



# AVENUES FOR **IMPACTFUL ACTIVISM**

CRITICAL & CONTEXTUAL COMPENDIUM • HARRIET ALLEN





This body of work articulates my research and critical thinking on how design activism methods can be collected, documented, and transformed into living archives, to serve as resources for future voices of resistance. It is as much a research project, as a call to action to be used to inspire, promote and enthuse collective movements. It is plurally voiced and contributes to the continuation of future acts of disobedience.

## TACTICAL FRIVOLITY

A form of public protest, that often uses humour, dancing and other forms of creative expressions. The term is often associated with womanist and queer-themed marches.

## URBOEFFIMERO

Urban inflatable objects designed and performed by the Italian UFO group.

PREFIGURATIVE  
POLITICS

The ways activists and organisations structure activism through democracy, inclusivity and collective action.

## PUPPETISTAS

The term used to describe a group or community of puppet makers, which creations are used to protest.

DISOBEDIENT  
OBJECTS

Everyday objects that have been repurposed and reclaimed for use in driving social change and transformation. Objects are often defined by their creativity, drawing influence from art, craft and performance. They can also be referred to as 'social movement cultures', highlighting their importance as countercultural symbols.

## TRIPODS

An object that allows the user to create a blockade, usually made by erecting 3 poles and securing them at the top to make a frame. A platform is then built and the sitter is suspended from the top of the tripod. Removing the frame then becomes a risk to the sitter.

INTELLIGENT  
BARRICADES

An urban response to a Tripod, by Reclaim the Streets. Made from metal scaffold, bikes and pedestrians could still access the street but no cars or machinery. eg. Angel High Street 1994.

## ICONOCLASM

The belief in the action of destroying or actively rejecting symbols of power produced by institutions of belief systems. An example of this would be destroying monuments or relics produced by political or religious systems.

## RED ZONE

An area with specific conceptions of security and governance put in place by military, and or systems of power.

## MEGABLOC

A large group of individuals collaborating and communicating to initiate a protest bloc within an institutional setting. This may involve other collaborators and designers, who all share the same ideology.

## WILDNESS

The absence of order and acceptance of disorder/chaos that rejects the binary attempts to manage life in a biopolitical way.

## WAYWARDNESS

A rejection of the normative paths set out for marginalised groups through embracing ones agency and disobedience.

## HAPPENINGS

The spontaneous performative events, hosted by the Italian UFO group that blended art, theatre and public engagement.

## LONDON RECRUITS

A 2024 documentary written by directed by Gordon Main. Based on a true story of the London/South Africa freedom fighters.

## QUEER METHODOLOGY

An approach to research and knowledge production that draws from queer theory to challenge heteronormative or mainstream ways of understanding culture. It often prioritises marginalised voices such as the LGTBQIA+ community, but includes any groups that rejects the binary categorisation of modern day society. For the purposes of this body of work, queer methodology encompasses any groups that resist systems of power and mainstream ways of live.

## COUNTERPUBLICS

Coined by Michael Warner, counterpublics refers to the groups and communities that form in opposition to dominant systems of power. This groups often form alternative space for resistance, solidarity and other forms of creative expression.

**'THERE IS NO TIME FOR DESPAIR, NO PLACE FOR SELF-PITY, NO NEED FOR SILENCE, NO ROOM FOR FEAR. WE SPEAK, WE WRITE, WE DO LANGUAGE. THAT IS HOW CIVILISATIONS HEAL. I KNOW THE WORLD IS BRUISED AND BLEEDING, AND THOUGH IT IS IMPORTANT NOT TO IGNORE ITS PAIN, IT IS ALSO CRITICAL TO REFUSE TO SUCCUMB TO ITS MALEVOLENCE. LIKE FAILURE, CHAOS CONTAINS INFORMATION THAT CAN LEAD TO KNOWLEDGE - EVEN WISDOM. LIKE ART.'**

Toni Morrison, *The Site of Memory*, *The Nation*, March 2015

This Compendium explores how creative art practices are serve as powerful tools for social transformation and protest. In recent news, we have witnessed the alarming rise of far-right ideologies, racism and discrimination. It is crucial that we take action now, to prevent further division of communities, fostering unity through collective practices and joyful moments.

This is as much a personal account as a history, and may have missed out examples others would have covered. It is written from the perspective of someone actively involved in political action, as well as the personal perspective of a family member working with Medical Aid for Palestine (MAP).

This body of work is written for people involved in political action, to be used as a shared resource to inspire new forms of counter-culture. It includes varying case studies, as well as personal references of current actions, and any critiques of them may be influenced by lack of full knowledge of the happenings. In the past, it may have been necessary for such movements to be hidden, proving challenging to gather these histories and past accounts.

#### DISOBEDIENT OBJECTS EXHIBITION:

The Disobedient Objects exhibition was a great place to start this research, and has greatly influenced this exploration. Running from July 2014 -February 2015, the Disobedient Objects exhibition at the Victoria and Albert Museum was a ground breaking show, that explored the integral role of objects in social change movements.<sup>1</sup> Items exhibited highlighted the importance of collective creativity intersecting with political activism and has been referenced multiple times throughout this body of work.



Figure 1. Crowd at Speakers Corner, Authors own image

Figure 1: Cover photo, Authors own images

<sup>1</sup> Flood, C. and Grindon, G. (2014). *Disobedient Objects*. London: V & A Publishing.



**You feel bad because many bad things are happening.**

Figure 2. Bad things meme, Instagram

In February 2025, an opinion poll conducted by YouGov for The Times newspaper, found 25% of Britians population voted for the far-right Reform party, pulling ahead of the current Labour government.<sup>1</sup> This isn't really surprising when observing the concerning rise of far-right movements globally. Certainly Donald Trump's influence on global politics is evident, and violence and hate directed at minorities and asylum seekers are normalised.

For years, left and right mainstream European parties have united against accommodating far-right ideologies, such as the 'Firewall' agreement in Germany and the 'Cordon Sanitaire' in France.<sup>2</sup> However, just last week (Feb. 25), Germany's conservative leader Friedrich Merz broke this pledge to put forward a motion urging a hard immigration crackdown, commended by the far right.<sup>3</sup> This mainstream move to accommodate far-right ideologies, is a 'vicious cycle'<sup>4</sup>, that allows more members of the right to enter governments, and encourage controversial bills.

This could be seen in 2022 with the conservatives deeply disturbing move to send individuals seeking asylum to Rwanda. The governments rhetoric only aids in the spread of fear and division within society, framing vulnerable groups as 'extremists'<sup>5</sup> or 'foreigners with HIV'<sup>6</sup>. The August riots seen in the UK, and various parts of Europe were a stark reminder of the growing influence of far-right ideologies and the dangers they pose to society.

#### THE BODY AS A TOOL FOR CHANGE:

As individuals we can feel helpless to incite change at an institutional level. The need for political action has never been greater and systems of power will continue to resist unless we deploy radical and initiative approaches. A new trend of activists see the body as instrumental in fighting for social change, through focusing on how politics is tied

<sup>1</sup> Perkins, L. (2025). Reform UK leads Labour in YouGov poll for first time, *The Telegraph*.

<sup>2</sup> Kassam, A. (2025). Our neighbours are daring to choose fascism again, *The Guardian*.

<sup>3</sup> Kassam, A. (2025). Our neighbours are daring to choose fascism again, *The Guardian*.

<sup>4</sup> Henley, J. (2024). 'Vicious cycle': how far-right parties across Europe are cannibalising the centre right, *The Guardian*.

<sup>5</sup> Nigel Farage: EU asylum plan could let in extremists. (2015), *BBC News*.

<sup>6</sup> Nigel Farage: EU asylum plan could let in extremists. (2015), *BBC News*.

to our everyday lived experiences.<sup>1</sup> The body becomes the primary tool of resistance in non-violent direct action, that harbours creativity and performs its politics. The methods used to delay the authorities, use bodies as individual sites of knowledge and political intervention.

Such contemporary direct action can lead to what Bronislaw Szerszynski calls the 'politics of vulnerability'.<sup>2</sup> Our bodies hold the impact of oppressive systems, with exhaustion, numbness, burn-out and trauma often found in activist groups.<sup>3</sup> Yet activism does not always need to be loud and violent. Creative, gentle protest can also foster the transformational change we strive for.

#### A CALL TO ACTION:

So what can we, as spatial practitioners do? In Toni Morrison's essay 'The Site of Memory' she calls for action in the face of turmoil and fear.<sup>4</sup> Creatives have the power to respond to the worlds pain through artistic expression, using art as a tool for transformative social change. Rather than being paralyzed by despair, we can offer alternative ways of living and resisting. It is this resilience that I am harbouring in this body of work, refusing to bend to the ongoing trend of hate and violence.

Morrison discusses the importance of collective memory in her writing, and how this can be used as a tool to celebrate groups of which histories have been forgotten or suppressed. Memories become a site of construction, that involves actively listening and discussing sensitive topics that have shaped our present. Remembering and confronting trauma is a form of resistance and a way of reclaiming memories that have been shaped by dominant power structures.<sup>5</sup> Art provides a space where this can be explored and objects explored in this essay, have an important role as cultural symbols of social identity.



Figure 3. Finchley anti-riots rally, Authors own image

Figure 3: Bad things meme, Instagram, Available at: <https://www.instagram.com/gendersauce/>

<sup>1</sup> Egan, J., Gatens, L., Graham, E., Khalaf, A., & Thorp, A. (Eds.). (2023). *How We Hold: Rehearsals for Art and Social Change*. Serpentine Education and Civic.

