FINNEGANS WOKE

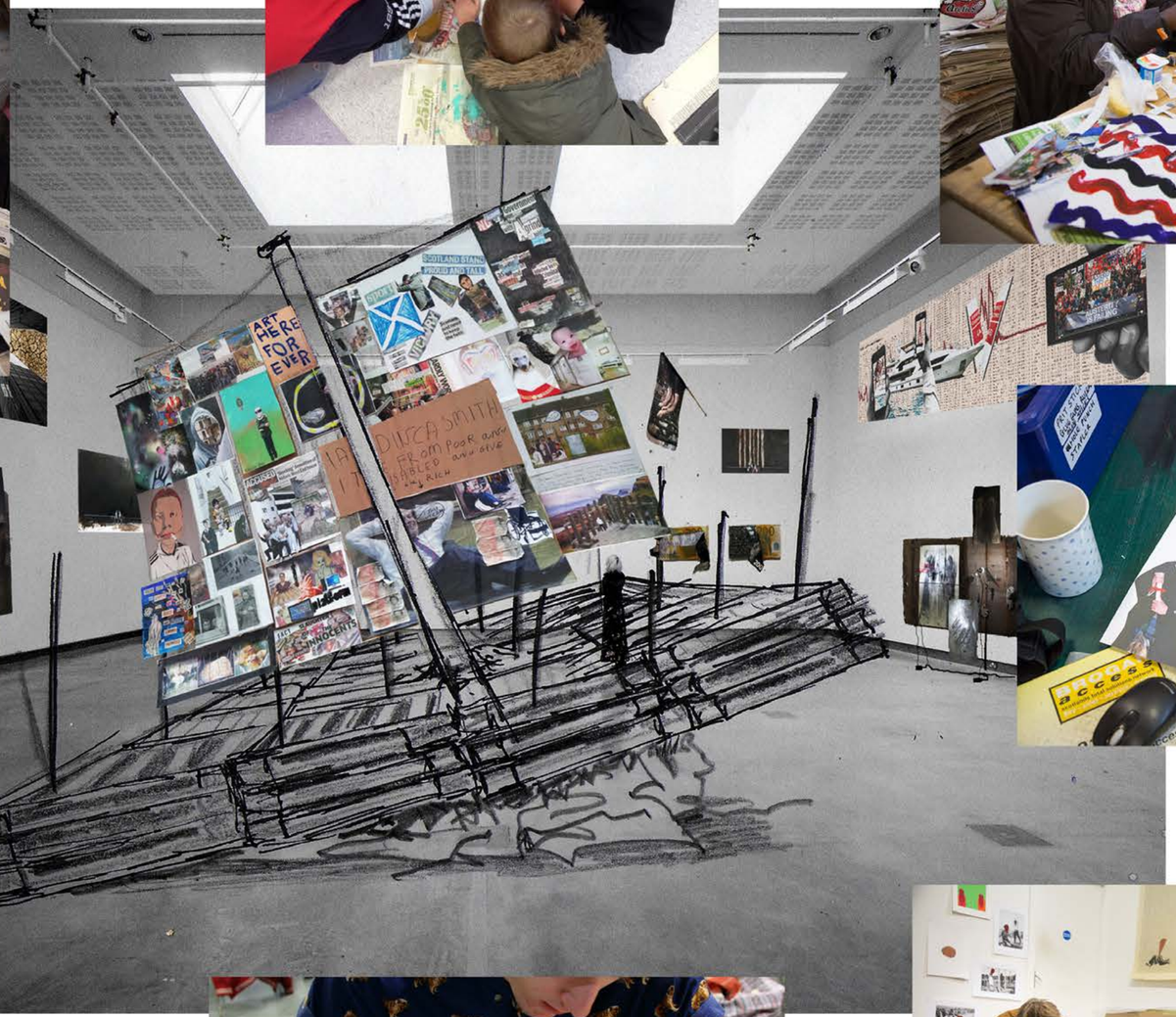


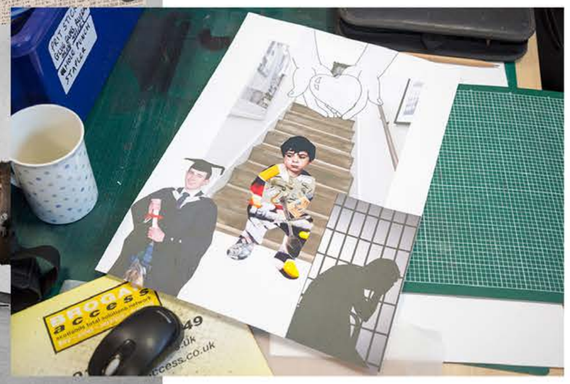
FINNEGANS WOKE

















EXHIBITION AND OPEN WORKSPACE

RUA RED 26TH JANUARY- 29TH MARCH ADMISSION FREE

An integral part of *Finnegans Woke* is the workroom where everyone is invited to work with the materials provided or bring their own things to make pictures which go on to become part of the exhibition. All visitors can make work about any subject they would like to address. We are all bombarded daily with corporate advertising images telling us to consume, we are inviting you to produce.


