

THE

Final Straw

A WEEKLY ANARCHIST SHOW

The Final Straw is a weekly anarchist and anti-authoritarian radio show bringing you voices and ideas from struggle around the world.

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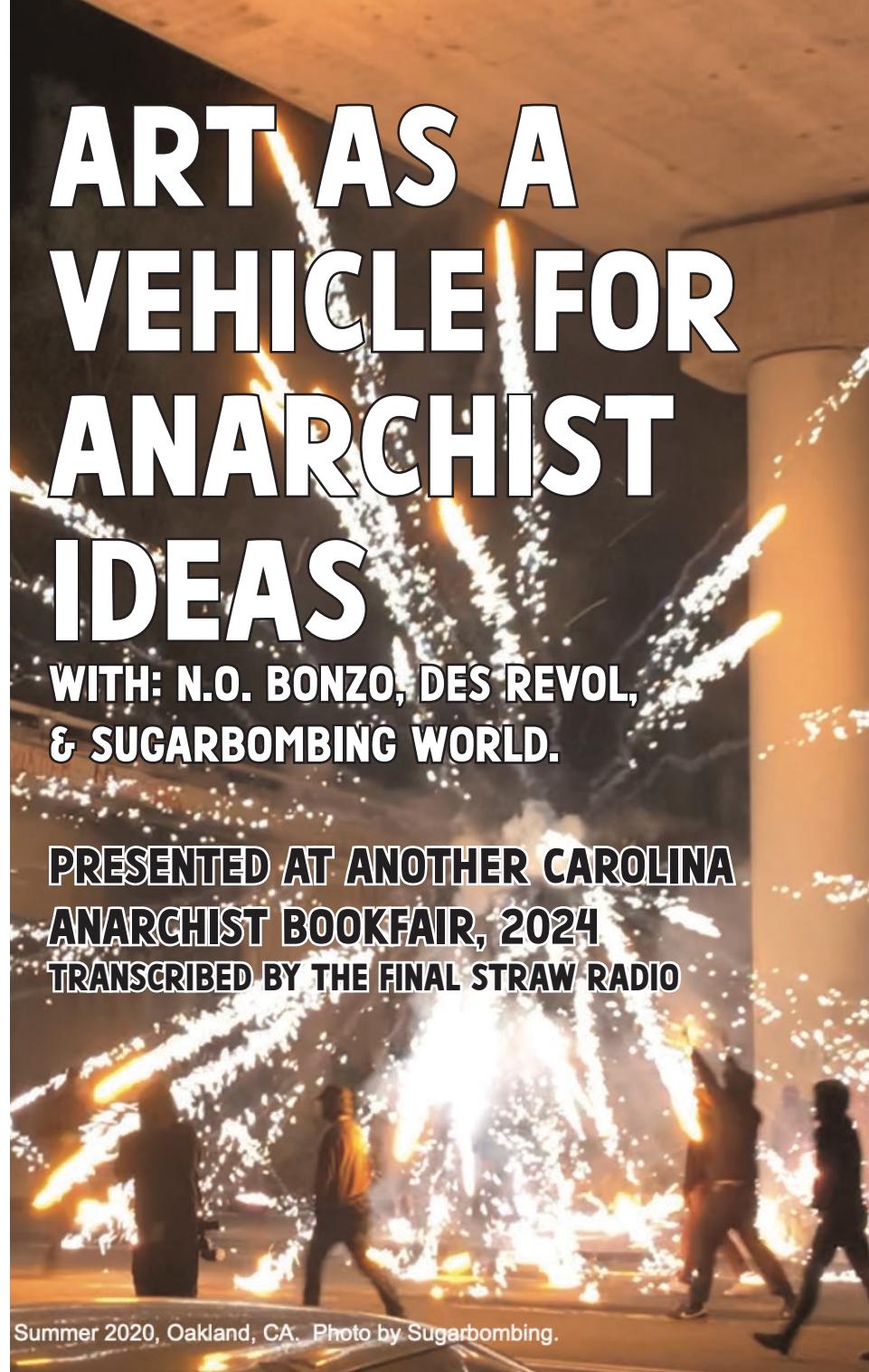
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ART AS A
VEHICLE FOR
ANARCHIST
IDEAS
WITH: N.O. BONZO, DES REVOL,
& SUGARBOMBING WORLD.

PRESENTED AT ANOTHER CAROLINA
ANARCHIST BOOKFAIR, 2024
TRANSCRIBED BY THE FINAL STRAW RADIO

Summer 2020, Oakland, CA. Photo by Sugarbombing.

The following is a recording from the 2024 Another Carolina Anarchist Book Fair in Asheville, North Carolina. You can find more info and recordings from this and other years at acabookfair.noblogs.org. This is a presentation entitled 'Art As a Vehicle for Anarchist Ideas' with N.O. Bonzo, Des Revol, and Sugarbombing World.

From the description: 'Three longtime anarchist artists N.O. Bonzo, Des Revol, and Sugarbombing World will explore the role that art plays in resistance and movements, along with remembrance of the past and visions of the future. They'll look at ways that art brings people together and can serve as a great tool, whether in organizing and agitating and/or inviting people into anarchism.'

Sugarbombing World

My name is Sugarbombing. I have a small background in graffiti. Bombing is the action of painting your name all over the city or the town or anywhere you want. So then I am Sugarbombing. So I'm coating everything with sugar, but also being destructive at the same time. I want to start with this image.



The original Let's Riot graphic, 2019

Some of you might be familiar with it. I made that drawing in 2019, just because that's what I do. I love kawaii. I grew up with Hello Kitty, and Hello Kitty [is] representing, a super patriarchal, capitalist way of seeing the world, where Hello Kitty has a sister and a boyfriend and the nuclear family. She's baking apple pies and the mom and the dad doesn't make a damn thing. So, you know, I love the idea of Hello Kitty, even though Hello Kitty is kind of creepy. She doesn't have a mouth. To me, I was like, 'Wow, that's really weird that the main character in this whole story is speechless.' So I love the imagery, but it really never spoke to me in a sense, where agreed with the plot of the stories.

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Sugarbombing: It also depends on where you live. For example, I live in one of the most expensive cities in the country, so obviously my prices are going to be different depending on where I am. I'm not going to charge the same amount if I go to Philly, which is half the price of your prices, or when I am home, or when I come here. Because I have to travel and stay at somebody's house. Or if I go to Seattle, which is even more expensive than New York City. So I feel ethically we all live under capitalism, and if I am trying to be my own boss bitch, if I'm not going to have a nine-to-five, then you know, you have to sacrifice some stuff.

The reality is that I'm never not working, but when I am working it's for myself. I don't have to share a cut with anybody. I don't have to give my labor for free to anyone, and I try to price it according to the life that I want to live. Obviously, I don't have a lavish life of luxury, but, you know, I have to make a living. I wish I didn't have to do anything that was not my own art, which is, sadly not the case. I also do art handing in art fairs, when I handle the multi-million dollar pieces, and I go to houses of rich households to install art.

