

UNIVERSITY OF CALIFORNIA

UNSIGNED ISSUE\_05

2020

# UNSIGNED

This edition of the Unsigned magazine hopes to take you away from your everyday and enlighten you to all the wonderful unsigned creators to come out of 2020. This year, we've created a 45min playlist featuring the best new unsigned names in music. Please scan the QR code and tune in whilst you flick through the pages of our Class of 2020 issue.



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WORDS BY STEPHEN LEDGER-LOMAS

**THIS IS THE THIRD YEAR OF UNSIGNED AND I DON'T THINK ANY OF US NEED REMINDING OF THE DIFFICULTIES THE CREATIVE INDUSTRIES FACE AS WE APPROACH THE END OF 2020.**

In the context of these challenges, the desire to forge ahead with our annual showcase of emerging talent might seem less obvious to some, but for BBH, the urgent calls for meaningful change to produce real equality in our industry have made this year's showcase more vital than ever.

Unsigned was established with the singular ambition to: "put diverse talent on your radar", which feels and sounds even more prescient this year than it did on its inaugural exhibition.

Discovering and collaborating with emerging talent is at the heart of BBH's creative process and has been fundamental to our brand since its inception. It enables us to find new voices and perspectives in an ever-evolving creative landscape, and to tell stories for our clients which reflect the points of view of our diverse audience.

Unsigned was established in September 2018 in an effort to reinstate our commitment to discovering and collaborating with undiscovered, and unrepresented photographers, directors and illustrators, and to create a platform which would enable the whole industry to benefit from the collective output of months of research and curation. Its goal was simple: look outside of the traditional channels and elevate the most exciting emerging talent to bring it into the spotlight.

Many of the artists discovered in the first three years of Unsigned have gone on to find representation and commercial commissions, and whilst this is not solely as a result of this platform, meaningful collaborations and exposure such as this has hopefully played an important role in shaping the journeys of our Unsigned artists.

In 2020 the conversations on representation and diversity have rightfully become one of the most important drivers for change in our industry. With this new important generation of Unsigned talent we are proud to be helping to be part of this movement whilst singularly focusing on giving a voice to the most outstanding emerging creatives working today.

The pandemic has prevented us from hosting our annual exhibition at 60 Kingly Street this year, but like all challenging moments has forced us to re-evaluate and respond, and has resulted in this extraordinary publication in its place. Commissioned, edited and designed by the Unsigned team and crafted with care and attention, it finds itself here with you today.

This year's issue features our curated selection of unsigned photographers, directors and illustrators alongside interviews with the artists themselves (and Unsigned alumni of the previous years), an exclusive look at the forthcoming Unsigned Union, a 'Free The Work' spotlight on the featured directors and a look back on the five winners of this year's Good News Open Brief Illustration Competition.

We hope it is the start of many new collaborations and conversations in the months and years to come.



FEATURING TALISA ROMAGNOLI AND PHOTO ASSISTING BY PRATHIMA RAMESH. CREATED FOR KAJAL MAGAZINE.

# Unsigned asked aspiring Illustrators to show us their version of 'GOOD NEWS'.

In the midst of the fear and anxiety of the first lockdown, staying positive felt more important than ever. So, the Unsigned team wanted to offer a positive outlet and create an opportunity to celebrate a pool of exceptionally talented unsigned artists battling their way through a depleted creative landscape.

With that in mind, the Good News open brief was born. We launched the brief with the intent of offering a welcome distraction from all the hard-hitting headlines and bleak negativity; it was an opportunity to flex those creative muscles and create some positive art!

We saw hundreds of personal and often moving interpretations come through from some incredibly talented artists from around the world. Our applicants set the bar high and the task of choosing five winners was tough.

We are delighted to showcase the work of the fantastic finalists: *Charlie, Joshua, Ellie, Holly* and *Patrick*, throughout this magazine. Each artist will have 'Good News Open Brief' on their page.

Next month, one of our fabulous finalists will be crowned the overall winner and receive their own solo exhibition at *They Made This* print shop, with a limited edition print on sale. They will also receive artist representation by BBH's internal agency *Black Sheep Artists*, alongside personal mentorship from the Unsigned team and wider network of past Unsigned illustration artists.

Keep your eyes peeled on [@unsigned\\_\\_](#) Instagram where you can vote for your favourite submission!

The winner will be announced early 2021. Now there's a little something to look forward to ;)

DURING MY TIME IN LOCKDOWN, I WENT AND STAYED WITH MY PARENTS IN CORNWALL WITH MY GIRLFRIEND.

