

ISSUE NO. 2



THE  
CHANNEL

CREATIVE AND CRITICAL WRITING & ART

A MAGAZINE FOR THE SUSSEX COMMUNITY



2020/21



## I S S U E N O . 2

ON THE COVER: ARTWORK BY CHIARA BRADFIELD

This edition of The Channel was edited during the springtime apex of the Covid-19 pandemic. The burden of Covid-19 is falling heaviest upon people of colour and the poor. Workers in supermarkets and delivery companies previously dubbed 'low skilled' have been rebranded 'key'. The lives of previously vilified immigrant doctors and nurses have been unnecessarily lost due to government discrimination, incompetence and neglect. Cases of gender-based domestic violence have sharply increased.

Even before the pandemic, a decade of austerity had disproportionately harmed the lives of ethnic minorities while increasing inequality and childhood poverty across the UK. No doubt, the looming recession will continue to disproportionately hurt ethnic minorities, immigrants, precarious workers and other systemically oppressed people in the UK.

As is clear in the pages that follow, these interconnected issues were very much on the minds of our contributors - which include a care worker and students from Hong Kong - before the pandemic struck. Whether it is the struggle in Hong Kong; the structural racism in the UK responsible for the Windrush Scandal; the British arms sold to Saudi Arabia; or the increasing concentration of global wealth and power into fewer and fewer hands, these deeply intertwined issues are all connected by the imperial history and neo-colonial present of the UK and have been exacerbated by the recent turmoil.

The Channel's founding goal was to share art and writing by the Sussex community that challenges the established order and highlights issues of social justice. We are proud to share with you a non-commercial, advertisement-free space where the voices and talents of our community can remind us of all we have collectively in common and our shared stake in a just future.

Welcome to the second edition of The Channel. We are a yearly print and online publication that is open to anyone in the Sussex community. Find us on social media to get involved or contribute.

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## EAT YELLOW, BUY YELLOW: ETHICAL CONSUMPTION AS PROTEST

I am often asked: 'Is the social movement in Hong Kong dying down?'

Hong Kong police continue to fire tear gas, as they have done for many months, to interrupt peaceful assembly. Corpses have been found at sea and people have died after falling from a great height. The police have classified these death cases as 'unsuspicious.' However, many Hong Kongers disagree with the police. Some even suspect that the deceased were protestors silently killed by the police. Noticeably, the dress code for Hong Kong protestors is all black, and the bodies found in the sea had been stripped of clothing. Protestors continue to confront police, protesting against the police brutality.

Since I returned to Hong Kong in 2020, I have experienced a new form of activism. Now, Hong Kongers have also immersed the movement into everyday life.

Hong Kongers live day-to-day activism by building a yellow economic circle. The yellow economic circle is a consumption movement in which pro-democracy Hong Kongers eat and buy according to shops' political values. The political alliances are colour-coded: 'yellow' represents pro-democracy; 'blue' represents pro-establishment (Pro-Hong Kong government and Pro-Beijing); 'red' represents the Chinese capital from Mainland China. So, pro-democracy Hong Kongers no longer shop according to price, now they queue up outside yellow restaurants, while the blue restaurants, which used to be crowded with people, are now empty.

When I first went for lunch with a friend after my return, she took out her phone and opened the 'Eat with you' App. In Cantonese, this is: 'Wo Nei Eat'. 'Wo nei' means 'together with you'. It also shares the phonetic sound of 'wo lei' which means non-violence and rationality. This app helps people find restaurants that support the protests.





While the Chinese New Year Fair in Victoria Park was shut down by the Hong Kong government, activists set up their yellow Chinese New Year Market. Recently, the yellow taxi network has appeared, so you can call a taxi driven by a yellow driver. The biggest challenge for me is avoiding the train and the underground, which are run by a company that stopped services and instead transported the police during the protests. Although the fare for the bus may be double that of the train and the transport is often slower, I and many others choose not to take the train. If we find a yellow shop to buy from, we avoid buying in a blue or red shop.

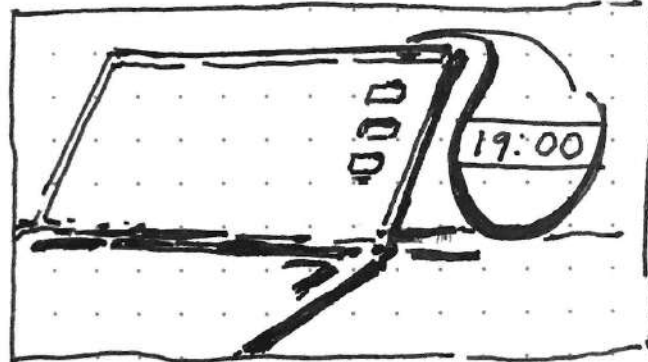
Spending every dollar carefully is not only a way to embody our values in everyday life, but also a way to pressure the pro-Beijing camp through each act of consumption and to reassert our 5 demands: (1) full withdrawal of the extradition bill from the legislative process, (2) retraction of the characterisation of protests as "riots", (3) release and exoneration of arrested protestors, (4) establishment of an independent commission of inquiry into police, and (5) universal suffrage for Legislative Council Chief Executive elections.

As the situation develops, whether this includes new security laws or future aggressions from Mainland China, we hope that the global community will stand in solidarity with Hong Kong.

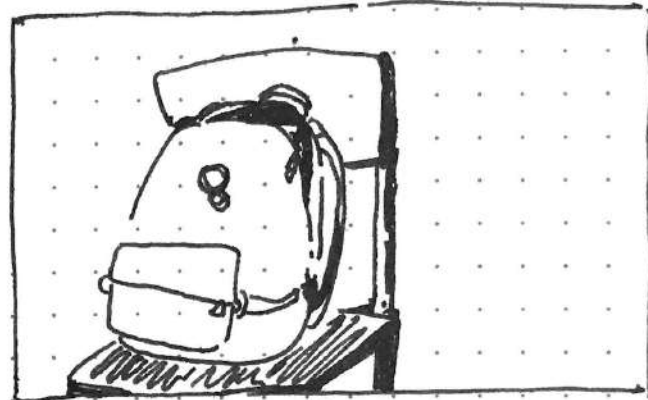
**WORDS BY SIMONE LO**  
**PHOTOGRAPHY BY DOMINIC CHEUNG**