And I also do sign paintings. And obviously, the thing that I use for sign painting is crazy radioactive. And I'm probably gonna die by inhaling all those fumes. You know, it's really hard to find that balance, because as Bonzo said, if you want to make something that's not a Gilden T-shirt, then how much is your public going to be willing to pay for a garment that is sweatshop-free? Or do I want to appeal to the middle class? Or do I want to appeal to my comrades? Obviously, online, you can control who buys your stuff. In real life, I wish I could offer other alternatives. But you know, the reality is that if you want something that's more ethically suitable, then it's more expensive.

Des: We have to cut off. One last thing. Please come by and say hi. We're gonna be at the Odd [bookfair venue] and get some artwork. And also fuck museums and art galleries because they gentrify spaces!

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So, I mean, that's what living in capitalism is. This is what's happening to all of us right now. If you're guys on social media, now we all write in code because we can't say 'genocide', because we can't say 'Palestine' if it doesn't have an 'l instead of a 'i'. It's just another way for censorship to take over our lives. But as long as I am alive, I'm gonna fight against that.

Audience 4: This is a large topic. So I understand, but I did want to ask about, how do we reconcile contradictions around the production of any kind of pathological consumerism of reproduction? How do you make pins, stickers and T-shirts that are produced ethically at an accessible price point? Because it's so hard to figure out. How do we do these things while still maintaining ethics around the materiality part and the environmental and the human cost of things? Like sheet stickers and T-shirts. Emphasizing how do we figure out the state of DIY while being able to still make money and have things sold at an accessible price point? That's a complicated part about messaging and propaganda and what is the material we're using? Where does it come from?

Bonzo: I think there are two different answers to that. The first is on the ethicality of just being a person who sells things. Because that is a thing. I think, as I understand it, all of us are aggressively anti-copy rights, right? If someone else wants to produce our work, they absolutely can, they can access that work even without going through us.

In terms of the supplies and different things you use. There's absolutely not going to be any way to create no footprint, but you can get sweatshop-free clothes, right? This is something that's actually tracked that you can look into. You can get the fabric to print patches on that aren't pumping dioxines into a local estuary. I will state the sad fact that it is going to be more expensive, right? So you are cutting down that accessibility, at least for myself personally. Because I do really care about all this stuff. I also really care that things are vegan. Things are this, things are that, things don't use pigments that come from mountaintop removal. This is a problem with spray paint cans, by the way, just mentioning. Don't paint with the mountaintop removal colors.

But you know that does mean the price point is going to go up. But if you are making something that also somebody at their home computer can print off, or that somebody else can burn a screen, they don't have to pay your prices. They can just make that themselves. But you can look into all these things. Sometimes it's hard to find, but you can figure out how things are made. There are some companies like Sticker Mules, a Trump fan who just gave away cyber truck, which, if I win the cyber truck, we're all gonna smash it for a five dollar donation.

I always wanted to divert the reality. I feel like all of us right now, we are subverting our horrible, bad reality, and we're trying to make it better with our community, breaking the roles that we were given by birth, by society. We did not choose our gender, the color of our skin or the place where we were born. So we're trying to subvert these things that were imposed on us. That's what I've been trying to do with my art. So from an idea that comes from 'kawaii', which was also very important in indoctrinating the Japanese after World War Two, when people were really sad. So they decided to put characters on everything so people could forget that they had been radiated for the rest of their lives with the nuclear bombs, the austerity, the scarcity, and the crisis that the country was going through.

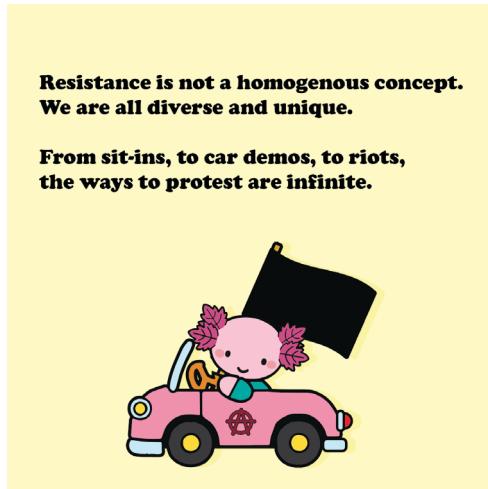


Benefit Sticker Pack
June 2020

I decided that I wanted to turn these characters that I grew up with into something that would actually speak to me. What if Hello Kitty would bring my melody to a riot and they would flip a cop car, right? That would be kind of cool. And back then, I was producing enamel pins. So the first ever enamel pin that I made was a flipped cop car on fire. That became really popular, obviously, in our circles. And then it was like: 'Okay, I'm gonna make it a little cuter.' So then I made that in 2019 and I just kept it there and made the stuff.

But then George Floyd stormed in 2020 and because it was something so dramatic and crazy, and at the time, I ended up stuck in Mexico for five months during the pandemic. I was far away from the action. I needed to do something, I wanted to participate and do something in a way that could be useful for the people that have been arrested in Minneapolis. So I made that sticker pack. And I was like: 'Yeah, what if I make a sticker pack with the money that I have, I can just print them myself.' And I was hoping to raise \$500 on that, it would be amazing.

I ended up selling \$10 sticker packs, and I raised \$5000. That was kind of nuts for me. I was never expecting that. And from there, people wanted more and more. So then that's when I became popular with not just the comrades, but with people in other places. And then I started...



This is my own character, it's an axolotl. They always stay baby. They are genderless, and they are endemic to Mexico. So I was like: 'Oh, this is kind of perfect,' right? So I started creating these messages and putting them online. And people really wanted merch.

This was one of my favorite images ever. Somebody, I have no idea who that is, decided to use my imagery to go to a demonstration in Los Angeles to avenge Floyd's death. And that's when I realized: 'Whoa, art has so much meaning and it can reach so many people that can then become a liberal or a radical.' I was always really sick of seeing the same images of hands holding seeds. What the hell is that? What does that even mean? And then my ideas resonated with other people. And I was just so impressed. Like, whoa, people really fuck with me. Then Rilakkuma was also



art degrees, and we think about art history like almost all of the art that you see in museums was not created with the intention of being in a museum. And the majority of art that is in museums was stolen historically and culturally. I think that museums, especially fine art museums, should be a point of intimacy for sure. You know, a lot of what is in museums is historical artifacts or things that were collected from other cultures or other places as a byproduct of colonialism. And a lot of those things are not rightfully owned and were not created [for museums]. The people who created a lot of those items didn't create them during a time or place where museums as we know them, even existed.