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I felt so lucky to be able to go for countryside walks and swim in the sea. We would help out in the garden and explore the outdoors in a way which felt reminiscent of my childhood. In a way, I felt that lockdown enabled me to appreciate a relationship with nature that has been with me forever, but had until then, been taken for granted.

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My final University project submission was during national Lockdown, so I set up a studio in my parents house. On the night before hand in, I had a zoom session with my uni friends to replicate the familiarity of being in the studio. Since then and having now moved back to London, I've found my experience as an aspiring illustrator pretty positive. I feel like the industry has really stepped up in supporting recent graduates during such an uncertain time.

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'Nature is Bae'







ART DIRECTED BY **MEIKE LINTHORST**



# ARTISTS



WORDS BY MARA DETTMANN  
IMAGES BY TERESA ENG  
ARX PICTURES  
CRAIG BERNARD

# moral responsibility

“IT’S NOT THE ARTIST’S JOB TO SOLVE IT.”

Four artists on the struggles, triumphs, and meaning of creating art during a global pandemic.



Covid-19 brutalised the arts. In the US, the fine and performing arts industry lost almost 1.4 million jobs and \$42.5 billion in sales as a result of the pandemic. In the UK it was the second-worst sector hit by Covid-19 after accommodation & food service. Initially, relief measures were put into place – but come October, the UK Government was actively encouraging artists to retrain. But this isn't a case for why the arts are especially important in times of crisis. Nor is it about the role of the artist.

If you're reading this, chances are that you value the arts. You'll appreciate that although we can assign a financial value to the arts sector (that's almost £11 billion per year in the UK), the impact of the 'cultural wasteland' scenario would extend far beyond lost revenues. I wanted to examine the role of the artist in turmoil. Looking at whether there's a need – almost a moral imperative – to create work that addresses the pandemic and social justice issues like Black Lives Matter.

To find out, I spoke to four artists – all photographers – from our 2020 Unsigned roster: Teresa Eng, Saheer Umar and Asya Gorbacheva who run creative studio Arx Pictures, and Craig Bernard. But this approach turned out to be misguided. Asked whether she feels artists have a responsibility to address Covid-19 with their work, Teresa pushed back: *“There are some images that do reflect this time and era, but it's not vthe role of artists to make something so specific.”*

Craig similarly disagreed: *“I wouldn't expect a photographer who only takes amazing pictures of flowers to start making photojournalist photographs of BLM, or anti-mask marches, or issues around Covid.”* Saheer put it even more succinctly: *“It's not the job of artists to solve it.”*

So instead, I talked to the artists about how their own art has been impacted by the pandemic – how crisis shapes art, rather than how the artist can shape crisis.

“IT’S SO WELL DOCUMENTED – I DIDN’T KNOW IF I HAD A DIFFERENT VOICE TO ADD TO IT.”

- TERESA ENG

"ELEPHANT & CASTLE IS SO WELL DOCUMENTED - I DIDN'T KNOW IF I HAD A DIFFERENT VOICE TO ADD TO IT."



"HUMANS HAVE VERY SHORT MEMORIES. RIGHT NOW IT'S INTENSE AND NOT EASY.

BUT IN TWO TO THREE YEARS TIME, A LOT OF PEOPLE WILL HAVE FORGOTTEN."

Teresa is originally from Vancouver but now lives in London. When lockdown came into place, she made a conscious decision to focus on her existing work:

*"I don't think I've made anything specific relating to the pandemic - I'm trying to continue my Elephant project."*

Teresa's Elephant project chronicles the regeneration of London's Elephant and Castle neighbourhood. Lockdown and social distancing measures did have an immediate impact on Teresa's work: *"It's making it harder to get out there and shoot, and I can't get too close to people."* For the rest of the year she anticipates further challenges of working in enclosed spaces. But since Elephant is a decade-long undertaking, it gives Teresa a unique perspective on current events.

