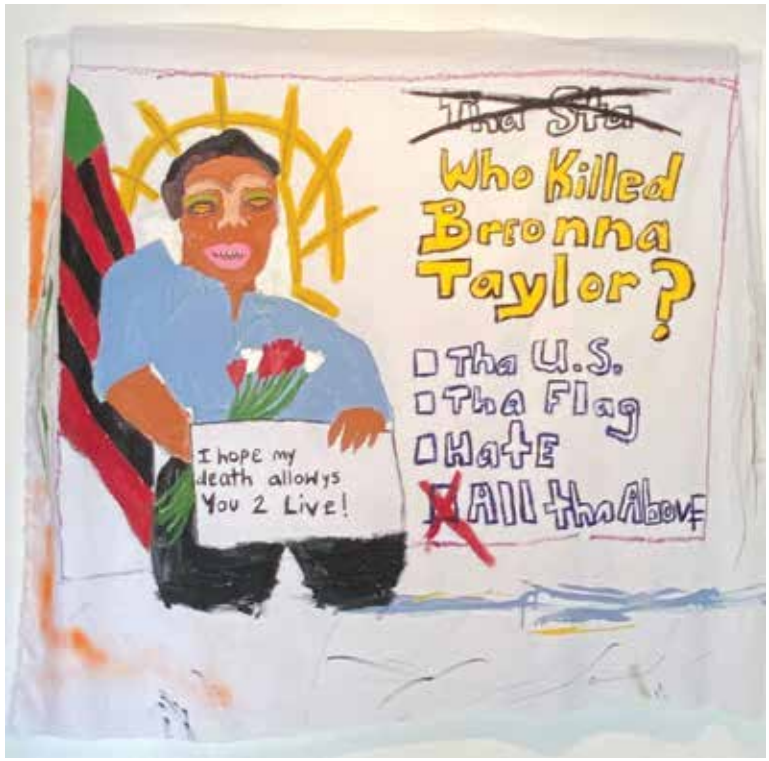
♫ I could feel a change a comin'. I got into Nashville early, sleepy, hungry, tired, and dirty. ♫

I headed east to The Red Arrow gallery, where owner Katie Shaw and manager Ashley Layendecker curated "BREATHLESS," a group show responding to the conflagration that has defined 2020.

Tragic losses of life and freedom motivated 15 artists to create works addressing the environment, the pandemic, and racism. A series of three colorful giclée prints by Marcus Maddox near the entrance offer a visual transition from a life now dominated by digital photography and screens into one possessed by objects and artworks. Straightaway, Maddox's *Face Off* (2020) boldly points outward again to sites where people have been demonstrating. In June, Maddox, a self-described fine art photographer who grew up in Tennessee, traveled to Philadelphia in solidarity with protests on the heels of the murder of George Floyd. In his photograph, an unknown man grips the ends of his durag as he takes a stance against injustice and brutality. With the stasis of photography, and a gaze from behind the man's diagonally outstretched arms, Maddox's art succinctly captures the inherent tension and unease of protest, reorienting us to the onerous political work of folks whose full personhood, bodies, and lives have been forever attacked in America. The discordance of the physical, visual, and metaphorical line leaves no question; in 2020, the power of sight obligates us to stand for change. Acknowledging this is the price of entry into Red Arrow. It must become the price of entry into our social contract. Change.

The scale and direct frontal placement of Marlos E'van's *Justice for Breonna Taylor* (2020) by the curators invites closer looking after one crosses the line of entry into the high-ceilinged formerly industrial space. The rawness of Marlos E'van's art, both in materiality and style, evoke a deep emotional soreness that is impossible to suppress. The substrate of cotton fabric in E'van's work functions

Marcus Maddox, *Face Off*, 2020, giclée print, 20 × 30 in. Photo courtesy of Red Arrow Gallery.



Marlos E'van, *Justice for Breonna Taylor,* 2020, acrylic and latex on cotton fabric, 4 ½ × 6 in. Photo by Kelli Wood. .

as a powerful metaphor for the enslaved human bodies that founded and still underwrite the American economy. E'van retools elements of the photograph circulated by the press of Taylor; the Seal of Louisville as a halo of light around Breonna Taylor's head, utilizing the biblical iconography of Mary in memoriam to evoke compassion. In their statement about the piece, E'van highlights their substitution of the African-American flag for the African flag as a challenge to the fiction that we live in a society offering freedom and justice for all

Marlos E'van, *Pandemic on Top of a Pandemic!*, 2020, oil, latex, oil sticks on canvas, 37 ½ × 32 ½ in. Photo by Kelli Wood.

Seconds after I wrote that sentence, I got a news alert that Taylor's murderers will not face justice. I'm on the clock to submit this essay, so I decide to hold it together. I take a deep breath, but notice a strange sound overlaying my writing music—at this moment, it's Mingus's *Cryin' Blues* (1960). An ice cream truck drives down my street projecting the iconic jingle, *Turkey in the Straw*. The initially uncanny echoes of that tune crystallize into pure horror. I connect the song to an announcement last month that Good Humor commissioned the Wu-Tang Clan's RZA to write a new song after being made aware of its awful racist past [i] Change. The track changes to Mingus's *Freedom*. 'Freedom for your brothers and sisters, But no freedom for me.' An apparitional demand from Breonna Taylor? Freedom. Life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness: Isn't this the pathetic fucking minimum we owe each other as human beings?

The palpable despondency at the abject failure of our nation's pledge and our flag's promise of freedom and justice are echoed more quietly in Jodi Hays' *South of Hope* (2020). The rectangles of diagrammatic cut canvas and linen painted in blues resemble an upside-down flag with the texture of denim. Hays is a native Arkansan like me, and *South of Hope* confronts women's roles in traditional crafting and rural culture though the use of textile and the aesthetic of quilted jeans. In a rhyme of color with Marlos E'van's *Backwards Ideology* (2020) on the same wall, the curators and artists make visible that America has yet to address wrong-sided legacies of our past. *Backwards Ide-*

ology starkly repeats the letters *n*, *u,* and *g* again and again over 25 square feet of acrylic on canvas until the supremacy of guns is inescapable and overwhelming. Both artists also signal the doubling of troubles during the time of the pandemic. Hays' *approximately, forever* (2020) takes the formal abstraction of collage to its logical end. The grid is both a useful organizing tool and a system of oppression. By the 20th century, the tyrannical hegemony of linear perspective and its symbolic form had to be undone by makers and historians in concert: the initial power of naturalism as the special rhetoric of artisans, the non-elite, became obsolete or was forgotten. When you realize that the system has been constructed so that you cannot win the game, no matter how hard you try, you must cheat—lie—steal—and then smash the chessboard. If you don't have the power, you must strive to change the collective memory. Change.

Purposefully, I suspect, the most poignant work of the show was hung out of immediate view in the gallery's kitchen. Marlos E'van's *Pandemic on Top of a Pandemic!* (2020) is best described in the artist's own words: "I'm a Person of Color living in a twisted world where the game is domination & not tha kind we like with leather & spikes. This piece could be a movie poster, in fact, it is a movie poster to the days of our lives that we're living right now." Times of exigency, history reminds us, are both the best wakening calls to the problems of society and also opportunities for 'temporary' concessions to be made permanent—almost always in the favor of those in power. Not this time? Fight. Change.

♫ Then I started walking down the streets
of Music Row. Just walking up and down the streets,
trying to find out who to see.♫

Pedestrian flow on streets is disrupted by flashing LED traffic signs that have been re-purposed to attempt to control crowds on Lower Broadway during COVID-19: "MASK ON OR STAY HOME." I stumbled past Hatch Show Print and Haley Gallery. Heather Moulder's *Hide Your Smile* (2020) retools a carved wood block from the poster for the 1939 Western *Jesse James*. By reimagining a Southern iconic outlaw as a 21st century ambassador for safe social distancing, Moulder's *Hide Your Smile* strives to use a shared visual idiom and popular (though problematic) collective memory of someone fightin' the power to bring people together, apart.

The gallery manager of Hatch, Daniel Lonow, has curated a show at Julia Martin's Gallery, so I head south. Lonow greets me outside and tells me a bit about the show "Family Values" and how he met the artist Mark Mulroney at the SCOPE Art Show in Miami over a decade ago. Since then, the two have remained in touch in clever and heartwarming ways that aptly highlight the fundamental need for creative modes of human connection in our time of isolation. Lonow described receiving an unexpected package; upon opening it, he discovered a cereal box stuffed with Mulroney's works on paper.

"Family Values" features 119 rectangular works on paper hung in neat grids across every flat wall of the gallery. Their repetitive encampment across the shuttered space of the inner room coalesces with the monotony of the

Left: Jodi Hays, *South of Hope*, 2020, oil, ink, cut canvas and linen collage on canvas, 20 × 16 in. Photograph by Kelli Wood.
Right: Heather Moulder, *Hide Your Smile*, 2020, letterpress prints from carved wood block. Hatch Print. Photo by Kelli Wood.

Installation of some of Mark Mulroney's "Family Values" at Julia Martin Gallery. Photo by Kelli Wood.

quarantine during which Mulroney created the works. In many of these multimedia pieces, Mulroney re-purposes imagery from American popular culture, ranging from 1950s comic strips to contemporary ads and photos, and makes witty and satirical interventions in paint and printed text in order to assert a trenchant political critique of a past that never existed.

The repetitions start to tire my eyes, and being masked-up, it is getting hard to breathe, so I decide to head to the restroom for a moment and regroup when I notice a different theme emerging in Mulroney's pieces. So, ♫ *I washed my face and read the names*. ♫

> donald trump from memory
> donald trump jr. from memory
> Sean Hannity from memory
> Rush Limbaugh from memory
> mitch mcconnell from memory
> DR. ANOTHY FAUCI from memory
> Rupert Murdoch from memory

Mulroney portrays figures who haunt our endless 24-hour news cycle alongside the words "from memory" to grimly comedic effect. His *donald trump from memory* (2020) combines material, form, and text into a piquant morsel: the gold foil creating Trump's face is cut from a Toblerone candy wrapper. The paper used for each of the works in "Family Values" was salvaged from the trash of Yale's library archives where his wife Lucy is the Associate Director. The edges of Mulroney's pieces retain defunct labels of reproductions now removed from the archival paper, so the material itself becomes symbolic of the debris of history. Oriented upside-down, Picasso and Manet yet occupy real estate in Mulroney's work. Sandro Botticelli's name has been erased in another work, covered over by liquid paper color corrector. As an art historian trained in the Italian Renaissance, I smirk. Mulroney's combination of re-purposed material culture of Americana past with creations of his own memory present amplifies his intervention. The presumed authority of both nostalgia and history must be upended. Change.

With my own nostalgia in mind, I head up to North Nashville to revisit murals I admired during my last visit. ♫ *But I found it going rough. Everyone was all tied up.* ♫

I am disoriented by how much has changed since I last visited pre-pandemic. Murals have been whitewashed and

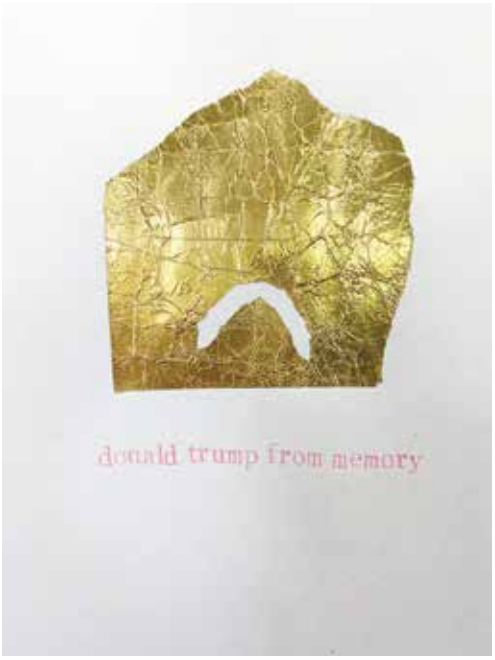
new ones have sprung up, so I head west to talk to painter Omari Booker. I ask him about my sense that the muralists who put North Nashville on the map, and who were featured in the Frist's exhibition, feel more visibly absent in place of murals for commercial enterprises. "North Nashville and the gentrification that it's undergoing has been happening for a while…" said Booker.