Audience 3: I guess, kind of echoing Bonzo. I'm wondering, as we're building that other world, what that could potentially look like as we try and remake the world that we want to see? But the question that I had was for Sugarbombing. When you're creating work that uses characters, especially characters that are copyrighted, and things like that, creating artwork and like navigating cease and desists, you know, kind of legal stuff like that. You're doing it in a very mainstream way, right? Your work is very well known very accessible and very public. Thank you so much.

Sugarbombing: Well, it's not public as I am private right now. I've been private since October. So this is the second Instagram account that I have. The original one that became viral during the George Floyd riots got deleted about 27 days. They stole my money. Stole \$3,800 that I had in my PayPal account. Because they reclaim their fucking characters. It's kind of crazy, because contemporary and modern art is all based on stealing other people's shit, right? If people are familiar with Andy Warhol, Andy Warhol decided to make art, not even subverting anything, right? He was just like, 'Oh, this is a Brillo. This is a Campbell Soup in a can and now I'm gonna worship this as an item of consumerism.' And people clapped. He even went further than that, making portraits, silk screens of Elizabeth Taylor and Michael Jackson, etc, you know, Kennedy.

And then there are guys like Kaws, who also comes from graffiti, though they are a cis white male who just decides to, add X's to all the characters in Sesame Street or Mickey Mouse, or you name it. What I'm doing is nothing new and nothing that other people haven't done. But the main reason why Kaws doesn't get fucked with as much is because he is not spreading a message of militancy. So obviously Sanrio doesn't like my shit because I'm not having Hello Kitty smoking in a bomb, I don't have Hello Kitty in a rave, you know what I mean. When the message of art is ideologic, which has an ideology, they don't like it. When you create stupid art that lacks ideology, they're okay with it.

So that is just it. It doesn't feel good, but it's like 'You think that you can fucking stop me!?' They can't fucking chop my hands so I can stop doing it, right?

impermanence is really important. With graffiti, you paint something and it might be gone the next day, so there's no permanence to it. Again, it's approaching art in that sort of way. That's how I feel. So if you have a refined piece, show it off, but don't expect it to be there forever, you know. And make it accessible, put it up in a store that people walk [by] and, you know, with homies, at Firestorm or something, where people can engage with it and appreciate it. I think it's definitely my approach to that.

Sugabombing: I mean also we're all pieces of art, right? We're all walking around, sporting tattoos, sporting our hairs in different colors, our bodies in different shapes, and we all wear clothes. We're in a society where clothes are needed. So for me, clothes have always been a way to express your politics to express your aesthetics. I mean, maybe all of these things seem simple, but I work more than any other person. I'm only not working when I'm asleep. So it takes a lot of effort, but for me, I have succeeded, when I see somebody wearing my design. When I go to a demo and I see the comrades wearing a tote bag that holds their stuff, or when I come to a place like this. To me that's what keeps me going, that's my motto. I see somebody's water bottle, and I see my sticker from like, 2020, and I'm like, 'Whoa.' We all have different parameters on how to estimate or underestimate our efforts. So, you know, it depends, on what type of art you're talking about, but I just feel like we all are big pools of art.

Bonzo: I also think we have become really confined and limited in how we think about the display of art. Because my mind started to go to: 'Oh, I got friends who spend 500 dollars on a painting.' Because they enjoy this process. It's like a fulfilling process for them. If you look into the funders of the museums, it's oil companies, it's Boeing, it's Raytheon, it's Lockheed Martin.

Sugabombing: Chase...

Bonzo: I mean, people attack the museums. Black Masks shut down the MoMA, and most recently, folks were shutting down the MoMA for their cooperation with oil companies and stuff. I think about – and I don't think we have to have an answer to this – what would it actually look like if we together as people who make really dope things, decided how things would look and where they would live, and what would happen with that? Would somebody travel around in a Volkswagen Rabbit, showing it in a bunch of cities, or houses? Like, what would we do? I know what we have now, though, is not what we would do.

Audience 2: I have a question. But also, just on the topic of museums, I have two

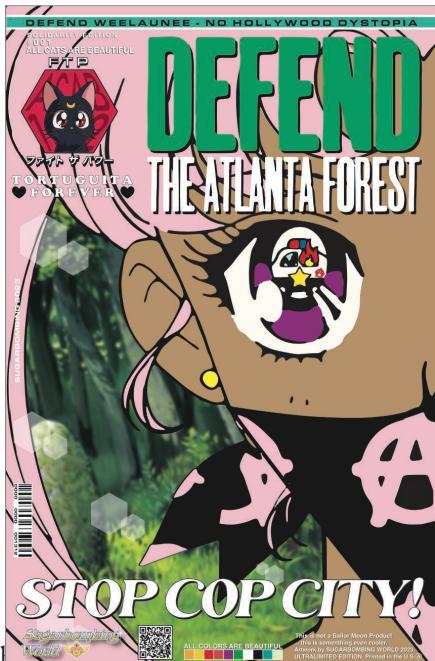
very popular. So I decided to make my own genre, which is called Subversive Pop, where I just grab basically infantile pop culture imagery, because I grew up liking Riot Girl stuff, and that was very different from punk. 'We are only wearing black esthetic and only wearing the same patches!' So I just wanted to create something that maybe would appeal more to the Gen Z or, you know, silly people like me.



Because this is Pride Weekend, I decided to include some of the images that I have created throughout the years. This is obviously very recent, it talks a lot about Palestine, true love is free Palestine, right? This is also Pride is a Riot, it is not like some corporate rainbow with Zionists around or cops being part of it. No, no, hell no.

Pride is a Riot





I also made this. One of the most important parts of our contemporary movement, and something so horrible is probably gonna happen all over the country if we don't stop it. Obviously, right now, I've been playing a lot with the symbols of resistance that the watermelons have become, wearing a keffiyeh has become. So in a nutshell, that's me.



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And you see these things. We have all these things around our cities. We just look, and we don't give a fuck about them, most of the time. So there are things that are offensive and terrible, like this. And it's up to you, you know. I'm not saying to do this or break or cause any loss or anything, but it's up to people right? You can beautify your place, you can beautify the city, right? You can make it better. There you go. That's pretty much it, what we had. Do you have anything to add to that? We're gonna be opening for questions. So if anybody has any questions or anything...



Audience 1: Thank you all so much for your talk. I did have one question. I noticed a through line between the three of your works of simplicity as a way to try and meet people to be reproducible, that sort of thing. I'm curious if you had any thoughts on more elaborate pieces, and what role they have to play in the movement. Des, you were talking a lot about how the museum is the wrong place for art. And so I'm curious where do you think the best places are for really elaborate art that takes a lot of time, a lot of energy, that you can't just throw up on the wall real quick?

Bonzo: Beehive collective. The biggest, most elaborate. But that still hangs on our walls, right? Museums don't get that. They come around and they sell those posters for 15 bucks or something. Yeah?