IM DUE A LRY



I SHOULD LEAVE



IT'S WELLING

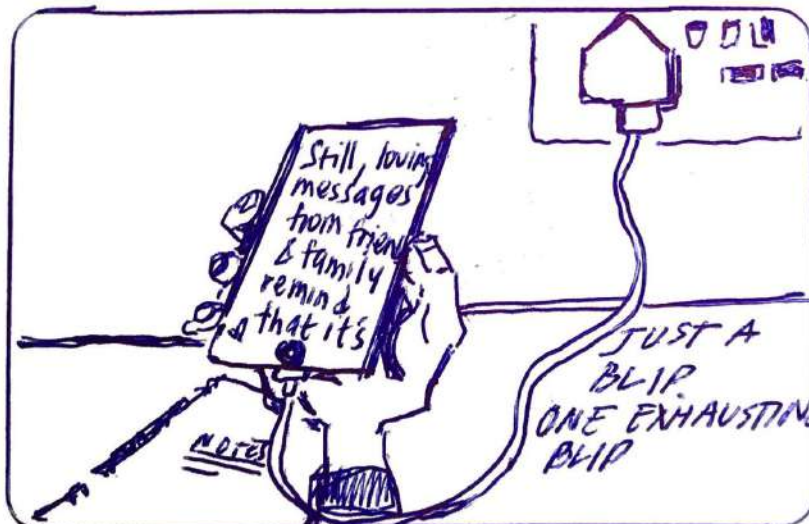


THERE GOES THE BUS, DAMN.

07/10/2019



↑ WHOOOPS 16:00



I AM VERY APPRECIATIVE  
OF THOSE WHO REMIND ME

&  
OF THOSE WHO LOVE ME



## THE CARE SYSTEM WAS BROKEN BEFORE COVID-19: WE NEED TO FIX IT NOW

BY OLIVIA MERE

The social care system is broken. In the wake of the 2019 general election, Boris Johnson's government had pledged that nobody would have to sell their homes to pay for care, making ample promises to increase NHS funding and intending to ease the pressure on already overstretched local authorities.

Then Covid-19 happened. This pandemic has laid bare to the British public just how indispensable and undervalued care workers are. It has also shown, through the global government bailouts to companies and individuals, that the funding to fix the care system has always been available and that its systemic underfunding was always a political choice. This is a branch of our welfare state that is propped up by a tenuous mixture of local authority funding, the NHS, private agencies and service users who are hit with huge bills for their care. This system relies on a workforce of low-paid, zero-hour contract workers who leave the job more rapidly than the positions can be filled.

*As a carer I have helped someone pass through this life, unable to help them move into a more comfortable position because my agency had not been given the funding to provide two carers.*

*As a carer I have had to help an elderly client with dementia get dressed, eat breakfast, wash, take their medication and have their pressure sores tended to within 15 minutes, because it was the only funding the local authority would provide.*



*As a carer I have been sexually harassed and inappropriately touched by service users and cornered by their family members.*

*I have worked 15-hour shifts knowing I would only get paid for 10 of those hours. I have worked alongside single mothers who had been bullied by our managers into taking on extra service users because there had been another wave of carers quitting. I have worked in the houses of vulnerable adults with no furniture, undressed wounds and dirty living conditions because community care as we know it is coming apart at the seams. This is a system in which gums are left to grow around dentures and rubbing Sudocrem onto the nappy rash of an 85-year-old becomes like second nature because the last carer forgot to change their pad.*

*And yet, I love this job, and I love my clients.*

Investing in the care system can ease a few immediate pressures temporarily but it won't solve the heart of the problem. We know this based on other examples of broken or breaking systems receiving large injections of money. Emergency NHS funding during the pandemic may have delayed some of the worst-case scenarios but no amount of emergency cash can fix a decade of underfunding, privatisation and mismanagement. The government bailout of the financial sector during the 2008 financial crisis preserved the structure of a crumbling system for private profit and public loss, while the architects of the crisis were all but rewarded for the catastrophe. When systems fail, systemic change is needed.

We have 77,000 vacant care positions because zero-hour contracts with unpaid travel time and the promise of a 'rewarding job experience' do not pay the bills. Splitting up people's care needs into the shortest possible time slots removes their autonomy, their right to choice and their 'needs' from

the equation entirely. Meanwhile, care agencies are run for profit to maximise shareholder value.

*Care work becomes a clock-watching 20km trek every day, chugging water and eating a cereal bar on your way to your 15th client that day for a 15-minute, £2.50 worth of work.*

*Care work means being the go-between for exhausted families, multiple care agencies, and the social workers who decide how best to divide rapidly shrinking funds between hundreds of people. Care work is having to stand by while clients are pushed between different care providers until their home equity is liquidated and the council steps in to pay instead. Care work is spending hours on the phone with my manager trying to convince social workers that a client requires a care review; a vital process which would release the funding for a second carer on shift (allowing me to safely move a client without injuring them, or myself).*

*Care work becomes fitting in sex work at night after you've finished a 7am-10pm shift because your wages aren't enough to make ends meet and never would have been in the first place.*

We do not have a care system which is fit for the purpose of care because successive governments, ruled by the markets which ascribe value to labour, have not deemed the people we care for as having fundamental value. Our work is deemed unskilled because the art of care has turned into a playground for private equity firms.

Our work is to care for people whose needs have been outsourced by palliative care, social services or the NHS to a private company. A privatised system run by business managers with no lived experience of care absolves the government of responsibility, and feeds into a wider trend of disabled people being increasingly at the mercy of private sector providers.