"The artists in the Norf [North Nashville] collective, at least 2 out of the 4 of them have been pushed out of housing in North Nashville. It's very tangible." Booker added.

One of Booker's series, *Redlining*, uses razor wire to divide his compositions in memory of the same-named discriminatory lending practices implemented to deny mortgages and services to Black communities. "US history is a huge part of what I do, of what has informed my life, justice issues," says Booker. "Police officers killing black persons is not an anomaly, it is, it is the point…when slavery ended, the police became a thing." In his *What Could Happen* video series, Booker interviews his great aunt, who was born in 1916, and registers some powerful questions. Himself imprisoned for drug charges in his youth, he asks, "If the black male body had not been vilified, what could have happened? If racist comments had been challenged, what could have happened? If we dealt with the discomfort of integration rather than segregating by other means, what could have happened?"

The historian in me loves this. But the professor in me jests with Booker about what I suspect will be his answer to the next question, how did he feel about the way art history was taught when he was an undergraduate, and he laughs too. "Ha, yes I failed art history once, but then I took it again and passed it. It's just a different muscle." All that memorization. Since Booker was an undergraduate, advances in technology have changed everything. Search engines rapidly produce millions of data points, sometimes frustratingly. If an inexperienced cook wants to know which recipe to follow, this can create a tyranny of choice, but if a chef understands how to read a recipe and trusts a vendor to sell them quality ingredients, they can find answers quickly.

The switch to online teaching due to the pandemic has forced many teachers to rely less on memorization to gauge learning and require that students demonstrate their synthetic and holistic mastery of ideas. (Most rejoice, but slackers are disappointed.) In many places this is hardly new, but I describe how I like to have my studio and history students curate their knowledge and think of themselves as collaborating to keep the memories of the makers. Booker responds, "I like that… It [art history] informs our artwork whether we know it or not." He clearly knows. Memory and history, abstraction and narration percolate seamlessly through Booker's art. "Too many



Left: Mark Mulroney's "Family Values" at Julia Martin Gallery: *donald trump from memory*, 2020, mixed media on archival paper. Photo by Kelli Wood.

Right: Omari Booker, *Lil Bro*, 2020, oil on canvas, 30 x 40 in. Photo by Kelli Wood.

people are misremembered because they didn't have anything to do with their own stories…As artists, we can plant seeds to make a shift. It's like the *Redlining* work. I could potentially plant seeds to get enough people to understand that things've gotta change." Change.

♫ *Down on Music Row* ♫ melody and motif blend seamlessly with paint and plaster.

"My biggest art influence is music… it's Jay Z, it's Nipsey Hussle, it's Kanye, it's Mos Def, Talib Kweli, and Master P—what he did—business wise," said Booker. "They were boxed out of an industry that they were like, that's cool, we are going to create this lane for ourselves, and then once we own it the industry has to circle back to us." Speaking about other artists in Nashville, Booker says, "They are a big part of what makes the area. It's a culture. It's what Brooklyn sold. The culture of Biggie and Mos Def and all them. Then next thing you know no one's there." Timely. The gentrification of Biggie's plastic crown reached its own apotheosis just last week, shattering estimates and selling for nearly $600,000 at Sotheby's much-maligned auction, "Hip Hop."

During our interview in his studio, it's clear the kindness visibly manifested in his panels and murals comes from Booker's own unyielding warmth and generosity. His upcoming show "Need A Hug?" at The Black Box Gallery, only the second black-owned gallery in Nashville, focuses on our very humanity during times of crisis. The candid, outward gazes of the figures in Booker's *Lil Bro* (2020) demand reciprocal acknowledgment from the viewer. His composition inverts pyramidal constructions of weighty grounded figures, while the saturated red of the titular little brother's shirt direct us upward inspires a sense of ascendancy. And yet, the picture is incomplete. The scene dematerializes into brown brushstrokes on bare canvas. Something is missing from the green landscape of Tennessee mountains. Freedom. Change.

♫ *But I could feel that change a comin'* ♫

Colton Valentine and Megan Lingerfelt, *Dolly Parton,* 2019 and 2020, Market Square, Knoxville. Photo by Kelli Wood.

As I drive back to my home in Knoxville, I think about a downtown mural here of local celebrity Dolly Parton that has been painted and repainted over the last few years. My memory of the mural intertwines with my first memory of her, a childhood recollection of sitting on the floor and seeing her big smile and blonde hair on a small cathode ray tube TV. The VHS tape plays the comedic 1980 film *9 to 5*, in which overlooked working women overthrow their sexist and bigoted boss by kidnapping and forcibly detaining him until they take back their office. Hmm.

Terbosterbo, *Train*, mural, 2018, "Off the Wall" project, Charlotte Ave., Nashville. Photo by Kelli Wood.

Installation shot of "BREATHLESS" at The Red Arrow gallery, 2020, Nashville. Photo by Kelli Wood.

In 2018, Parton was made aware that the name of her dinner show at Dollywood, the "Dixie" Stampede, had hurtful and racist associations with the Confederacy, and she altered the name to Dolly Parton's Stampede. "As soon as you realize that [something] is a problem, you should fix it. Don't be a dumbass. That's where my heart is."[ii] Parton's heart has driven her toward massive philanthropic support of education and the arts in Tennessee. Yet as Priscilla Renea stated succinctly in an interview with Michel Martin about her country-meets-R&B album *Coloured* (2018):

> "Dolly Parton is one of my favorites, and she makes it very clear, 'If you want to be in show business, keep your mouth shut.' Which, I agree, to a certain extent, but I think people like her and who look like her have that privilege. As a black person singing country music, the essence of country music is talking about your experience as a human. And this is a part of my experience, the black experience. There was a young kid who just got shot in Pittsburgh. He wasn't doing anything. He was scared."[iii]

A March 2020 interview for *billboard* magazine by Melinda Newman captured Parton's unequivocal support of Black Lives Matter protesters: "I understand people having to make themselves known and felt and seen," she says. "And of course Black lives matter. Do we think our little white asses are the only ones that matter? No!"[iv] Change! Action?

A Charlotte Ave. mural by Nashville street artist Terbosterbo called *Train* connects with the site's history as a rail yard. In monumental scale and unstoppable rhythm, Terbosterbo depicts a 1984 CSX-branded locomotive engine hauling older defunct Southern Railway boxcars into the future.

During the 1980s, railroad companies stopped branding their trains with slogans in a futile attempt to discourage tagging. Terbosterbo subtly places the words, "Southern Serves the South," on top, rather than underneath, the graffiti. The track suddenly changes from a distant and dimming ice cream truck to a full-blown cacophony of sirens and thundering wheels. We Southerners must ENACT what is in our hearts, now. I can feel a change coming, here, in my Tennessee mountain home.

Kelli Wood is an interdisciplinary researcher, writer, and curator. She is Assistant Professor of Art History at the University of Tennessee.

Lyrics (in ♫ ♫) repurposed from Dolly Parton's "Down On Music Row," on *My Tennessee Mountain Home* (1973) .

i Good Humor, "A New Jingle for a New Era," *https://www.goodhumor.com/us/en/jingle.html*

ii Melinda Newman, interview with Dolly Parton for *billboard* magazine's Country Power Player's Series, published August 15, 2020, *https://www.billboard.com/articles/columns/country/9432581/dolly-parton-country-power-players-billboard-cover-story-interview-2020*

iii Michel Martin, "Priscilla Renea Refuses To Be Quiet About Racism In Country Music," *NPR Music Interviews*, June 23, 2018, *https://www.npr.org/2018/06/23/622316454/priscilla-renea-refuses-to-be-quiet-about-racism-in-country-music*

iv Melinda Newman, Interview with Dolly Parton for *billboard* magazine's Country Power Player's Series, published August 15, 2020, *https://www.billboard.com/articles/columns/country/9432581/dolly-parton-country-power-players-billboard-cover-story-interview-2020*

Iconoclasm Then and Now.

by Thomas F. X. Noble

Byzantine Iconoclasm is often considered to be the beginning of a process or movement that has persisted to our own times. On the fall of the Soviet Union, people went to the streets and pulled down statues of Lenin and Stalin. In Pakistan in 2001, the Taliban destroyed two beautiful Buddha sculptures at Bamyan. When the United States defeated Saddam Hussein, Iraqis yanked his statues off their pedestals. In recent years Confederate statues in the US have been tipped over or removed by both crowds and public authorities. These recent phenomena had political, social, ideological, and religious motivations. How was it with Byzantium?

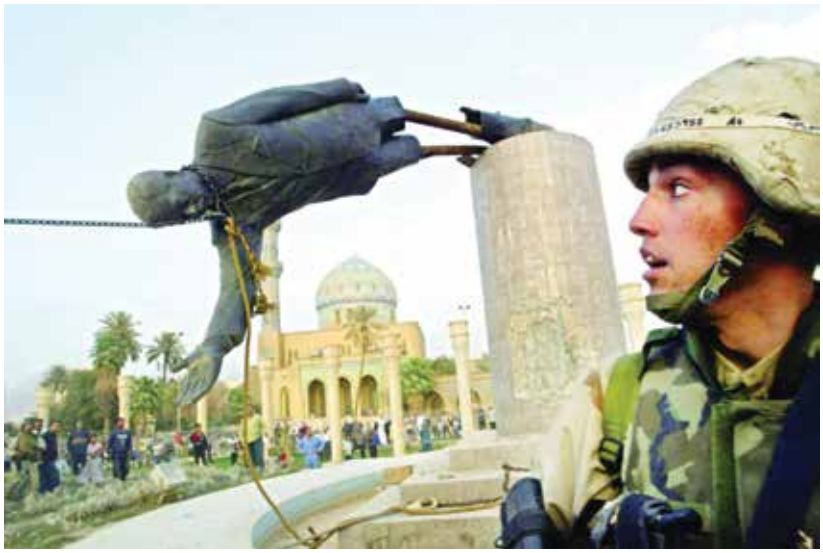
Byzantine Iconoclasm was "born in the purple": the phenomenon was inaugurated by Emperor Leo III, perhaps around 726, continued by Constantine V in the 750s and 760s, quashed by Empress Irene in 787, and revived after 815 under emperors Leo V, Michael II, and Theophilus before its definitive rejection in 843. Iconoclasm was episodic. There is no evidence that a broad social movement caused or sustained iconoclasm, although soldiers loyal to particular emperors were reliably iconoclastic. Iconoclasm was fundamentally a theological proposition based on Exodus 20.4: "You shall not make a graven image ...." Leo seems to have believed that Byzantium was suffering natural disasters and military defeats because God's prohibition of images had been contravened, that Christians had become idolaters. Byzantium's Muslim enemies rejected figural images, but there is no evidence they influenced Leo. Leo's successors tried to deepen the theological case against images and also to take some practical steps to avoid their adoration, such as placing them out of the reach of their devotees.

What, exactly, is iconoclasm? Iconoclasm—from the Greek *eikono/klasmo*—means to break or crush an image. Is to break or crush an image the same as to reject an image? If someone dislikes an image, will he or she seek to destroy it? Will his or her objection be based on the person represented or the fact that someone, anyone, has been represented? Will his or her objection be based on who mounted the representation? Will the objector be a solitary or a member of social movement?