Des: You're right. You're right, There could be a place possibly, right? But it's also thinking of art in a different way. Why are we so worried about permanence, for example, you know what I mean? Because we want to create something, but then immediately it's like, 'Oh, it should be in a museum.' So that it's kept. And then it shouldn't be on a piece of cardboard, we want it on canvas to exist forever. I think

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So this is from a legend about Bakunin in Dresden.* There was a revolt and Bakunin – it's talked about in literature, but it's word of mouth so nobody really knows if it actually happened. But the point is that they were gonna get raided by the Prussian military, and they stole this painting, which was one of the most valuable paintings that they had in that era. And then they placed it right in front of the barricades. So the Prussian army decided not to attack them. And later on, the way that they dissuaded the conflict was by somebody snitching and betraying them. But they didn't go through this painting, which is completely absurd, in my opinion. It's a piece of art. It doesn't matter if they hold it valuable, but it's again, engaging with art in a different way, right? In my opinion, I would be like: 'Fuck yeah, burn it. I don't care.'



Throughout the history of radical movements, there have been people who have actually done that. There was a Venezuelan Liberation Army in the 60s, that did the same thing. They stole a bunch of paintings, and they basically had them hostage until they got raided, unfortunately, and they got killed. But they took a whole bunch of people to save these paintings. It's so wild. And then with the détournement, again, it's like taking old art and creating something completely different. To me, this is beautiful. It's a whole different way of engaging with that.

**Editors note: there is a high likelihood that this story is in fact apocryphal and the state troops were shooting from within an art gallery at the rebels, but it's an entertaining story nonetheless.*

Des Revol

I'm Des. I'm a mixed-media artist. I grew up doing graffiti since I was like 12. I grew up in Mexico, and one of the things that I learned when I was painting over there, is that since resources were not available, a lot of times you had to do graffiti with brushes, straight up, a lot of carving, basically, whatever you had around you would use to create something. We have an idea of thinking of graffiti with just spray cans a lot of times, but it's probably more than that, right? And historically we've seen that, ever since cave paintings and during the Roman and Greek empires, when people were writing political graffiti, writing love poems, and doing all these different things to communicate, making it accessible to people.

I've always been fascinated by that aspect of graffiti and art, where it's not just relegated to the building and a school or these so-called intellectuals or professional artists sometimes just create something that is going to be put in a museum. Art should be accessible, should be, in my opinion, free, and should be fun, should be engaging. And when you go to a museum a lot of times you see the same kind of shit. If you go to the Smithsonian you see all these old paintings of white people, and it's just kind of the same thing over and over. And these are held as the epitome of art, the standard for what things should be.

I started, just painting, doing graffiti for my ego. If you're familiar with that game, you basically create a name, you paint it as much as you can, and it gets you fame, it gets you recognition. It's a fun game that you play with other writers, and you're constantly just kind of scoping. My introduction to graffiti too was that I was able to go to places that I had never been before within my city. It pushes you to explore and engage with your environment in a lot of different ways. So you're looking at a surface in a completely different way than other people do sometimes because you're walking by, you're saying: 'Oh shit, I could put my name up there,' and then it's figuring it out. How do I get there? How do I climb to that building? How do I do this? You start scoping things out. And you engage with your environment completely differently. Where somebody else might just be passing by, and not even looking at that, you know.

So you start paying a lot of attention to your surroundings. Going to bridges, highways, or train tracks. You just walk around that area, factories, and warehouses in the middle of the night too, at two in the morning. It's a whole different experience than you have during the day, right? You see a lot of crazy shit. You see interesting things, and it's just a very interesting way of engaging with your city and with your surroundings, and putting a piece of you on that too.

I was getting older and I kind of had to stop doing graffiti as much, primarily because it was getting sketchy and the cops were doing raids. They were keeping track of all the writers around the city. And what they do is they'll normally create a file with all the complaints that you have or all the city property that you tagged.

And then if your name is the same one, and you get caught, and you have anything with that, a sticker or a notebook with your name on that, then they rack up all those things together into one case, and then you get a \$100,000 fine or something like that. So I had to stop.

At the same time I was getting politicized, I was probably about 17-18 years old. And I came across Che Guevara, basic, typical political work. I started changing the way that I did graffiti, where it was no longer just about the ego, but it was more about a message. And trying to put stuff out there that is engaging with people, and that is pushing boundaries. So I started changing the way that I did graffiti and art in general.

At the same time, I also started working as a teacher assistant in an elementary school, and I did that for a bunch of years. That also changed the way that I approach art because it allowed me to get inspired by a bunch of children's books, and do art for kids. I used to do a bunch of doodles for kids every day, and then just give them out as rewards and stuff. So it also gave me a different approach, to what is the kind of art that I want to do, where it's no longer just a picture of Che Guevara, or you know what I mean, the typical anarchist iconography that we usually use. To try to make something a little bit more subtle in a way, but still rad, right? Something that you can see and not necessarily get the message right away. Sometimes you have to look at it twice or it's a little silly. I just enjoy humor in art as well. So that's kind of my upbringing into the art.



Then these are just tags in gentrified neighborhoods, and it's just stuff that again, you just kind of stop. There's no name, you know, nobody's signing this. So you're just walking in the neighborhood and you see this shit, and it's like: 'What!?' So it makes you stop. And sometimes think about it. 'What do they mean by this?' And this is a critique of gentrifying spaces where developers are just creating these giant



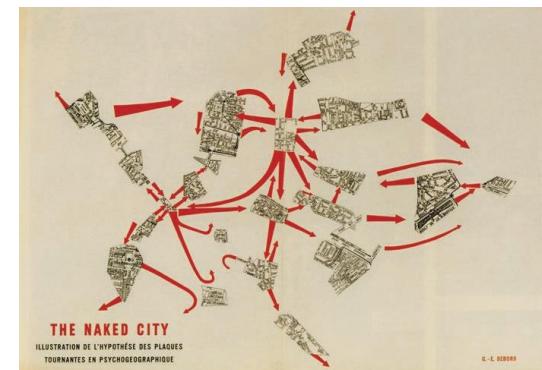
And what that means. Imagine anything that you can think of, and you have an image of that that is usually given to you by the media. A lot of times it's romantic relationships. We see these rom-coms, and it's like: 'Yo, this is how it is.' Even with anarchist movements, you think of an anarchist, and for most people, they have a specific image.

A lot of these things, unfortunately, are through the lens of consumer society. They're intended for us to keep buying things, to purchase all these things, and to participate in the economy. And our experiences are completely affected by that. Going to the beach, you need a beach ball, you need a beach umbrella, you need a bathing suit that is specifically for that. You need all these different things that specifically make you participate in consumer society. Just being critical of that and understanding that we can live outside of that, is very possible. It is difficult, but it is possible. And that's where our take on that will come.



So one of the things that they did is, this is from the 60s and the Situationists. They are one of the first few people who took comics, and then they just replaced the little bubble on top. This is a romantic, probably the person's going through something else, and they're just like, boom!, They basically modified it.