Kaydan day




I Just
I DON'T CARE


fuck
depression






Why are they living in such Conditions?
What are they doing?
Asylum Seekers have nowhere in their Homes to play and socialize. When they Play Outside their Flats, other people in the Community Wrongly Mistake them For Gangsters.


Resistance




Government
Honour
Police
financial
grind
to hold us
until the end of time
on welfare
as we Sell off
and
GRACE to
austerity
infected by the
Criminal
with the
Parliament
Television
promote a Platform
British That
want to boycott
Black folk

FOREWORD: SYLWIA SERAFINOWICZ

Finnegans Woke is a unique installation of both historical and new work by kennardphillipps, a powerful collaboration between Cat Phillipps and Peter Kennard established in 2002. Centred around a monumental raft built by the artists are photomontages, prints, paintings and mixed media works. The raft is topical, both a symbol of resistance and a reflection of the struggle to survive war and starvation in the Middle East and North Africa by those crossing the Mediterranean Sea in the summer of 2015 and now the English Channel. Its inclusion in the show is an acknowledgement of the survivors of such journeys who now live in Tallaght and the surrounding county. kennardphillipps captured the terror of flight and then arrival in the hostile UK in *In Humanity,* 2016. In the background of the work we can see an inflatable raft crammed with people marooned in the middle of a ruined city; in the foreground, on barbed wire hang the front pages of British newspapers. The headlines announce 'Illegals have landed', 'Send in the Dogs'. This language is not unusual for the political debate surrounding immigration in the UK.

The show arrives in Tallaght when the biggest Direct Provision Centre in the area, Clondalkin Towers, a hotel housing two hundred and twenty-five refugees and asylum seekers is about to close. It is a stark reminder of the hostility of the environment in which they live. Not so long ago, in 1978, in a TV interview for *World in Action* Margaret Thatcher expressed her concern over the immigration from the Commonwealth and Pakistan, saying that 'people are rather afraid that this country might be rather swamped by people with a different culture (…).' In a similar way that Peter Kennard in his individual work criticised Thatcher, kennardphillipps call the next generation of politicians to account; from their iconic *Photo Op,* 2005 featuring Tony Blair taking a selfie against burning oilfield in Iraq, to the more recent series of portraits of David Cameron in *Studies for a Head,* 2012, Theresa May in *Profit,* 2017 and Donald Trump in *Kill Story,* 2018. All of these heads of state take an openly negative stance against immigration. kennardphillipps does not stop there, but point also to the existing power infrastructure. *Untitled Men in Suits,* 2018 depict contemporary shadowy decision-makers; a series of one hundred and seven portraits of mostly anonymous men in suits. kennardphillips disintegrate their intimidating silhouettes, through a rebellious misuse of materials and machine technology.

The title of the show evokes the repetitiveness of history. It refers to James Joyce's *Finnegans Wake,* 1939, a book based on the premise that history is cyclic. kennardphillipps replaced the word 'wake' with 'woke' to align with the African American human rights movements who originally used this word to promote the attitude of awareness and action. By coupling Finnegans and Woke kennardphillipps announce that they are far from laying down their weapons.

The artists fight propaganda with one of its most crucial tools: the image. The duo countered the media before the phrase 'fake news' gained momentum during and in the aftermath of the US presidential elections in 2016. This relatively new term reflects the contemporary digital wars in which the visibility and clickability of news and advertising impact the results of the referendums and elections. However, it marks just the latest chapter of the centuries-long wars in which photography played a crucial role. Aware of its power were photographers such as Philip Jones Griffiths, who came back from the Vietnam War and decided to publish their account in independent photobooks, instead of newspapers. Predecessors just as John Heartfield whose war on the rise of Fascism in Germany in the 1930s with his scathing photomontages originally printed for the general public in *AIZ* magazine remains an important reference point for kennardphillipps.

The British compliance to the invasion of Iraq in 2003 was the watershed moment that incited Cat Phillipps and Peter Kennard to join forces. The decision, branded by George W. Bush and Donald Rumsfeld, the then President and Secretary of Defense respectively as the 'War on Terror', today is recognised as one of the biggest misinformation campaigns of recent times which led to the pointless and bloody war and occupation of Iraq. kennardphillipps criticised the military intervention in numerous works, including *Untitled (Iraq),* 2005, a monumental work, oil and paper on canvas, in a form of a scroll. One end depicts a proclaiming Rumsfeld, while the other shows US troops and Iraqi prisoners, shackled and blindfolded. The powerful juxtaposition of the men in charge and the men in custody, in a manner characteristic for kennardphillipps, tie a political decision with its consequences. It is a rare quality in the era of the digital wars bombarding us with the news which instead of giving us more information, aim to misinform.

Crucial for kennardphillipps is the opportunity to share their critical and practical tools with those who are deprived of them. That is why the beating heart of *Finnegans Woke,* is the *War on War Room,* a space for continuous creative production where the local community can create their own work, speak up, share their experiences and perspectives. Images found by the artists and makers of the workshops are used to create a new, strong, body of work, collectively opposing social injustice. Such engagement in the community-led practice makes kennardphillipps' statements always reactive and allows them to continuously reinvent themselves.