<sup>2</sup> Szerszynski, B. (2016). *How the Earth Remembers and Forgets*.

<sup>3</sup> Activist, A. (2024). *Laurel Therapy Collective*. [online] Laurel Therapy Collective.

<sup>4</sup> Morrison, T. (1991). *The Site of Memory*. In: M. J. McGurl, ed. *The Oxford Book of American Essays*. Oxford University Press. Pages. 324-337

<sup>5</sup> Morrison, T. (1991). *The Site of Memory*. In: M. J. McGurl, ed. *The Oxford Book of American Essays*. Oxford University Press. Pages. 324-337



Figure 4. Chair workshop, Authors own Image

### A WORKSHOP WITH JACK O'BRIAN:

In January 2024, MARCH worked with the artist Jack O'Brien to explore the relationship between the built environment, found materials and queer failures. The queering of a chair provided a structure at a workable scale, where through embracing collective making practices, we could reimagine mainstream objects.

### DESIGNING WITH QUEER FAILURE:

All counter-culture movements are intrinsically creative, as they go against the mainstream. The design of protest tools references the voices of those who have gone before, particularly groups who have fought to have their voices heard. Disobedient objects can be understood through the lens of Jack Halberstam's theory of 'queer failure.' Halberstam offers a radical alternative that aligns with forms of resistance rejecting nominativity to challenge systems of power and binary social expectations.<sup>1</sup>

Disobedient objects embody resourcefulness and nonconformity, rejecting mainstream trends of taste to create new tools of resistance.<sup>2</sup> Like queer failure, imperfection is celebrated and the lack of formal skills in making and designing objects is overcome by the creative agency of those who produce them. The relationship between queer culture and creative protest reflects a powerful resistance against mainstream systems and driving the fight for liberation through craft.

### WHAT IS CRAFTIVISM?

Craft in activism can be seen throughout history, but the term 'craftivism' was coined by Betsy Greer in 2003 as 'a way of looking at life, where voicing opinions through creativity makes your voice stronger, your compassion deeper.'<sup>3</sup> Craftivism seeks to use craft as a political tool for positive change, through gentle, subversive action. While craft has previously been seen as domestic or purely decorative, reclaiming craft to communicate resistance can be an inclusive and accessible way of protesting.<sup>4</sup>

Activism can be difficult to plan and participate in. Not all bodies can be a part of marches and some are at more danger from authorities. Craftivism includes and empowers all bodies including those with disabilities, children, women and other minoritised groups to create change. The emphasis on care and pleasure from acts of

slow resistance, strengthen our understanding of our own creativity within our bodies.

### INSIDE THE WHITE CUBE:

Craftivism brings political activism and community engagement into the traditionally formal art world. Exhibitions such as Disobedient Objects have started to celebrate such work, and yet the art galleries they are displayed in still remain detached from the political agency of the objects. Art historian Brian O'Doherty's essay, 'Inside the White Cube' critiques the sterile, neutral environment of galleries that often separate art from the world outside.<sup>1</sup> However, gallery spaces offer a platform for exploring and presenting objects that challenge societal norms and could offer a new alternative space for protest.

### SELECTIVE INCLUSION:

The Victoria and Albert's Disobedient Objects exhibition, is an example of a gallery that explored this realm, exhibiting objects from key social movements. In the exhibition catalogue, Catherine Flood and Gavin Grindon write how much of art history is selective inclusion, shaped by the market of collectors.<sup>2</sup> Institutions have the power over which objects are deemed culturally valuable, and the creativity of other classes were mostly excluded from their collections. So what about the histories and cultures of the communities, grassroots organisations, anarchists and radical thinkers? Yet these social moments are no doubt one of the key drivers of mainstream culture and politics.

It is to be acknowledged that the objects referenced in this essay, vary in their political message and their power, privilege, and access. Not all these objects have been made by activists but some by the communities of which social change, class struggle and division of labour is part of their everyday.<sup>3</sup> Because of this, objects vary in their aesthetic, type and style. There is no 'style' of disobedience, just the resourcefulness and creativity that defines them.



Figure 5. Palestine march, Authors own image

<sup>1</sup> Halberstam, J. (2011) *The Queer Art of Failure*. Durham: Duke University Press.

<sup>2</sup> Flood, C. and Grindon, G. (2014). *Disobedient Objects*. London: V & A Publishing.

<sup>3</sup> Greer, B., 'Craftivism', *Encyclopedia of Activism and Social Justice* (SAGE Publications, 2007)

<sup>4</sup> Corbett, S. (2019). *How to be a craftivist: the art of gentle protest*. London: Unbound. Pages 68-73

<sup>1</sup> O'Doherty, B. (1986). *Inside the White Cube: The Ideology of the Gallery Space*. 1st ed. University of California Press.

<sup>2</sup> Flood, C. and Grindon, G. (2014). *Disobedient Objects*. London: V & A Publishing. Pages. 7-16

<sup>3</sup> Andrew X. (2003). *Give Up Activism: Do or Die*. In: *Do or Die Magazine*, Issue 10. Pages. 14-19.



Figure 6. Stand up to Racism arrest, Authors own image

# KNOW YOUR RIGHTS:

# YOUR BUST CARD:



Figure 7. London bustcard example, Green & Black Cross

A bust card will contain basic information and advice for what to do if you are arrested, or stopped and searched at a protest. Users may make their own or download pre-made resources, categorised by location. If you are attending an action, printed bustcards are often handed out by stewards and legal observers.<sup>1</sup>

## WHAT IS A LEGAL OBSERVER?

Legal observers are trained volunteers, who attend protests in order to support the legal rights of activists.<sup>2</sup> While having no official legal power, they can offer advice to protesters through distributing bust cards, witnessing the actions of police and most importantly monitoring arrests. Observers are often found at the front, or sides of a crowd and can be identified by their orange hi-vis vests with the words 'Legal Observer'. If you are interested in becoming a legal observer, you can attend free training through organisations such as Green and Black Cross.<sup>3</sup>

## POLICING PROTEST

Article 11 of the European Convention of Human Rights provides freedom of assembly, meaning any individual, regardless of cause, has the right to protest, march or demonstrate.<sup>4</sup> These rights only apply to public spaces and anyone protesting on private property without the permission of the occupier are likely to be viewed as a trespasser.

Authorities can impose conditions to manage the location, duration and size of a protest, and make attending marches harder. Any limitation to the right to protest must be outlined in legislation and be necessary either in the interest of national security or public safety, to prevent disorder or crime or to protect others' rights and freedoms.

Figure 7: London bustcard example, Green & Black Cross, Available at: <https://greenandblackcross.org/guides/bustcard/#london>

<sup>1</sup> Bustcards, Informed Dissent. (2023)

<sup>2</sup> What is a Legal Observer? Green and Black Cross. (n.d.)

<sup>3</sup> What is a Legal Observer? Green and Black Cross. (n.d.)

<sup>4</sup> European Court of Human Rights (ECHR). (1950). European Convention on Human Rights: Article 11 - Freedom of Assembly and Association.

During protests, police can impose conditions to manage public order and enforce laws. Understanding your rights before attending a protest, rally or site of disobedience is important in limiting the chances of yourself or others being in trouble with the law.

1. Authorities have the power to stop and search anyone that may be under suspicion of carrying items that may cause damage or offense. The search should be tailored to the items they are looking for and you are not legally required to give personal details, unless a fixed penalty notice is issued (which is under a specific anti-social behaviour power).<sup>1</sup>

2. If you find yourself approached by police or witness an arrest, check the officer is acting lawfully and ask under what power they are using. Protect yourself and others by not engaging with any conversation with authorities that may be used to gather information and answering 'no comment' to any questions if you are arrested.<sup>2</sup>

3. If it is proved you are aware of the imposed conditions of a protest and chose to break them, you may be convicted of an offence under Section 12 and 14 of the Public Order Act. Officers may do this by handing out leaflets or making announcements, and it is important to not accept or pass on any of this material to fellow protesters.<sup>3</sup>

4. If arrested it is recommend by Green and Black Cross to use a lawyer experienced in protest, and not the solicitor on duty at stations. If you are in London recommended organisations include HJA, Bindmans, ITN or ringing GBC on 07946541511.<sup>4</sup>

5. Officers may try to get protesters to accept a caution, which will appear as an admission of guilt. Do not accept a caution, unless advised by your legal team, as this will appear on your criminal record.<sup>5</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Key Advice when Going on a Protest, Green and Black Cross. (2023).

<sup>2</sup> Mini briefing on common policing powers used on a demo, Green and Black Cross. (2025)

<sup>3</sup> Mini briefing on common policing powers used on a demo, Green and Black Cross. (2025)

<sup>4</sup> Key Advice when Going on a Protest, Green and Black Cross. (2023)

<sup>5</sup> Witnessing a stop and search, Informed Dissent. (2024)



Figure 8. Inflatables for protest V&amp;A Blog

**When:** May 2012, Barcelona

**Category:** Inflatable

**Description:** Throughout his career, artist and activist Artur van Balen has collaborated with different political groups to produce a series of inflatable protest objects.<sup>1</sup> The inflatable cobblestones featured in the V&A's Disobedient Objects exhibition, were designed with collective Electric Electric, for the 2012 General Strike demonstration in Barcelona.<sup>2</sup> Made out of silver-reflective foil and tape, the "stones" became a celebration of a symbol of resistance of anti-authoritarian struggle, with a touch of tactical frivolity. Doubling as a provocative symbol, as well as a mobile barricade, the authorities interacting with the cobblestones resulted in a playful dance of inflation and deflation as the police tried to destroy the balloons.