These are the little journals that they used to keep off the city. As you can see, this is a map, according to them. So it's the ways they drifted around the city of Paris and stuff. And it's just, again, navigating through the city in a different way. Basically taking these old images and recreating them.



Des: I want to go a little bit into this thing. Is anybody familiar with the Situationist International, which was not anarchist, right? They had a couple anarchists in there, and they got kicked out right away because they were Marxist-Leninist for the most part. However their take on art was pretty impressive, I feel. And they coined a couple terms that are kind of bourgeois in a way, but the process that they talked about or think is very valuable. And one of the things that I wanted to talk about is the psychogeography. Are people familiar with that term?

Basically geography studies or takes care of maps, right? Rigid lines, landscapes, terrains, etc. Psychogeography is about how all these things affect your psyche. How do they affect your behavior? So it's kind of a study of that in itself. Because a lot of times we don't hear about that. How your environment, the architecture around your environment, the color the buildings are painted, the way that the concrete fucks with your behavior too.

The Situationists have had a couple of different points, which is what you brought up earlier. Dérive, which means to just wander, or drift. And it's basically what I talked about earlier, with graffiti. How many times have you walked around your neighborhood with no specific goal? I don't have to go to the store, but I'm just strolling through here. You know what I mean? A lot of times I feel like we kind of neglect that, where we don't necessarily engage with our environment anymore, especially in urban environments. And in cities and things like that, where everything just looks the same thing. And we also kind of neglect engaging with that. So therefore these environments can be completely taken over by developers and completely changed, and then we don't have any say whatsoever in that. So dérive is basically that process, to just wander off and then take mental notes on things that you've engaged with. Psychogeography, like I said, is the study of that.

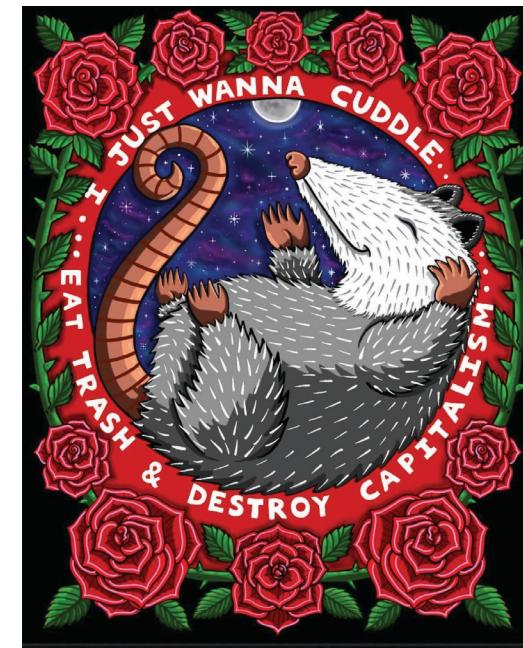
A third thing is called unitary urbanism, which is thinking of architecture and the cities and the way that they have been built again, but go beyond functionality. Where it's not just like this building serves for this specific reason, but to go beyond that. Make it adventurous, make it fun. Instead of us just having basic buildings, concrete, and all these different things, make something completely different. Make a fucking tree house, just random stuff. So that's the take on that.

The last thing is détournement, which is kind of like taking old images or old buildings or statues and turning them into something completely different. It kind of resembles building a new world on the old shell. Basically not letting things go to waste and then giving them a different purpose. So I feel those things are super important for artists, and just for people in general, to just engage with your environment through art.

One of these things that the Situationists talked about was the idea of the spectacle. A lot of people have heard that probably. It's this belief that life is no longer experienced fully, but is a mere representation that is mediated through images.

condos, and they don't care about people. They're displacing people. They don't care about how people live, and they're just making money, you know.

So that's kind of one of my favorite things to do, in general. It's just basic tags, and they're not polished or anything. It's just quick, and easy. And that's one of the ideas I feel sometimes with graffiti. Sometimes people get caught up in trying to make this super cool piece. There's room for that as well, but just catching tags, that's probably my favorite thing. But yeah, again, working with your environment, I found this piece of supply wood, and I'm just like: 'Yo, put this here.' I had two cans of spray paint, and things happen, right?



Then I started moving more into artwork like this. It's kind of cute, cuddly, and shit, and it's a little silly. I feel it's well-received by people. Honestly, when I was even drawing this, I felt that it was dumb. And I was like: 'Who the hell will relate to this?' [laughs] I've been vegan for a long time. I'm all about animal liberation. And I love just painting animals in general too. Obviously, each one has its own unique character and things that they represent. I call them 'trash critters', your raccoons, possums, cats, you know, the homies in the neighborhood, basically. I just love it, because they're so resilient, and, you know, they thrive, or they try to live in this urban environment. They were encroaching on their environment and stuff.

Some little stickers ‘Eat trash fight cops’. This was a series of donuts that I was doing in different poses. It was called ‘Angry vegan donuts.’ It was imagining a world where donuts were fighting back, you know.



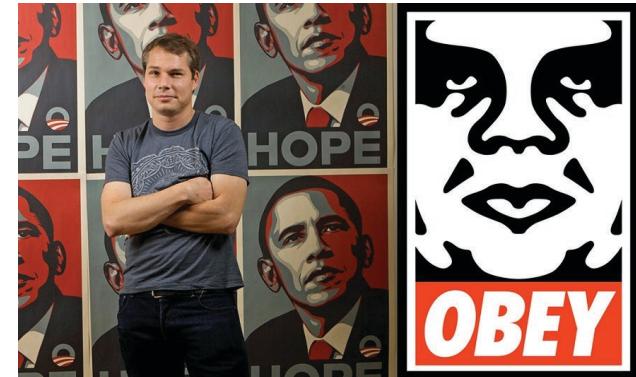
This is one of the pieces that I did lately for Firestorm as well. But again, just those little possums and stuff. I love those things.



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Bonzo: Okay, I’m gonna switch with you now.

Des: [Jokingly] *Better not be talking about insurrectionary politics.* [laughter] So this was a little bit of two things, two different points in one slide, right? I think you were really cool about what you have to talk about. Shepard Fairey. We wanted to bring this up. The difference between anarchist artists, and artists that do political work. We see this example, and do you want to expand something on that?



Bonzo: I’m just gonna talk about Fairey, and then I’ll get away. So Des and I both have a similar experience of growing up and seeing Shepard Fairey and being like: ‘That’s a rad dude who’s doing things’. The realities of Shepard Fairey. So Shepard Fairey is kind of a boogeyman in several different scenes. One of those being the actual anarchist left, or just the liberatory movement.

