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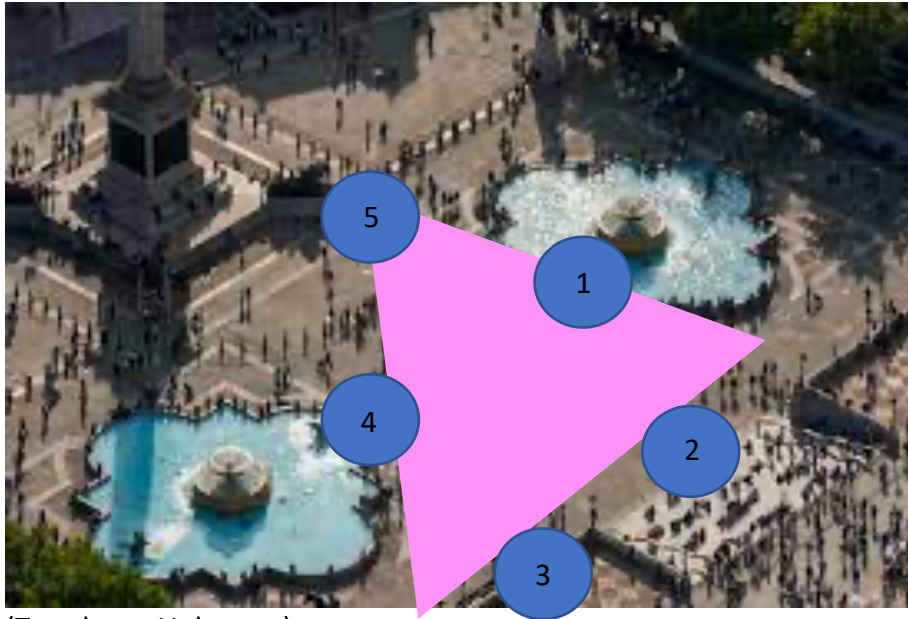
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Curating a Hypothetical Exhibition: *Fight for Us*

‘Curation is a key mechanism of sociality in a digital era’ (Davis, 2016, p. 777). Curation can be choosing artworks for an exhibition to sharing a post online, and in the 21st century, it makes it easier for curators to choose what they want. Through this curation, I will show the rights of the LGBT+ community and women and how they previously and currently are fighting for their rights. ‘Queer theory is a field of study that challenges existing traditional ideas about identity, sexuality, and gender.’ (LGBTQ Nation, 2021). This also links to feminism, to quote IWDA, ‘It’s about respecting diverse women’s experiences, identities, knowledge and strengths, and striving to empower all women to realise their full rights.’ (IWDA, Unknown).

My chosen space for my exhibition will be Trafalgar Square, I chose this location because it was named after ‘Britain’s victory in the Battle of Trafalgar in 1805.’ (London & Partners, 2011). I find this is a very impactful location to use because there was a battle and using it for my own exhibition, it will make it more powerful to the audience. I believe that by having the pieces outside near the fountains will bring more of a what is this type of question, which is what I want from my audience.



(Treadway, Unknown).



Fig 1. *Gay is Angry*, Juan Carlos Vidal and Nestor Latronico, 1971

Anger is such a powerful emotion, 'anger has strong communication aspects for human beings and therefore has great constructive potential' (Rothenberg, 2006, pp. 454). This is a natural human emotion; the gay community are angry at the world for continuously fighting repeatedly for the same rights. Anger can be used in different ways, by yelling, screaming, shouting, crying, but it all depends on the person, because sometimes it can be from unbottled emotions that have burst to the surface.

The 1960s and 70s were a massive part in the LGBT history, 'we witnessed first-hand the resurgence of feminism as well as the rise of gay liberation. (D'Emilio and Freedman, 1997, p. 2). It only started after the police raided the Stonewall Inn, also known as the 'Stonewall Riots', Making History (2022) notes that it had 'sparked a brand-new generation of activist organisations such as the Gay Liberation Front'. This is placed in a context where a riot was the inspiration that was needed to help fight for a movement, which was placed to help fight for the rights of people that preferred the same sexual partner and to remove the illegalisation of same sex partners. The Liberation Movement's vision for the future was to 'complete sexual liberation for all people cannot come about unless existing social institutions are abolished'. (Ashley, 2015, pp 28).