Iconoclasm is actually related to two other processes: *damnatio memoriae* and vandalism. *Damnatio memoriae* is an action designed to efface the memory of a person

Left: Taller Buddha of Bamyan in 1963 (left) and in 2008 (right) after destruction. Image from Wikipedia.

Right: Stalin's monument was torn down on October 23, 1956, during Hungary's October Revolution. Image from www.rarehistoricalphotos.com.



A US soldier watches as a statue of Saddam Hussein falls on April 9, 2003. (Reuters) Image from www.arabnews.com/node/950126/middle-east.

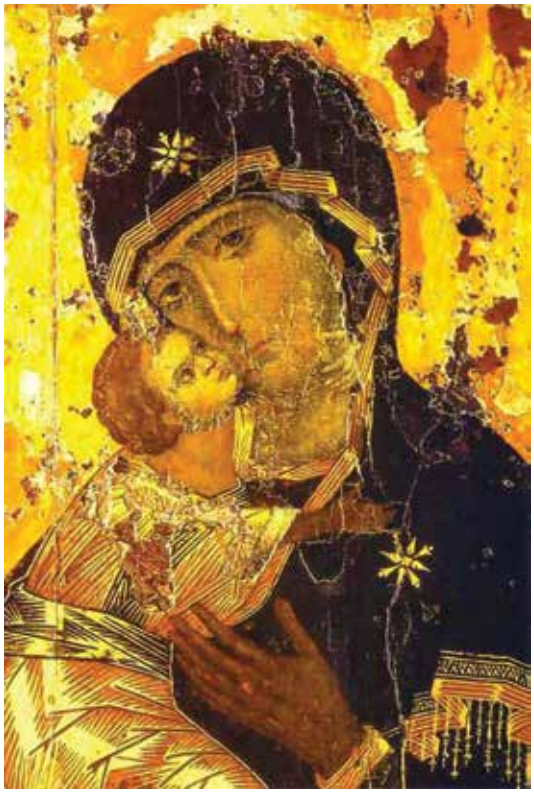
memorialized by, say, a public inscription bearing that person's name and, possibly, countenance. The action might be undertaken by one aggrieved individual but more often results from concerted action by a specific aggrieved group. Vandalism takes many forms, ranging from modest damage to massive destruction. It can result from teenage pranks on Halloween, "marking" by gangs, or intended or unintended street violence during protests.

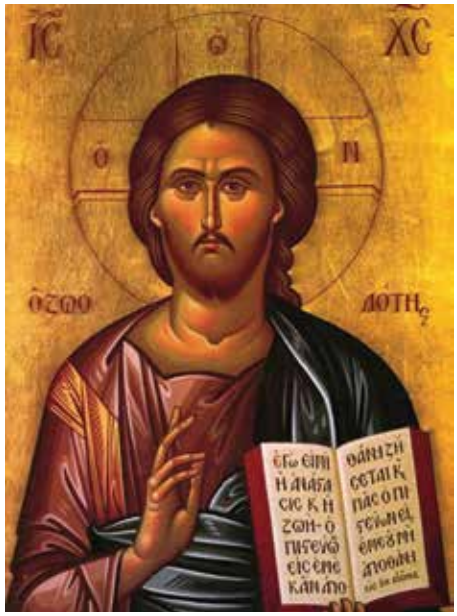
Let's pursue definitions a bit further. **Iconoclasts** were those who broke or destroyed images. **Iconodules** were those who regarded them as traditional and adored them. Amid the discussions prompted by images in the iconoclast period we can sometimes see an attempt to differentiate between adoration and veneration (*latreia* and *proskynesis* in Greek). We might also speak of **iconophobes** and **iconophiles**, identifying this way those who were basically indifferent to images and those whose devotion to images was moderate and restrained.

A letter of Emperor Michael II to Louis the Pious, Charlemagne's son and successor, spelled out a number of practices to which iconoclasts objected. The Carolingians (the dynasty named for Carolus Magnus, or Charlemagne) in treatises and church councils said that images were licit for commemoration or decoration. Pictures could remind people of what they had been taught or because of their sheer beauty elevate their thoughts to a higher plane. What the Byzantines objected to was burning oil and incense before images instead of before the cross. People prayed before—to?—images seeking help. Sometimes images were wrapped in linen and made sponsors to children at baptism. The clippings from a boy's first haircut were allowed to fall upon an image. Scrapings from images were mixed with wine in the communion chalice. Priests occasionally placed the communion bread on an image and extended the image to the communicant. We also know that images were carried into battle and hung over the walls

Left: Protesters lynch a figure pulled from the Confederate monument at the State Capitol in Raleigh, N.C., June 19, 2020. (Travis Long/*The News & Observer* via the Associate Press.)

Right: Workers remove the statue of Confederate General Stonewall Jackson from its pedestal on July 1, 2020, in Richmond, Va. Photo by Associated Press/Steve Helber.





Left: The *Theotokos of Vladimir* icon (twelfth century) www.newworldencyclopedia.org/entry/Icon.

Right: A contemporary Orthodox icon: *Christ the Pantocrator (The Almighty)* https://blogs.ancientfaith.com/orthodoxbridge/need-photo-id-christ-2/.

of cities to ward off enemy attacks. Those who attacked images claimed that these kinds of practices were recent novelties. Those who defended images claimed that such practices were traditional.

The deep background to Byzantine iconoclasm is important historically. As early as the fourth century, arguments for and against figural art had begun to circulate in Christian circles. Art historians note that Christians began to adopt and even surpass the style and production techniques of pagan artists. Those opposed to images said they contravened the words of God expressed in Exodus 20.4: "You shall make no graven image…." They also said that images were idolatrous and equated them with images of the ancient gods and goddesses. The sheer materiality of images was rejected by those who said God was to be worshiped "in spirit and in truth" (John 4.24).

Some insisted that faith and morals could only be inculcated by texts, not by images. This argument was an interesting manifestation of relative superiority among the senses: seeing meant, say, looking at a statue and potentially being deceived whereas hearing meant listening to a text read out (and not privately reading—looking at—a book). Those who defended images began by saying that God had commanded some images to be made such as the Ark of the Covenant and the fittings of the temple in Jerusalem. They also said that images and idols were completely different: an image represented something whereas an idol was something. What is more, images were like writing and could instruct those who lacked the ability to read. Images could provoke salutary emotions. The beauty of images could lift mortals from the cares of this world to a contemplation of divine and heavenly truths. Acts of veneration performed before images were transported to the person represented and were not focused on the image itself.

In the Orthodox world, the views of the defenders prevailed, augmented later by some sophisticated explanations rooted in Plato and Aristotle. Roman Catholicism basically accepted the views of the defenders as well. Protestant Christianity hearkened to the views of the opponents of images. The taxonomy sketched above permits this characterization: Byzantines wound up as iconodules. Roman Catholics were initially iconophiles but gradually verged on iconodulia. Protestants were always iconophobes and sometimes iconoclasts.

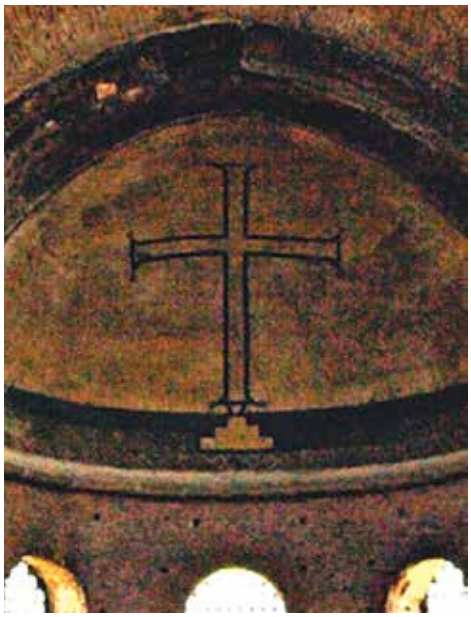
The matter is, however, a little more complicated. I have used the word image instead of the word icon. Now, icon (*eikon* in Greek) simply means image but anyone who has any familiarity with Byzantium and its art will think right away of icons, a kind of beautiful picture that has a hauntingly similar look down through the centuries. The distinction I am drawing is not stylistic; it does not focus on Byzantine styles of representation as opposed to those of the West. The distinction I am drawing emphasizes that, in Byzantium, perhaps beginning in the sixth and seventh centuries and growing in intensity after that, some images were imagined to be potent, to be holy, to share somehow in the ontology—the "way of being"—of the person represented. This kind of thinking took a long time to root itself in the Catholic West. When Protestants rejected

images, therefore, they not only cited Exodus and called them idolatrous but they also regarded their adoration as flatly superstitious.

Iconoclasm was official policy in the Byzantine world for almost 125 years. Very little writing survives from the iconoclasts. Iconodule writing tends to be harsh, almost hysterical, in its condemnation of the iconoclasts. Iconodules had every incentive to catalogue the art works that were supposedly destroyed or whitewashed. Yet they did not do so. It is difficult to name more than a dozen or so works of art that were destroyed, effaced, or covered over. These might be illuminated pages from manuscripts, frescoes, or mosaics. A few examples might serve to illustrate the issue. In the Hagia Eirene church in Constantinople (Istanbul), a cross was placed in the apse over another no longer identifiable image. In the Koimesis church in Nicaea, a lovely image of Mary and Jesus was put over an undefinable removed image. The ninth-century Khludov Psalter has a revealing image in which the Roman centurion Longinus pierced Christ's side while, below, an iconoclast is whitewashing an image of Christ. Iconoclasm in practice was a pretty small-scale affair. Actually this conclusion makes sense for a surprising reason. Churches in Byzantium before the ninth century were much less lavishly decorated than used to be assumed. There was not, in other words, a huge quantity of art available for destruction.

Iconoclasm is a wonderfully complicated subject. When French revolutionary mobs pulled down statues from the façade of Notre Dame, mistaking kings of Israel for kings of France, or when, say, Californians pull down statues of Junipero Serra, how are we to understand this? The revolutionaries were not irreligious, and the California protesters were not anti-Catholic, like Protestant iconoclasts of the sixteenth century who bashed out stained glass windows. Today, an "iconoclast" might be a person who rejects prevailing standards in speech, conduct, or behavior.

Thomas F. X. Noble is the Andrew V. Tackes Professor Emeritus of the University of Notre Dame. He taught for 42 years, mostly at Virginia and Notre Dame. His work focused on the city of Rome, the papacy, the Carolingian period, and the connections among art, theology, and politics. He is the author or editor of twelve books and more than 50 articles and chapters. He held three fellowships from the National Endowment for the Humanities and memberships in Clare Hall, Cambridge, The Institute for Advanced Study (Princeton), and the Netherlands Institute for Advanced Study. He is currently writing a history of the papacy.



Top: *Khludov Psalter*, with 9th century priest rubbing out the image of Christ with a sponge. https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:-Clasm_Chludo.jpg.

Left: Hagia Irene: Constantine's first church, first completed in 360 AD. The black cross on a gold field, installed during the 8th century by Constantine V, covers a previous mosaic. Http://www.istanbulhistorichotels.com/hagia-irene-constantines-first-church/.

Right: Church of Koimesis in Nicaea. Mosaic of Virgin and Child. It replaced an Iconoclast cross whose outline can still be seen on the gold background. https://www.thebyzantinelegacy.com.

"Twists and Turns"
The Confederate Mound at Oak Woods Cemetery

by Neil Goodman

"I said death don't have no mercy in this land
Death will leave you standing and crying in this land"
(Reverend Gary Davis)

Definitions:

MEMORIAL: something, especially a structure, to remind people of a person or an event.
MONUMENT: a statue, building, or other structure erected to commemorate a famous or notable person or event.
CENOTAPH: an empty tomb or monument erected in honor of a person or group of people whose remains are elsewhere.