**'The use of cobblestones in social uprisings is however much older. [...] Taking stones out of the pavement is a favoured act of those who refuse to consent to an oppressive social order.'**<sup>3</sup>

**Reflection:** Building inflatables is a collective effort and one that brings together activists to share knowledge, solidarity and support. Tools for Action have documented these collective makings and provided 'how to' videos as a resource for visibility and agency, as well as countering commercialisation discourse. The inflatables can be mass produced for different protests and are still a great way of transforming in minutes from being discreetly hidden in a backpack, to temporarily reclaiming public space. The ephemeral and playful form captivates the media and engages more attention in social movements.



Figure 9. Inflation Houses, V&amp;A Blog

#### SOVIET CELEBRATIONS:

The use of inflatables can be traced back to the Soviet Union parades in the 1930s, as photographed by Georg Zelma. Inflatables has various themes including housing reform, symbols of production and political ridicule.<sup>4</sup>

At the same time, American department store Macy's began its now famous carnival parade with inflatable figures such as Walt Disney's Mickey Mouse. The inflatables have become a tool of mass media communication and spectacle for both Socialist and Capitalist campaigns, and we can continue to see their influence today.

**Tactical Frivolity:** See Glossary (Page 3) for further information.

Figure 9: Inflatables for protest, V&A Blog, Available at: <https://www.vam.ac.uk/blog/disobedient-objects>

Figure 10: Inflatables houses, V&A Blog, Available at: <https://www.vam.ac.uk/blog/disobedient-objects>

<sup>1</sup> Van Balen, A. (2014). Inflatables for Protest. [online] V&A Blog. 3 July 2014.

<sup>2</sup> Flood, C. and Grindon, G. (2014). Disobedient Objects. London: V & A Publishing.

<sup>3</sup> Van Balen, A. (2012). Inflatable cobblestones (Berlin 2012). [online] Tools for Action.

<sup>4</sup> Van Balen, A. (2014). Inflatables for Protest. [online] V&A Blog. 3 July 2014.



Figure 10. Air Draft, Antepavillion

#### ANTEPAVILLION:

Designed by Thomas Randall-Page and Benedetta Rogers as a two-level inflatable space on top of a river barge, the 2018 Antepavilion used inflation and deflation to change the structures shape in just over 5 minutes.<sup>3</sup> The pop up structure creates a space of performance, theatre and comedy, with its pillow-like structure being something the public could physically interact with. The more bodies that walked, sat and interacted with the balloon, would result in the form changing and created a responsive architectural typology.

**When:** January 1968, Italy

**Category:** Inflatable

**Description:** The Urboeffimeri UFO were a group of architecture students founded in 1967, Florence. The group set out to transform architecture into actions, through performance and happenings of tubular inflatable structures, made from polyethylene. Later series often were used as tools of communication, with provocative slogans written on the side of the structures drawing attention to themes of conflict such as the Vietnam War.<sup>1</sup> These large scale structures were activated in Florence's piazza during the student protests of 1968, occupying and disrupting urban space as instruments of protest.<sup>2</sup> The sites of protest became just as important to the groups work, as the objects themselves, with the contrast of the playful structures against the monumental backdrop of the city.

**'The cities, the territory as theatre, presents a sort of ready-made.'**<sup>3</sup>

**Reflection:** The public spaces occupied by the Urboeffimeri, become activated by the introduction of foreign objects. These playful structures capture the attention of citizens, engaging them with writings on the urban policies that impact their lives, using public art as a means of intervention and change. Inflatables still have purpose today as an object situated between play and disobedience. This approach could be modernised into a structure for participatory exchange, serving as an evolving billboard of ideas. Tools only come to life when being activated by bodies.



Figure 11. Urboeffimeri, Fondazione Palazzo Strozzi

**Happenings:** See Glossary (Page 3) for further information.

Figure 12: Urboeffimeri, Fondazione Palazzo Strozzi, Available at: <https://www.palazzostrozzi.org/en/archivio/exhibitions/radical-utopias/>

<sup>1</sup>Piccardo, E. (2013). UFO Story, from Radical Architecture to Global Design Centro Pecci for contemporary art. Domus.

<sup>2</sup>Piccardo, E. (2013). UFO Story, from Radical Architecture to Global Design Centro Pecci for contemporary art. Domus.

<sup>3</sup>Fiorani, E. (2012) Geografie dell'abitare, Milano: Lupetti.



Figure 12. Common Practice, V&amp;A Blog

**When:** 2011 (Never realised), New York

**Category:** Inflatable/Architecture

**Description:** Common Practice, a group of architects and activists, came together in response to the weather conditions at Zuccotti Park, where protesters were camping outside in Winter. Fast collective action was necessary to battle the weather and to maximise warm spaces for protesters. The group focused on designing structures that could be easily replicated and sourced. Instruction booklets were created that could be distributed through the non-hierarchical organisation of the park encampment.<sup>1</sup>

**‘We began to understand our own practice of architecture as basically the production of instructions. We were seeing architecture not as the built product, but as the coding of information that would inform it.’<sup>2</sup>**

**Reflection:** Although never built, this project is a great example of the agency of designers and architects in designing spatial solutions above the general assembly of occupation zones. The structure can be seen as a call to gather and occupy space, being designed to be easily erected and relocated. The design creates a protective bubble, using inflatable skin to separate the occupied space from the immediate public environment. This defines the space of resistance, with the structure both practically and symbolically acting as a shield.



Figure 13. Inflatable room, Authors own image

#### INFLATABLE ROOM:

Back in 2018, I worked with collaborator Daniel Leckhoff to create a pop-up meeting space. Lightweight, low-budget and easily transportable, the structure could be activated to create a private bubble within public spaces.

Made from polyethylene sheets and tape, the structure was easy to construct, but depended on a fan to fill the space. While this worked well inside, when used in a public environment the structure was fragile and relied on temperamental portable fans or wind.

Figure 13: Common Practice, V&A Blog, Available at: <https://www.vam.ac.uk/blog/disobedient-objects/designing-for-the-common-goals-of-people-an-interview-with-common-practice>

Figure 14: Air Draft, Antepavillion, Available at: <https://www.antepavillion.org/2018-winner>

<sup>1</sup> Duarte, S. (2014). Designing for the Common Goals of People [online] V&A Blog. 17 Sept 2014.

<sup>2</sup> Duarte, S. (2014). Designing for the Common Goals of People [online] V&A Blog. 17 Sept 2014.

<sup>3</sup> Block, I. (2018). Inflatable yellow theatre barge pops-up on east London canal. [online] Dezeen. 9 August 2018.



Figure 14. Dope, Londonist

### DOPE MAGAZINE:

DOPE is a supporter-funded magazine focused on politics, art, and culture, working towards social transformation. The organisation is based on anarchist principles, that forefronts direct action and provides readers with possible solutions. The organisation socialises its profits by using money from supporters that can spare it, to pay for publication & distribution generating cash for its vendors that need it.<sup>4</sup>

Each quarterly issue features collaborative storytelling of first hand accounts to informative illustrations. The magazine is plurally voiced and features writers from marginalised groups including homeless people, sex-workers, and queer people. Magazines can be found across London, including my local vendor outside Finsbury Park Station.

**When:** 1967-1971, London and South Africa

**Category:** Guerilla Warfare

**Description:** In South Africa in 1970 the racist apartheid regime had destroyed domestic opposition efforts, and activist Oliver Tambo, deployed a top secret plan.<sup>1</sup> While much of this effort will never been known due to the secrecy of the group, a recent documentary ([London Recruits](#)) follows the efforts of Ronnie Kasrils and a small group of freedom fighters, scheming from the United Kingdom.

Kasrils trained ordinary men and women in London before sending them to South Africa, specifically using white bodies, that would go under the radar and seen as 'allies' to the apartheid regime. The group designed leaflet 'bombs' that when detonated would spray 500 leaflets 20m into the sky and spread pro African National Congree (ANC) information.<sup>2</sup>

**'Because of its reproducibility, low cost and potential for graphic expressiveness, the print is an ideal way to voice opposition. Prints are often a form of public art, as they are circulated widely outside the private sphere.'**<sup>3</sup>

**Reflection:** Key to success of the design was the deliberate decision for the bombs to be harmless and not cause casualties. Having the moral high ground, the ANC wanted to show they were above killing and wanted freedom for all, gaining new supporters and sympathisers.

[London Recruits](#): See Glossary (Page 3) for further information.

Figure 15: Dope, Londonist, Available at: <https://londonist.com/london/features/dope-magazine-homeless-london>

Figure 16: ANC Leaflet, *The Guardian*, Available at: <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2015/dec/06/>

<sup>1</sup>Jefferies, S. (2015). The leaflet bombers: the London recruits who fought apartheid from within. *Guardian*.

<sup>2</sup>Jefferies, S. (2015). The leaflet bombers: the London recruits who fought apartheid from within. *Guardian*.

<sup>3</sup>Caplow, D. (2009). *Paper Politics: Socially Engaged Printmaking Today*. United States: PM Press, Pages 10 - 20.