*"Humans have very short memories. Right now it's intense and it's not easy - but in two to three years time, a lot of people will have forgotten."*

**"FOCUSING ON STILL LIFE WAS OUR RESPONSE TO THE PANDEMIC."**

- ARX PICTURES

Like Teresa, Saheer and Asya - who are based on New York City - had their work physically impacted by restrictions to contain the pandemic. Like Teresa, however, they very much consider this to be a watershed moment: *"This is a 9/11, a WWII. It will shift where we're going dramatically. And we need to take a moment to acknowledge that."*

Though they're very much of the "every action is political" school of thinking, Saheer and Asya don't consider their work as activist art. They see the still life pieces they created during the pandemic as a meditation on - and response to - the social system, *"just not in a straightforward way."*

*"There's a serenity to the work we make, and it's therapeutic to make it."* While they find news outlets focus on the future with an



arx pictures





"everything will be okay" outlook, Saheer and Asya hope their own work provides a counter-narrative that allows the viewer to find time and space to reflect on the present. "It's a moment of stillness to sit with how we're dealing with this. The pandemic forced us to look inward - something people don't often do."

The narrative of each series only emerges when Craig re-examines his work: "My pictures share a dialogue with each other that isn't always linear or high concept."

@craigobernard

"THE IMPORTANT PART OF EDITING COMES AFTER. SOMETIMES MONTHS OR YEARS AFTER."

- CRAIG BERNARD

For Craig, lockdown photography was also about being part of a community: "We gravitated towards each other because of photography. But it's the friendships, camaraderie, and looking out for one another which kept up our spirits."

There's a fundamental irony to our relationship with the arts in times of turmoil. The act of producing art - but also consuming it - clearly helps us process and bear witness to moments of crisis. But funding to the arts also tends to be cut when we need it the most.

Craig's photography style is

generally focused on close ups. But he also documents gatherings of

So instead of "What's the role of the artist in times of crisis?"

people, including London's Black Lives Matter protests. Craig takes a long-term view of the broader meaning of the photos he created during the pandemic: "When I go and photograph a demo all I know is that there's a demo. I take my camera and flash and respond to what I see."

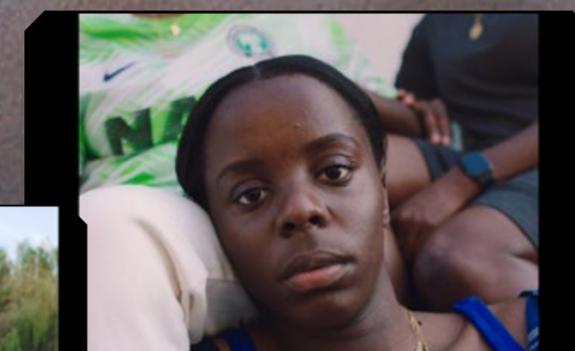
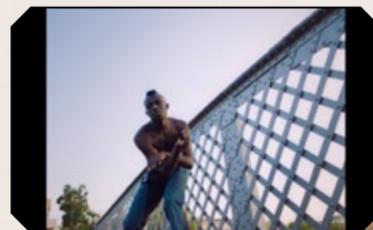
The question should be:

"WHEN THINGS FALL APART, HOW CAN THOSE WITH THE RIGHT RESOURCES HELP SUPPORT THE ARTS?" ■



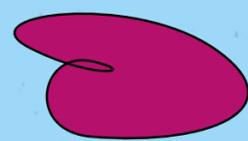
"WE CRAVITATED TOWARDS EACH OTHER BECAUSE OF PHOTOGRAPHY. BUT IT'S THE FRIENDSHIPS, CAMARADERIE, AND LOOKING OUT FOR ONE ANOTHER WHICH KEPT UP OUR SPIRITS."







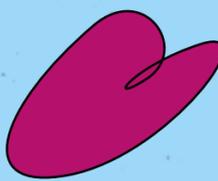
THE SETTLED COMMUNITY OFTEN CAST SWEEPING JUDGEMENTS ON THE ENTIRE TRAVELLER COMMUNITY BASED ON THE ACTIONS OF THE FEW.



These photos don't play on stereotypes associated with travelling communities.

This project sought nothing more than to honestly document a community of people that is so commonly misrepresented by exploitative media channels.

The word traveller conjures a fairly unanimous and specific (and false) image into most people's minds. The settled community often cast sweeping judgements on the entire traveller community based on the actions of the few. For some reason, viewing travellers as somehow lesser has allowed traveller discrimination to prevail as what some have coined 'the last acceptable form of racism.'



The travellers' way of life is foreign to our own but not so far from the way we used to live. Family bonds are arguably stronger in this tight-knit community. On Bashley Road, having three generations from the same family all within a stone's throw was nothing new.









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One is very often (especially in these times) confronted with negative news and a pessimistic sense of the future. I try to counter this fear a little bit.

My figures mostly arise from banal, positive everyday situations. Often they get lost in the fast routine and the uncertainty of everyday life.