Shepard Fairey is very famous for - and wait till the end of this sentence before you judge what I’m about to say – stealing images and then copywriting them. This even extends to early Black Panther images. This extends to early images from the 70s in support of a free Palestine. He fucking copyrights that shit and puts this ‘Obey’ giant stuff on it. He has reproduced Nazi imagery, the Totenkopf, and said: ‘Oh, well, I saw some bikers wearing it, so I thought it was cool.’ And it’s like, ‘Well, yeah, you saw some Nazi bikers wearing it.’

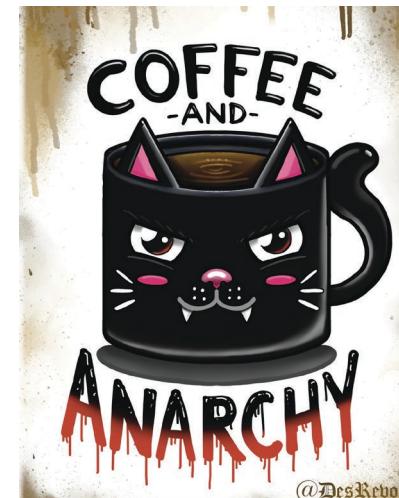
Shepard Fairey has also collaborated with the state directly against anarchists. One of the most famous squats in, I believe, Denmark or Sweden. You might know this, Denmark or Sweden got horrifically evicted. It had been going for 20 years. There was also a really militant migrant support center there. They were violently evicted, people put in prison, people lost teeth. That dude came in the next day and painted a big peace mural with doves on the side of it, paid for by the city. But this is a person who, if you ask a lot of normal people and you show them an image, they’re like, ‘Oh, that’s a radical artist. That’s a rebel, that’s a revolutionary’, and it’s like – ‘No.’ One last thing, an anarchist jumped him for painting that piece mural. So that man has had his nose broken by an anarchist. There are photos of it.

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nin or Stalin, so we do not make figures set in stone to worship. But what we do is that we think about and we honor those that have fallen and those that have been taken from us through repression, through the violence of the state. So I feel that it's not something that I see in a lot of other political movements, but in actual care and respect for the contributions, the incredibly generous contributions of those that were with us till recently, or even came in the past. And I think that is something really special about anarchism. That, instead of worshiping these weird godheads who committed horrible genocides, or even just liberal, they probably got fucking, I don't know, George Bush or Reagan in their house, right? One of those dudes. But in anarchism, we think about the people who have made contributions and who are no longer able to enjoy those contributions they made.



Sugabombing: In our movement, we not only honor those who were taken away from us for life, but those who have been taken away from us, and don't have their freedom. So we always honor our political prisoners. We always talk about them. We do letter writing for them. We make images for them. So that's also something very unique in our movement. I mean, I don't have a lot of commie friends, but I have never seen a gesture like that in the communist movement.



And then this one too. And so again, you see the anarchy. It looks angry, right? And the cat is cute, but it's still like: 'I'll fuck you up.' So I try to do some of that, you know I just want to make it that way. So even a kid can have this and a lot of people are not even gonna be upset about it, because it's kind of cuteish. But it's also an anarchist kid. So that's pretty much it.

One of the things that I wanted to say is again, bringing it up to graffiti, and relating that to anarchism. A lot of graffiti artists, when they start and even when they're older, you paint with whatever you have. And most people don't have access to things, so they steal things, right? You will hear anything from kids just going to Home Depot and running out with a fucking shopping cart full of spray paint. They will last you a couple weeks, you know? And I think that was something that really attracted me as well. It's the fact that there are no excuses, you know what I mean. Obviously, there are things that you cannot avoid, but for the most part it's accessible, it's easily reproducible. You don't have to be a good artist, what they were talking about like punk music. You don't have to be a good artist. You could just go tag something. You go to write some shit. That's what I relate to, my anarchist politics as well. It's do it yourself. Be rebellious, push whatever you want to do. You know what I mean?

Sometimes graffiti makes people uncomfortable, but it is what it is. It devalues the property. And I think it's great. You see, in a lot of neighborhoods, that's probably for later on in the talk, but we have beautiful murals a lot of times. Even if it's radical. It could be a person that we love and a character that has historically been an anarchist or whatever. But the fact that it's a cool mural, attracts all these fucking hipsters that will come to take pictures with that. I've seen it plenty of times. They don't even know who the character is, but it's like: 'Oh, it's a cool graffiti'. Clap. So the difference between seeing a grimy tag or graffiti and then having the much-polished art, I feel I struggle with that sometimes too. I want to paint cool shit, but also I want to do grimy stuff. I feel the grimy graffiti, or art in general, tends to be more effective in combating gentrification and a lot of these things. But anyway that's it.

N.O. Bonzo

Hi everyone! I work under the name Bonzo. Following up with what Des was talking about, touching upon repression that comes down on graffiti artists. I just want to talk about somebody from Portland. His house was just raided and \$12,000 worth of supplies were stolen, which he distributed to us throughout the city for the past 20 years. He's been one of the mainstays and backbones of our graffiti community in Portland and he is currently on the run, and if everyone could just hope that no one ever finds him [laughs].

I also have a background in graffiti. How strange we all came here. I also started really young when I was 12. I have a background predominantly in graffiti and kind of punk subcultural spaces. My family spent a lot of time homeless while I was growing up, and I was also displaced and kind of unstable till about 30. One of the things about graffiti that Des touched upon really perfectly too, is if you have nothing and you're bored, very bored, (which is a big part of being homeless) you can go steal something and go do graffiti and have tons of fun.

Though many beautiful things can be said about it, you can actually interact with the world and also put something out there in a totally unmediated way, right? If folks also had the chance to attend the punk talk yesterday, so much of our forms of expression nowadays, you have to do a permit, a fucking Museum has to look at this mission statement that you wrote, right? A lot of things are really mediated. You have to pay to be able to express yourself in any type of way. With graffiti, you can just go do that and write. Hopefully at night when no one in authority sees you. Watch for cameras, please. This is the same thing with maybe more punk forms of vandalism. Lots of wheat pasting and stencils, there's lots of overlap between all of these things.

So from a pretty young age, I was engaged in the practice of wheat pasting, stenciling, writing on things, scratching into things. They can't buff scratches. And also being really influenced by a lot of the art that you see within graffiti and punk. That art is kind of the art of, what this one dude, John Dewey would call 'the art of everyday experience.' So this is the art that's in cartoons and comics and things that you don't have to really go somewhere to access. You don't have to go to school and learn about art history and learn about like Corbu [nickname of famous architect and designer Le Corbusier] or something. Most of us are generally familiar, even if we don't have direct access to a TV or other types of media, of a lot of the images that are really... everybody knows what an X-Men looks like at this point, probably, right? And these are really prominent images, both in punk through folks doing détournement and dérives of images. So taking those images and then turning them into something subversive and radical.