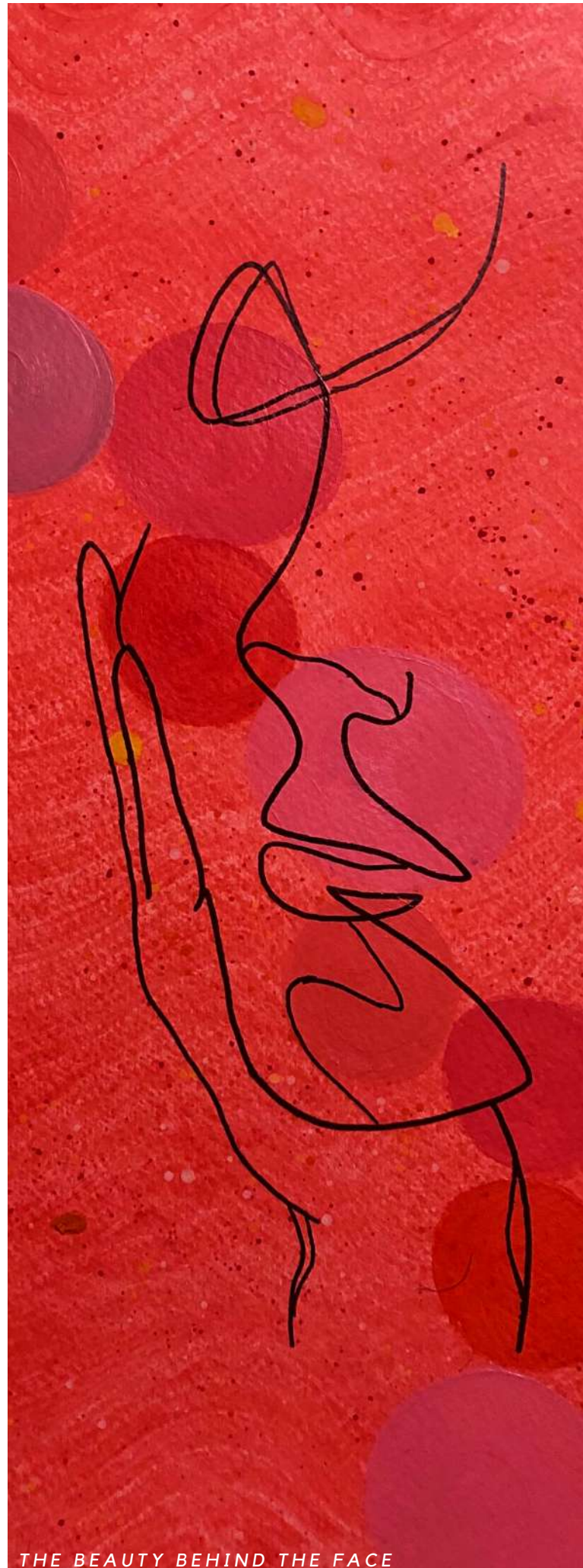
The politics of neoliberalism and privatisation has positioned workers as

disposable, and as a resource to be exploited. Neoliberal economics does not ascribe value to care work because it is affective labour: it is labour primarily delegated as “women’s work”. A profit-driven economics that aspires to anoint everything with monetary value has no space for care, for labour which cannot be measured, for the radical idea that disabled, elderly and marginalised people are more than problems to be solved. The social-care crisis is man-made.

*Care work is the simple act of helping someone drink when they themselves cannot. Care work is sitting next to someone who knows they’re dying. Holding space for a person you have only met three times. Sitting with each other staring out the window at the sea, knowing you alone can’t move them into a more comfortable position. Care work is vital and it is indescribable. I love my job, and I know it can be different.*

My demands are incredibly simple. In order to fix care, we need to end the persistent devaluation of people who require care from the state. In a world which ties human value directly to productivity, elderly and disabled people routinely face human rights abuses by our own government. These same people – made even more vulnerable by the last 10 years of ruthless austerity – have been unfairly impacted by the failures of Universal Credit and Personal Independent Payment (PIP).

We need care work (paid or unpaid) to be valued as real work; an end to zero-hour contracts; a real living wage for all workers alongside the renationalisation of all care contracts. No more care homes run by private equity firms or foster care replacements at risk of bankruptcy. I propose a future in which every person is entitled to the love, resources and care that they need for their entire lives.





ARTWORK BY TAMARA OKUDU

# BRUISE: A LUCID LOVE POEM

ANNA JEPSON

It dawns on me  
in the back of my throat  
in a way that tastes like gunpowder and blood

that we are non-governmental  
anti-governable with violent tendencies  
but you make me shatter.

I've never seen anyone having to use the bus emergency hammer to smash the glass  
but I imagine it looks similar to that Christmas Day  
that ended with an axe going through the sliding glass doors.  
Anyway.  
That's what it feels like.

Like stolen words and stolen sentiment  
so sharp it glistens like leaked anticipation.

Like a genetically modified  
orgasm  
denial

We spin round and  
round again  
and again

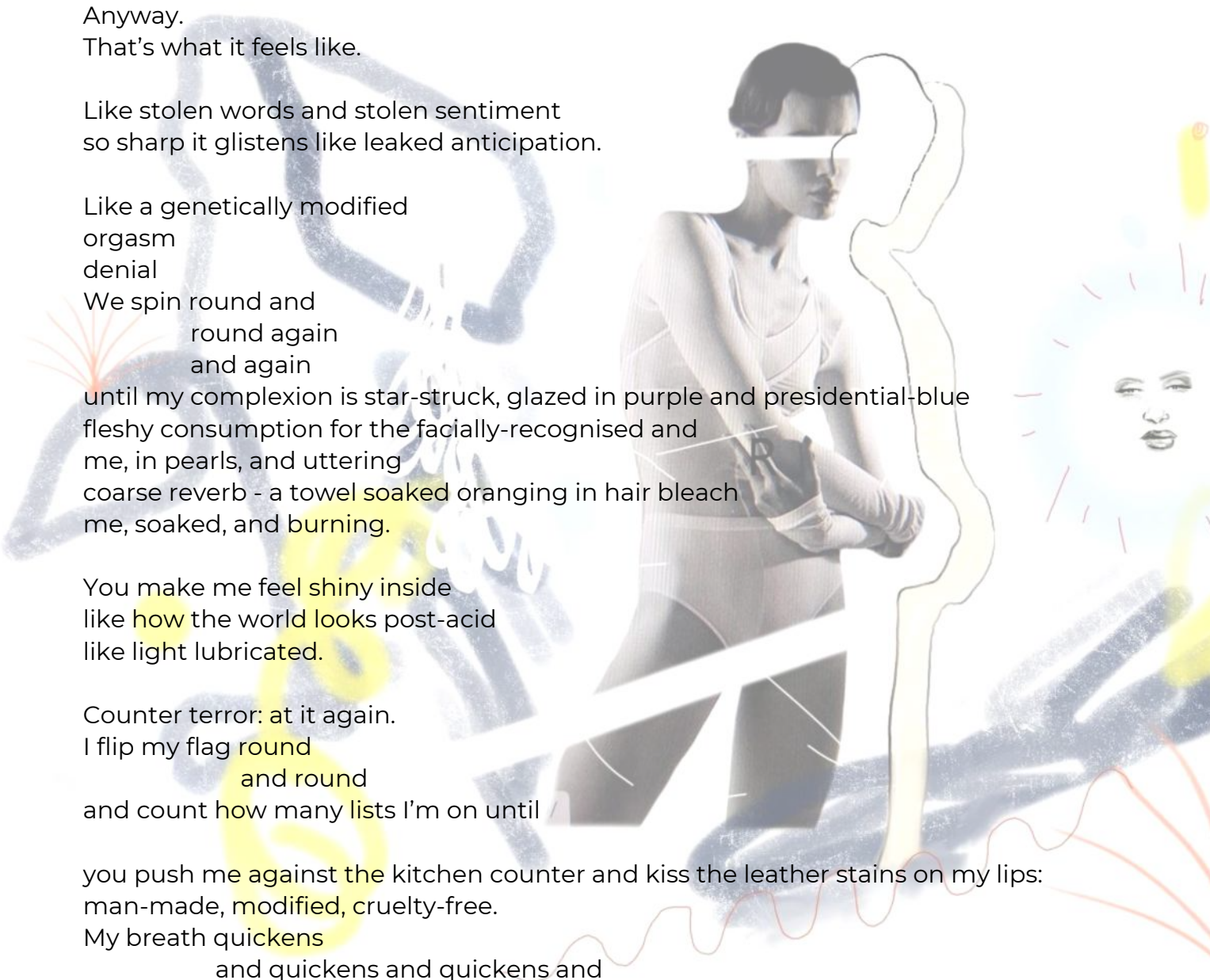
until my complexion is star-struck, glazed in purple and presidential-blue  
fleshy consumption for the facially-recognised and  
me, in pearls, and uttering  
coarse reverb - a towel soaked orangin' in hair bleach  
me, soaked, and burning.