<sup>4</sup>Magazine, D. (2025). *DOPE Magazine*. [online] DOPE Magazine.

# THE AFRICAN NATIONAL CONGRESS SAYS TO VORSTER AND HIS GANG:



## YOUR DAYS ARE COMING TO AN END!!

- ★ You teach that black is lazy yet wherever you look it is our sweat which makes your gold and money while even the most useless white stands there as our boss.
- ★ You pretend that black is ignorant. But you know that even our professors, our doctors, our lawyers and our teachers have less rights than even the most ignorant white labourer.
- ★ You have the cheek to say that in our own country black is foreign whilst every white immigrant who has never before breathed the air of Africa can come here and become our lord and master.
- ★ Like a lying thief you want the world to believe that the national home of the black people is in those little corners of our land which you call "Bantustans" whilst the natural home of every white is in the rich cities we have built and on the land which you have stolen from our forefathers.
- ★ You think you can treat black people like children and you give us toy parliaments to play with whilst every white youth from the age of 18 can vote for the parliament which rules our country and the Bantustans.
- ★ Because you are frightened of us you spread the lie that the black people of the world are not fit to rule even in their own countries yet you know that it is the white imperialist governments who have in this century killed and maimed more people than at any time in history.

WE LAUGH IN YOUR FACES AT ALL THIS NONSENSE AND TOGETHER WITH OUR COLOURED AND INDIAN BROTHERS WE SAY "MOVE OVER OR YOU WILL BE PUSHED".

**WE WILL TAKE BACK OUR COUNTRY!**

Figure 15. ANC Leaflet, *The Guardian*



**When:** 2021 - Present, 17 Countries

**Category:** Puppet

**Description:** Little Amal, a 3.5m tall manually operated puppet, is an ongoing performance art project of a 10 year old Syrian girl.<sup>1</sup> Designed by Handspring Puppet company, Amal's imagery uses art as a beacon of hope and draws attention to the thousands of children suffering at the hands of war. The design of the puppet plays into the whimsical creativity of protest, transforming the narrative of a refugee to one of hope and dignity.

Amal was designed to be part of the wider art programme; The Walk, a travelling art festival. The Walk celebrates the multicultures of each city hosted by a range of artists and art organisations.<sup>2</sup> Everything about the festival is designed to be communal and encourage collective creativity and solidarity. Even Amal herself cannot be operated without multiple Puppetistas operating her.

## 'HOPE. Too BIG to ignore.'<sup>3</sup>

**Reflection:** Through the celebration of artistic expression, the Puppetistas have dismantled hate and fear, offering social commentary on the lives of the vulnerable and advocating for change. Amal has become a symbol of strength and hope, bringing thousands of people together in sensitive and conflicted zones.

As with many protest puppets, Amal's size allows her to stand above a crowd and becomes too big to ignore. This could have been designed to be intimidating, but the design of playfully large red boots, and visible DIY torso has made the figure approachable and fun. This 'anti-monument' uses the utilitarian skills of creating new ephemeral objects of collective protest. Using gentle activism like this engages people from all ages and backgrounds, provoking deeper discussions about the root cause.

Puppetistas: See Glossary (Page 3) for further information.

Figure 17: Little Amal, The Walk Available at: <https://www.walkwithamal.org> [Accessed 7 Jan. 2024].

<sup>1</sup> Lan, D. (2023). Our Little Amal has travelled thousands of miles – but there is still far to go. *The Guardian*.

<sup>2</sup> Wilson, R. and Quinn, C. (2024). Little Amal: Syrian refugee child puppet arrives in Belfast. *BBC News*.

<sup>3</sup> [walkwithamal.org](https://www.walkwithamal.org). (n.d.). *The Walk* | July to November 2021.



Figure 17. Camden Biennale performance, Authors own image

### GRANARY SQUARE TROLL:

In Summer 2024, myself and a team from the Lethaby Gallery, organised an afternoon of workshops in line with the Camden Biennale exhibition.

The use of the Troll (designed by Sabrina @nonagonnnnn and Molly @zombi.mombi) was to create a 'spectacle' in the public realm of Granary Square, attracting new visitors and resulting in more footfall through the gallery. Many of the children following and playing with the troll, came and engaged in the following workshops I hosted after the performance.



Figure 18. Block Bloc, Authors own image

#### PROTEST PROP WORKSHOP:

At the start of February 2025, we the [Megabloc](#) hosted a weekend of prop-making at Pelican House in Bethnal Green. The workshop aimed to link land and governance through a series of prop making exercises, in which we promote the works of Palestinian authors. Objects made were inspired by Book Bloc shields, later covered in this compendium.<sup>4</sup> However, as left blank for now the objects also offer a canvas for art, murals and other creative displays of defiance.

**When:** 1937 (Painted) - Present (Replicated), Spain

**Category:** Painting/Mural

**Description:** Pablo Picasso painted Guernica in 1937 as a reaction to the mass casualties resulting from the bombing of the Basque town of Gernika. The painting depicts a scene of spatial uncertainty, which is neither exterior or interior due to the ruins of bombings. Silhouettes merge with objects to create a unified form of devastation.<sup>1</sup> So horrified by the images he saw, Picasso accompanied the painting with a poem relaying the devastating scenes (shown on the following pages).

In 1947, artist Ad Reinhardt wrote an article for the leftist publication P.M., analysing the symbolic representation of the imagery and figures in the painting, which has become a monument of protest against the death and destruction caused by war. This imagery is still used today such as protesting the Iraq war in 2003 and the banners made by students in Barcelona for Catalan independence.

**‘Not just a simple poster or banal political-cartoon which you can easily understand (and forget) in a few minutes, but a design that diagrams our whole present dark age.’<sup>3</sup>**

**Reflection:** Painted almost 90 years ago, Guernica’s call for solidarity and compassion across borders is still referenced today. There are now hundreds of versions of Guernica carried on tapestries, placards, banners, flags, and painted on the side of buildings. The painting is now a symbol of anti-war and advocacy against war crimes. The tragedy depicted in the painting creates such a terrorising spectacle, the significance is felt by the viewer and appears almost timeless.

**Megabloc:** See Glossary (Page 3) for further information.

Figure 20: Barcelona Protest, ArtNews, Available at: <https://www.artnews.com/art-news/artists/picasso-guernica-exhibitions-anti-war-symbol>

<sup>1</sup> Clark, T.J., Marisa García Vergara and Sofía R. (2017). Pity and Terror : Picasso’s path to Guernica. Madrid: Museo Nacional Centro De Arte Reina Sofia. Pages 19-60

<sup>2</sup> Reinhardt, A (1947), How to Look at a Mural, P.M., New York

<sup>3</sup> Reinhardt, A (1947), How to Look at a Mural, P.M., New York

<sup>4</sup> See Pages 28-29 for further information



Figure 19. Barcelona Protest, ArtNews

le charbon plie les draps brodés de la cire des aigles  
tombant en pluie de rires l'écheveau glacé des  
flammes du ciel vide sur la peau  
déchirée de la maison dans un coin au fond du tiroir de  
l'armoire vomit ses ailes

claque à la fenêtre oubliée sur le vide  
le drap noir déchiré du miel  
glacé des flammes du ciel  
sur la peau arrachée à la maison  
dans un coin au fond du tiroir  
l'aigle vomit ses ailes

sur la peau arrachée à la maison  
claque à la fenêtre oubliée au centre du vide infini  
le miel noir du drap déchiré par des flammes glacées  
du ciel l'aigle vomit ses ailes

au centre infini du vide sur la peau arrachée à la maison  
claquent à la fenêtre les bras nus du miel du  
drap noir déchiré par la glace des flammes du  
ciel empuanté par l'aigle vomissant ses ailes

a fenêtre oubliée au centre de la nuit secoue  
le drap noir dévoré par la glace des flammes  
l'aigle vomit ses ailes sur le miel du ciel  
immobile au centre de l'espace  
la peau arrachée à la maison  
secoue le drap noir de sa fenêtre  
l'aigle pris dans les glaces  
vomit ses ailes dans le ciel

le drap noir de la fenêtre claque sur la joue du ciel  
emporté par l'aigle vomissant ses ailes  
arraché des dents du mur de la maison la fenêtre secoue son  
drap dans le charbon du bleu grillé aux lampes  
les ongles des persiennes  
abandonnent la lutte ses ailes à la chance

The coal folds the sheets embroidered with the wax of the eagles  
raining down in laughter the icy skin of  
flames from the empty sky onto the torn  
skin of the house in a corner at the bottom of the drawer  
in the wardrobe vomits its wings

snaps at the forgotten window onto the void  
the torn black sheet of the frozen  
honey of the sky's flames  
on the skin torn from the house  
in a corner at the bottom of the drawer  
the eagle vomits its wings

on the skin torn from the house  
snaps at the window forgotten at the center of the infinite void  
the black honey of the sheet torn by icy flames  
from the sky the eagle vomits its wings

in the infinite centre of the void on the skin from the house  
snap at the window the naked arms of the honey of the  
black sheet torn by the ice of the flames of the  
sky stunk out by the eagle vomiting its wings

The window forgotten at the centre of the night shakes  
the black sheet devoured by the ice of the flames  
the eagle vomits its wings on the honey of the sky  
still in the centre of the space  
the skin torn from the house  
shakes the black sheet from its window  
the eagle set in the ice  
vomits its wings in the sky

the black sheet of the window snaps at the cheek of the sky  
carried away by the eagle vomiting its wings  
torn from the teeth of the wall of the house the window shakes its  
sheet in the coal of the blue grilled by maps  
the nails of the shutters  
give up the struggle its wings to chance

<sup>1</sup> Picasso, P., Marie-Laure Bernadac and Piot, C. (1989). Picasso: Collected Writings. Paris: Gallimard, Pages 210-11.