Confederate Mound, Chicago, Illinois with a cannon in the foreground. Photo by John Delano of Hammond, Indiana.

I first happened to visit Oak Woods cemetery (1035 E. 67th Street—between Grand Crossing and Hyde Park) and discover the Confederate Mound more than a decade ago. I was there with my son Maurice, for maintenance of the Jewish part of the cemetery (fenced in), largely under the rubric of a youth group project. The original community had migrated elsewhere and had been replaced by the neighboring African-American community. The Confederate Mound was a bit of a surprise, as it seemed atypical to place a seemingly important historical monument-memorial both in Chicago and also within the confines of a more typical cemetery.

Cemeteries are like history lessons: culture, time, and place all seem to be juxtaposed and layered, while memorials and monuments shadow the landscape with the remnants of their eras. As cemeteries serve the dead while their occupants can only be remembered by the living, monuments like the Confederate Mound can be placed concurrent with smaller memorials and gravestones.

Although the mound itself was dedicated in 1896, the cemetery dates to 1853, spans one hundred and eighty-three acres, and was designed by the landscape architect Adolph Strauch. Considered very forward thinking for its time, it included abundant green space, rolling parkways, a small lake, open vistas, and a bucolic, welcoming topography.

Interspersed throughout the grounds of the cemetery itself are the remains of numerous other Chicago legends. To name a few, they include Mayor Harold Washington, Enrico Fermi (physicist and creator of the first nuclear reactor), Ida B. Wells (civil rights activist), Junior Wells (musician), Jesse Owens (Olympic champion), Nancy Green

Tablets with the names of the buried soldiers surround the base of the plinth. Photo © 1997, 1998 by Matt Hucke (Graveyards.com).

(the "Real Aunt Jemima"), Mircea Eliade (historian of world religions), Mayor Eugene Sawyer, Gary Becker (Nobel Prize-winning economist), Thomas Dorsey (musician), William Stokes (mobster) and son Willie the Wimp (buried in a Cadillac-style coffin), Bill Veeck (Major League Baseball owner), Jake Guzik (gangster and bookkeeper for Al Capone), and Big Jim Colosimo (boss of the Chicago mob). Even Richard Loeb, of Leopold and Loeb notoriety, was cremated there after being stabbed to death in prison at the age of 31.

Surrounded within this landscape of multiple histories at Oak Woods Cemetery is the Confederate Mound.

The Confederate Mound is a hybrid in the sense that it is administrated and owned by the Department of Veterans Affairs, yet it is distinctly integrated within the confines of the cemetery. It is also, and most importantly, a memorial and monument to between four to six thousand imprisoned Confederate soldiers who perished at Fort Douglas in Chicago between 1863 and 1865.

The Confederate Mound dates to 1896, some three decades after the mass burial at Fort Douglas and subsequent reinterment at Oak Woods. Ironically, the bulk of the funding came from wealthy Chicagoans, including Marshall Field, George Pullman, Potter Palmer and Ferdinand Peck (financier of the Auditorium Theater). The grand opening for the memorial was attended by President Grover Cleveland and was initially billed as an act of reconciliation between the South and the North and a symbol of unity and empathetic acknowledgment of suffering. It is also one explanation as to the context of the memorial and why a large Confederate monument would be created deep within northern confines.

The Confederate Mound also bears the dubious distinction of being the largest mass grave in the Western hemisphere. Confederate prisoners, originally buried close to Fort Douglas, were removed after the war and reinterred at Oak Woods between 1865 and 1867. On the mound are also the engraved names of many but not all of the Confederate prisoners that died in Fort Douglas. Correspondingly, a Confederate soldier modeled after the John Elder painting *Appomattox*, depicting a vanquished soldier viewing the battlefield after defeat, is affixed to the top of the thirty-foot plinth on the burial mound. Surrounding the mound are three bas relief panels entitled "A Veteran's Return Home," "A Soldier's Death Dream," and "The Call to Arms." There are also twelve marble headstones of Union soldiers that had died of disease while stationed at Fort Douglas as well as several other memorials-monuments in Oak Woods, including a statue of *Lincoln the Orator* as well as a smaller memorial dedicated to the Soldiers of Illinois, watched over by a marble soldier.

Concurrent time-wise (1896) and within close proximity of the Confederate Mound is a much smaller memorial, the Cenotaph. Inscribed on the stone by the southern abolitionist Thomas Lowther, an accompanying text recounts a divergent history that is both profound and often overlooked, as it recounts the sacrifice and suffering of those Southerners that resisted the Confederacy. This unusual juxtaposition is certainly atypical of memorials, as the Cenotaph, although dwarfed in stature, is very much present.

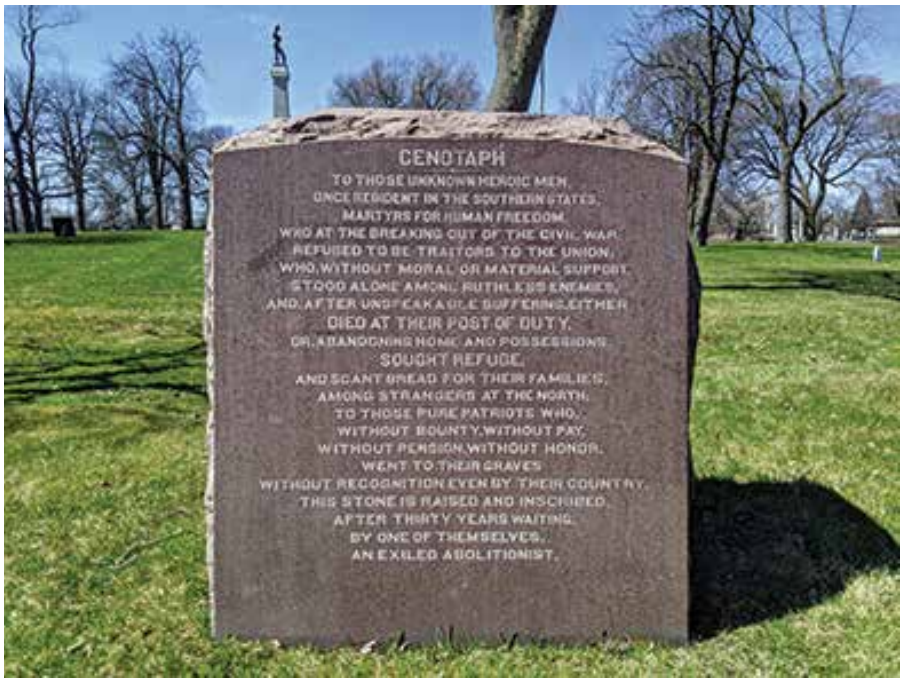
The Confederate Mound itself is a bit of a yin and yang, as the proximity between monuments creates poignancy for one and reexamines the other. It is a very dark and sad monument, glorifying neither the Union nor the Confederacy; it also resonates as a memorial to the impact and sadness of war and the responsibility of victor to victim. Right can become wrong, and in this case, we have only shades of gray. To erase this dialogue is to erase this conversation, and in the context of revisionism concerning memorials and monuments, the Confederate Mound needs to be looked at within this lens, as the obvious choice might not be the best or only choice. The Confederate Mound's history is uniquely its own, and the conversation regarding its fate should be at least partially considered within its own parameters as we reexamine and reconfigure monuments.

Most poignantly, the Confederate Mound is also a unique and perhaps unprecedented dialogue between Thomas Lowther's Cenotaph and the Confederate Mound; the two have been sitting quietly in the sidelines and next to each other for the last one hundred and twenty-five years. This dialogue of competing and differing narratives is an odd history lesson—perhaps a teachable moment. It suggests that the present also had a past that was equally poignant and divisive. This is the irony of Oak Woods, as time forgotten is now remembered and can be easily erased as we redefine our landscape with the morals and norms of our time.

In writing this article, I was struck by the profundity, individualism, and heroism of Thomas Lowther the abolitionist. His Cenotaph, although small in stature, casts a sombering shadow over the Confederate Mound. In looking back, we look forward, and wonder if our voice (and values) would as be loud and clear, and our courage and conviction as resolute. In the land of the dead, he is still very much alive, and in the words of Thomas Lowther:

TO THOSE UNKNOWN HEROIC MEN,
ONCE RESIDENT IN THE SOUTHERN STATES,
MARTYRS FOR HUMAN FREEDOM,
WHO AT THE BREAKING OUT OF THE CIVIL WAR
REFUSED TO BE TRAITORS TO THE UNION;
WHO, WITHOUT MORAL OR MATERIAL SUPPORT,
STOOD ALONE AMONG RUTHLESS ENEMIES,
AND, AFTER UNSPEAKABLE SUFFERING, EITHER
DIED AT THEIR POST OF DUTY,
OR, ABANDONING HOME AND POSSESSIONS,
SOUGHT REFUGE,
AND SCANT BREAD FOR THEIR FAMILIES,
AMONG STRANGERS AT THE NORTH:
TO THOSE PURE PATRIOTS WHO,
WITHOUT PENSION, WITHOUT HONOR,
WENT TO THEIR GRAVES
WITHOUT RECOGNITION EVEN BY THEIR COUNTRY,
THIS STONE IS RAISED AND INSCRIBED,
AFTER THIRTY YEARS WAITING,
BY ONE OF THEMSELVES,
AN EXILED ABOLITIONIST.

Neil Goodman is a sculptor formerly based in Chicago with an extensive exhibition history. Presently living in the central coast of California, he retired from Indiana University Northwest as Professor Emeritus of Fine Arts. He is currently represented by Carl Hammer Gallery as well as serving as the Los Angeles correspondent for the *New Art Examiner*.



Thomas Lowther's Cenotaph. Photo by Eric Allix Rogers (twunroll.com).

COVID-19 and the Creative Process(es)

Two More Interviews from Chicago—Introduction

Six months ago, the rapid spread of the COIVD-19 global pandemic seemed like the definitive issue of 2020. There was no way to predict that a national and even international rise of civil disobedience and social disruption in response to systemic racism would overpower the fear and necessity of quarantine. But it justifiably and rightly has and will continue to do so. Less shocking but still disturbing is the further descent into authoritarian reactionism on the part of the administration and its enablers in the government and national media. In spite of this, I have to confess I was struck with a greater sense of fear and anxiety back at the end of March when cities began to rapidly shut down and people started losing their jobs. The fear had less to do with my health and financial well-being than for something broader. The media was abuzz with talk of looming death tolls and economic decline, and though these are relevant and practical concerns, it was what was not being discussed that worried me. I imagined all the things that would slip through the cracks; the poor and marginalized, a shared sense of safety and community, culture itself, and all the harmful actions of a regime that so many had been openly fighting without the hurdle of quarantine. For anyone who had ever mused upon the coming of a second dark age, it felt as though it had arrived.

This fear was only amplified by the narrow public discourse around the crisis of the pandemic. I know that in such an emergency, it is important to keep people informed first and foremost. But the questions of what culture could do and how it might change lingered in my mind. So, I decided to search for answers by reaching out to members of Chicago's large and diverse arts community. We had long conversations with our seven interviewees (Quenna Barrett, Jessica Campbell, Stevie Hanley, Patric McCoy, Jessica Stockholder, Lori Waxman, and Carlos Flores—the Campbell and Flores interviews will appear in the Winter quarter) that were commiserative, uplifting, cathartic, contemplative, and informative. It was not only restorative to simply just connect with people but refreshing to hear from folks who think critically about the world on a daily basis. Though things are changing and have changed a great deal since these conversations took place, it is my hope that they can continue to provide relief, comfort, insight, and inspiration as we move forward into uncertain times. I know I found these discussions helpful, and if you are reading this, I hope you do as well.