You make me feel shiny inside  
like how the world looks post-acid  
like light lubricated.

Counter terror: at it again.  
I flip my flag round  
and round  
and count how many lists I'm on until

you push me against the kitchen counter and kiss the leather stains on my lips:  
man-made, modified, cruelty-free.

My breath quickens  
and quickens and quickens and  
we're moving towards another mass extinction event.



You have an egg timer on your shelf,  
I push you aside to flip it over  
and over and  
I don't have enough time to explain...

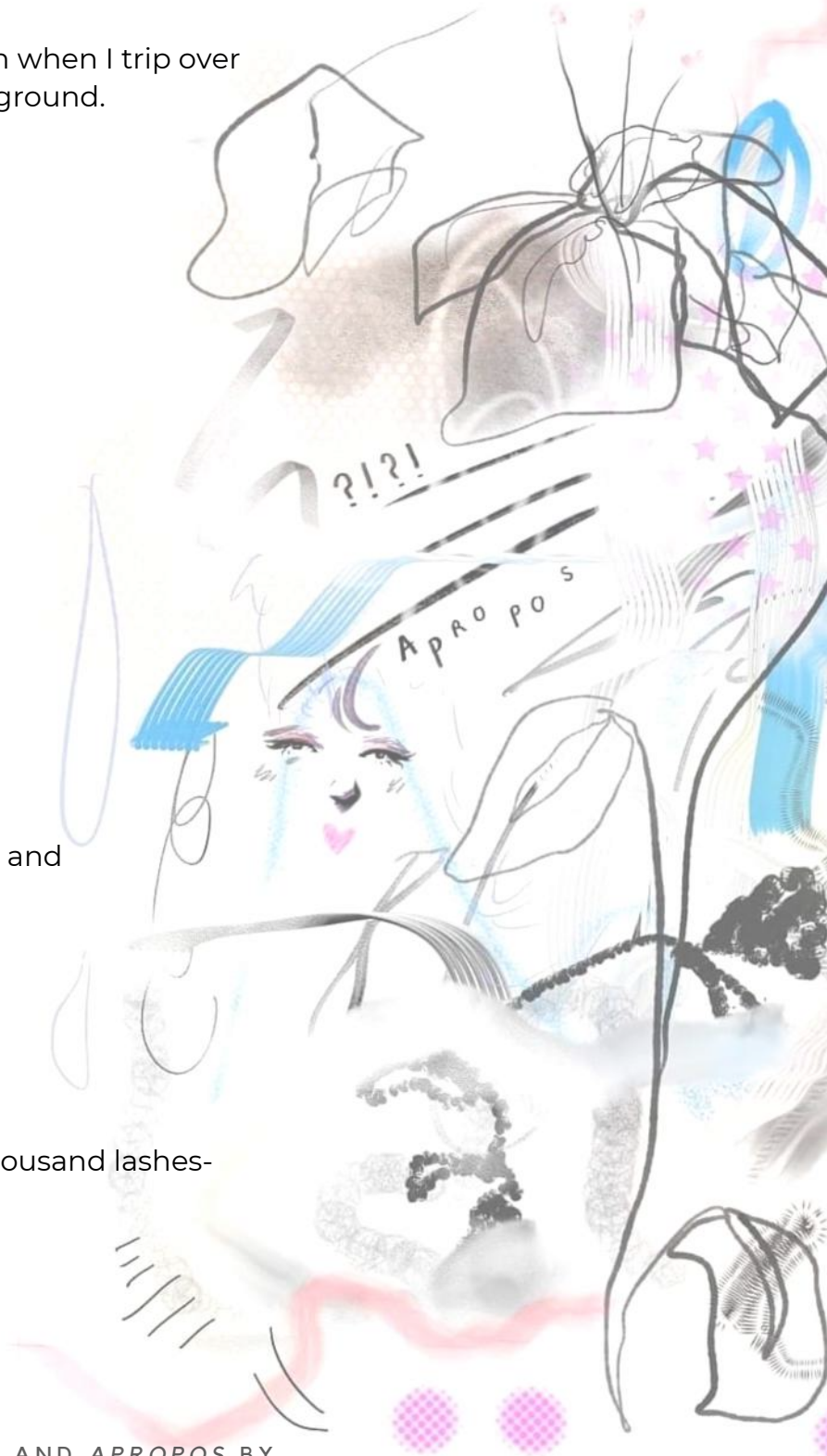
I don't have enough time to explain when I trip over  
and the egg timer shatters on the ground.

Overwhelmed, we pull blood out  
like we were going to  
like bondage and domination  
like big data.

Like your reddening bedsheets  
redder than mine,  
I like being there  
and being redder and purpler  
and I like being under messes  
they are  
departed idle drones  
me, unmanned, and moaning  
me, unalgorithmic and blinking.