If folks are familiar with a lot of graffiti, you often put in a Bart, or you put in a Jean Gray, or you put in these various different types of characters to remix

DRESS ME UP BLACK BLOC



not going to have ballot boxes unless they're burning or being smashed in some other type of way. We're not going to have images that show authoritarian forms of governance being re-applied to people. We're not going to be illustrating anarchist jails, because that is not a thing that should exist. And generally, when we are going to be showing our tools of the trade, we are going to be showing things that are reproducible and accessible. So things

like a rattle can, things like a black bandana so you can cover your face. Things like bolt cutters, so you can get the homies out. Or get them in to break out some beagles or minks, you know, various animal comrades. And Molotov cocktails. Our images are going to be things, too that we want to be seen reproduced in the world. So I hope all of us in here have a desire to see a thousand of us running with Molotov cocktails being surrounded by burning cop cars.



I think about how those symbols translate through history too. This is a comic book character from the 1970s. He has bombs. He's burning a draft card. He robbed a bank, maybe. He has a wrench and a screwdriver. This is the Anarchick he was an early anarchist comic and he predominantly existed in Europe, but he did make it over here due to the work of the Anarchist Black Cross at that time. I wanted to show this too, because this is also an older iteration of a Molotov cocktail. And we could even go back to much more historical anarchist art and see images that are similar to this. Of people burning down and attacking and destroying the things that are destroying us and destroying the people that we care about and are in solidarity with.

I also wanted to talk about something that I do actually feel is unique about the symbols that we use in anarchism. In anarchism, we do not worship Le-

But, you know, everybody understands ACAB, everybody understands Molotov cocktails and a cop car on fire.

Bonzo: Can I say something? Indonesia and the Philippines both have amazing info shops that provide unbelievably important, critical support, and you can donate to them. With the way the world economy works, sadly, us just donating \$200, they can publish 5000 books with that. They can buy food for the kids they have supported for a long time. So just think if you are in a position where you're like: 'Hey, I want to give some money to some anarchists.' A lot of these folks, they're on Instagram, and because Instagram has some translation worked into it, you can just chat with them. It'll be goofy, but you can chat with them. Sorry, I just wanted to [say that].



Sugabombing: No no, that's great. It's really important to highlight that. These are comrades in New York City. This is in one of the very early abortion rights demonstrations. There were people holding placards with silly designs that I made. For me that's the success that I want to achieve, when my images make it to the outside world and people want to bring them to a demo, or people want to teach kids about anti-repression, then you know, I'm good. I can die tomorrow. The next one basically talks about the symbols of the iconic imagery in the anarchist movement. Do you want to talk a little about that?

Bonzo: We're all kind of switching off. It's working. One of the things about the anarchist movement is that we're not a political party. We're not trying to pass a piece of legislation or get someone elected. We're a group of individuals who strive towards a general set of shared values and frameworks. When we're thinking about our movement, we're also thinking about what we do in this movement, that's going to be reflected in our art. None of us are gonna make a poster for Biden. I mean, that's even an extreme. Elizabeth Warren, maybe a softer, nicer, you know, genocider. None of us are going to do that. If a local NGO asks us to do something, we're probably not going to do that.

So we're not going to have certain types of things within our imagery. We're
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them and to have fun with them and make them your own. Also, someone else has already drawn them. You don't have to make them up. You just have to copy. It's very simple. And I was also part of...for folks who maybe are familiar with the history of graffiti, there's like, actually 10 million different subdivisions of it. There is a subdivision which is called 'character-based style.' So if you see folks who are kind of just drawing the same character over and over again, this was really big in Oakland, where I spent a lot of time as a youth. I was predominantly into character-based graffiti. So this was the act of creating a character and doing it repeatedly everywhere. This is something that you get down to where you can paint in about 10 minutes or so. So it's very similar, too, to stenciling and to screen printing, these things that I was having overlap with in punk.

A lot of my style developed through this idea of repetition, reproduction, being able to make this accessible, to make it your own, and to also pass it around. Through my participation in both graffiti and punk I also came to the ideas of anarchism. I will be honest, I was a very bad kid and I am grateful because anarchism made me worse in a much more effective way. Yes, we can always be worse. [laughs]

As I got into anarchism, I also was interested in a lot of the imagery that had existed in anarchism, and that was existing then. For folks who have maybe guessed kind of my general generation, I was growing up when Eric Drucker was really big in punk, and Seth Tobocman was really big in punk. These images were kind of everywhere. You might have seen the image: 'We don't have to fuck each other over to survive'. All of these, they are dirty-ass stencils. They are things you can just really easily photocopy on a Kinko's copier, put some vegetable oil on that, and burn a screen. All of these are images that were made specifically so that anarchists and punks and other people interested in liberatory ideas would take those and reproduce them. With very little barrier to entry. That was a result of all these different backgrounds, especially in comics. My style kind of developed out of that.



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And of course, I'm showing this heavily colored piece first. Most of my work is very illustrative. I think I am kind of becoming a little bit of a dinosaur nowadays. I still predominantly work all in pen and ink, very boringly. I've started trying to use color because I finally read a book on color theory, and it's easier than the College wants you to believe. Just go read a book. But predominantly my work is incredibly illustrative, and it's made specifically to be screenprinted. I also very intentionally, try to never have my name attached to my work, because I want folks to feel less of a barrier to being able to take that, to change that in any way they want to be able to use that, to maybe be able to print that for a benefit show you're doing, or paint that on a spot that you're opening up.

I sometimes struggle a lot when I think about what I'm trying to do with art because I think about art in the same terms that I often think about anarchism. Anarchism is something that we are continually moving towards, right? We're never like: 'This moment right now is anarchist, it's perfect, 100% glossy.' It's something we're always moving towards. It's something we're trying to achieve. And with art, I kind of feel the same way. You know, almost day by day I sometimes change how I feel about my process and how I feel about my production. I am also very committed to older techniques. Lately, I've been getting into the habit of trying to build very, very expensive presses that are often kind of hidden away within the universities or within very fine art galleries. So I've been trying to build DIY letterpresses. It's so cool. I'll send you, I'll send everybody. I love it. It was \$40, it's amazing. I love it so much.

A lot of the intense DIY focus comes from graffiti. If you know graffiti artists, they usually know how to make their own mops [graffiti tool]. They know how to make their own scribes. They know how to make ladders sometimes, which is an interesting thing I discovered. And that DIY ethos is also in punk where you know how to do your own publishing, and you know how to do your own distribution. I still screen print on \$5 worth



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This image right here, this is people in Paris. You know, Paris is also one of the main capitals of the world that has a lot of money but a lot of diversity. And right now they're also facing Marine Le Pen, which is a horrible fascist. So these people in Paris decided to take some of my work and make photocopies and color them and bring them to a demonstration. And they just sent it to me, and I was like: 'Whoa. Somebody did all of that, damn.' I was just really happy to be able to appeal to somebody who on the other side of the world is willing to do all of that and bring it to a demo. And that's the type of language that I want people to speak.