My characters interact with each other in a good way: with looks or physically, without a façade,

whether playing, being on holiday or having sex. Moments detached from all conventions, without glamour and perfection.



For me bright colours and a strong contrast are important. They make my work expressive.

Although most of the figures are obviously female, I try to keep a neutrality towards gender and origin, with the skin being mostly yellow and altering the proportions of their figures.

I try to lure the viewer in with a funny naivety and hope to bring a little smile to their face when they view my work.

bb



THE INSPIRATION FOR THIS PIECE CAME FROM THE GOOD NEWS THAT BELGIAN CRANE COMPANIES HAVE BEEN REUNITING FAMILIES WITH ELDERLY RELATIVES WHO WERE SHIELDING IN HIGH RISE HOUSING DURING THE PANDEMIC.

It was imagining such a bizarre, mid-air reunion during such a serious international crisis that lead me to visualise the scene through illustration. It is equal part beautiful, emotional and comical.

During lockdown, I've been focussing most of my creative energy into starting my own business designing illustrative greeting cards championing underrepresented communities, family dynamics and occasions (@luckyinlovecards). Staying connected to friends and family has never been more important, and being able to develop my style through such a positive outlet has really helped me enjoy this period of lull, despite it's terrible origin.

'The Sky's the Limit'

GOOD NEWS OPEN BRIEF



# TO LIVE AND DIE IN MANILA

MANILA

IN

DIE

UNSIGNED

Unsigned polymath Angela Steps is a director, photographer and DJ. She's been able to fuse her fixation with music with her skills as a visual artist to make some beautiful, jarring and distinctive work. Influences from her Filipino heritage and her London upbringing are both prominent in 'To Live and Die in Manila'. The film covers the city's burgeoning creative scene within the context of Duterte's violent approach to ruling the nation. Angela reflects on the unique everyday life in the Philippines. Angela began her career filming live events for The Great Escape

PRESENTS:

and then Boiler Room. Music has clearly influenced her creative output and she describes herself as a music fanatic with visual capabilities. The combination of these two creative forces is what makes her work so poetic and is especially apparent in the way she intertwines vivid shots of Manila with flawless sonic cues.

We spoke to her about her creative journey as a filmmaker, the influence working in underground music has had on her work and what it's like to flex your creative muscles in the alternate reality we're calling '2020'.

ANGELA

STEPS,

TO

AND

LIVE

HOW LONG HAVE YOU BEEN MAKING FILMS FOR AND WHAT MADE YOU WANT TO START DIRECTING?

I started shooting in 2012. I had an internship at The Great Escape festival and I used my time there to shoot interviews with some of my favourite artists on the line up that year. Through this experience, I learnt how to direct, shoot & edit myself. I was always enamoured with storytelling in music but I'm more of a visual person. Luckily, I found a way to combine both of my interests.

WHAT INSPIRED THE CREATIVE CONCEPT BEHIND THE FILM?

I spent a ten year period away from the Philippines, and making this film was really about finding a way to reconnect with the culture there in the only way I knew how. I'd spent years working at Boiler Room and travelling all over the world. After experiencing music and club culture elsewhere, I knew that when the time was right I wanted to do what I could to help put Filipino artists on the map. I met Eyedress who featured in the film, he treated me like family and introduced me to the music scene and I just felt so proud of what I witnessed there and wanted to share it. The sociopolitical situation at the time made us feel some sense of urgency for sharing these stories, and while it's disheartening to feel like the situation is getting progressively worse, documenting that moment in time felt like the right thing to do.

HOW HAS YOUR FILIPINO HERITAGE INSPIRED YOUR CREATIVE VISION? DO YOU THINK IT'S SOMETHING THAT WILL CONTINUE TO INSPIRE YOU?

The Philippines is absolutely my biggest inspiration. I spent a lot of my childhood in Manila where my family was based, and visually, for me it's the most stimulating place in the world. The Philippines was pretty much the only Asian country to be colonised by Spain and it makes it feel a little like Asia and Latin America at the same time. Then there was the US invasion which left behind a lot of American culture, like we have the world's oldest Chinatown. The idea of identity becomes quite confusing to navigate when there is so much cultural blending. That's part of what made understanding its history more and more important as I got older. Over time, I've



@angelasteps

"I THINK IF I CONSIDERED BEING A FEMALE FILMMAKER A HINDERANCE, I WOULDN'T GET VERY FAR DOING WHAT I DO. FOR THE MOST PART I DON'T REALLY THINK ABOUT IT. I'M A FILMMAKER."