Sickening  
teeth chattering  
it feels like  
the adrenaline of post-999 buzzing and  
tasting like  
sweating out  
you in every waking exposure  
threaten me with  
gentle lucidity  
magnified to sparking

like a thousand lashes-  
waking on me from above,  
you dawn on me.



# THE FACE OF THE HIVE

a poem by Melody Hill-Fisher

>Be me

Your muffin top isnt anything  
people wanna see

when you cum you scream like a  
banshee

so shut the fuck up and

bend over for me ?

You're a sketty little rat

You wont amount to shit

ur not alt ur just fat

Is it alright if I touch you up a bit?

your dreams are faker than  
your profile picture

most people are ugly or stupid but youre  
the winning mixture

I'm under your bed with  
a knife and a balaclava

17:32

Your an idiot u flooded  
my house

with lava







# HONG KONG

**WRITTEN AND PHOTOGRAPHED BY DOMINIC CHEUNG IN JANUARY 2020**

## **CITY OF TEARS**

The Hong Kong Police have fired over 10,000 tear gas canisters since the protests have started.

Experts have raised concerns of its short- and long-term effects on the population. No other governments have used tear-gas at this scale.

## **GATE TO HYSAN**

Lee Hysan was a businessman in the early 20th century, best known for being the "Opium King" of Hong Kong and Macau in his lifetime. The Hysan family has built a business empire from the profits of opium trading and is one of the most influential powers in Hong Kong today. Owned by the Hysan Development Company, Hysan Place is a shopping mall sitting on one of the most highly-priced lands worldwide. At Christmas Eve, the mall was closely guarded to prevent protests from taking place, several times refusing entrances.

*During the last winter break, I flew back home to Hong Kong and documented what I saw. I photographed protesting events in black-and-white. I also took colour photographs that are not strictly related to the protests, as a way of presenting the other side of life in Hong Kong - the calm and the storm.*

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CITY OF TEARS



GATE TO HYSAN



MURDEROUS REGIME

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**MURDEROUS REGIME**

At a busy underpass in Tsim Sha Tsui, the words "[this is a] murderous regime / blood debt [must be filled by] blood payment" are graffitied.



THE CRUSADERS

**THE CRUSADERS**

Wielding oppressive military force, the crusaders marched into lands of people they saw as "others" under the iconography of the Cross.

*Photographs, in order of appearance: City of Tears, Gate to Hysan, Less Lethal, Muderous Regime, The Crusaders, Raindrops in Venice.*

**LESS LETHAL**

Fully geared police in military uniform standing by in groups on New Year's Eve, one wielding a rifle embossed with the words "LESS LETHAL".

**RAINDROPS IN VENICE**

During Christmas Eve, protestors opened umbrellas after the signal "it's raining!", and planned their next steps in Times Square, a popular upscale shopping mall which became a popular site of protest. This is because its name bears a similarity with the popular slogan "Liberate Hong Kong, Revolution of Our Times".

After visiting Times Square, protestors proceeded to Sogo Causeway Bay, one of the most iconic shopping malls in Hong Kong. In front of Bottega Veneta, protestors used the umbrella strategy to discuss their dispersal plans.