**When:** 1982 (Painted) - Present (Replicated), Iraq

**Category:** Painting

**Description:** Iraqi Artist Dia Al-Azzawi began this response to the massacre of hundreds of Palestinian and Lebanese refugees in 1982.<sup>1</sup> The scale of the devastation is felt through the mural-sized canvases. The words of Jean Genet's "Four Hours in Shatila" became the inspiration for the scenes, drawing the stories as a way of sharing the horrors with the world.<sup>2</sup> As Susan Sontag writes in her book 'Regarding the Pain of Others', we are fairly shielded from the horrors of war, and can only absorb the reality of it if it can be made vivid enough.<sup>3</sup> Here the drawing of a 'manifesto of dismay and anger' does exactly that.

**'To process the loss of his homeland through his own visual language, and also to provide a very necessary testimony to a crime perpetrated.'**<sup>4'</sup>

**Reflection:** Side by side, Al-Azzawi's Sabra and Shatila and Picasso's Guernica, both draw attention to the catastrophic tragedy of war and act as a warning to not repeat history. And yet, these images are even more chilling when reflecting on the vulnerability of people living in current war zones including, but by no means extensive, Palestine, Lebanon, Congo and Ukraine.

At a recent Palestine protest I saw a poster of some of the imagery depicted in Azzawi's drawing, and was incredibly moved by the people of Palestine's constant pursuit of justice. Although the drawings are 2D and could be categorised as 'not spatial', it felt important to include this timeless imagery within this archive.



Figure 21. Palestine March, Authors own image

**LARGE PROTEST FLAG:**

Whenever myself or my friends attend a march, we always keep an eye out for interesting banners, placards and objects. There is usually an imbalance of resources activists have access to, and the authorities they are protesting against. This results in unique, homemade designs such as this large peace flag. Once a bedsheet, the addition of a glittery door fringe and a large metal pole, has made this huge visual impact on the procession, and is used as a ordination object to meet with friends in a march.

Figure 21: Sabra and Shatila Massacre, Tate, Available at: <https://www.tate.org.uk/art/artists/dia-al-azzawi-15929>

<sup>1</sup>Map.org.uk. (2023). MAP stands in solidarity with survivors of Sabra and Shatila in their pursuit of justice and rights - Latest News & Developments - Medical Aid for Palestinians.

<sup>2</sup>Nayeri, F. (2016). Painting the Arab World, From Afar. The New York Times.

<sup>3</sup>Sontag, S. (2013). Regarding the Pain of Others. Farrar, Straus and Giroux.

<sup>4</sup>Kafil-Hussain M. (2022). DIA AL-AZZAWI. Meem Gallery.



Figure 22. Pride, Authors own image

### 2024 PRIDE PARADE:

Today's Pride parades are a continuation of hybrid protest and celebration for the LGBTQIA+ community. Pride acknowledges the past histories and testimonies of the people that have fought for queer rights, while celebrating newer voices and educating a diverse audience.

The very essence of queer DIY culture provides a mean to express yourself outside of the binary societal norms, rebelling against the institutions and systems of power that exclude them. The use of collective art remains a vital methodology of attendees to express their identities and peacefully advocate for meaningful change.<sup>5</sup>

**When:** 1991, London

**Category:** Civil Disobedience

**Description:** The Reclaim the Streets (RTS) movement in May 1995, occupied London's Camden High Street, an area that had seen a rapid commercialisation of its alternative scene. The movement used non-violent forms of protest and intelligent barricades to take direct action against capitalist car culture, and lobby for increased mobility and safety for cyclists and pedestrians.<sup>1</sup>

On May 14th 1995, two cars theatrically "crashed" into each other, creating a blockade of which hundreds of people swarmed around.<sup>2</sup> This temporary barrier of bodies in the form of a street party, transformed the use of urban space into a communal commons. The street became a place to play, socialise and dance without the structures of social order and monetary gain. This movement became the first in a series of protests reclaiming urban space. However, the Criminal Justice and Public Order Act of November 1994, cracked down on the countercultural leisure and political dissidence of these movements. Raves and illegal gatherings where people dance to the 'succession of repetitive beats<sup>3</sup>' were specifically attacked and the system was changed to a criminal offence.

**'If you want to change the city, you have to control the streets.'**<sup>4</sup>

**Reflection:** These social movements saw a shift in the mobilisation of protest through collective artistic expression. Theatre, dance and music allows one to be part of the performance, engaging the emotional and spiritual response to art. This creative positivity, forms an alliance with one another, providing a feeling of hopeful change.<sup>5</sup> The RTS movement is not separate from today's protests, and continuous threads can be seen through Extinction Rebellion, Just Stop Oil & Pride.<sup>4</sup>



Figure 23. Street Party, Beautiful Trouble

**Intelligent Barricades:** See Glossary (Page 3) for further information.

Figure 24: Street Party, Beautiful Trouble, Available at: <https://beautifultrouble.org/toolbox/tool/reclaim-the-streets>

<sup>1</sup> McKay, G. (1998) DiY Culture: Party & Protest in Nineties Britain, Verso.

<sup>2</sup> McKay, G. (1998) DiY Culture: Party & Protest in Nineties Britain, Verso.

<sup>3</sup>Criminal Justice and Public Order Act, op cit, section 63, subsection 1b

<sup>4</sup> Reclaim the Streets. (1995) Street Party Flyer

<sup>5</sup> Staggenborg, S. Eder, D. & Sudderth, L. (1993-1994) Women's culture and social change, Berkeley Journal of Sociology, 38, Pages. 31-56



**When:** November 2007 - Present, Multiple

**Category:** Props

**Description:** The history of the Book Bloc can be traced back to the Onda, an Italian student movement in 2007 fighting against Silvio Berlusconi's education reform.<sup>1</sup> Inspired by, and in solidarity with the Italian demonstrations, London activists took the book bloc to the student and public sector workers' protests of 2010. United against European austerity policies, protesters from London to Rome took to the streets demanding change.

Organised by groups of students, protest shields made out of plexiglas and cardboard were used to resist violent police lines guarding red zones of political power.<sup>2</sup> The shields were made in universities that became celebratory places of creative freedom, inspiring the shields form of books, with titles used deemed important to the cause. Books used for education, knowledge sharing, freedom of speech, and creativity, became reclaimed as a defensive tool against the state's violence against free thought, expression and education.

**'They had a transversal, pluralistic appeal.'**<sup>3</sup>

**Reflection:** The powerful symbolism of the book shields against the brutality of the police, communicated with sympathisers and resulted in wide media coverage. The events embodied that ideas can literally shield people, and those who engage in prefigurative politics can find protection in words of subversion. Words and knowledge can become a physical power and offer protection against authorities. Since the first pioneering design of a photographic shield by the Tute Bianche movement in 2001<sup>4</sup>, DIY shields have inspired a wave of reappearances in cycles of struggle up to the present day.



Figure 25. Book Burning, Al Jazeera

#### ISRAELI SOLDIER BURNING LIBRARY:

The direct governing of knowledge and access to information is not an isolated event and has been prevalent in recent news stories. This photo from May 2024 shows an Israeli soldier posing in front of the burning of Central Library in Gaza, Palestine. Book burning and the destruction of places of education infringe on the Universal Declaration of Human Right to access and enjoy cultural heritage.<sup>5</sup> These rules of law are an recognition of the equal right for human dignity.

**Prefigurative Politics:** See Glossary (Page 3) for further information.

Figure 25: Book Bloc, *Critical Legal thinking*, Available at: <https://criticallegalthinking.com/2010/12/17/biblioclasm-and-the-book-bloc/>

Figure 26: Book Burning, Al Jazeera, Available at: <https://www.aljazeera.com/news/2024/8/24/>

<sup>1</sup> Flood, C. and Grindon, G. (2014). *Disobedient Objects*. London: V & A Publishing. Pages 56-59

<sup>2</sup> Flood, C. and Grindon, G. (2014). *Disobedient Objects*. London: V & A Publishing. Pages 56-59

<sup>3</sup> Flood, C. and Grindon, G. (2014). *Disobedient Objects*. London: V & A Publishing. Pages 56-59

<sup>4</sup> Flood, C. and Grindon, G. (2014). *Disobedient Objects*. London: V & A Publishing. Page 57

<sup>5</sup> United Nations (1948). *Universal Declaration of Human Rights*.



Figure 26. Paper protest, Falmouth Packet

### PROTEST WITHOUT WORDS:

A blank placard, banner or piece of paper holds many possibilities for protest, as seen in more modern day events in China and Russia. However, in February 2023 a man in the UK was arrested for holding up a piece of paper, when the Prince and Princess of Wales were visiting the National Maritime Museum in Falmouth.<sup>4</sup> It is very concerning that people are being arrested not even for republican views, but for a blank sheet of paper.