I learnt that to create positive change is very nuanced, it takes a true comprehension of our history and cultural complexities. A really dysfunctional government has been able to maintain power and exploit innocent people for hundreds of years. Tackling issues like that almost feels impossible at times. For now, I want to try to highlight the things I love about the country. I have always been moved by how creativity runs in everything people do there, from the way they recycle material and build makeshift structures, to the painted signage, and the bootlegging culture. People there tend to find an interesting way to do everything.

ARE THERE ANY FILMS THAT INSPIRED YOUR FILMMAKING CAREER?

I caught Alfonso Cuarón's 'Y Tu Mama Tambien' on TV one day when I was 15. I would usually come home and have a nap next to my dog on

the sofa after school, when I woke up and flicked through the channels this film was just about to start so I decided to watch it. The story, locations, characters and soundtrack completely blew me away. That was the first time I became interested in cinema, I'm just glad no one walked in on me during the threesome scene.

HOW DO YOU FIND OPERATING IN THE INDUSTRY AS AN UNSIGNED FEMALE DIRECTOR? ARE THERE ANY BARRIERS?

I think if I considered being a female filmmaker a hinderance, I wouldn't get very far doing what I do. For the most part I don't really think about it. I'm a filmmaker. I just happen to bring a female perspective to my work because that's how I identify. I get a little tired of the token work on offer that requires me to be female to fit a diversity brief, but equally I'm happy that women are getting more opportunities for paid work. It definitely hits better when we're creating these opportunities for ourselves and for each other. I once turned down a job from someone that specifically wanted me on board because I would 'bring female energy to a predominantly male set.' I thought fuck that, if they've never met me how are they supposed to know what sort of energy I might exude? Expectations like that infuriate me. We all have the ability to feel masculine and feminine or both at the same time, putting limitations on that doesn't make any sense to me at all.

On being unsigned, I once had a meeting with a production company in the hopes that they would sign me, their Head of Music video told me the best thing I could do was not get signed. I took their advice and while I felt like a failure at the time because no one wanted to represent me, I now appreciate the freedom that I have to form my own relationships and work at a pace that suits me, I don't feel like it holds me back at this stage of my career.

HAVE YOU SEEN ANY WORK FROM UP AND COMING FILMMAKERS OR PHOTOGRAPHERS THAT YOU THINK IS PARTICULARLY INTERESTING? WHAT ABOUT IT STANDS OUT TO YOU?

I love the portraiture work of Erika Kamano and Sirui Ma, both photographers with Asian heritage.

"I HAVE ALWAYS BEEN MOVED BY HOW CREATIVITY RUNS IN EVERYTHING PEOPLE DO IN MANILLA. FROM THE WAY THEY RECYCLE MATERIAL AND BUILD MAKESHIFT STRUCTURES, TO THE PAINTED SIGNAGE, AND THE BOOTLEGGING CULTURE."

I've also been hugely inspired working on set with director duo Zhang + Knight. I'm so impressed with the way they execute their vision and how cohesive their body of work is. I also appreciate the technical ability of cinematographers, I think Molly Manning Walker and Ruben Woodin Dechamps in particular are geniuses.

YOU WORK IN MUSIC AS WELL AS FILM, HOW DO THESE TWO WORLDS INTERTWINE FOR YOU?

To me they just go hand in hand. My work to date is mainly music documentary, music video and behind the scenes work. The photo & video work I do currently with musicians is promotional material, which means I'm quite selective of the work that I take on. I feel really lucky to be a fan of all the people I get to work with.

HOW HAS THE CURRENT GLOBAL CHAOS (COVID-19 ETC) IMPACTED YOUR CREATIVE PROCESS?

It made me appreciate that no matter what situation I find myself in, I do still feel like I have this creative drive. There were days where that was the only thing that kept me going. Feeling like the world was ending just made me want to get started on the things

I told myself I always wanted to do. I didn't feel rushed or pressured, I just thought, why wait to do something that you can do right now? I'm trying to see the limitations that we're experiencing right now as a challenge that I'll appreciate when I look back, but I'm very lucky that my skill set allows me to earn money working from home or in smaller working environments, it's not been as positive for everyone so I'm trying to create opportunities for the creative people around me while I still can.

WHAT SORT OF PROJECTS ARE YOU LOOKING FORWARD TO WORKING ON IN THE FUTURE?