STATE OF THE NATION

Resistance is a necessity. We put our work in the toolbox of resistance as the visual arm of revolt. *Finnegans Woke* is a montage of our attempt to get a grip on the real, take the temperature, measure the trauma. It's a partial, fragmented and insecure exhibition of how things are looking to us. Photos are cut and torn - the action is upfront, not concealed, the audience is the action, we know what's happening, we know it's a state of emergency.





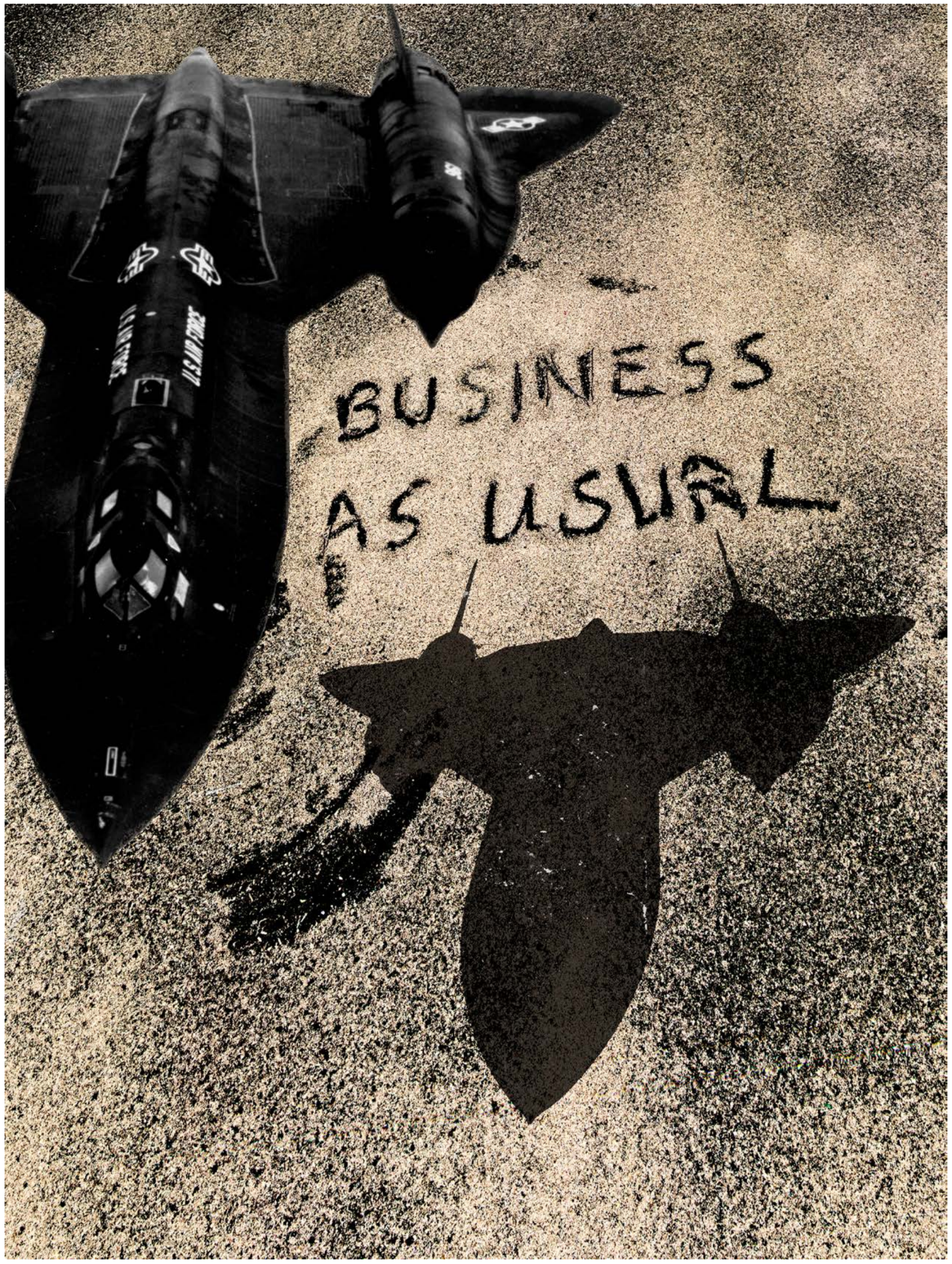
AMERICA FIRST

We work to create an opening for critical thinking amongst our audience. We don't want to tell people what to think or what the answers are. We're not making propaganda. We aim to empower people, thinking beyond headline control; we are about people debating themselves, creating powerful, new perspective, consolidating citizen power. We're challenging the right of politicians to dominate the election.



DEMOCRACY DEVOURED

American ideals are in tatters, with the rich living in policed penthouses and the poor against a backdrop of drought, disease, and poisoned water. Donald Trump was elected on a post-fact wave of anger to sort it all out, but he only aims to divide and profit from the scrap heap that Earth is fast becoming. His simplistic, violent rhetoric originates in his self-perception as a king. He believes that corporate might is an absolute right—no matter the destructive impact corporations have on the planet and its people. Will such an outrageous, belligerent soul ever compromise or embrace cooperation? Because he likely won't, resistance is required. As Walt Whitman, the great American poet of democracy, wrote: Unscrew the locks from the doors!/ Unscrew the doors themselves from the jambs!/ Whoever degrades another degrades me.