**When:** 1967, San Francisco

**Category:** Props/Performance

**Description:** The Blank Placard Dance was choreographed and designed by Anna Halprin in the 1970s, as a response to the USA's involvement in the Vietnam war and broader counterculture movement.<sup>1</sup> Originally performed by members of her San Francisco Dancers Workshop, the performers, dressed all in white, paraded in a line through public space, and holding blank placards. Each performer was careful to stay 10 metres apart, in order to avoid the local ordinance governing the need for a protest permit.<sup>2</sup> Passers-by would be intrigued by the silent performance and asked what they were protesting, initiating conversation and deeper discussions. Halprin's approach allowed multiple protests to go on simultaneously, while never placing significance or importance of one over another, with viewers having the freedom to imagine whatever cause they wanted on the placards.

**'To foster a climate of community and personal reflection among performers as well as the audience.'**<sup>3</sup>

**Reflection:** The political dimension of performance within the public sphere, transforms the street to a living theatre and the city its stage. Observers become part of the performance, giving one the gift of agency and direct experience with political intervention. At our current time of great uncertainty, one can feel exhausted by the multiple causes worth fighting for, and stretched in all directions. This way of creating a moment of solidarity for all conflicts is a really inclusive and sensitive approach.



**Counterculture:** See Glossary (Page 3) for further information.

Figure 27: Paper protest, Falmouth Packet, Available at: <https://www.falmouthpacket.co.uk/news>

Figure 28: Blank placard, Wikimedia, Available at: [https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Demonstratie\\_tegen\\_politiebeleid](https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Demonstratie_tegen_politiebeleid).

<sup>1</sup> Halprin, A., 1972. *Parades and Changes: The History of the Dancers' Workshop*. San Francisco: Dancers' Workshop Press.

<sup>2</sup> Mackrell, J. M., 1993. *Anna Halprin: Experiences in the Creative Arts*. New York: Twayne Publishers.

<sup>3</sup> Banes, S. (ed.) (2003) *Reinventing Dance in the 1960s: Everything Was Possible*. University of Wisconsin Press. Page 37

<sup>4</sup> Gold, T. (2023). *Nobody wins when the police detain people for holding up blank paper*.

**When:** 2025, London

**Category:** Exhibition

**Description:** Addressing the political turmoil of the last decade, Peter Kennard's exhibition at the Whitechapel Gallery, showcases the images of protest in shocking photo-montages. As they so often appear at marches, the montages are printed onto placards, with their slogan removed. The placards stand tall and upright, shouting their cries of anti-war. The imagery speaks loudly enough, and although some images are from the 1980s the same messages of the brutality of war can be applied to Gaza, Syria and so many more zones of conflict today.<sup>1</sup>

**'My art erupts from outrage at the fact that the search for financial profit rules every nook and cranny of our society.'**<sup>2</sup>

**Reflection:** Kennard's work is so hard hitting as it is grounded in reality. The photographic forms hint at everyday familiar objects, wounded and often ripped apart by the actions of conflict. The paradoxical imagery is clear in its intent, and strength lies in its simplicity. Even where objects are more ambiguous, the audience can recognise the brutality of the gestures used to create such images. Kennard's work not only exposes the violence of the systems of power, but also the creative possibilities that lie in the cracks inbetween.



Figure 29. Leftover Placards, Authors own image

#### A FUTURE RESOURCE:

On visiting the Archive of Dissent in January 2025, I had the pleasure of chatting with Peter Kennard about disobedience, protesting and everything inbetween! Peter told me how 'you get all these museums running around after a protest, fighting for memorabilia. The London museum against the Victoria and Albert etcetera.'<sup>3</sup> This led to a fascination with the protest placards becoming a resource for the future.



Figure 28. Peter Kennard at Whitechapel Gallery, Authors own image

<sup>1</sup> Cumming, L. (2024). Peter Kennard: Archive of Dissent review – definitive protest images that go beyond words. The Guardian.

<sup>2</sup> Peter Kennard at Whitechapelgallery.org. (2024).

<sup>3</sup> Authors own conversation with artist Peter Kennard, (18 Jan. 2025)





Figure 30. Dress up workshop, Authors own image

#### BETTE NUNNELEY :

A CSM alumni, Bette Nunneley is a jewellery maker, creating an entire collection using found coins. Bette queers the 'relics of our time'<sup>4</sup> into 'wearable acts of resistance'<sup>5</sup>, documenting how the designs are perceived in queer night spaces.

During my work for the Charting Constellations Panel for the Lethaby, Bette worked with us to create a photo booth for documenting her wearable art. Dressing up is inherently camp, but wearing defaced coins (an act that is actually illegal), Bette brought a new resistance and power to the portraits.

**When:** 2024, Speakers Corner

**Category:** Costume

**Description:** The costumes seen at Speakers Corner in London's Hyde Park, are a handful of examples of the plethora of costumes seen at protest movements. Costumes have the ability to immediately capture attention, making them a powerful tool to create a media spectacle that can go viral, sharing the message of protest. Tony Blair even commented on the 'travelling anarchist circus'<sup>1</sup>, referencing the range of puppets, performers and people in costumes that make up the variety of joyful protests. The costumes are not to make a mockery of the subjects of the protests, but used instead to diffuse tense situations with police and authorities, how can you argue with someone dressed in a puppet costume?

**'There is no clear line between puppets, costumes, banners and symbols, and simple probs. Everything is designed to overlap and reinforce.'**<sup>2</sup>

**Reflection:** Certainly, what I've dubbed 'Jesus is Alive man' or JAM for short, uses costume to project his views. An American, Trump supporting Christian, JAM plays into the stereotypical identity of his political party. This creates a visually unified association, that has more power than a lone supporter.

However, costumes are not just used to draw attention, but also as a means to protect their own identities. On speaking to 'Terminator 24' at Speakers Corner in November 2024, I understood the need for people to protect themselves in such a volatile space. T24 explained to me how he 'plays a character through dressing up'<sup>4</sup>, in order to not be defined by his persona.



Figure 31. Speakers Corner, Authors own image

<sup>1</sup> Castle, S. (2001). We won't give an inch to anarchist 'circus', vows Blair. The Independent.

<sup>2</sup> Flood, C. and Grindon, G. (2014). Disobedient Objects. London: V & A Publishing. Page 71

<sup>3</sup> Authors own conversation with Speakers Corner protester; Terminator (13 Oct. 2024)

<sup>4</sup> Authors own conversation with artist Bette Nunneley, (25 Oct. 2024)

<sup>5</sup> Authors own conversation with artist Bette Nunneley, (25 Oct. 2024)



Figure 32. El Siluetazo, Eduardo Gil

**When:** 1983, Argentina

**Category:** Collective Art Initiative

**Description:** The 'Dirty War' was a period of time in Argentina in 1983, marking the authorities involvement in human right violations, including kidnappings, torture and executions<sup>1</sup>. As a response to this hundreds of Argentinian civilians living under the dictatorship of General Jorge Rafael Videla, took to public squares to take part in a public art protest. Participants were invited to create silhouette drawings, combining artistic initiative with mass social movement. These silhouettes were then pasted on monuments, tree's and other public infrastructure as a way of representing the presence of the absence of all of the people 'missing' and killed under the military regime.<sup>2</sup>

**' The mass production of participatory posters, invited people to complete the blank spaces in the image.'<sup>3</sup>**

**Reflection:** The scale and participation of so many members of the community, was a large part of the success of this scheme. The complete absence of a human-scale figure evokes a deep emotion that is felt at ones very core, becoming an output of collective grief and memorialising loved ones.

This non-violent resistance, united art and politics through mass audience participation and welcomed new activists to be involved in direct action. In times of division, creating moments of solidarity and collective emotion is vital to remaining unified against systems of power. In a conversation with Peter Kennard, he mentioned that he was planning of repeating a similar exercise in Trafalgar square in August and I look forward to taking part in such a communal form of action.<sup>4</sup>



Figure 33. AIDS die-in, Tim Clary

**ACT UP NY:**

Founded in 1987, ACT UP is an international organisation formed as a response to the AIDS epidemic. The group became known for its provocative stunts<sup>3</sup> and public actions, as a way of attracting attention from the media and government. In New York at the time, tens of thousands of mostly gay men had died, with no response from officials. ACT UP became a social safe space advocating for change, as well as providing healthcare, legal help and access to information. Pictured above is one of the groups protest 'die-ins', where activists would lie down in public spaces as though dead, to represent all of the lives lost by AIDS. There is something so emotive about seeing bodies both stencilled and real, lying on the ground and has been used as a peaceful method to incite change.

Figure 33: El Siluetazo, Eduardo Gil, Available at: <https://alternativas.osu.edu/assets/files/issue9/ensayos/zicari-final.pdf>

Figure 34: AIDS die-in, Tim Clary, Falmouth Packet, Available at: <https://www.npr.org/sections/health-shots/2019/02/09/689924838>

<sup>1</sup> Feitlowitz, M., 2011. A Lexicon of Terror: Argentina and the Legacies of Torture. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

<sup>2</sup> Flood, C. and Grindon, G. (2014). Disobedient Objects. London: V & A Publishing. Page 104

<sup>3</sup> Flood, C. and Grindon, G. (2014). Disobedient Objects. London: V & A Publishing. Page 104

<sup>2</sup> Authors own conversation with artist Peter Kennard, (18 Jan. 2025)

<sup>3</sup> Schulman, S. Let the Record Show: A Political History of ACT UP New York, 1987-1993" (Farrar, Straus & Giroux)



Figure 34. Unchained, XR

## EXTINCTION REBELLION:

Extinction Rebellion was founded in 2018 with a 'declaration of rebellion', as a response to the climate crisis.<sup>4</sup> The group has a strong emphasis on the culture of participation, with any person welcomed to join the cause and advocate for the climate. The road signs (accessible on the Extinction Rebellion's website for anyone to use) used for mass protests are strikingly similar to GAC's work.