Evan Carter

Stevie Hanley

Stevie Hanley is a practicing artist and instructor at the School of the Art Institute of Chicago. He is the organizer of Siblings, a Chicago artists collective, and has curated numerous exhibitions nationally.

Patric McCoy

Patric McCoy is an art collector as well as co-founder and president of Diasporal Rhythms, a non-profit organization dedicated to promoting the support and collection of works by artists of the African Diaspora.

Stevie Hanley

New Art Examiner: So just generally, how are you doing? How are you feeling?

Stevie Hanley: It's been a roller coaster of emotions. I've been pretty busy because I teach at the School of the Art Institute of Chicago, adjunct in three different departments. So it's actually a lot more work sort of trying to figure out how to do online teaching… but that is officially just ended, and all my summer classes have been canceled. All my fall classes are up in the air. So… I can just work on my own practice, and [luckily], I'm in a privileged enough state right now that I have enough money saved up to get me through the summer without an issue. Come [fall, if I can't teach,] that'll be another story, but I'll figure that out when that happens… It's been ups and downs.

NAE: People are finding some silver linings, but there's also a lot of unease in not knowing what the future holds. So let's talk about the silver lining part of it. You have more time for your practice. How are you feeling about that?

SH: I'm excited. I've been feeling [a] little bit [of] unease as well. My impulse is to produce a lot, and I think this whole global pandemic and economic slowdown has also made me question the sort of production… I think it's all ultimately good for the art world that a lot of things aren't just being forced to be made very quickly. And so, I'm doing a lot of writing, and that's been helping my practice a lot and just giving myself permission to go slower. I also got sick. I was diagnosed COVID-19. I got pretty sick, much sicker than I thought I would get, but a silver lining [was] just like teaching me to slow down and to listen to my own body. I felt that I was the sort of person that was pushing my body all the time, sort of ignoring it and thinking like the mind had to control the body and then realizing that no, the body like also definitely needs a say in like what is happening… I've been trying to just slow down.

NAE: Well, you seem a lot better. Would you say you are fully recovered?

SH: I am. My lungs are a little bit sore. I don't know if they've reached their full capacity. They are not how they were before, but I'm fully recovered, yeah.

NAE: I read your piece in *The Quarantine Times*, and I thought it was very honest and got to the heart of the struggle of being stuck at home. It seemed like there was a lot of introspection going on for you and for Noah. Can you talk a little bit about that piece and how it may have helped you with your practice and your process?

SH: I've always believed that artists, and people in general, can learn a lot from their limitations. So I really took this as an opportunity to learn from the limitations. So with materials, trying to only use materials that were here in my home. I have a studio, but when I was diagnosed with COVID-19, under doctor's order, I could not leave to go to the studio because it was like a 15-minute bus ride. [I decided to] embrace making work with things I have in the home. I do think that's true that you can learn from limitations—and it's hard. You may have a time where you're not producing or you're trying to figure out what to do and then…being honest with this sort of guilt and shame about masturbation, about a sort of loneliness…anxiety or paranoia around cleanliness or contamination or this virus sickness and mortality.

NAE: You're someone who's pretty engaged in Chicago's art community. How much does being engaged in the community affect your work versus being disengaged from the community?

SH: My apartment is an apartment gallery, Siblings Collective. I've always been engaged with curatorial work from [a] pretty early age. I was told by an art instructor of mine, Veronica de Jesus, that you need to get over this idea that you just make your work and you're going to be discovered—that you need to put on your own shows, whether that's in a restroom or in the back of the U-Haul truck. I think that mentality actually was really empowering to me because it gave me as an artist more agency rather than having someone else be the arbiter of taste… and also, working with other artists, I found that it's a very privileged, intimate space to enter someone else's creative process. People are so different, and they work so differently. It can also be a difficult situation to be in but ultimately a really enlightening position, so. Our gallery was already slowing down a little bit before all this happened. I was trying to focus more on my own practice, but yeah, I don't know. It's like I have never really been this type of artist [that has] one thing I do. I have kind of reacted against that. To me [it] just felt like a corporate sound bite. I didn't want to do that and… I don't know why I like the sort of idea of morphing or shape-shifting. Yeah, I would say that ultimately, I still feel like my practice has been pretty crowded in painting and drawing. That's a sort of starting point when it goes out from there.

NAE: I would love to hear more about the slowing down of culture at large, personal self-care slowing down, and then art production slowing down. Do you have more

thoughts on those ideas that you want to elaborate on or share?

SH: I think that our capitalist society really pushes a sort of unhealthy kind of rat race... a kind of sickening, like, speed that I think is ultimately really destructive to the environment, for one thing. People like coffees to go, lots of, like, single-use plastic. Just this sort of need to like send someone a small little present for every little holiday through Amazon. All these little things actually have really big global effects, and I think my own personality sort of is that way. I like to be, like, [that] sort of overly fast. It's, like, a way of dealing with my own anxiety that I am trying to slow down everything—and that has been helpful... I've been giving myself permission recently to... take all the time I need, but also, like, letting my sleep schedule change too. So if it's even the middle of the night and I wake up and I'm like, "I want to, I want to write, I'm going to do these things"—I think you are just giving yourself permission to do that. But not to feel like you have to, like, do things as fast as possible. But rather, like, I'm going to do things right and do less things and do them better. I don't know if better is the right word, but that has been really helpful.

NAE: It is a thing that we can all benefit from, this idea of slowing down. Unfortunately, we don't all have that benefit, and essential workers are going through a lot right now—the people that are deemed essential at least. We can't avoid the political nature of this moment, so do you have any thoughts you want to share on that topic?

SH: I've been in Chicago for about 4 years, but before that, I lived in Berlin, Germany for 6 years, and... it's just really sad, the difference between Berlin and Chicago, and there's just such a criminal lack of resources here. I was diagnosed from symptoms of COVID-19, and a bunch of my friends were, but it was nearly impossible to get a test, and even if you were to get it sometimes it takes up to 10 days to get the results, which I... just don't understand. Supposedly this is the wealthiest nation in the world. So it is mind-boggling.

NAE: There are so many things people want to see change. For when we come out of this, if you could only pick one solution to a big problem what would it be?

SH: I would say Medicare for All. Yeah, like public option or something where people who are sick could be treated in this country and not go into like a lifetime of debt.

Left: Stevie Hanley, *Parallel Inversion*, 2019. Chalk pastel on oil and water color emulsion ground on paper in oak frame, 53.25 x 42.25". Courtesy of Marc LeBlanc Gallery.

Right: Stevie Hanley, *Orthopedics for Aliens*, 2019. Gouache, acrylic, spray paint and collage on pape; frame: styrofoam, Plexiglas, 62 x 47". Courtesy of Marc LeBlanc Gallery.

NAE: When things are back to normal, [what's] the thing you want to do the most that you can't do?

SH: I miss going to the movies by myself, which is weird. I miss the sort of space where I can be by myself or with other people. Like, I also really like cafes for that reason. And I miss dance clubs, even though I was always a little bit suspicious of people who, like, say, "Oh, dance clubs are these revolutionary spaces," and I'm like, I don't know if I believe that's true, but now that the access to them has gone, I do really feel there is truth to that… more true than I realized. I guess another good… I found myself, like, connecting to a lot of old friends that used to be very close friends, but because I moved, [over time] we became distant… I find myself now communicating with these people that are from my past. That has been another silver lining from the situation.

NAE: Just the idea of revolutionary spaces is something that's been on my mind. What do you think of as a revolutionary space?

SH: I do think about the gay bar a lot, gay spaces. And gay spaces have already been disappearing for a very long time for a lot of reasons. Maybe people don't need them like they used [to]… when people were closeted and it was more dangerous to be out and before [people could meet online.] I think about Times Square Red, Times Square Blue by [Samuel R. Delany.] He talks about these spaces being spaces where people cross racial boundaries and class boundaries. Especially some of these sex spaces, because people would go and just want to get off, and maybe a white businessman would hook up with a black guy, and in another situation they would never do that. In that situation… I feel like these connections could be made because sometimes through the online sites… the algorithms and our own choices are [sorting] us into specific groups. Going into [a physical location] that is just open, you go there, and the possibility of meeting strangers like, the Manhandler [Saloon] which may shut down after this, could be a revolutionary space… Sometimes I am also, like, critical of these spaces too, because there also seems to be [a dependence] on substance usage and sometimes substance abuse. Being the child of alcoholics… that was always my issue with the spaces too, and that it seems like a lot of times people would need to use a lot of drugs or alcohol just as a social lubricant, and that would also sometimes feel a little sad, but it also was nice that people could be together.

NAE: Do you have any final thoughts final thoughts on what you think is not being discussed enough in the mainstream media or in the public conversation that you want to highlight?

Stevie Hanley, *Saint CHRYS*, 2019. Sumi ink, gouache and acrylic on paper, 72 in. x 38 in. Courtesy of Marc LeBlanc Gallery.

SH: I think [it's] being discussed, but I think it needs to be discussed more, and that would be class, like the economic situation of it. Unfortunately, it seems like there has been a polarized view of people on the left for calling for longer quarantine times, listening to science, and people on the right are calling for going back to work, but I feel like it's the not the most productive binary to buy into because it is a sort of privileged space to be quarantined. A lot of people can't afford to do that, and we already have a lot of essential workers—delivery people—delivering our food and doing all these things, [who] are usually poorer people. So I'd like to see that binary broken a little bit and talked about in a significant way.

Patric McCoy

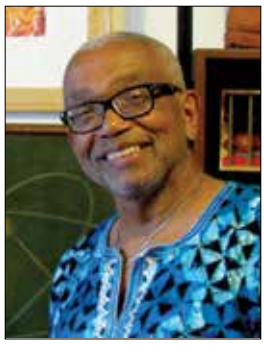
New Art Examiner: Hi Patric. How are you doing with this whole situation?

Patric McCoy: Well, you know I don't have a television. And it's because of my irritation with the news media, especially radio, during the 2016 election, I was just disgusted that the media did not accurately challenge and report the situations that were going on. And they allowed this asshole to manipulate the media. And one of the ones that I was very upset with was NPR. That was my station. That was my go to. And after I listened to it, I realized they actually coddled him and they actually gave him room to get into a lot of people's heads when they should have just been calling him out from Jump Street. So I don't even listen to that [station anymore]. It's through this little phone and looking at Facebook every now and then and so forth. That's how I get my information. And people call me and tell me what's happened. But that's still too much. (laughter)

NAE: How would you assess the cultural moment right now?

PM: I think about it all the time, and I don't ever stop thinking about it because I recognize how important it is to at least put up a caution sign or a redirection sign or detour sign so that some people can actually go in a different direction. I can't stop the flow of this top-down cultural model. I can't stop that that's going to be there. But I can at least redirect some people or make them start thinking about it. Is this really the best thing to do? Is this the best way that we can promote the visual arts and so forth?

I'm very concerned, and have been for a long time, that so many collections have been created within the



African-American community, even in other communities, I just don't know the specifics with other communities, but I know within my community collections have been created that are really very fascinating. They really tell a story about a particular person's view of things or of a particular time, and the artists that were active in that time. And then that person dies. [The one] that put the collection together. And because the people that come behind [them], the heirs or whatever, don't have the same vision, or even [in the absence] of heirs, the [collection] is just totally disbanded. It is thrown away. It's destroyed. Some stuff ends up in dumpsters and so forth. I'm seeing this and I'm like, 'This is horrible.' This is not what should happen. And as I've mentioned in the radio interview, Chicago just experienced the worst possible example of that recently, the loss of the Johnson Publishing Company/Ebony Jet collection. That was a priceless collection that [publisher Johnny] Johnson put together over all those years. It's unbelievable that it is gone. It was like an alternative art institute. The types of works that he had reflected the African American community. And to have them housed in an historic structure, the first African American skyscraper in downtown Chicago—that it could be gone? That's a travesty that the stuff goes into auction and is dispersed. The fact that it was put together with purpose and the historical connectedness of all these artists that he and his assistants sought out and put together, that history should not have ever been destroyed.