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We make photomontages, because we are trying to articulate the separate images bombarding us, connect them so that a photo of the destruction of Syria can be put in the same visual space as an English newspapers inhuman headlines about refugees or next to the underside of Sky's glitzy logo. We are connecting global climate catastrophe with war with corporate greed with politicians with oil with austerity – they all different sides of a coin that has spun out of control.


Mirror
FREE
bottle of water
& TV mag
Dec's secret wedding TODAY
BRITS FACING HOLIDAY HELL
CALAIS CRISIS: SEND IN THE DOGS
PM's desperate bid to halt tide of illegal migrants
Sun
SPECTRE
Bond is back, and in his best
Boatloads at Cyprus RAF base seek back door to UK
Fears for 1D Liam over gig
Watson sorry for pervs slur
ILLEGALS HAVE LANDED
Daily Mail
WHY WE ALL FEAR DENTISTS ARE NATURAL BORN KILLERS
QUENTIN LETTS
As police seize stowaway migrants across South, Cameron is attacked for 'likening them to insects'
THE 'SWARM' ON OUR STREETS
DAILY EXPRESS
30p
FREE £15 TO SPEND AT WH Smith
KEEP OUT, BRITAIN IS FULL UP
STICK THIN POSH

IN HUMANITY

We try to connect capital, media, corporations, politicians to the citizen, whether that citizen is a refugee fleeing oppression or us, the viewer. We can't explain our images in words, we communicate in pictures. We are shocked and disgusted by the response (that is lack of response) by world governments to the horrors being inflicted on refugees, fleeing war and poverty to find razor wire, walls, desperately overcrowded refugee camps and a media demonizing their every move. This must be the nadir of western democracy and its 'free press'. Boats carrying refugees are sinking almost every day, human beings are drowning less than a kilometre from holiday beaches. Children are drowning, many children, not only Alan Kurdi the 3 year old Syrian boy whose photo stopped people in their tracks for a second or two, forcing politicians to mumble an inanity of unfelt commiseration for another second or two before we could all get back to our twittering.





















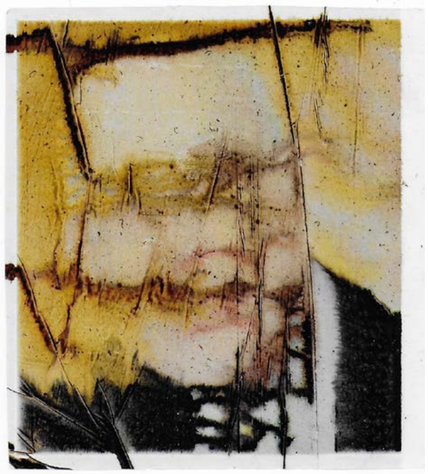













How did this yacht enter the channels of governance? Symbol of the super-rich individual,
it glides unperturbed through vast oceans of capital profit.

The heartbeat of humanity is now separate from the powers that govern it. It cannot affect the adjustment of an algorithm, locked inside
a supercomputer that cannot feel it.
The human logic that created capitalism cannot keep up with the speed of developing technology.
And as our social supports are smashed up by corporate pursuit of profit so society's allegiance to the powerbase flatlines.

These owners of luxury, the purveyors of the unnecessary would like to eradicate solidarity, build more walls between peoples and communities. Create separation. With a view to lock more capital wealth into their small, weaponised fortresses. They live life based on fear.

These owners of all resources wish to own us,
the citizens. They cannot gain strong allegiance, they offer nothing enduring in return. So they attack us in an attempt to bring us to such a point of despair that we will obey and beg for mercy.

Beg for mercy from the trolley lines up in the hospital corridors.
Beg for mercy deciding which service to cut, in the council chamber.
Beg for mercy as the 90th emergency call comes through on your terminal.
Beg for mercy in a bag of food given out at the food bank.
Beg for mercy in the muddy squalor at the refugee camp.
Beg for mercy at your own front door, to the bailiff.
Beg for mercy from the cold pavement where one must now sleep.

Beg for mercy to the screen that cannot see, hear or feel you.

A consumer economy separated from real need, it tries to infect us all. Luxury beckons us, blindsiding our mutual needs. With compliance scarcity grows. Addiction to an appearance of wealth in every magazine, newspaper, at every bus stop – an addiction wedded to a virtual paradise where an abundance of everything is made visible to our imaginations but starves us of reality.

The yacht glides on. Like a shark gorging on social structures – our structures which were engineered to nurture humane aspiration into politics.

Suffering the irrelevance of impossible luxury trappings is a humiliation. Suffering the decapitation of social services is a death sentence. Aspiration is replaced by survival instinct which sharpens the senses to what is real and begins to make mockery of the virtual, capitalist dream.

FINNEGANS WOKE: ADRIAN BURNHAM

One argument goes there's no apostrophe in the title of James Joyce's *Finnegans Wake* (1939) because the plural of Finnegans affords reference to a collective people rather than just one individual. The double meaning of 'wake': an emergence from slumber or celebratory vigil has clearer connotations. And WOKE further suggests a conscientious, tuned in awareness.