Both designs play on reclaiming and disrupting authoritative infrastructure for the groups causes. This civil disobedience often gains good coverage across media, and openly challenges our systems of power through familiar objects and objects.

**When:** 2002, Buenos Aires

**Category:** Civil Disobedience

**Description:** GAC, an art collective founded by students and graduates, teamed up with Etcetera Etcetera, a group of performance activists, to collaborate on their creative efforts.<sup>1</sup> The groups focused on direct action, tracking down the homes and locations of generals implicated in the genocide during the dictatorship. Exposure campaigns were organised by pasting posters in local neighbourhoods and creating signs that directed attention to sites of genocide and complicity. These efforts were accompanied by a map titled Criminals Live Here, marking the locations of over 100 homes occupied by perpetrators in 1976.<sup>2</sup>

**'We don't think politics necessarily needs to be practiced through conventional means ...[but seek to] create a space where art and politics can be part of a single mechanism of production.'**<sup>3</sup>

**Reflection:** The reappropriation of civil objects such as signs, stencils and surveys, is a fascinating way of fighting back against authority and creating iconoclasms. These protestations can easily go under the radar, while creating a sort of "secret code" that can be used to warn groups of danger or surveillance.

**Iconclasm:** See Glossary (Page 3) for further information.

Figure 35: Unchained, XR, Available at: <https://extinctionrebellion.uk/2019/10/09/xr-unchained-day-2-of-rebellion/>

Figure 36: GAC Signs, Flickr, Available at: <https://www.flickr.com/photos/gacgrupodeartecallejero/>

<sup>1</sup> Flood, C. and Grindon, G. (2014). *Disobedient Objects*. London: V & A Publishing. Page 103 - 105

<sup>2</sup> Flood, C. and Grindon, G. (2014). *Disobedient Objects*. London: V & A Publishing. Page 103 - 105

<sup>3</sup> Flood, C. and Grindon, G. (2014). *Disobedient Objects*. London: V & A Publishing. Page 105

<sup>4</sup> Extinction Rebellion (2024). *About*. [online] Extinction Rebellion UK.



Figure 35. GAC Signs, Flickr



Figure 36. Kiosk in-situ, Kiosk of Solidarity

**When:** 2023, Berlin

**Category:** Urban Practice

**Description:** The Kiosk of Solidarity is a vessel designed to bring together themes of labour, health and housing in public spaces.<sup>1</sup> Formatted in various configurations, the design was a result of the Transforming Solidarities research project collaborating with design group Construct Lab, as well as a stream of students and activists. The kiosk was designed to be in a constant cycle of change, through different curation, public spaces, permits and budgets. Since 2023 over 25 different projects have used the space, and been supported by the group in their initiatives.<sup>2</sup>

**' To create new solidarity-based places for encounters, networking, knowledge production & transfer, protest, appropriation, support, public relations, and participation in public space to strengthen the approaches to socio-ecological transformation.'<sup>3</sup>**

**Reflection:** This transformation piece of 'small' architecture has been important in providing visibility in public spaces for marginalised groups. The design takes up public space, extending beyond its dormant design into a vessel that can be configured in new ways. For many smaller groups, making the connections and networks is a battle and this meeting place acts as a socio-spatial possibility of a space of solidarity.



Figure 37. RIBA Exhibition, Authors own image

**HERE, QUEER AND EVERYWHERE:**

This 2025 exhibition, hosted by the Royal Institute of British Architects (RIBA), explored the theme of 'activism and social change' through the lens of the queer community. My selected project uncovered the hidden domestic lives of queer people, looking at how the home is performed, constructed and experienced as a queer space. This archive of work by, and for the LGBTQ+ also included other exhibitors exploring the public realm, creative spaces and queer night life. Having the breath of themes represented in one space within the historic institution was an honour, and a great example on how solidarity-based spaces can encourage wider participation.

Figure 37: Kiosk in-situ, Kiosk of Solidarity, Available at: <https://www.kioskofsolidarity.net/>

<sup>1</sup>Kiosk of Solidarity. (2024). Kiosk of Solidarity.

<sup>2</sup>Kiosk of Solidarity. (2024). Kiosk of Solidarity.

<sup>3</sup>Kiosk of Solidarity. (2024). Kiosk of Solidarity.



Figure 38. Weaving Ivy, Authors own Image

### PLANETARY CARE:

In March 2024, our Unit 2 project explored the use of craft in reconnecting with land. In a capitalist world obsessed with profit, taking a minute to slow down and be creative allows a space for reflection and reconnection within ourselves and the wider environment.

In today's political climate, neutrality is not an option and we need to make social responsibility part of our everyday lives. But can the gravity of political and environmental crises limit our capacity for creative solutions? The aim of Craftivism is to empower individuals, not to evoke feelings of helplessness or guilt. It provides a hopeful approach to encourage conversation and group participation. By participating in small, everyday actions, craftivist groups hold significant power, cultivating broader awareness and engagement with important causes.<sup>1</sup>

**'Objects are powerful within both everyday life and within pedagogy, they motivate learning and they become significant beyond their material physical selves.'<sup>2</sup>**

Sarah Corbett suggests that intimate protests can be held in any environments where people have time to reflect and engage in meaningful discussions.<sup>3</sup> These spaces, often designed to foster community and interaction, can become powerful platforms for change. Spatial design can strengthen craftivist methods, by collaborating with other change makers to make functional and impactful designs.

Upon joining the Royal Institute of British Architects (RIBA), under Principle 3: Relationships, architects should 'seek and promote social justice.'<sup>4</sup> We must challenge the frameworks of the architecture profession, crafting spaces that can support, protect and prolong social movements such as protests. Whether you are involved in direct action groups, have been to a few protests or use architecture to support activism, everyone can contribute to this transformative form of creative resistance.

## A Craftivist's Manifesto

**Connecting our hands, hearts and heads we can truly make a difference.**

### 1 Be the tortoise

Breathe; take it slow. Craftivism is about taking a thoughtful approach to mindful activism.

### 2 Craft is our tool

It can bring about effective long-term change, but it should always fit seamlessly with what we're saying, never used for the sake of it.

### 3 Solidarity not sympathy

Preserve the dignity of others by showing solidarity with them in your craft. Understand their struggles and you'll understand their solutions. Activism is not about charity.

### 4 Find comfort in contemplation

Use the slow, stitch-by-stitch, nature of craft to help you consider the complexities of injustices. It will lead to a deeper understanding of them and their solutions.

### 5 Empathy never points fingers

Try to see everyone's perspective. Everyone faces different challenges, so aim to make critical friends, not aggressive enemies.

### 6 Small & beautiful

However small, pieces inspired by beauty and love can be powerful reminders of just how gorgeous the world can be. Don't worry about imperfections either; they're endearing.

### 7 Humility holds the key

The world often needs us to change before it can. Consider your role within the bigger picture. Work with people, never against them and always keep an open mind.

### 8 Provoke don't preach

Never shout, always encourage. Inform through your craft and it will provoke thought and action. Intriguing activism inspires never intimidates.

### 9 Embrace positivity

It's the most encouraging tone we can take. Being cynical's easy, but a positive, compassionate world vision has the power to fuel dreams and build movements.

### 10 Make the change you wish to see

If we want our world to be more beautiful, kind & just, then let's make our activism beautiful, kind & just. So pick up your needle and thread and join us in crafting! Together we'll change our world one stitch at time...

**Made with courage and care by Craftivist Collective**

Figure 40: Craftivist Manifesto, Flickr, Available at: <https://www.flickr.com/photos/craftivist-collective/albums/72157716210717317/>

<sup>1</sup> Corbett, S. (2019). How to be a craftivist : the art of gentle protest. London: Unbound.

<sup>2</sup> Hodder, I. cited in Corbett, S. (2019). How to be a craftivist : the art of gentle protest. London: Unbound. Page 216

<sup>3</sup> Corbett, S. (2019). How to be a craftivist : the art of gentle protest. London: Unbound.

<sup>4</sup> Royal Institute of British Architects (RIBA), 2021. RIBA Code of Professional Conduct. Londo

# 'THE MASTERS TOOLS WILL NEVER DISMANTLE THE MASTER'S HOUSE.'

Audre Lorde, *Sister Outsider: Essays and Speeches*. Berkeley: Crossing Press, (1984)

## DESIGNING SPATIAL DISOBEDIENCE:

So what can spatial design contribute to resistance? One of the key needs for collective action is having sites and spaces where bodies can come together. Judith Butler empathises in her writings how the mere presence of bodies in public spaces asserts a politic agency that can challenge systems of power.<sup>1</sup> The Blank Placard Dance demonstrates how minimal spatial interventions, such as arranging bodies or providing blank placards, transform public spaces into dynamic stages of political dialogue, embodying Butler's notion that assembly is itself a performative act.<sup>2</sup>

As designers, we have the opportunity to translate these insights into tangible architectures of resistance, where spatial designs not only host movements but actively co-produces acts of solidarity and empowerment. The design of public spaces must focus on creating environments that prioritise inclusivity and can balance adaptability with permanence to ensure that these spaces can continue to be used and evolve with the communities that need them. This could include modular furniture at different eye levels, large open plan spaces and good acoustics, but equally important are the bare necessities of design, such as water points, plenty of toilets (even more important with current events) and accessible meeting points.