NAE: So one of the things that I think is worth a lot of scrutiny and comes up a lot in the art world a lot these

View of part of Patric McCoy's collection. Photo by Evan Carter.

View of more of Patric McCoy's collection. Photo by Evan Carter.

days is the kind of cultural course correction we're seeing in art history. There's seems to be a move towards inclusion, diversity, and a kind of reexamination and then an elevating of African-American artists.

PM: I don't agree with that.

NAE: If you look at the MCA and at a lot of the art centers and foundations around Chicago in particular, a lot of them are very diversity focused. But there's a problem in what I think is reflected by what happened to the Johnson collection, that collectors are trying to capitalize on a superficially inclusive movement in the arts. It could be a way of covering their own asses in terms of their complicity in larger, oppressive structures.

PM: Right. And as a result, when that fad passes, it will go back to the way it was. I ain't feeling it, I ain't feeling it. As long as it's a top-down cultural flow for the visual arts, it'll always have these problems. Once you recognize that a cultural flow has to come up from the bottom, then you can actually have structural change. I just say this is a passing fad and it ain't even a good one. What these people talk about "inclusive" and so forth, they're talking out [of] their ears and making no sense.

NAE: Another artist I was interviewing was telling me that Betsy DeVos is a big collector of artists of color, and that raises questions for me, like what is her motivation?

PM: Don't get me cursing on this thing. Please. (laughter) Don't. Let's go to something else. Oh, hell no. What was the motivation of the British to go into Benin City? To steal every goddamn thing.

NAE: It's cultural colonialism.

PM: That's all that is. Don't take me down that path. (laughter)

NAE: I apologize.

(more laughter)

NAE: I do want to get something that we can put out there to make people more aware, because I think that there are a lot of young artists and people who are just like, "this is so great." And to a degree it is, but it you should also scrutinize it more and you should look for ways to challenge it, because how can we generate this bottom-up cultural change that you want to see, that we need?

PM: I believe that you have to get your hands dirty. You got to get down into the weeds. And you have to recognize that it's a long haul, that you're not going to see results instantly... It comes from having the long view, which is what young people don't have, and I don't fault them for it. The young artists [I see] would be scrambling, trying to get into the view of this system that they are [operating within and seeing it as paramount]. And they will do whatever they need to do. Be competitive, all that other kind of crap. I understand that. I don't have a problem with that. I just recognize that we have to change things down at the [artist-collector] level. Our thinking is, and what Diasporal Rhythms is [doing, is getting] some people to change their thinking [about being an art collector.] And that will change their behavior. In our organization, we have eighty-plus people who now identify as art collectors... Their behavior is now one where they are comfortable interacting and acquiring and preserving and treating artists that they just like, without it having to be sanctioned from above. That's a major change, [to feel] like I don't have to have

this name or this type of work that is now lauded in the papers and so forth, which nobody could understand what the hell the artists are saying in the first place! Why would you feel like you have to have that type of work, when you can just go and get something that appeals to you? That's a major change. A major change. So we're just plowing ahead on that path, and we recognize that it's a long haul.

NAE: Has is it been tough having to put events on hold for Diasporal Rhythms?

PM: So much of our organization is [based on] social interaction. It's a very diverse group of people. The glue is the fact that we like each other and we all like art collecting. So when you put all that on hold, it's very difficult [to maintain cohesion.] I'm going to have a board meeting tomorrow, and we would have had two membership meetings by now. And our people really like being together. They like hearing about artists and having artists come and talk about what they are doing. We definitely like hearing about what other collectors are doing and what they like and so forth. So, it just, it is very difficult, very difficult for us at this point.

I've been on Facebook. Since the beginning of the lockdown, I've been posting images out of my collection, sections of the collection. I write about them [in a conversational tone], give back stories, funny stories, whatever, every day... It's a means of connecting people and also providing people a new way to think about an art collection. The comments that come out of that are very, very fascinating. I'm amazed at some of the things that people say in the comments: "This is just what I was thinking of" or "I did this also." Wow. I would have never thought I would get such thoughtful responses. But I introduced the concept that we can talk about art collecting and then [found] out people have a need to converse about the importance of the visual arts in their world. So that's what I've been doing to keep the concept of [our] type of art collecting in the forefront of the people that form our community and even introduce it to a larger community.

NAE: What do you think about all the gallery closures and the virtual art shows and all that stuff? Would you think about all that?

PM: The gallery closings, I would've expected that... It's a hard business in the best of times. So when you take out the fact that people can't move around... [it becomes,] "Oh, hell no. This is not a viable activity!" Also, because [the society] has promoted a top-down phenomenon for so long, [it is easy for the average gallery attendees] to pivot into a mindset that this is only for the elite and therefore I can't be concerned about it during the lockdown because it's not essential to me. Whereas we want people to think about it like, "No, [art] is like music." As you are hunkered down in your house, you gotta have [music playing] just to keep you from going crazy, Okay? You should have so much art in your world so that you can see things that remind you of sanity. So, that's why I think I have not jumped out the window after fifty-something days of being in the house. I'm constantly looking at images that remind me of what is good about life. Because I believe art is essential. I know I might be in the minority, but [through Diasporal Rhythms,] we are working to make that a more widespread mindset. That yeah, you need to, to have art in your home.

One of my buddies just got a new place... he's a laborer for a building management firm [and had not been a self-proclaimed art enthusiast before.] He asked me if he could get a piece of artwork. I have some [extra] art pieces

Two more views of Patric McCoy's collection. Photos by Evan Carter.

down in my storeroom, so I gave him one. And now that he has put it up, he wants more, he wants more (laughs). So I could see that once people see how [art in their space] changes them, how it changes their world… art collecting will have the ability to be self-sustaining. But we've been taught to go art openings on Fridays, but you're there mainly to be social and be seen. To drink some wine, eat some cheese, but not actually to interact with that art. With no real purpose [of understanding] that somebody is saying, "This visual information is important." You need to see this, and you might need to consider having this as a part of your world. And we tend to default that because of the cost of [the art,] because of the complexity of ['required'] art knowledge, and, "I don't really understand it, but it is nice." We can come and go to this event and participate, but [we are] not seriously considering ever acquiring any of this "art." I might not even understand the art in a show because what's written on the wall is in some other language. (laughs) This 'art speak.' "What are they talking about?" Also, we've been taught that we are supposed to be thinking about this as an investment—a financial investment. I don't subscribe to that investment world because it's a totally rigged system… If you understand that it's rigged, you're cool. You know, stay out of it. Don't even go in there.

[All of these things are] why people can quickly jettison these activities and not feel like, oh, I'm missing something because I'm not going out to the galleries. And why galleries would close and now have to try to grab your attention through some virtual shows, I don't know how effective they are. I [have looked] at some art on the screen, but not a lot. And I've kind of been spoiled, maybe I shouldn't use the word spoiled; learned as a person that's interested in the visual arts that you really have to see this art in person.

NAE: Absolutely.

PM: The screen is not the way to do it. [The situation] is not as extreme as in music, where it is a whole other experience to hear it live. But we have developed our electronic media with music to the point that it's not that bad. You can kind of get a real experience from listening [to an electronic rendering.] But with the visual, I don't get it. I feel like you have to see it in person. So a visual image on the screen does not make me… in fact it makes me want to pause. If I see something I like, I still have to pause? Because you know, it might not look like this in real life.

NAE: I definitely think your message of having art in your home, particularly in times like this, is really important. But even before this, politics were terrible. The economy is crazy. People should have art regardless of whether or not we're in some kind of pandemic lockdown.

PM: That's correct.

NAE: And that's the point of this. We're going to keep pushing that message. I tried pushing it with our previous interview and I feel like we're covering it again in a new sort of way. There's a little more urgency to it now. What I find interesting about this situation that we're in is the question of what is being revealed? What are we thinking about differently? Like, what is kind of being uncovered? And I feel like one of the things is the importance of having something that resonates with you in your home.

PM: Right. Well, I'm here by myself. Yeah, I don't live with anybody else. But I have observed over the years that when I do have company here, we end up with very, very, very interesting conversations. Not the bullshit conversations, real conversations. And I kind of wonder, why is that? What I propose is that it's because there's art on the walls. [However,] we're not talking about art. The conversation is not about art, but it's just that human beings feel very comfortable talking to each other when they're in the midst of art, because art has a conversation going anyway. And so, my kind of paraphrasing of the phenomenon is that all we're doing is joining a conversation that's already taking place. It's easy to join a conversation as opposed to starting one. So I'm thinking that if we had art in these homes, especially during this lockdown where people are stuck with each other, that it would be easier for them to talk to each other. As opposed to being in a bare room, bare walls and so forth, I envision that's like talking to your ceiling. (laughter)

NAE: Thank you, Patric. It's always a pleasure.

A final view of Patric McCoy's collection.
Photo by Evan Carter.

"Problem Areas"

by Luis Martin / The Art Engineer

In an empty gallery, on the third floor of a still emptier building in the West Village of New York City, hangs in situ "Problem Areas," the first solo show by Nevada native and New York-based artist Paul Moreno. The artist and the curators at The Bureau of General Services—Queer Division brazenly tempted fate by not only agreeing on the ominous title for the show, but also by scheduling the opening for Friday the 13th of March 2020. As the last nail went in and the last painting was hung on the pristine white gallery wall. New York City, while still ahead of the country, was trying to catch up with the rest of the world as it started to slowly shut down. A season later, the show is still holding court to an empty room—a room whose walls could tell their own stories to rival the narratives playing out in the wooden panels on view. The gallery hosting this exhibit is housed at The Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual & Transgender Community Center in New York, home of Keith Haring's masterpiece bathroom mural Once Upon A Time. In this very building, countless other quotidian queer moments became legend. What becomes of art that is fossilized by social distance, historic civil unrest and awakening? If an artist captures personal catharsis in paint and their very existence is a victory of its own, can the artist and his work too evolve into legend if there is no one there to see it?

Looking at the work of Paul Moreno is like using the dismantling of structuralism in queer theory to design and decorate the interior of a tender wet dream. Pastel colors are juxtaposed and reflect on hazy surfaces that are not fully there but present enough to suggest meaning. The painted figures in the show manifest as subject, memory, ghost, and fantasy. The all-male cast are made all more significant against the layered and textured surfaces of muted backgrounds with vivid punches of bright jubilant

Paul Moreno, *Not Shy*, 2017. Mixed media on collaged paper, 7 ¾" in. x 8 ½ in. Photo courtesy of the artist.

Paul Moreno, *A rest before the rest*, 2016. Mixed media on wood, 48 in. x 48 in. Photo courtesy of the artist.

forms. There is an importance given to objects; they demand inspection for possible secrets or perhaps to trigger memories to come into focus.

Not shy, a mixed media work on collaged paper, depicts a pair of worn shorts. The painting frames the staple garment with balanced space on all sides. While this could have been an objective study, every element about this work is activated. The shorts themselves are composed of folds that seem to remember and long for the limbs that once wore them. The empty space around the wrinkled cloth captures a murky light that is tender and opaque. Much like *Not shy*, the breath of this exhibition is very much composed of a longing for the queer male as an experience of poetry with an array of idiosyncratic object d'art in their orbit. The show is also peppered with works that can loosely be described as vivid still lifes, ebbing and flowing into focus.