Finnegans Woke is an exhibition, live studio, archive, workshop, a forum for critical discussion as well as a communitarian, accessible and supportive chat room. The range of work on show is immense. And the array of imagery and materials employed reflect both a principled politics, finely tuned social conscience but also humility, a trying out and testing of possibilities: an experimental approach that's continued throughout almost two decades of kennardphillipps' oppositional art making.

So steady yourself on the *Raft of Resistance* and look around. Cast your eyes three-sixty degrees to see the argosy of art that accompanies you. Yes, there's anger, despair, ugly truths but all these works are made in good conscience. They are assisting pilots, a flotilla of righteous outrage there to help ensure safe passage back to calmer, safer waters, to a fairer land.

In 1816, the Frigate Méduse was famously lost off the coast of Mauritania due to corrupt and incompetent leadership. There weren't enough lifeboats to accommodate all four hundred on board ship so a raft was hastily put together in a bid to save those who didn't make it into the boats.

The lifeboats were supposed to tow the raft carrying one hundred and fifty people, to give it some direction, some hope. Instead, the lifeboats carrying mainly politicians and officers, including the captain, cut their ties and left the poorer souls deemed expendable to their fate. Only fifteen people survived that ugly, callous abandonment.

We are living through times when the UK and elsewhere have suffered at the hands of self-serving, catastrophic governments. Wars are perpetuated, social care is in crisis, education devalued, homelessness at epidemic levels, in-work poverty and Tory politicians opening food banks like summer fetes when really it's more akin to the launch of HMS Albion of 1898. Who's being vigilant? Where are the lifelines? Who acts as the conscience for a society tossed about on the raging seas of neo-liberal indifference, arrogance and the subsequent devastating decade of austerity?

History is dead. God is dead. Sex pest Bush Senior is dead. Okay, only that last one turns out to be true but 'Who you gonna call?' kennardphillipps. Draw alongside the works. Hail their conscience and decency even as it hurts sometimes to live with what they have to say.

Check out the maleficent form of an American Air Force bomber, its shadow twin cast below: these death craft silhouettes top n tail the boilerplate adage *Business As Usual* (2005). The text looks to be finger scripted in the snow, or sand, or the first light dusting of nuclear winter precipitation.

Use the works to take soundings, to assess the depths of ministerial malice and societal despair. There's the showboat Theresa May portrayed in *Profit* (2017). In its original form, this was one of a series of works: digital prints with hand drawn elements produced on the salmon-hued stocks and shares pages of the *Financial Times*. Theresa May's face is strafed with asset management figures. kennardphillipps have produced a contemporary *The Scream*. Her eyes have been put out but this is no Santa Lucia, the virgin martyr from Syracuse whose death at the hands of the Romans resulted in her becoming the patron saint of the blind.

May's charcoal lipsticked mouth agape, the blind bling portrait of the PM garners no pity. And nor should it. You can almost hear that robotic hectoring tone we've been routinely subjected to. The self-serving lies, her volte-face brand of politics, May epitomises a Tory tendency toward bullying the weak and sucking up to the rich and powerful. If Lucia means light, the root of the name Theresa is derived from a Greek word for harvest, or reaper. And what is it her government seem hell-bent on doing? Who's benefitted from her belligerent, patronising, mean-spirited approach to statecraft? Not the NHS or student nurses, not workers' rights, not the Windrush generation, nor the disabled or other minorities… Made into a poster and pasted on walls around the UK by flyingleaps this work garnered many a response from passersby. Some more willing to physically express their grievance than others: it was routinely written over, ripped, left in tatters. A curious décollage of a nation in forced decline.

In *America First* (2017) the viewer is set down amidst, pinioned and oppressed by soaring modernist skyscrapers – that symbol of US economic dominance but here we're caught in a clusterfuck steel and glass delusion. What was once a symbol of triumphal dominance has become a disaster horizon, spur to anti-capitalist protest. The sky here is a dead, cracked earth that's sterile, flawed, a testament to blinkered ambition. Cruciform, flag-like… Who is going to own this banner?

In Humanity (2016): refugees, a raft of the disenfranchised, stranded in a sea of roiling rubble and destruction. Fluttering on barbed wire in the foreground are front pages of the mainstream UK media that talk of 'Crisis', 'Swarm', 'Illegals' and 'Keep Out. Britain Is Full Up' – this latter in the *Daily Express* even whose editor, Gary Jones, has admitted its headlines have been 'downright offensive' and contributed to Islamophobic sentiment in the UK.

The abject figures amidst the monochrome bomb damage retain a hint of colour, they are not seeking to enter the UK by the back door. They are trying to stay afloat in a sea of material devastation and public discourse that is routinely, cynically poisoned by the very few who look to gain from this unimaginable tragedy.

Except that kennardphillipps have taken it upon themselves to imagine such anguish. They make manifest the lot of those we'd rather not look squarely in the eye. Their work is a tirade of exacting chagrin, warning and visual protest against gut-wrenching injustice. 'Lest we forget' indeed.