The designers of this piece created this after the Third World Gay Revolution, which is an additional Gay Rights Movement that was organised in 1970. Vidal and Latronico wanted their poster to 'imply both the hopes of destruction, but also of transformation.' (*Days of Rage*, 2022). The curators of the 'Days of Rage' exhibition, wanted to 'produce subjective reflections on the interdependence of design and activism.' (Ibid, 2022). Activism has been a huge part of history; it is the only way that can earn a society's attention. History can be graphic design, it is a powerful visual statement, which helps to provide knowledge in a creative matter by using people as the tool, 'design lives through us: our bodies, our memories, our activated minds.' (Ibid, 2022.)



Fig 2: *Silence=Death*, Avram Finkelstein, Brian Howard, Oliver Johnston, Charles Kreloff, Chris Lione, and Jorge Socarrás, 1987.

Silence is 'a situation in which someone refuses to talk about something'. (Oxford Learner's Dictionaries, *Silence*). It happens when people are afraid or in denial to talk about a topic, or to keep silent about it. The poster was created by the Silence=Death project 'to spread the word about the epidemic' (*Half the Picture: A Feminist Look at the Collection*, 2018). The epidemic during the 1980s was the start of the AIDS crisis, and 'Act Up' which stands for the Aids Coalition to Unleash Power, they started this when the government stayed quiet, which was killing thousands of gay men and it remains an issue to this day with it remaining 'a global health issue, with nearly 40 million people living with HIV at the end of 2017' (Ibid, 2018), with it affecting both men and women across the globe.

One of the designers' decisions was to use abstract imagery to reach multiple audiences. Imagery can be a powerful symbol, and the designer's decision to use such a powerful and well-known symbol in theirs was a risk but it gathered people's attention. 'Symbolism and Imagery have always been at the forefront of human expression: from cave paintings to heraldry to modern logos.' (Joseph, A. 2021). The symbol used in the poster is the 'Pink Triangle', its history was used to 'identify the thousands of gay men who were sent to concentration camps,' (Trouble and Strife, 1996). It was a decision that Gay rights groups including 'Act Up' used the symbol to 'reclaim the trauma' and to 'unite the gay community and to reclaim their own narrative and their own dignity' (Joseph, A. 2021). The curators of the 'Silence=Death' Exhibition in New York honoured this impactful poster by having it on display in the busy street of New York; one of the curators, Avram Finkelstein describes it as "the poster comes for you in ways art simply can't. The poster comes for you where you live" (Finkelstein, 2021). This is why I wanted this piece included in my exhibition, I wanted to use it in a way that it would follow the individual, that even by having your back to it, it may feel like you are being watched by the powerful significance of imagery.



Fig 3. *Women are Dying for AIDS Treatment*, Critical Mass, 1990

This poster was created because there were ‘various ways that AIDS manifested, women were denied care, and needed access to life-extending services.’ (*Days of Rage*, 2022). 1990 was the most impactful year for the fight against AIDS, and the LGBT community, where thousands of people attended protests across the United States and the demands of the government pursuing this issue. In July 1990, ‘Act Up make ten demands including a conference on women with HIV and a women’s committee... we demand a natural history study of women and HIV which finally begins in 1993’ (Act Up, unknown) and return at the

end of the year to 'demand the immediate expansion and revision of its narrow definition of AIDS.' (Ibid, unknown).

However, the designers also relied on heavy symbols as their message, one of them being the 'sign of Venus is long used in feminist activism' (*Days of Rage*, 2022). This symbol is used for women and has been used by society for decades and is associated with women, which has been incorporated with LGBT symbols to this day, linking it with women and women relationships, as well as transgender. Using symbols is a good way for the designers to portray the same message as typography. The symbol of Venus can mean many things, but in mythology, 'Venus was recognized as the goddess of love, passion, fertility, prostitution, and victory.' (Muscato, 2022) and that 'could be vengeful, she could be sweet, she could be cruel or mischievous or kind.' (Ibid, 2022). The creators using such a powerful symbol in their work with a mythological figure that is linked to sex is a phenomenal way of associating it with the AIDS crisis.