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LESS LETHAL



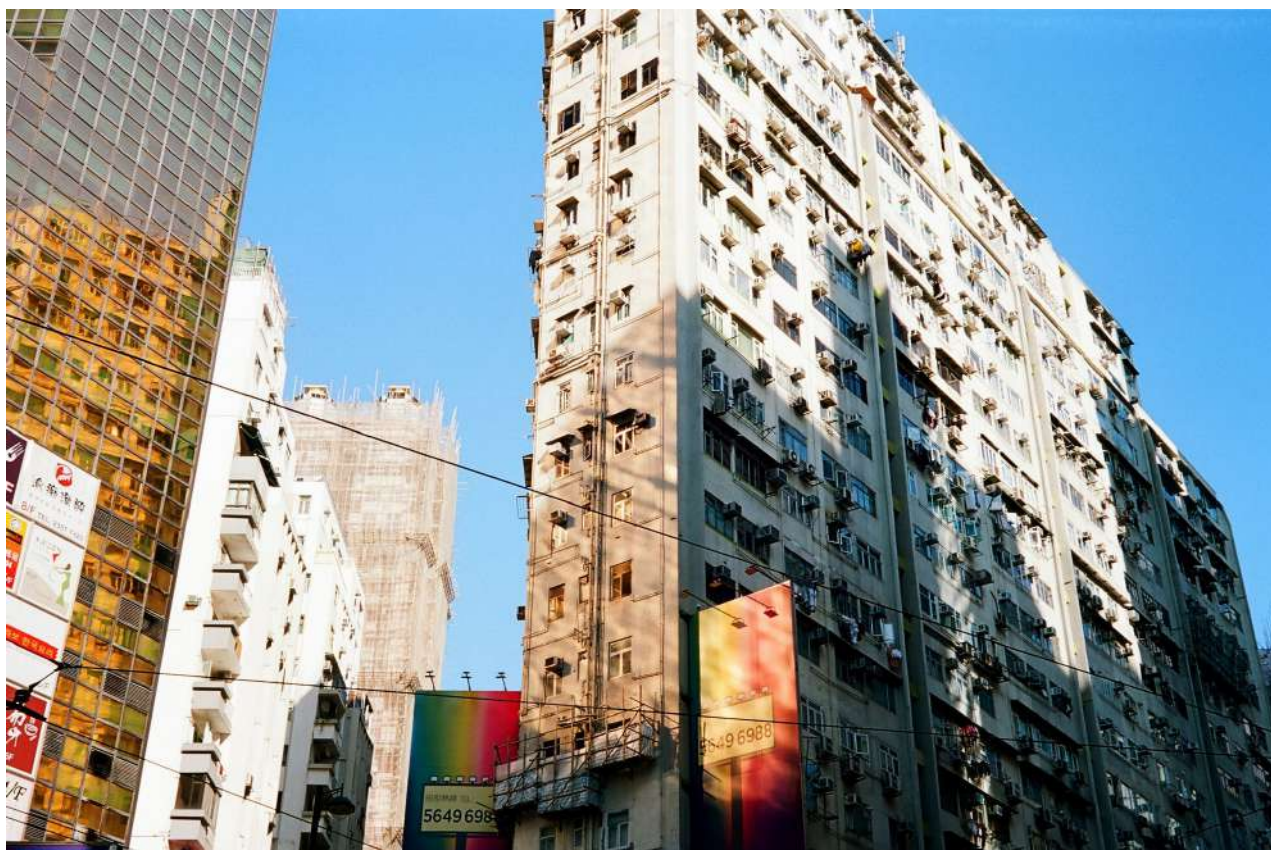
RAINDROPS IN VENICE



AH SHUN SALON



CARGO AND MIST



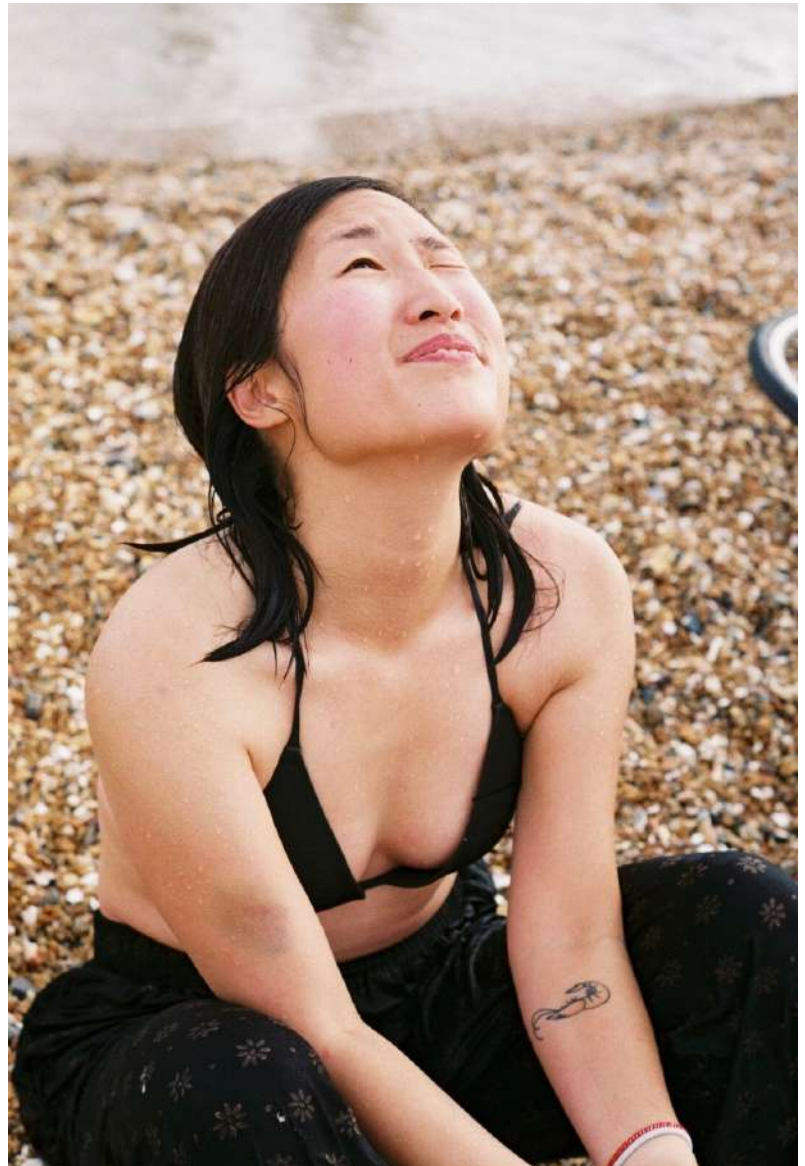
*GOLDEN DIVISION*



*KWUN TONG AT NIGHT*



BY EMILIA COX





PHOTOGRAPHY: BNI BY EMILY HICKS

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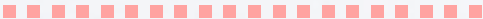
## DIGITALISING THE EPHEMERAL: STREET ART, BANKSY AND THE INSTA-ARCHIVE

BY MARIA JOB

Street art is susceptible to destruction from the moment of its creation.

Street art can be weathered and worn away by nature's inevitable destructive forces. It can also be erased by a fresh layer of paint or by 'vandalism.' There is, of course, an irony in using the term 'vandalism' to describe the destruction of that which was once also considered vandalism before being baptised as 'Art.' These complexities and paradoxes, paired with street art's ephemeral nature, present a challenge to those who wish to preserve and archive street art.

The preservation of street art is a relatively new phenomenon. With the advent of big names in street art such as Banksy, there has been in the last decade a pivotal change in attitudes toward street art. As Chelsea Antoniou describes in *The Street Art Spectacle*, "The Banksy Effect not only prompted the increase of sales and market value in street art but also benefited some cities and communities that capitalised on the cultural phenomenon." As an anonymous street artist and political activist, Banksy has set the stage for the perception of street art as being of global, cultural, and historical value.



## Ephemerality and Banksy's creative destruction

Banksy has a reputation for going the distance when it comes to making a point. This is evidenced by *Shredding the Girl and Balloon*, a Banksy painting that was sold at an auction house for £1,042,000. The artist uploaded a video on the official Banksy Instagram page captioned with a Picasso quote that read: "The urge to destroy is also a creative urge." The video contained details of Banksy's plan to destroy the painting if it were ever sold and included footage of the painting being shredded in the presence of a shocked and bewildered audience the moment the sale was made.

“*The urge to destroy is also a creative urge*”

This destructive spirit imposes a concern for the temporality of the artist's work and explores destruction not as a permanent disintegration and abolition of the work but rather, a form of renewal or resurrection. An excerpt from an article by the auction house, Sotheby, notes, "Seconds after the hammer fell, part of the canvas passed through a hidden shredder, and in the process of 'destroying' the artwork, a new one was created."

## Ephemerality, the 'Banksy' brand, and the ownership and economics of street art

Over the last few years, the 'Banksy' name has gained significant market value. Several critics have pointed out the irony that Banksy's art, which often critiques ultra consumerism-culture, sells for millions. Antoniou notes that, "The subcultural narrative of "reclaiming the streets" from the bullying power of capitalist greed has sparked a commercial demand of its own."

Serena Moodie, in her work *Street Art and*

*the Commodification of the Subversive* notes that following the demand for subversive art, "Corporations seeking to align themselves with the saleability of street art, thrust this once subcultural movement further into the commercial sphere; perpetuating the mass market commodification of this once underground art form."