I like to think that right now, Moreno's paintings are like the enchanted portraits at Hogwarts, chitchatting with each other from their painted grottoes and prosceniums. The works in the show are paintings and works on paper from 2016 to 2020 BC19 (before COVID-19). While the paintings were not executed as a political or revolutionary act, the world has shifted and with it, the context of the artist's practice has also pivoted, without any effort of the artist himself. As the work of a Queer Chicano and devout Catholic, the exhibition "Problem Areas" is now fodder for a critical inspection through a charged BIPOC (Black Indigenous People of Color) lens. As a BIPOC, Queer, Chicano artist myself, I can't help but approach Moreno's work looking for connection and a less-than-subtle desperate need for reflection. Post COVID, post George Floyd, and in the midst of Trumpian fascism, "white supremacy" in our culture has been uncloaked as not only limited to the extremes of white hooded monsters next to burning crosses but also ever present and parasitically rooted in every structural aspect of our culture. The lack of representation in galleries, museums and cultural organization's boardrooms is finally diagnosed and labeled.

Looking at Paul Moreno's work does not stir echoes of the Chicano experience or offer me a moment of brown reflection. Should it? Should every shoulder lug the struggles and histories of their people, in every painted stroke? Is it the artist's job alone to create movements that then become hashtags, to then become trending memes? Is that the singular duty of every artists of color—to recapitulate glib symbols of a prescribed experience? I don't think so. In my search for the BIPOC sensibility, I do, however, find revolutionary acts by the brown hands that painted these works. There is a kind of cultural mutiny that this artist commits in allowing himself the space to ruminate, to create, to paint, and to feel, regardless of the imposed structures of power and oppression on artists of color.

Looking at the art or, more specifically, at an image of a painting online, allows the viewer several points of entry into the work. Looking at *A rest before the rest* on my computer screen allows me to take an instant leap and make connection between the painting and that of 18th century Mexican "retablo" paintings without the context of scale. Retablos are devotional paintings that get their name from the Spanish word for "board." Unlike retablos, usually painted on a paper size sheets of tin, *A rest* is painted

Paul Moreno, *Constructs is over*, 2016. Mixed media on wood, 48 in. x 48 in. Photo courtesy of the artist.

on a 4-foot by 4-foot wooden panel. The genre of retablos depicted a prayer being asked or the retelling in gratitude of prayer answered by the divine, usually by *La Virgen de Guadalupe.* These scenes are always painted in a one-point perspective and play out much like a one act stage play. In A rest, we see a languid figure in the process of fading into oblivion. The singular figure is surrounded by objects, proxies of queer masculinity. In the foreground we find sneakers next to a small composition of yellow markings that could allude to a basketball net, further drawing on masculine ambiguity. At the center of a table in the foreground lay a pair of popper bottles, standing in formation ready to perform, but the figure is flaccid and uninterested. Not even the book he was reading has engaged him enough to keep him present. What miracle is the artist witnessing or petitioning for in this neo-retablo? Is it to rid of past lover's ghosts or an attempt to take a snapshot of a fleeting affair?

Moreno takes a similar approach in composition and flat narrative in *Construct is over*, a painting from 2016 of the same size and substrate as *A rest*. If *A rest* was a prayer for emotional closure, this painting is a jovial documentation of a life lived. Objects are strewn about in the painting with an urgency of someone taking notes and committing a passing scene to memory, a foreign notion to anyone with a smartphone in their pocket. The central figure is offset to the right half of the painting as if he is just as important as the objects loosely rendered in the scene. Moreno describes his process of painting and his relationship with his substrate as that of making time, of wearing and layering the material to perhaps track and keep moments from altogether passing. There is a vulnerability in the lone figure, palm waving the viewer next to his lap dog with what seems to be a random list of his possessions set out to be explored and lovingly scrutinized.

Experiencing the exhibition "Problem Areas" from its gallery checklist allowed me to make quick visual connections in its forms and colors and become at once familiar with the artist's sensibility. Coming to the art from a relaxed perspective, unhampered by the context of a gallery setting, allows the experience to be like leafing through the index of a poetry book—each title an invitation to enter a conceptual space and to be at once immersed and swept away by vivid colors and figures who undulate between fog and form. In the case of Paul Moreno's works, his revolutionary act is to have the emotional fortitude to create space to explore vulnerability and make an art of simply experiencing the human condition through an art practice where intensity is given to the expression of feeling and ideas.

If identify is based on reality, what is the role of the artist but to construct space in which to activate the void of our present experience? Standing at a distance from each other and looking at art from a computer screen with the ardent lens of the present leaves little room to imagine what a new paradigm can look like for society or in art. When quarantine began, I imagined the men and women of Wall Street someday returning to their offices, only to be confronted and ousted by their neglected office plants, now overgrown in the midst of a revolutionary spring of their own. I hope to be one of the first viewers at the opening of "Problem Areas" to take in the fermentation of ideas and face my own reflections of past and future wet dreams patiently waiting to become legendary.

Luis Martin / The Art Engineer is a collage artist, and host of the podcast "Studio Confessions: the art podcast." His self appointed title has given Martin creative license to address curiosity and inquiry through his practices that include visual art, curating and writing. The artist's prolific approach merges the "hustler's" essence of his home base, New York City while keeping tuned in and inspired with his native California soul.

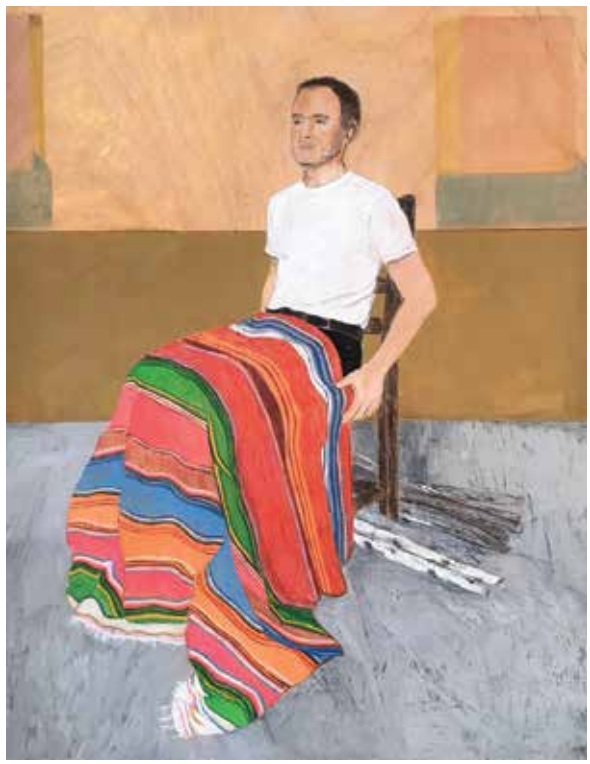
See more of Paul Moreno's work on his website: *http://www.paul-moreno.work/*

Follow the artist on Instagram: *@bathedinafterthought*

Listen to Luis Martin's podcast "Studio Confessions" on Apple Podcasts or visit *StudioConfessions.com*

Follow the author on Instagram: *@artengineer*

Additional Works by Paul Moreno



Top Left: Paul Moreno, *Mano poderosa*, 2020. Mixed media on wood, 20 in. x 29 in. Photo courtesy of the artist.

Top Right: Paul Moreno, *Ignatius (for a friend)*, 2020. Mixed media on wood, 18 in. x 23 in. Photo courtesy of the artist.

Bottom Right: Paul Moreno, *Rudimentary Desires 1*, 2016. 8 ½ x 8 ¾ in. Mixed media on paper. Photo courtesy of the artist.

There Where You Are Not

Selected Writings of Kamal Boullata

By Nathan Worcester

At the height of the Black Lives Matter (BLM) protests this summer, the movement might have seemed invincible: despite the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic, thousands packed the streets in demonstrations that were, at least 93% of the time, peaceful.

In some circles, however, BLM's attitude toward Israel had become a sticking point.

"No wonder Jewish groups are wary of BLM," wrote the *Australian Jewish News* in July, noting BLM's ties to the Boycott, Divest, Sanctions (BDS) movement. Others observed that BLM's 2016 platform had described Israel as an apartheid state committing genocide against the Palestinian people.

Things change fast these days. On August 28, the *Jewish Telegraphic Agency* analyzed a 10-page summary of BLM's new platform, noting that it did not mention Israel or Palestine. Earlier that same day, more than 620 Jewish groups had affirmed their support for BLM in a full-page advertisement published by the *New York Times.*

Even after this apparent rapprochement, the debate over BLM, Israel, and Palestine has continued on Twitter and other social media platforms. Unlike most other "national conversations," which are increasingly indistinguishable from monologues, it really *is* a debate; Western liberals, particularly in the United States, have always found it hard to pick a side.

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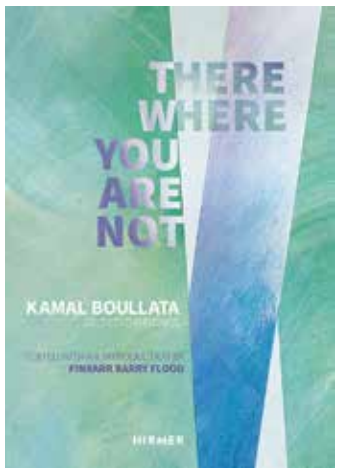
There Where You Are Not, a comprehensive new collection of writings from the late Palestinian artist and activist Kamal Boullata, is an instructive complement to the current Zeitgeist. Exiled from his native Jerusalem in 1967, Boullata spent the remainder of his career producing and advocating Palestinian and Arabic visual culture, mostly while ensconced in various capital cities of the West.

Boullata is a fluid and poetic writer—so much so that his own intellectual assumptions and ambitions might pass unnoticed. Fortunately for us, in the book's Introduction, editor Finbarr Barry Flood explains how Boullata's project was informed first by mid-twentieth century Pan-Arab Nationalism and later by a deliberate emphasis on a "pervasive Semitic sensibility" linking Arabic and Jewish aesthetics. Invoking Gayatri Spivak's notion of "strategic essentialism," Flood observes that "there is... a performative dimension to the affirmation of such identities that subordinates the risk of essentialism to the strategic value of a politics of solidarity." [1]



How does this play out?

Boullata, who was buried in the Cemetery of the Greek Orthodox Patriarchate of Jerusalem, deemphasizes his Christian origins and thoroughly Westernized value system in the interest of building and maintaining an Arabic and, more specifically, a Palestinian identity. This highlights an inconvenient pair of truths: both the Israeli and the Palestinian were forged in the crucible of 20th century politics.

In analyzing the work of 'Asim Abu Shaqra ("The Artist's Eye and the Cactus Tree"), Boullata contrasts the Palestinian/Israeli Arab's icon-like treatment of desert cactus (sabra) with the Israeli image of the prickly, persevering sabra—that is, a Jew born in Israel. Boullata seems to think that nature, unlike politics, sides with the Palestinian. Thus, where Israeli Jewish or Orientalist European artists merely analyze the landscape as outsiders, a Palestinian artist (in this later essay, the printmaker Abu Shakra) is privileged to an "intuitive reading of an inhabited place, intimately recognized by the specificity of its place-name." [2]

Kamal Boullata, *Thawra / Tharwa (Revolution / Wealth)*, 1978.

Kamal Boullata, Nun Insan, 1975.

Viewed in hindsight, some of Boullata's rhetoric makes the failure of successive decades of peace negotiations more explicable. Writing in 1971, he envisions the children of Palestine growing up to be "warrior-artist[s]." [3] This registers as a dark prophecy of the suicide bomber, whose acts hold a terrible aesthetic power.

Boullata managed to construct many convenient identities; considered in and of themselves, they are illustrative of the political realities that shaped his thinking. Thus, while objecting to Western imperialism, he indulges in an irredentist yearning for Al-Andalus—the Islamic civilization that flourished in southern Iberia for centuries during the Middle Ages.[4] He argues with some justification that this long-gone high-water mark of Arabic culture was good for the Muslim and the Jew alike. In another essay, when critiquing the Israeli poet Yehuda Amichai, he takes pains to note that "it was the German in the settler poet" that appropriated Jerusalem for the Occident.[5] Boullata's later emphasis on commonalities across Semitic culture, while not without merit, seems to grow in part out of a similar set of considerations. There is an unspoken promise: peace and even unity are possible, but only at the expense of Euro-American cultural hegemony.