Democracy Devoured (2016) appears otherwise to my eyes. More projectile vomit, a McFlurry of what's left of democracy after Trump and right-wing populists the world over have poisoned the well of public discourse. A torrid and catastrophic reflux after 'the American Dream' has come into contact with the bucket of bile that passes for POTUS number forty-five.

The cover image to this catalogue shows hordes of protesters breaking through a barricade of signature London buildings, mostly the head offices of banks: HSBC, Citigroup, Barclays… The placards and banners held aloft by the protesters detail particular griev-







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ances: poverty pay, cuts to services, local and global ills but the force of the image pivots on seeing the people rip through the glass and steel corporate facades as if it were paper. It begs the question why can't society be reimagined as radically, unequivocally and matter-of-fact fairly to favour the majority – the 'marginalised' (read as 'ignored', 'shat on') rather than those who hoard, hide and multiply their power and wealth in perpetuity.

Study for a Head 7 (2012/16) was pasted beneath a shopfront sign that says 'Quality Butcher'. Quality? Certainly not but David Cameron for sure butchered the country – his rash action suspended democratic effectiveness regarding the proper and accountable delivery of social services, education, housing, you name it, across the UK for years – purely as a sop to the right-wing of his Tory party. He abandoned ship and in doing so unleashed untold demons, the Leviathan, the demon of darkness.

UN (2017) Ha! A small, malnourished black child perches on the end of a wooden bench in front of the Palais des Nations in Geneva. Yes, that's the same Geneva that calls itself the Capital of Peace. In reality, the preservation of world peace and global consensus often only amounts to the preservation of existing inequity. The abject black child – a symbol often criticised for its general stigmatising of an entire continent – is apt here as a sign of humanity gone awry. S/he sits in silent witness and is met only by a faceless wall behind which the plots of international one-upmanship take precedence over more equitable global distribution of wealth and opportunity.

S/he is the evidence of a world run to benefit the inheritors of colonial rule, a selfish globalism. A United Nations, yes, but largely united to serve the powerful. Take Yemen, the years of tortuous warfare, the millions of people brought to their knees. But hey, Iran and Saudi Arabia get to bait each other and the US and UK made a few bob. If the destitute child in kennardphillipps' *UN* has come to appeal to the better nature of some high-minded arbiter, the concrete wall, the bunker-like structure is the answer to that appeal.

kennardphillipps could never be accused of false eloquence, the idea that it's a valid, worthwhile approach, indeed a necessity when it comes to controversial issues to be able to defend both sides of an argument. No, some things are just plain wrong. Take one matter of acute concern: the global refugee crisis. The rights of those fleeing social persecution, famine, war, ecological disaster… The needs of such people far outweigh any counter-argument that to help an 'other' would threaten social harmony at 'home'. The imperative first and foremost is to be constructive, to help. And then to patiently work out ways that compassion and support for those in need don't impact negatively on other sections of society. Merkel did the right thing in giving hope to tens of thousands of Syrian refugees. But it needs courageous leaders, an enlightened media plus continued effort and ethical concern to ensure that those rescued from the maw of hatred and destruction really do have an opportunity to live well and flourish. kennardphillipps' work is a constant and jolting reminder that to care for the least among us is to care for and work towards a good society for all.

We're maybe used to kennardphillipps 'the provocative art politicos' who make work that challenges power and injustice. What's less often remarked upon is their constant experimentation and risk-taking in terms of their approach to exploring materials. It was certainly risky going anywhere near their rickety red graph construction while it was a work in progress. The admixture of digital imaging and more traditional materials and processes has been a very rich and productive area of their practice.

And another risky step appears to have been taken with the most recent work shown here, the 107 disfigured portraits designated *Untitled Men In Suits* (2018). They sit uneasily between figuration and abstraction. Trying to 'read' them is discombobulating. The more you try and fix a clear, straight, direct image of an individual in front of you the portrait melts away into an ephemeral absence. Even when the viewer plays that trick of half-closing their eyes, something almost appears to take shape, something that we could address, petition, call out… But as soon as we relax our eyes the 'flesh and blood' that appeared to be there evaporates: All That's Solid… and all that.

It's probably only a part of the story to say these works relate to the difficulty of holding the powerful to account. There's clearly delight in grappling with intention and chance, order and chaos, communication and confusion. And, if not delight, then at least an acknowledgement of the messy but exciting process of making work, of trying to do good in the world.

One definition of good visual art practice, that is work worth doing, is the investigative pursuit of and development of fresh visual language. John Heartfield did this in the 1930s, Leon Golub with his *Mercenary* and *Interrogation* paintings fifty years later. Without material experimentation, testing and taking risks, admitting the possibility of failure then, however critical, oppositional in intention, work can fall into stagnation. The very opposite of radical questioning that is at the core of what kennardphillipps do.

With *Finnegans Wake,* James Joyce meant to puzzle readers and critics. *Finnegans Woke,* the exhibition and attendant events is an opportunity to work through the seemingly endless complexities – individual and systemic – of today's world. And to do so not only through seeing the work on show but actively engaging in opportunities to celebrate collective betterment: to join in using multiple ways of being and making, be that written and spoken word, carpentry, food, community meetings, informative talks, research groups: helping people make sense of personal and political issues by expressing themselves. Visitors to and partakers in F*innegans Woke* are key to the whole venture. Here people are encouraged to have their say, to leave their mark.

