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ARTIST STATEMENT

RUSSIA AND AMERICA ULEC

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The practice of deception and propaganda through media has been around since as early as the twentieth century. Although the method is a worldwide reality, this series of animated posters focus on portraying the examples of such operations in Russia and America. Each poster on their own, as well as a series, are aimed to depict and explore how Russia and America use media outlets as a form of propaganda and deception. These works not only assess media as a form of propaganda but also as a measure to protest and oppose the deception. The stance of authority figures, activists, and minorities are interpreted to portray how the media works as a powerful tool of propaganda. It is essential to examine the different types of media outlets to analyze the approaches in which they construct and communicate disinformation. In the twentieth century, before social media, media outlets consisted primarily of television. Today, social media plays a large role in the way people access and consume information.

The poster 'Social Media Information Warfare' takes inspiration from the documentaries "The Great Hack" and "Agents of Chaos" along with the book "Network Propaganda" by Benkler Yochai. In 2016 during the United States presidential election, Donald Trump worked together with Cambridge Analytica, a political consulting firm from the United Kingdom. During this alliance, social media, specifically Facebook and Twitter, were used as a tool to manipulate covertly and surreptitiously influence the public. There were "tens of millions of Facebook profiles to develop techniques for manipulating voters" (Page 11, Network Propaganda). Cambridge Analytica, together with Trump, collected data on behavior, characteristics, and backgrounds about different communities to manipulate voters using their personal information, also

known as "information warfare" (The Great Hack). This poster portrays an abstract yet direct way to display how social media platforms were weaponized and used as a form of propaganda without people's knowledge. Cambridge Analytica "targeted those whose minds we thought we could change, until they saw the whose we wanted them to," which is a critical message in portraying the real goals and targets of social media propaganda within this poster.

However, the United States is not the only one to participate in and initiate social media usage as a form of manipulation and information warfare. Online social networking services have more power than we recognize as they allow for anonymity and rather personal connections between our internet personas, which lead to a greater sense of trust. "Facebook and Twitter automated accounts, which incited people on both the left and the right to protest" (Page 10, Network Propaganda) was a way in which Russia played its role in manipulating voters during the 2016 elections in the United States. The Agents of Chaos documentary goes into detail about how Russia used troll farms, which were social media automated "troll" accounts that appeared to be real people but were, in fact, bots during the 2016 United States presidential elections and in the years following. Although the troll farms were not connected to Cambridge Analytica, they developed their manipulation techniques through social media to deceive and misinform people. Furthermore, they targeted vulnerable communities such as supporters and populations of the Black Lives Matter movement. "Russian propaganda campaign just kept going even after President Trump won the election" (Agents of Chaos). However, the troll farms played a part in using deceitful information to manipulate communities during the elections; it did not stop

once the elections were over. This poster intends to highlight how social media networks can be used as a weapon for information warfare—exploiting personal data to benefit the authorities of Russia and The United States while deceiving and covertly using social media to their advantage.

The poster 'Politics and Media' takes inspiration from the text by Yurchak and Boyer "American Stib" as well as "Road to Unfreedom" by Timothy Snyder and "Soviet Active Measures and Disinformation" by Dennis Kux. The first poster was designed with its main focus being social media to portray the deception within social network propaganda. At the same time, this work looks at television networks as its primary focus. Going back to the 1960s, "disinformation" involving "various practices, including circulating false or misleading news stories" (Page 23, Soviet Active Measures and Disinformation) could be identified within Russian television networks. Although the world was different in the twentieth century, with television networks producing communist stories, we can still identify how authority plays a large role in media today. One of the largest Russian television channels is NTV. There is a pattern in the way governments take advantage of media for their benefits. Media and politics have a compelling connection with one another. Snyder wrote, "The Russian television channel NTV warned of "homodictatorship" in Ukraine" (Page 53, Road to Unfreedom). This instance traces back to Russia intervening in Ukraine's politics by falsely misleading citizens to contemplate "taboo" sex. This poster highlights how television networks can mislead and exaggerate news, which works for the Russian government's benefit. Furthermore, a music video titled "One like Putin" was released, which portrays two women praising Putin on television. This further informs that

television networks can be used in different ways as a form of propaganda. Although the release of this music video most likely had no direct involvement of Putin himself, it develops a commentary on how television networks have the power to formulate convincing and manipulative narratives for populations. This poster incorporates the different ways television networks in Russia use propaganda as a tool for manipulation while contrasting with media from The United States.

Yurchak and Boyer compared parody like media and their approach to covering politics in the United States. There is a pattern of predictable and repetitive forms of authoritative discourse within large US media networks such as CNN, Fox News, and NBC. "Even the casual viewer can see that The Daily Show is not only a parody of "real" political news on CNN, Fox, NBC, and other "serious" channels but that it also provides an elaborate commentary on how mainstream media organize their coverage of politics" (Page 192, American StioB). This poster incorporates the contrast of how media networks provide new opinions "for a whole generation of Americans" (Page 191, American StioB). News sources are not always reliable, especially large corporations that are in favor of governments. Furthermore, they are highly over-consumed. However, it is hard to tell the difference between propaganda and truth, as Snyder believes, "objectivity is a myth" (Page 53, Road to Unfreedom). Comparing different television networks and their approaches highlight how we may be missing the repetitive circulation of disinformation in media. Russia and The United States are both guilty in their use of media as a form of propaganda, whether that may be through misinforming the public of their opponents or repeatedly deceiving populations to believe a subjective statement.

The last poster, titled 'Anti-Government,' focuses on the opposing side of media networks. Primarily taking inspiration from the book by Valeria Sperling, "Sex, Putin & Politics." Pussy Riot was a group of young women who were "self-proclaimed Russian feminists" (Page 224, Sex, Putin & Politics) in 2012. They were anti-Putin and believed in feminism and LGBTQ rights. Pussy Riot displays a different perspective on media as "their main audience is the media themselves" (Page 237, Sex, Putin & Politics). Russia is anti-LGBTQ; thus, Pussy Riots protests got a lot of attention and quickly went viral. The media, at this point, was covering precisely what Russia was against. The networks covering Pussy Riot were so shocked by their oppositions, and this is when the point of view of people watching the media suddenly flipped to the media watching them. This poster portrays a fight, as Pussy Riot did for themselves and their community. Where they took advantage of the press to let themselves be heard. Compared to the other two posters where we see how media can be used as a form of propaganda, this poster also shows how media can be used as a tool to oppose the government and highlights the consequences that may come along with that. As Russia does not practice freedom of speech as The United States does, one could say that authoritarian discourse is present on a larger scale in Russia.

As Pussy Riot was a more recent group, we can still see how media portrays the opposition and resilience of the Russian people going back to the twentieth century. The film "Stilyagi" was released in 2008 and was set in Moscow during the 1950s. This film highlights how a minority group, in this case, "hipsters" opposed anti-western propaganda. Movies, shows, and documentaries are another form of media that is important to highlight. Stilyagi portrays how propaganda was used back in the

twentieth century. However, it can also create connections to the world we live in today. This poster highlights the opposition to propaganda as well as the consequences that have been faced by protestors.

The animated poster series looks specifically at three different components of propaganda; Social Media Information Warfare, Politics and Media as well as Anti-Government. These are all topics of propaganda, deception, and information warfare within different media formats. They are presented on a website, which allows the viewer to see the explanations behind them and view the posters on their own or as a series.

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