I would love to move into feature length narrative sooner rather than later, so I've borrowed some books on screenwriting from a friend to get to grips with that process first. And I've always been interested in making music myself so that is what I'll explore next. I'd love to be able to compose music for my own films in the future. It's like I won't feel satisfied until I've tried every single aspect of filmmaking.

ANGELA'S FILM 'TO LIVE AND DIE IN MANILA' WAS SHOWCASED AS PART OF UNSIGNED'S 2020 ONLINE EXHIBITION. ■



@angelasteps



WORDS BY EMILY COWER



Carlos Jaramillo's images of colourful pigeons against iridescent skies are a world away from the pavements of Havana, where he'd initially planned to photograph the local skate scene. Each bird, decorated with hand-painted neon racing stripes, is depicted with a sense of poise and drama that demonstrates the care and training they have received as avian athletes.

Having grown up in Texas with a Mexican mother and Cuban father, Jaramillo planned to travel to Old Havana to learn more about his Latin American roots. However, on the eve of his trip, Jaramillo's father revealed a life-long secret that he had held back from his son. He was in fact of Columbian heritage and had been forced out of his country as a young boy. While seeking refuge in Cuba, the fear of being exiled led him to keep his nationality a secret. Jaramillo's new found mixed heritage was a signifier for the change in path he would later pursue in Cuba.

Jaramillo's first sighting of the birds came at a time where he'd just wrapped an initial project focusing on Havana's rife skateboarding community. Their work was the subject of choice for swarms of artists and photographers who were all trying to document the scene at the same time. Jaramillo soon found himself looking to discover less familiar aspects of the city's culture. This exploration took him high above the streets to the city's rooftops, where he first spotted Erislandi's flock of painted birds.



JARAMILLO SOON FOUND HIMSELF LOOKING TO DISCOVER LESS FAMILIAR ASPECTS OF THE CITY'S CULTURE.

The pigeons' unique status at the centre of this world is showcased within Jaramillo's ongoing 'Cuba' series, a spectacle of fanned neon feathers, sometimes mid-flight and sometimes held by weathered hands, wet with freshly applied ink left to dry in the sun. Small plastic tags bearing the face of their owner identify them as his own and are the marking of their collective home roost.

While Jaramillo's images capture the craft and commitment Erislandi puts into his work, candid shots of his home, possessions and tools of the trade are reminiscent of the friendship they share. This depiction of Erislandi's inner world reflects an appreciation and understanding of the Latin American heritage he had long sought to connect with, and the role that their enduring relationship has had in the rediscovery of his roots. ■

AVIAN ATHLETES: CARLOS JARAMILLO'S NEON PIGEONS OF HAVANA

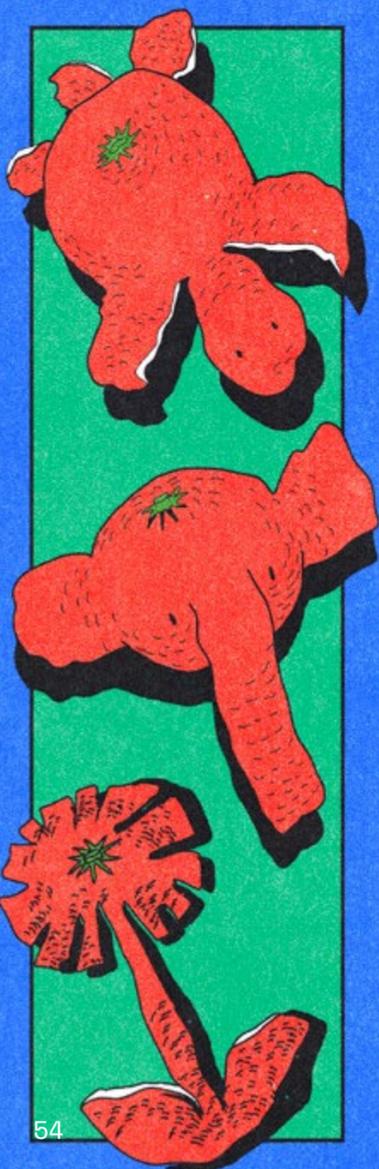




# ANXIETY?

PEEL A TANGERINE

CAN YOU MAKE  
AN ELEPHANT  
A FLOWER  
A TURTLE



*Ansiedad?,  
pela una mandarina  
puedes hacer animalitos*



'Sungazing'

THE INSPIRATION BEHIND THE PIECE CAME FROM JUST BEING INSIDE ALL DAY.