Visual art made by visitors in the course of this exhibition will become part of the *Raft of Resistance* that forms a centrepiece to the show co-hosted by a/political and Rua Red. So instead of Théodore Géricault and his Méduse's raft of despair (*The Raft of Medusa,* 1818-19), *Finnegans Woke* seeks to set sail a raft of resistance, a raft of repair.



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BAE SYSTEMS
INSPIRED WORK

List of works

Front & back cover:
Here Comes Everybody, 2015, kennardphillipps

1. *Profit,* 2017, kennardphillipps
2. *Study for a Head II,* 2012, kennardphillipps
3. *America First,* 2018, kennartdphillipps
4. *Democracy Devoured,* 2016, kennardphillipps
5. *Business As Usual,* 2005, kennardphillipps
6. *Know Your Enemy,* 2005, kennardphillipps
7. *In Humanity,* 2017, kennardphillipps
8, 9, 10. *Untitled (Men In Suits),* 2018, Cat Phillipps
11. *State of the Nation,* 2017, kennardphillipps
12. *Profit,* Flying Leaps street poster, London, 2017
13. *WELCOME,* kennardphillipps, SubvertTheCity Brandalism street poster, 2017, London
14. *Study for a Head XI,* Flying Leaps street poster, 2016
15. *Who's Paying For This?,* kennardphillipps, Bethlehem, Palestine, 2007
16. *Soldier #1,* kennardphillipps, 2006
17. *Board 1 (BAE Systems),* Peter Kennard, 2018 Photograph by Jenny Matthews
18. *Our Financial Times,* kennardphillipps, 2017

FINNEGANS WOKE
KENNARDPHILLIPPS

Finnegans Woke marks the fourth collaboration between a/political and Rua Red from their two-year partnership.

Publication by
kennardphillipps

Graphic design
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Texts
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Adrian Burnham writes on art and urban culture. He is founder and curator of www.flyingleaps.co.uk, a street poster and web platform for artists.
kennardphillips (pp. 2, 8, 11, 13, 15, 18, 22, 23)
p.13: Quote from Walt Whitman, Song of Myself, 1892