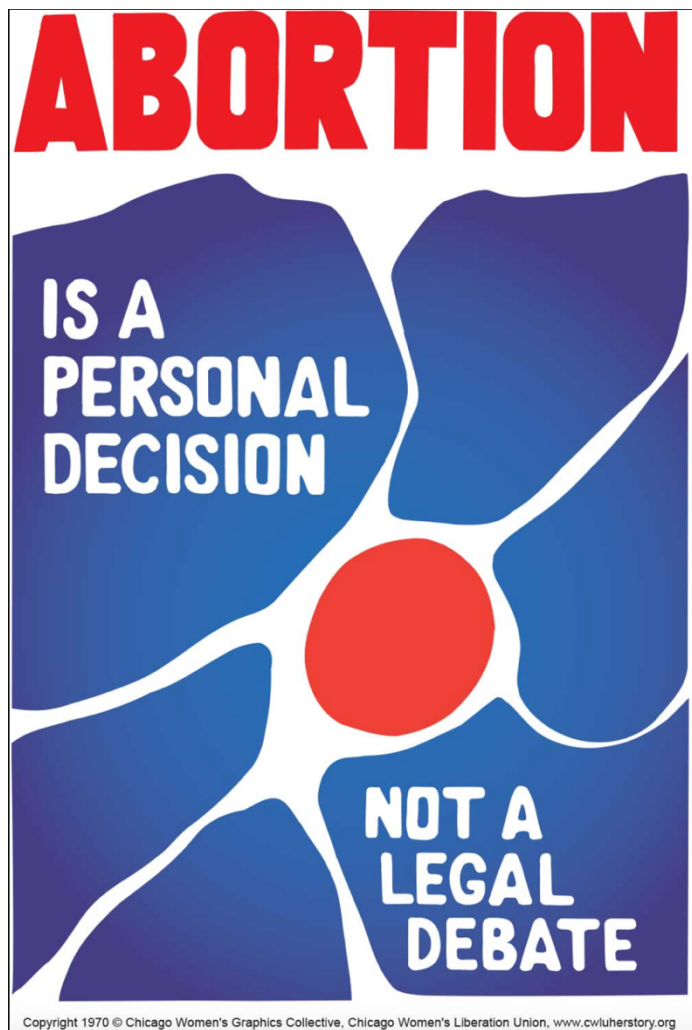


Fig 4. *Abortion is a personal decision, not a legal debate*, Chicago Women's Graphics Collective, 1970



Fig 5. *Your Body is a Battleground*, Barbara Kruger, 1989

In relation to figure 4 and figure 5, abortion rights is a fight for women, both in the past and in the present. This poster was produced for the Women's March on Washington D.C in support of the reproductive freedom for women back in the 70s and 80s. Here, fighting for rights is a common occurrence even today with the controversy of the Abortion laws and whether women should be allowed to have an abortion. In 1973, 'for the first time, Roe v Wade placed women's reproductive choice... by conferring the highest degree of constitutional protection,' (Reproductive Rights, Unknown). A basic human right shouldn't have to be fought for in the first place, and the fact that millions of women died for a right to have a say, just so that it got over turned in 2022. This links to my exhibition with it being a 'fight', a continuous one where women will have to fight for their rights again.

The curators describe Kruger as she 'address media and politics in their native tongue: tabloid, sensational, authoritative, and direct.' (*Barbara Kruger Collection*, Unknown). They also depict how Kruger describes her work, 'it visually personifies the image of a woman who abides by all the assigned aesthetic standards... the flame of controversy and passion for fighting for her own rights are burning.' (Public Delivery, 2020).

Kruger explains that "I'm fascinated with the difference between supposedly private and supposedly public and I try to engage the issue of what it means to live in a society that's seemingly shock-proof yet still is compelled to exercise secrecy."
(Public Delivery, 2020).

Choosing to focus on the LGBT+ and women's rights, I wanted to immediately focus on the continuous fighting, which is why I used the terms 'Fight for Us', it is still an ongoing fight over AIDS and abortion. That is why I chose Trafalgar Square as the location for my exhibition, a space where a battle was held and protests are currently being held to this day; fighting is a huge part of our history and our current story, and everyone's rights are important to fight for and I wanted to show that.

To review, the goal of my exhibition would be to present people with the reoccurring fights that may not affect them but their friends, family, or someone that they know, represented by the artworks that I have chosen to display. Hopefully by using these designs, this will give people the knowledge that to this day, the LGBT+ community are still fighting for their rights, and it may seem like we are going back in time, but we need to go forward, and by having more people aware that this is an ongoing fight, it may achieve change.

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