Due to the pandemic, a lot of people had to change their way of living and stay inside which is boring for a lot of people! Sungazing came from me envisioning these bored people looking outside their windows on a hot summer's day, wishing they could be outside. The hypnotic like background and the smaller character sitting on the main character's head reflects that daydream-like state we get into when being bored.

I really wanted to create a contrast between the vibrant colours and the expression on the girl's face.

Most of the work I do is in the comfort of my home so I feel lockdown has given me the opportunity to focus on it even more. The only downside for me personally, I would say is not being able to travel!



My Name is Rowland Olubukonla Koshoni. I was born in Lagos Nigeria. I moved to the U.K when I was 6 years old. The 12 names etched upon this sculpture, represent a selection of names I've been called, since arriving in the UK in 1983. I've been called these names by friends, teachers, colleagues and lovers. To take the disparaging, violent or offensive and reimagine. To take evil, wicked and vile and make beautiful, good and dignified. You cannot control all that happens to you in this life, but you can control how you choose to react. To discuss racism, we must be brave enough to bring it to light. To end Racism, we must be brave enough to acknowledge its existence. Cheryl Strayed, wrote "If, as a culture, we don't bear witness to grief, the burden of loss is placed entirely upon the bereaved, while the rest of us avert our eyes and wait for those in mourning to stop being sad, to let go, to move on, to cheer up. And if they don't, if they have loved too deeply, if they do wake each morning thinking, I cannot continue to live - well, then we pathologize their pain! we call their suffering a disease." I believe the same can be said for those who have suffered the grief of racism. Not matter race or self identifying gender. We all share the commonality of pain. I appreciate you taking the time to share mine with me. My Name is Rowland Olubukonla Koshoni. I am proud son of Nigerian parents. The youngest of four children. I am a father. A son. A husband. And I ask, that you call me - by my name.

“The Dog’s in the Car” Mum shouts from upstairs. Dad’s been running around the house, in and out of the garden thinking that he has lost Rudi, our dog.

This is a common occurrence, where Dad drives back from a dog walk, forgets he’s in the car, comes in to the house and proceeds to think that he has lost him.

My Dad, Tony, suffers with an illness called hydrocephalus, which causes him to build up too much fluid in the brain. About 25 years ago, he went in for an operation to put a hole in his head that would allow the liquid to flow more easily.

However, during that operation his short-term memory was accidentally

damaged, permanently leaving him with a unique difficulty with his short-term memory.



The Dog’s in the Car is a collaboration between the artist and her father. Showing intimacy through a performative photographic lens, we explore notions of memory, taboo and the familial care of a father-daughter relationship.



KEEP YOUR  
BRAIN  
BUSY

STEVE PHIL ANT  
CALUM AILISH VIC POPPY  
ALFIE NATHAN BEN  
HANNAH JODIE

GOOD NEWS

KEEP YOUR  
BRAIN  
BUSY

NO NEWS IS GOOD NEWS

MADELINE ROBERT  
MICA SUSANG  
PETER ANT  
STEVE PHIL  
CALUM AILISH VIC POPPY  
ALFIE NATHAN BEN  
HANNAH JODIE

MADELINE ROBERT  
MICA SUSANG  
PETER ANT  
STEVE PHIL  
CALUM AILISH VIC POPPY  
ALFIE NATHAN BEN  
HANNAH JODIE

KEEP YOUR  
BRAIN  
BUSY

KEEP YOUR  
BRAIN  
BUSY

KEEP YOUR  
BRAIN  
BUSY

MADELINE ROBERT  
MICA SUSANG  
PETER ANT  
STEVE PHIL

GOOD NEWS

KEEP YOUR  
BRAIN  
BUSY

“CHARGE MORE”: WHAT SEX WORK CAN TEACH  
IMAGES BY JACQ THE STRIPPER



SEX WORK, SAYS JACQUELINE FRANCES, TEACHES YOU EVERYTHING YOU NEED TO KNOW ABOUT EVERY OTHER INDUSTRY THERE IS.