Not all interventions may be facilitated at this scale however, yet there is just as much potential in small-scale interventions like the Kiosk of Solidarity.<sup>3</sup> These modular, adaptable structures operate on a human scale, offering flexible spaces that are accessible, inclusive, and deeply participatory. Unlike monumental architecture which often imposes permanence and control, small-scale interventions embrace ephemerality and mobility, aligning with Butler's emphasis on the performative power of assembly. The Kiosk of Solidarity, becomes a vessel for collective action, which is easily reconfigured to support everything from grassroots gatherings to public art installations. Spaces like these, can provide a critical spatial resource for activism groups to learn from and makes activism more accessible to those excluded from more traditional methods of protest.



Figure 40. Stand up to Racism March, Authors own image

<sup>1</sup> Butler, J. (2015) *Notes Toward a Performative Theory of Assembly*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.

<sup>2</sup> See Pages 36 - 37 for further information.

<sup>3</sup> See Pages 46 - 47 for further information.

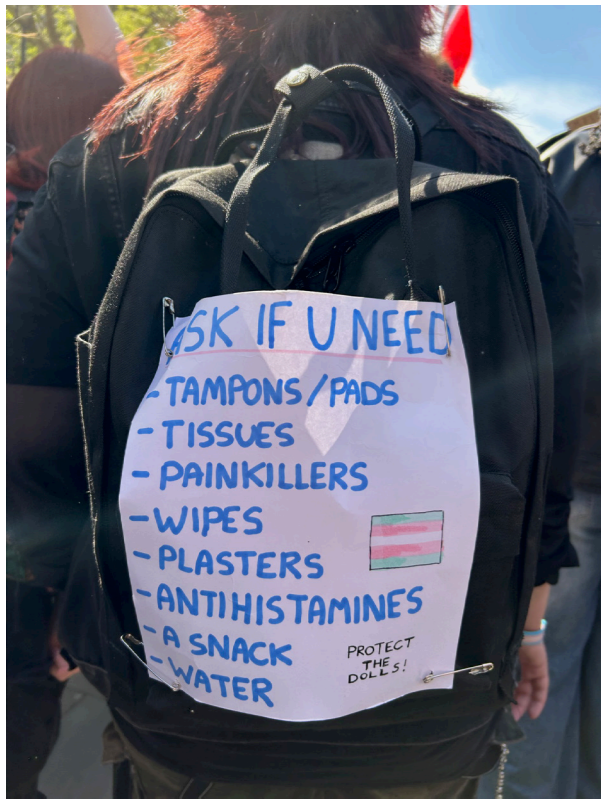


Figure 41. Trans Rights rally, Authors own image

### ARCHIVING FOR FUTURE RESISTERS:

No counter-culture movement happens in isolation, all marginalised groups share experiences of systemic oppression. Resistance is inherently collaborative and by drawing from shared histories and methodologies, marginalised groups forge a powerful, united front. This interconnectedness is evident in the reuse and adaptation of past methods by contemporary movements, showcasing a lineage of resistance that transcends time and context. For instance, the Book Bloc movement, which originated in Italy as a response to education reforms, has inspired similar tactics in student and public sector protests across Europe, including CSM-led MegaBloc at Pelican House this Spring.<sup>1</sup> These designs and activations are iterative and will be built upon, as long as they are documented and archived for future activists.

To ensure the ephemeral acts of protest have a lasting influence, we need to preserve the information and materials for future generations of resistance. The nature of grassroots movements and protests often rely on impermanent elements that are built with limited resources and access to long lasting materials. Banners, placards, chants, and spatial interventions are so powerful in their moment but risk being forgotten as time passes. By documenting and curating these artefacts, we create a living archive that serves as a repository of the strategies, symbols, and stories used by those in previous counter-culture movements. This not only honours the efforts of activists but also provides a critical tool kit for future movements, offering resources on best ways to mobilise create and adapt.

Archiving is also interesting as a method of challenging the dominant narratives shaped by cultural institutions of power. We the people, can ensure that the voices and actions of marginalized communities are not erased. Archives become spaces of memory and inspiration, reminding us of the struggles that have shaped our societies and empowering us to continue pushing for justice and change. These archives are not just for activists are those involved in the 'scene' but also community resources, family histories and a rich resource for architects and designers to understand how spatial strategies can support activism, bridging past practices with future innovations.

MegaBloc: See Glossary (Page 3) for further information.

<sup>1</sup> See Pages 34 - 35 for further information.

### BLOODY PASTS:

Under recent UK legislation, engaging with historic monuments during protests has become increasingly criminalised. The Crime and Policing Bill has made it an offence to climb certain war memorials, with penalties including up to three months in jail and fines up to £1,000.<sup>1</sup> These laws, which frame historic monuments as sites needing protection, often overlook their problematic and turbulent pasts. Instead of imposing restrictions, there is an opportunity to reimagine historic monuments as active participants in contemporary dialogue. These spaces can serve as archives of past struggles, offering critical historic references and lessons for the future.

This might seem idealistic in our current context, yet there is a increasing need to rethink the future of countless contentious monuments across the UK, such as those commemorating slave traders in Liverpool and Bristol.

By situating acts of protest in and around these spaces, activists can connect contemporary struggles with a lineage of resistance, using the permanence of historic sites to amplify their actions. For example, the ephemeral inflatables of the Urboeffimeri group in the historic piazzas of Florence, highlighted the power of juxtaposing playful protest tools against the long-standing architectural icons.<sup>2</sup> In this way, monuments can become living archives, preserving the memory of past protests and inspiring future generations to re imagine them as catalysts for justice and change.



Figure 42. Marble Arch Historic Image, George Birch

Figure 3: Marble Arch Historic Image, George Birch, Available at: George Birch, *The Descriptive Album of London*, c.1896

<sup>1</sup> UK Government (2022) *Crime and Policing Act 2022*. Available at: <https://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/2022/36/contents/enacted>

<sup>2</sup> See Pages 18 - 19 for further information.

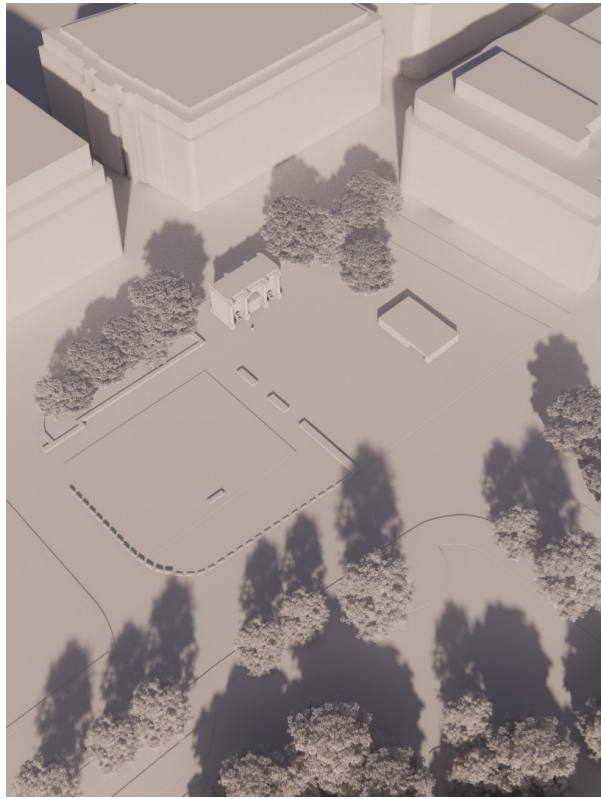


Figure 43. Marble Arch, Authors own image

### PROPOSITION:

In response to the pressing need for innovative resistance strategies and my growing interest in the role of archives, this major design project expands beyond immediate acts of protest to consider the long-term impact of creative activism. By integrating ephemeral actions with physical spaces, this project aims to establish not only sites of resistance, but also living archives within the city of London. These archives will preserve the material and spatial narratives of activism, ensuring that acts vulnerable to erasure, are documented and celebrated as part of a larger continuum of social change.

Drawing on the principles of craftivism and queer failure, this project reimagines public spaces and monuments as active participants in resistance. These spaces can act as repositories of memory, bridging past struggles with contemporary movements and offering platforms for future activism. In London, similar strategies could transform historic sites into dynamic, participatory environments where activism and collective memory converge, creating a resilient lineage of resistance that transcends time.

Taking inspiration from the Victoria and Albert Museum's Disobedient Objects exhibition, this project envisions an active archive and exhibition space. Informed by my experiences as a student producer with the Lethaby Gallery and my personal involvement in direct action groups, the project explores how protest spaces can transcend mere accessibility to become catalysts for empowerment and collective action.

As spatial designers, we have the opportunity to represent the cultures produced by communities rather than dictated by systems of power. This work reflects a critical shift in architectural practice, moving away from imposing 'starchitect' statements, toward empowering everyday acts of solidarity. Through the integration of art, activism and acts of disobedience, this project aspires to create new pathways for resistance in an increasingly unequal world.





Figure 44. Police guarding Trafalgar's Square, Authors own image

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Figure 45. Stand up to Racism March, Authors own image