Yet for all Boullata's seeming discomfort with the West, his particular brand of D.C.-based Third Worldism would be unimaginable absent Western examples and expectations. This comes across particularly strongly in his treatment of sex and gender, where he wears his feminism on his sleeve. Discussing a large-scale children's book project, he explains that he did not deign to comment on a proposed story's "sexist subject of associating girls and dolls." [6] Indeed, one of Boullata's few straightforward criticisms of Arabic culture comes in the course of his profane, hallucinatory "A Sex-Pol Manifesto" (1974): "My parents forgave me when I hit my sister. And the teacher hit me when I, a mere direct object to him, failed to start with the pronoun 'he' when conjugating a verb." [7]

Boullata's constructed identities are also revealing in what they leave out. Thus, while Arabic civilization is a constantly recurring theme, Persia and contemporary Iran are largely absent.

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Only language rivals politics as a central theme in Boullata's work. On Boullata's analysis, Orthodox Christian icons are not painted, but rather written; [8] again and again, Palestinian artists ranging from Hani Zurob to Zulfa al-Sa'di are said to have been inspired by the Arabic tradition of poetry. Indeed entire sections of the book (e.g., "Calligraphy and Abstraction," "Language and the Visual," and "Poetry: The Last Frontier") are given over to Boullata's endless, repetitive, yet ultimately thought-provoking meditations on the links between visual art and spoken or written expression.

Boullata's obsession with language is both political and aesthetic; indeed, he seems to have felt that the development of an authentically Arabic abstract art necessitated

the development of an authentically Arabic visual language. Some of Boullata's finest works, such as his Bilqis series of paintings from 2013, feel like the culmination of decades of this reflection.

At times, political concerns appear to have predominated. Boullata repeatedly evokes Rousseau in his discussion of Arabic poetry, asserting that it is the "embodiment of the collective will, with the living body of the poet as the medium." [9] In a lengthy essay presenting the raqsh (arabesque) as its own language "whose roots are firmly embedded in the same soil from which the Arabic language drew its structure," Boullata foregrounds the specialness of Arabic language and culture. [10] Though this aim is not obviously political at first glance, it stands out as such against the backdrop of recent history. The diasporic Palestinian is still a Palestinian, with a distinctive language, distinctive culture forms, and, distinctive modes of thought—all qualities that can only augment the consideration due to a Palestinian as a claimant to justice.

Like any great political artist, Boullata understood the importance of language, including outright sloganeering, to the meaning and effectiveness of a cause. Witness the very different reactions to "Black Lives Matter," "Blues Lives Matter," and "All Lives Matter."

A few hundred signatures add weight to an endorsement; a lightly edited platform brings BLM closer to gaining the whole world, nearer to losing its supposedly radical soul.

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Notes:

1. Boullata, pp. 20.
2. Ibid. pp.186.
3. Ibid. pp. 175.
4. Ibid. pp. 189-190, 430.
5. Ibid. pp. 35.
6. Ibid. pp. 71.
7. Ibid., pp. 245.
8. Ibid., pp. 38.
9. Ibid. pp. 88, echoed on pp. 396 and 401.
10. Ibid., pp. 362.

Kamal Boullata, *The Angel's Pool*, 1997, (Surrat al-Ard series), Khalid Shoman Collection.

Kamal Boullata, *Bilqis 1*, 2014.

"Blackbird & Paloma Negra: The Mothers"

Works by Sabrina Nelson

by K.A. Letts

Why you want to fly Blackbird, you ain't ever gonna fly
No place big enough for holding all the tears you're gonna cry
'cause your mama's name was lonely and your daddy's name was pain...

Sabrina Nelson, Detroit artist, educator and activist, cites singer Nina Simone's lament "Blackbird" as an inspiration for her solo exhibition "Blackbird & Paloma Negra: The Mothers," on view until October 3 at Galerie Camille in Detroit.

The image of the blackbird flies from room to room in the gallery, serving as spirit guide and metaphor. In her assemblages, installations and drawings, Nelson explores the psychic territory between private grief and public mourning felt by mothers of Black children lost to racial violence. She honors this more personal sorrow with a series of artworks that are poignant and elegiac. At times, they seem poised to disintegrate into their broken and damaged constituent parts.

Abandoned cages, shorn braids and lost baby shoes speak the language of unacknowledged desolation. Three fragile tissue and tulle dresses hang from the ceiling in the main gallery of Galerie Camille, threatening to dissolve at the exhalation of a sigh. The dresses provide a surround for sooty and slightly deformed birdcages, their womblike forms evocatively referencing both the absence of the child and the remaining husk of the inconsolable mother. These three artworks, *The First Home, Grace 1, 2 and 3,* represent the emotional core of the show and seemed, to me, to be the most direct and moving expression of her theme.

The charcoal and acrylic drawing of a monumental blackbird entitled *Raven: Attempted Conspiracy* occupies a central position in the main gallery, gazing quizzically at gallery visitors as they enter. Its intent is mysterious, its

Sabrina Nelson, *They Go in Threes*, 2020, installation detail, mixed media and drawings. Photo by K.A. Letts.

Sabrina Nelson, *The First Home/ Grace 3*, 2020, hanging sculpture, mixed media, size variable. Photo by K.A. Letts.

cunning obvious. Her choice of the blackbird as a visual metaphor throughout "Blackbird and Paloma Negra: The Mothers" is both potent and equivocal and allows for multi-layered interpretations. The corvid's complex associations across a variety of world cultures resonate throughout the collective consciousness, freeing Nelson to play at the shadowy margins. She skates metaphorically along the borders of confinement and flight, freedom, death and the afterlife, embracing the poetic ambiguity of the blackbird. She says of the species, "Our body and our nesting always tell the truth. A group of black crows is called "a murder of crows" and a grouping of ravens is called "a conspiracy of ravens" or "an unkindness of ravens". These poetic names were given to these corvid creatures during the 15th century."

In Galerie Camille's back room, Nelson strikes a reverential note with her complex, multi-faceted installation *Altar*, a ritual display that features devotional objects: feathers, candles and nests, along with drawings. The

Sabrina Nelson, *Raven: Attempted Conspiracy*, 2020, charcoal and acrylic on paper, 50 x 93 in. Photo by K.A. Letts.

Sabrina Nelson, *Altar*, installation, mixed media. Photo by K.A. Letts.

immediate mainstream association to a visitor might be with the commemorative *ofrendas* that appear yearly in Hispanic households for the Dia de los Muertos. This is a perfectly satisfactory association as far as it goes, but it's likely that Nelson is also referencing devotional shrines of the African Yoruba religion, which forms the basis for a number of diasporic belief systems such as santeria and vodou.

Nelson is an accomplished draftsman, and her skills are on display throughout the exhibit, but are especially striking in her wall of small drawings in the gallery's Cube Room. Her handling of the water media in *They Go in Threes* is technically impressive and emotionally resonant. She employs the liquid properties of the paint to suggest shadows and fugitive movement. The drawings hint at both the presence and absence of bird souls, the accretion of images delivering a powerful charge of nostalgia and a suggestion of violence in the dripping inks.

Sabrina Nelson was born during the Detroit Rebellion of the '60s, descendant of strong Detroit women with whom she identifies, even while expressing her own individuality. She describes her female forbears as "three generations of remarkable, independent women who each had her own way of being… My mother was probably the most rebellious in the house. She was young, had an afro and this attitude like, 'I ain't doing none of that stuff y'all did—this is the new deal.' She was down with the Black Panthers and was fighting for what she felt was right at the time. There was some serious rebellion going on when I was in her belly, so I'm sure there's a part of that energy in me."

True to the spirit of the matriarchs in her family, Nelson has found her own way of being and means of expression as an artist. She recognizes the emotional dissonance between the lonely, visceral sorrow a mother feels at the loss of her child and the public rhetoric that surrounds the Black Lives Matter movement. In her statement she writes, "We live in a hash-tag era, where Black and Brown bodies are brutally murdered and swiftly turned into hash-tag symbols on social media; where often the focus of how they were killed is sensationalized and who they were as valued beings in their communities is ignored." In "Blackbird and Paloma Negra: The Mothers," Sabrina Nelson channels the mood of this moment in history in the U.S. and in Detroit.

K.A. Letts is the Detroit editor of the *New Art Examiner*, a working artist (kalettsart.com) and an art blogger (rustbeltarts.com). She has shown her paintings and drawing in galleries and museums in Toledo, Detroit, Chicago and New York. She writes frequently about art in the Detroit area.


Breonna Taylor
SAY HER NAME!!!!


LANGUAGE OF THE DICTATOR
THEY ARE JUST ANIMALS


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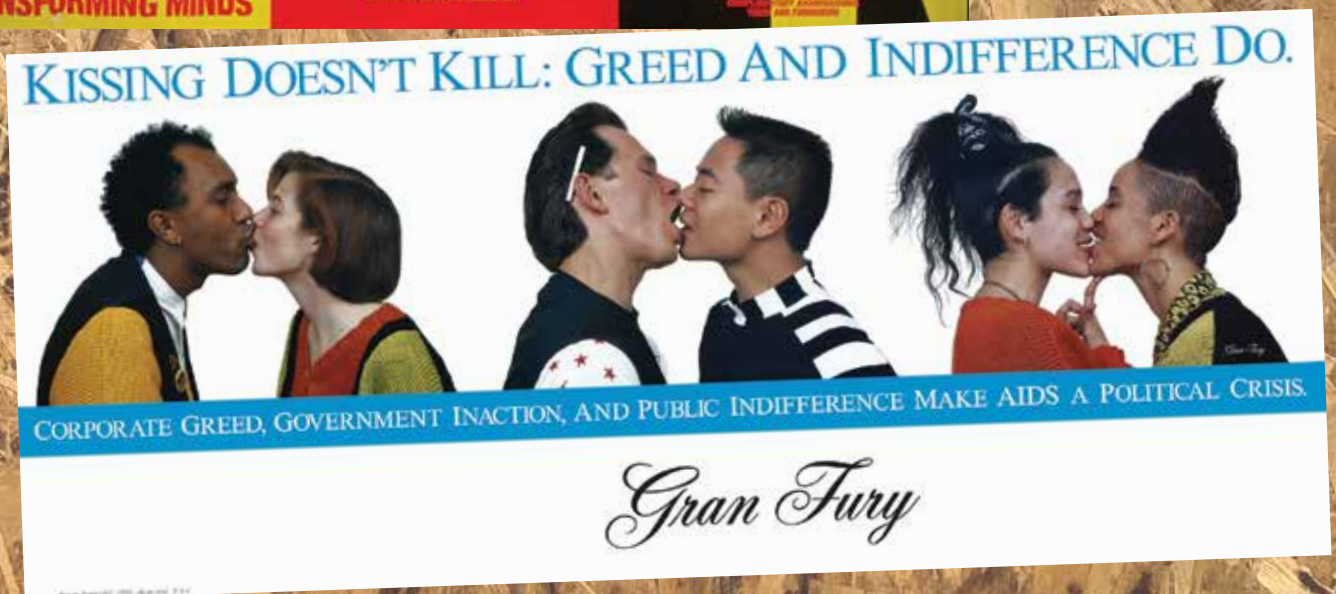
KISSING DOESN'T KILL: GREED AND INDIFFERENCE DO.
CORPORATE GREED, GOVERNMENT INACTION, AND PUBLIC INDIFFERENCE MAKE AIDS A POLITICAL CRISIS.
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