Take for example Banksy's *Haight Street Art*, San Francisco, April 2010, a work that consisted of two connected pieces on separate walls, featuring a rat spray painting a line on the opposite wall. While the first wall has been painted over and destroyed, the second wall (the one with the rat) has been taken down in the name of preservation. The documentary *Saving Banksy* (2017) explores the attempts of Brian Greif to "save" the remaining wall of *Haight Street Art*, dubbed *Haight Street Rat*, from the profiteers who wished to sell it. Although the remaining wall was a part of the original image, does it continue to embody the "spirit" of street art? Or was the original *Haight Street Art* brought to death the moment it was taken down? Is the remaining wall (currently circulating the globe in various art exhibits) just a mere corpse of the original work?

“*Seconds after the hammer fell, part of the canvas passed through a hidden shredder, and in the process of 'destroying' the artwork, a new one was created*”

The brash and almost unjust removal of street art from its original site begs the question: who is the deciding authority in such matters? It raises the issue of ownership of street art. It may be considered that street art belongs in some sense to the public or the state and that the artist has to relinquish ownership of it. As Peter N Salib (2015) argues, "because street artists generally break the law to produce their





art...appearances to take ownership of and, therefore, responsibility for such art will be rare." In the event that a mural is created on the wall of someone's property, as in the case of *Haight Street Art*, it complicates matters even further. Does the artwork now belong to the house owners? These questions remain vital to explore especially when there is such a high market value for them.

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*It may be considered that street art belongs in some sense to the public*

”

### The ephemeral curatorial style of Banksy's digital archives

If an original artwork no longer exists at the site of its creation, all that is left to retain memories of its image are the photographs that were taken before its 'destruction'. There are two official digital archives: Banksy's Instagram page and the official Banksy website. While web archives have become a popular resource for scholars, the idea of Instagram as an archive is nascent. As Lachlan John MacDowall and Poppy de Souza describe in 'I'd Double Tap That!!', while using Instagram for research has complexities that could potentially be overlooked, the "architecture of Instagram opens up productive possibilities for research into street art, providing a massive set of data, images, expressions of taste, and affiliation through which to understand it. As well as illuminating aspects of how interest in street art is structured and organized."

Banksy's curatorial style presents us with another form of ephemerality: exclusion. Photographs of *Haight Street Art*, one of his most notable works, are currently not displayed on either of his official digital archives. These "silenced" works direct our

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*The street is a public space to express a subversion of systemic structures and acts as a canvas to claim back a space by the disenfranchised*

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attention to potential interpretations behind this rationale. As Ed Folsom mentions in *Literature Now: Key Terms and Methods for Literary History*, "Who controls the stories that archives seem to tell is every bit as important as who controls what the archive collects (for the telling of stories embedded in archives is also, increasingly, the telling of stories of what the archive has silenced)." On one hand, then, Instagram may be thought of as an excellent archival medium for street art. On the other, it displays only a remnant of the original work. As Walter Benjamin describes in *The Work of Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction*, "even the most perfect reproduction of a work of art is lacking in one element: its presence in time and space, its unique existence at the place where it happens to be."

“

*There is in street art the "soul" or "spirit" of the work that belongs to the street*

”

Indeed, street art undergoes a certain kind of death through its displacement, dislocation, and digital reproduction. The street is a public space to express a subversion of systemic structures and acts as a canvas to claim back a space by the disenfranchised. In contrast to this, Instagram, a commercial digital space with its sponsored advertising and influencer marketing, is lacking. While art is often dislocated from its site of creation, there is in street art the "soul" or "spirit" of the work that belongs to the street.

THE PHOTOGRAPHER BY LOLA AWODERU



AMOEBA MUSIC BY ALEX VOICE-JOYCE





BLACK LIVES MATTER PROTEST - BRIGHTON BY HOPE EVANS



# LOST AMID THE FOOTPRINTS

NEHA BATOOL

lost amidst the footprints  
of travellers who've come and gone,  
drowned in their stories  
was also my story;  
unknown and unheard of,  
and as the sun rose and set every day,  
the new travellers who  
left their footprints behind,  
buried my story deeper into the sand,  
like missing evidence  
significant, but lost forever.

PHOTOGRAPHY: *THE ROCK* BY MICAELE ZAFFINA



# DRONE PIRATES!

## THE NEWEST INNOVATION IN HIGHWAY ROBBERY

BY EMILY BAILEY

The best drones fly early, that was the first thing Felix taught me. That little box you click at checkout, the one marked Standard Delivery; it's an agreement that your package won't be despatched until the next morning, locked up safely inside its resistabox. People always choose Standard Delivery for the big catches, the things they *umm* and *aah* about. They feel more comfortable knowing it won't be leaving the Factory straight away, that there's time to cancel if they change their mind overnight.

'...and Standard Delivery means early mornings, God's worst invention!' Felix always declares, waving his hands about and spilling his drink in the process.

McGregor is lying on his back next to me on the bank by the motorway, cut grass staining his elbows. I crane my neck back to watch the drones overhead, blinking against the sunlight. The drones jerk through the sky, juddering as if they were hoverflies encased in plastic and metal, motors spinning in the place of wings. Blue resistaboxes hang below them, like those baby monkeys that dangle from their mother's chest. You know, the ones from the Factory adverts: *Resistaboxes, the newest innovation in protecting drone deliveries! Ba da, ba DA!* Every now and then a drone breaks away, picking up speed as it heads towards its destination. The dew from the grass seeps through my jumper, making me shiver. McGregor's head tilts towards me.

'Ready?' he asks.

'Bitch, I was born ready,' I grin, miming cocking my shooter. It's warm against my hand, the little blue light flashing on the side. It fries the drone's systems, brings them down quick and quiet.

McGregor's teeth flash back at me, all wonky and overlapping. Barely five metres behind us ElectricCars zip down the motorway, the steady whir of wheels on asphalt floating through the air. We hide just out of sight, protected from prying eyes by the slope of the bank. The Factory's warehouse is ahead of us, a few miles from the road. We're piggy in the middle. Just picturing the building makes me scrunch up my nose. No matter which of the Factory's warehouses it is, and there are many to choose from, they always feel...haunted. Nowhere should be that big and have so few people inside of it.

If I squint hard enough, I can just make out the pinkish haze hanging above the warehouse building, the residue of their “eco-neutral” power supply. They sure liked the headlines when that was announced: *Factory Paving the Way in Eco-Neutral Power!* It’s kind of hypnotic to watch it from here, where you can’t make out the lifeless brickwork of the warehouse below. It’s pretty, I guess, in the way that sunsets are. A pretty, pink smokescreen.