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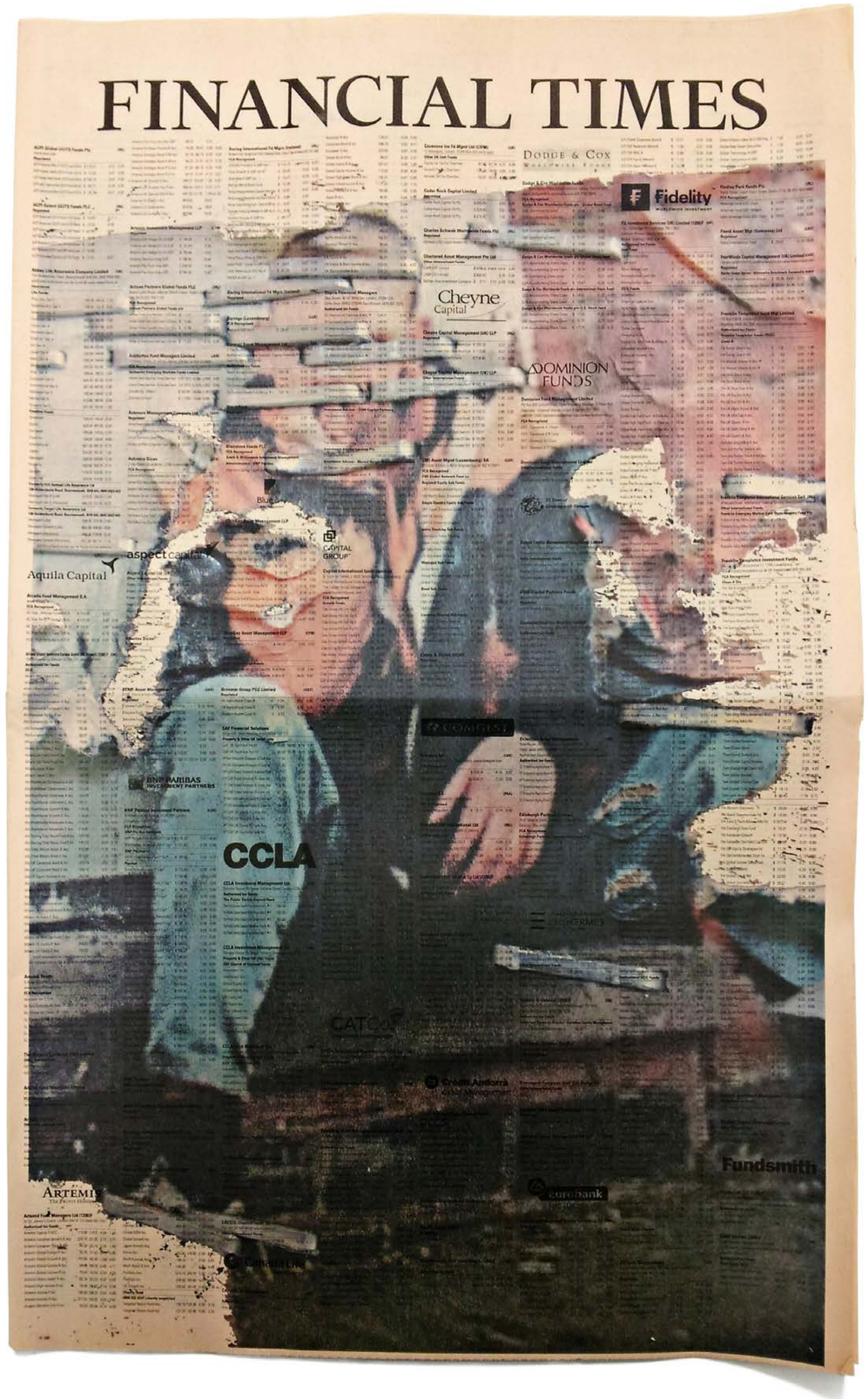
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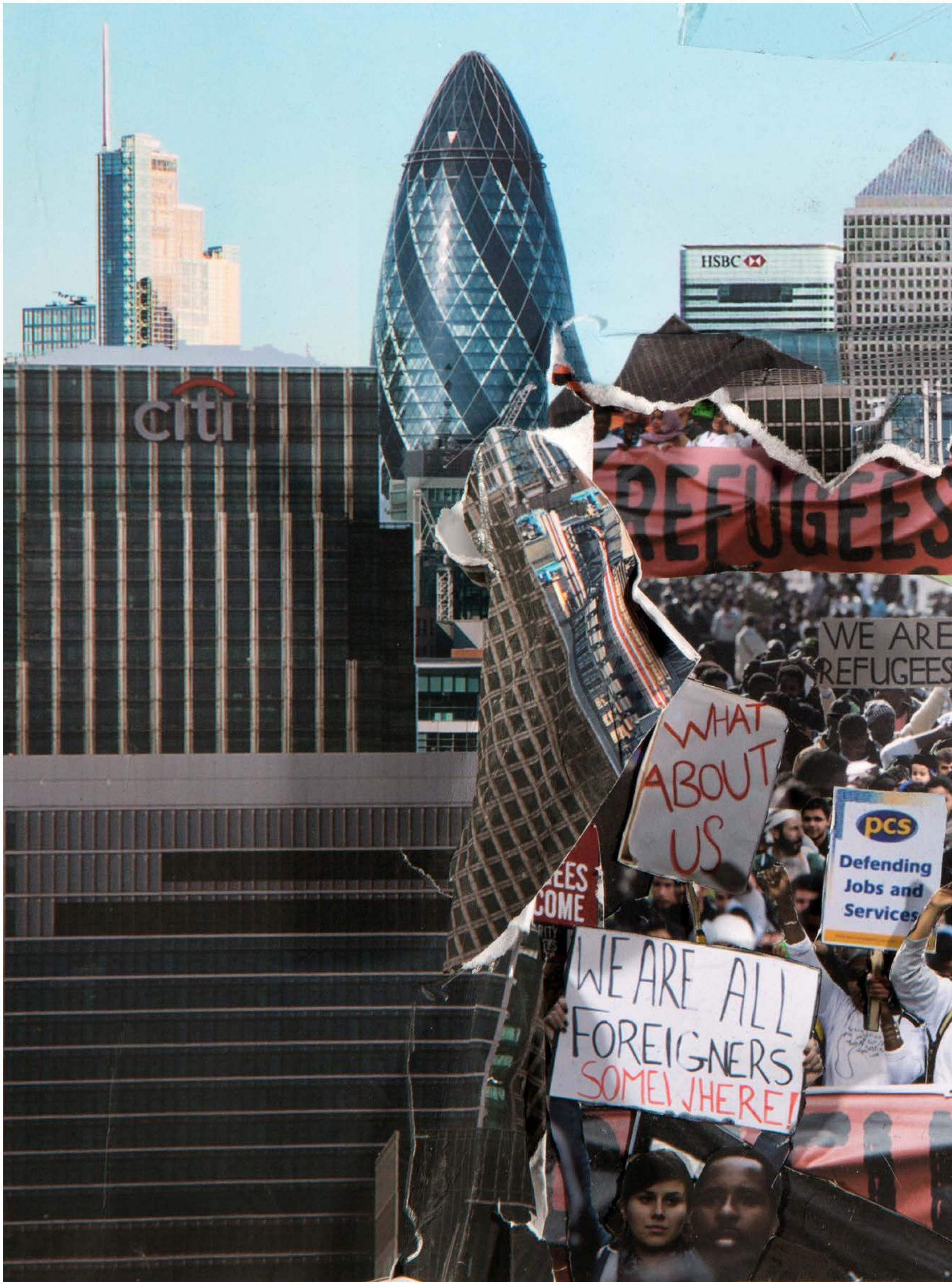
a/political

RUA RED

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South Dublin County Council

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citi
HSBC
REFUGEES
WE ARE
REFUGEES
WHAT
ABOUT
US
pcs
Defending
Jobs and
Services
WE ARE ALL
FOREIGNERS
SOMEWHERE!