I don't know if you guys are familiar with other scenes in the world, but in Asia, Indonesia has a huge anarchy scene. A lot of people compare it to what the Mexico City scene scenario is. There are tons of punks all over the country. These people reached out to me because I produced a coloring book for kids, also during the pandemic. I was like 'Oh, you know, kids are probably bored at home, why don't they color ACAB?' So these kids were like: 'Hey, we live in Indonesia, in a small town, and our community is facing mining. Our community is being displaced. Our community is suffering from a lack of clean water.' So when they told me that they were gonna have this as an activity for the kids, I just wanted to cry because it was incredible to me that my message had reached Indonesia. You know a language that I don't even know...



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SugARBOMBING: Well, now that you guys have seen all our stuff. So to me, the main purpose of having a conversation like this one is to highlight why it's important to have art in the movement. Because, you know for a long time especially brown kids like me, they make us believe that art is done by white cis males, right? And they are European, and they have to have some flamboyant last names. They have to come from money and be trust fund kids to be a successful artist, right? But what does that even mean? What is an artist, and what is success in this capitalistic society?

So for me, it's really important to have art in a movement that is fighting against all of that. We're fighting against seeing each other as merchandise, seeing each other as how much money you have, how many followers you have, how many people have you slept with. You know, we have this really crazy scale system, where we value ourselves more for what society tells us is valuable than for what is actually valuable. So I think that to have art in the movement, we see art everywhere, we just take it for granted. You are wearing a T-shirt and it has any type of pattern, any type of silkscreen, anything. There was a person who actually took time to sketch that out, and decided that it was worth producing. And here we go. We all have that. Somebody designed this chair. We see it as a commodity that is made out of plastic. But there was a human behind this who made this possible. There was also another human in a factory being extremely underpaid in a third-world country, assembling this chair that was put in a conveyor that flew probably thousands of miles away to make it into these institutions. So we can be sitting here. So I think that art is something so intrinsic to humanity that we need to have it in our movement.

Art is the best way of communicating an idea. When you see a poster that speaks to you, this is why advertisement is so important in capitalism, right? Advertisement sells a lifestyle, sells values, sells everything. We here want to sell anarchy to the world. So hopefully we'll succeed in making this place livable. And you know, have a better autonomous society with no bosses, no fucking cops, no repression, no war, no famine, no genocide. So this is why art is a very important part of the movement.

For example, right now the Palestine stuff is everywhere, there's not a single person who doesn't know about it, whether they agree with it or not. But the imagery is captivating. I live near the city, so I take the train every day. And when I see somebody wearing a keffiyeh, I'm like: 'I see you. I see you.' I see people wearing a tote bag that says: 'End the genocide' or 'Jews against Zionism.' It's a language. It's a language that speaks to you all the time. So if we manage to create art that speaks to people, not only us but more people, who would be attracted to our movement, I feel that's already half the battle.

of wood that I stole from a construction site and using squeegees that I accidentally found at a Nike screenprinting satellite station. They're fine. They won't miss them. As I said, I lived in so-called Portland, Oregon. They got them everywhere. It's misery.

A lot of the images that I make come directly from conversation. Whether those are conversations I'm actually having with people, whether those are conversations that I'm reading in maybe a book, or I'm hearing from a podcast, or they're in response to what is happening. This was a piece that was made at the beginning of the 2020 uprisings in solidarity and support of the George Floyd prisoners. I know a lot of our states still have prisoners that are still in. In Portland we have Malik Mohammed, he's still in for another seven years for allegedly throwing a Molotov. Amazing, amazing person.

WE DIDN'T GO TO SCHOOL TODAY



AND WE'RE NOT GOING TO GO TOMORROW

A lot of my work is generally made to have a purpose too, to be used to help support prisoners or help support other kinds of struggles going on. As I mentioned, I'm really influenced by the history of anarchism, and anarchist art. If anyone's familiar with 'We didn't go to work today and we're not going to go tomorrow. We choose to live our lives for pleasure.' This came out of the gigantic 1980s UK squatting scene. And this is something I enjoy about anarchist art, that you see the same themes replicating so much.

This is a goat I actually had to babysit. Their name is Sugarpants. They pee everywhere, by the way, don't actually keep them in your house unless you hate your landlord. We hated that dude. [laughs]. This is an anti-militarist piece that I made. So this is actually a Russian tank. These are the new tanks that they're using now that are better at mass murdering people. So I'm trying to demonstrate an idea of anti-militarism.

As I mentioned, I come from so-called Portland. So we were having, of course, and we will

continue to have fascists mobilizing directly in the streets. Of course, everyone is having a white supremacy and fascism problem. This is, you know, an occupied territory, but we had a couple of open white nationalist street gangs who were coming once a fucking month to bother all of us.

One of the things that I have currently been moving into in my work for the last couple of years is trying to illustrate a number of historical figures, and also diving into the history. I highly recommend if you're able to catch Kenyon's talk that's happening tomorrow [*The Lost History of Jewish Anarchism in America*], because our histories are full of so much promise and so much loss, and so many lessons too that are continually pertinent. This is Olga Taratuta. She was one of the first secretaries of the Anarchist Black Cross, and she has been almost completely lost to history, subsumed by all of the dudes in the Russian Revolution. I really hope to be able to help bring these names a little bit back into circulation. I also think that being an artist is a powerful way to convey our actual history.

This is a raid. This is Trotsky's



surgical strike. [image missing] This was a mass raid that happened all across Russia and Ukraine, arresting hundreds and hundreds and hundreds of the last free anarchists in Russia and Ukraine before the Bolsheviks solidified their charnel house. So this was a raid of one of the last anarchist conferences that happened. And some of those folks in there are secretaries of the Black Cross, people who did massive organizing, lived in Chicago. Fanya Baron in the front was friends with Lucy Parsons. And so I think that a lot of times, these histories can feel complicated and complex, and they're really dense. A lot of times we're even reading names we're maybe not very familiar with. And art can be a really easy way to convey that. Also, I drew this before I read a book on perspective, so don't look at the lines or try and see. I'm gonna redraw it now that I know how to do perspective.

Okay, last slide, and then we can get to the fun. I've also been starting to get into comics and making comics myself. When I grew up, all I wanted to be was an animator or comic book artist, and I did it. I just happened to make anarchist comics now. So yay! I think comics are a really powerful way to also convey our ideas, convey our stories. I believe BumLung is also here. I'm wearing a shirt, BumLung printed. And I believe they also maybe have a comic here. I haven't been able to scope their table yet. But yeah, it's been really fun also getting into the history of anarchist comics, because we actually have hella comics. Sadly, most of them are not in English, so learning languages... The history of anarchist comics is absolutely fantastic, and it's an incredibly powerful and moving way to communicate our ideas.

All right? And now we get into a small talk. We'll gather around the podium.