The second thing Felix taught me was the location. That’s the real trick in the catch. You have to wait until the drones are a few miles away from the warehouse, any closer and security is too tight: that’s how they get the wannabe crews. See, despite the Factory’s assertions that flight sequences are totally random, they’ve never fully wiped the road systems from the internal maps, which means the drones flock to the motorways after a few miles, zig-zagging across them. Laziness on the Factory’s part, really.

It’s impossible to get them there, of course. They’d be run over by the traffic or you would, in the attempt to grab them. No, you have to shoot them down just before the motorway, out of sight, deactivate the trackers and then take off with the boxes. After that it’s all about timing: you’ve got to reach the road just as the getaway driver pulls onto the hard shoulder. Then you’re in and away before the other drones pick up the aborted signal and start to scan the area, just another car on the daily commute.

It’s dangerous work but it sure beats scrimping and hustling alone in the city. I sometimes wonder what I’d be doing right now if Felix hadn’t approached me that day. I’d noticed him, of course, it was impossible not to. But I’d discounted him as a mark: suits carry the most cash and he was definitely not a suit. I was tucking the last few notes into my back pocket, getting ready to chuck away the lady’s wallet, when he tapped me on the shoulder. ‘Has anyone ever told you your skills are wasted out here? I’m sure that I could find you some work with more suitable aplomb, a drop of pizzazz. Do you want pizzazz?’

It took a while for him to convince me. It’s not that I didn’t want *pizzazz*, I just thought he was bound to get caught, what with all his, well, *Felixness*. How best to describe it? You know that thrill you get after a static shock, when you feel all electrified, tingling from head to toe? I reckon Felix lives in a constant state of electrification. It’s why his hair’s so spiky.

Of course, that’s not all he is. There’s something quieter inside too: a precision, a stillness. You see it when he’s planning a new catch. Not ones like this, these are easy: our bread and butter. We could do these in our sleep. I mean the bigger catches – Factory trucks, shipping containers, a quick trip into a warehouse at night – that’s when Felix is at his best. People, codes, routes: he moves us around like little chess pieces in his head. His brain logs us all. He’s a hurricane, a bundle of chaos on the outside but in the centre deadly calm; it just took me a while to see it.

Felix had always known I would say yes. He had done his research. Once, while I was helping him collect intel on new recruits, I caught a glimpse of the file he had on me. There was almost nothing there but it indicated that I never did like working on my own. I guess it's nice to know I had a reputation, however small.

The third thing I learned from Felix is that that there is no Plan. Well, that's what he tells us at least. I've certainly not been able to work one out. Sure, there are plans - blueprints for getting into a warehouse or taking down a drone; like I said, we know those by heart - but there's no capital P Plan. We hit where we like when we like. I may even have seen Felix flip a coin once or twice ... *'It keeps it fun!'* he claims. I'm not sure that I'd agree with that right now, freezing my butt off as we wait for Joey and Sam to be close enough with the car for us to get going. It's alright for Felix, tucked up back at base with his monitors, watching through his hacked feeds.

He used to work for them, you know, Felix. McGregor told me the night of my first warehouse raid, after I'd wiped my sweating hands on my trousers for the tenth time, my shooter slipping between my palms as we waited for Felix to stick the security cameras on a loop. He was the one who came up with the Factory's "log and promote" model, set the whole system up.

'...which means there's no one better to run this thing,' McGregor had said. 'If you want to take from the Factory, you need someone who knows the Factory. No one knows it better than Felix.'

I guess Felix wasn't a fan of what they did with his code. One minute they were tracking shopping habits, finding out what to promote, the next, well ... you must have seen it on the Factory home page, that 3D TV you were just telling your wife about: *Have you thought about this? We think you might like it!* It's funny what a string of digits can do, what it can find out about a person, what you tell it every time you scroll through the site. They made it into something, well, something Felix didn't exactly approve of. He's big on personal privacy and things like that. He says he was going to keep it small at first, a little virus let loose in the Factory's systems, a document leak revealing denied product recalls, employee lawsuits and settlement figures. But I don't believe him: for Felix it's go big or go big. Guess which he chose.

My earpiece crackles, Felix's voice flickering through my ear from base: 'It's showtime!'

McGregor tenses up, ready to pounce. I tighten my grip on my shooter, locking eyes on the drone, preparing to burst away from the ground. Three, two, one...

Would it be totally overdramatic of me to yell 'stand and deliver!'?

# EDO MBM

HENRIETTA TINKER

In 'Defence' -  
Blood seeps out beneath  
the metal crush,  
suppressing  
fire with fluid.

Fragments -  
Homing address: Yemeni water-pump factory.  
Cage number: Moulescoomb.

Substitute 'Defence'  
For eyes flickering binary,  
Monitoring the always-already dead,  
Piloting drones over unreal nurseries,  
Locating targets  
For the shedding of shells.

Substitute 'Defence'  
For headphones muffling,  
burning quilts embroidered with love,  
Ear drums bursting,  
Tongues cast in the mould of  
Just Doing My Job

Just Doing My Job

Just Doing My Job

Just Doing My Job

Just Doing My Job.

'Defence'  
As moral cladding  
Opens a tributary for the fire,  
Salt shells fall,  
As lies from lips,  
Wreathed upon  
Paveway IV bombs  
Made bespoke in Brighton.





A NOTE ABOUT THE POEM

Edo MBM by Henrietta Tinker is an artistic response to the UK arms trade and should be regarded as such. The poem takes its name from the Brighton arms manufacturing factory Edo MBM, a reference to their implication in a 2018 United Nations Security Council report into war crimes in Yemen. United Nations inspectors found a guidance unit for high explosive bombs stamped with “Edo MBM Technology Ltd” after an attack on a water-pump factory, other UK arms manufacturers were also implicated in the report.

In June 2019, UK arms sales to the Saudi regime went on hold after the Court of Appeal ruled it was “irrational and therefore unlawful” for the Secretary of State for International Trade to have granted licences without making any assessment as to whether violations of international humanitarian law had taken place. However, UK arms are still being transferred under extant licences (those granted before the judgment) and the government has yet to publish a timeline to end these sales.

Bombings in Yemen have continued during the pandemic. According to the UN, the Yemeni crisis is now the largest humanitarian crisis in the world with twenty-four million people requiring emergency aid. Over four million people have been forced to flee their homes. At least 12,000 civilians have died and ten million people are at risk from famine.

PHOTOGRAPHY  
BEHIND THE SCENES AT THE CALAIS  
WAREHOUSE: DROP STITCHES, NOT BOMBS  
BY ISABEL SOLOAGA



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