*“The whole point of selling anything to anyone is making them feel nice and special. Do they want to feel interesting? Do they want to feel powerful? Do they want to feel submissive? Do they want to feel relevant? Do they want to feel loved? Does it feel good for them to be generous? Maybe that's their thing. What kind of shoes is he wearing? Is he with friends? Is he shy? Is he making eye contact with you? Is he really talkative or does he just want to sit and listen? How are you doing dance for the client? How are they feeling amazing and jazzed? How are you selling your idea? Art is exactly the same. It's just hoeing.”*

Meet Jacqueline Frances (known to the world at large by her Instagram handle, Jacq The Stripper), a Canadian comedian, author, artist – and of course, stripper – based in New York. Jacq made a name for herself on Instagram, where she has amassed a following of 189k, by sharing single-panel comics that provide candid accounts of strip club culture. She consistently busts the social stigma around sex work and celebrates her “beautiful friends.” Jacq started illustrating without a clear plan in mind. “I was just writing quotes from things that happened at the strip club and they became these like single-panel drawings which eventually became comics.” Her signature ‘slutty, funny, feminist’ style is stamped on every one of her canvases: from stripping and stand-up comedy to her dreamily romantic paintings.

WORDS BY TESS LOMERY  
AS AN ARTIST  
YOU ABOUT MAKING IT



"I'M NOT ALLOWED TO SHOW MY OWN BOOBS ON THE INTERNET, BUT I CAN PAINT THEM

AND THEN I CAN PUT THOSE ON INSTAGRAM. THAT'S FINE."

"As a stripper, I was like, pay me. This is expensive, it should be expensive. My body as a resource? I know that's

expensive. We're

Only a small minority of sex workers are paying their way through college, sex work does not necessarily equal human trafficking and sex workers don't need your patronising pity. And for the record, they don't give a fuck if you're judging them and they sure as hell don't want to be rescued. These are just a handful of the myths that Jacq tackles head on in her work. Sex work is real work. It's about consenting adults having a good time for a nominal fee. "There's this idea that strippers have to show up to the club and be sexy according to what someone else thinks sexy is," says Jacq, "that's not really how stripping is. It's an expression of your own sexuality and people pay you for it." In the club, Jacq affirms, women are the ones in power.

"I KNOW I'M CHANGING THE WAY PEOPLE TALK ABOUT SEX WORK BECAUSE OF MY ART."

The stigma that Jacq is up against, though, is real. Paradoxically perhaps, it's on Instagram - the platform where Jacq found fame - that it can be felt the most. In October 2019, Salty - a digital newsletter that describes itself

as a "100% independent, volunteer run newsletter, buoyed by the voices of women, trans, and non binary contributors from all over the world" - released an investigation into algorithm bias on Instagram that collected data from respondents who identify as 'LGBTQIA+, people of colour plus-sized, and sex workers or educators'. Not only did the study find that Instagram's algorithms adversely affect these people, 16% of respondents indicated that no reason was given for the removal of their content.

Instagram's community guidelines allow female nipples in paintings and sculptures, but not in photography. Artists have been

putting pressure on the social media giant to treat female and male nipples equally for years. "It's funny to me," says Jacq, "I'm not allowed to show my own boobs on the internet, but I can paint them and then I can put those on Instagram. That's fine." As usual, women's bodies are the political battleground on which equality is being fought. But as a tool for artists, Instagram is incomparable, and far more useful as a marketing tool than a website. "Does Cardi B have a website?" Jacq asks. "She probably doesn't. Instagram put her on the map." So fight the platform at your own peril. "I am currently shadow banned. I have had my account deleted and I don't know how I got it back. I have friends who have friends on the inside."

Jacq, whose cartoons expose the double standards with which women are treated, says: "Just by existing, I'm political. My comics are about the hypocrisy of criminalizing sex work when everybody on this planet is a whore because nothing is consensual under capitalism." According to Jacq's paradigm-shifting view, the accountant working at a financial firm selling their brain and intellect is no different from a sex worker selling their body and sexuality. Should the accountant be ashamed? "We are all, in one way or another, sex workers."

There is an unapologetic and unashamed vein that runs through all of Jacq's art. Commodification might be a dirty word in the art world. But not to Jacq. To think that sex is somehow too sacred for financial considerations, she argues, is classist snobbery. It's the same with art. The only difference being that one is a service, the other a product. The only thing that cheapens art is a cheap price tag. That and the belief that art is disposable, that an artist's skills are expendable (I'm looking at you Rishi) and the starving artist trope that tells artists they need to be struggling. "We are afraid to ask for what we're worth, especially as women or creatives. We're always being told 'we can find someone else'. You don't want to be passed on. You're worried it's your only shot. I think that mentality has to change."

"It's a ritual for me," Jacq says, "because I really struggle to ask for what I'm worth as an artist compared to, as a sex worker. As a stripper, I was like, pay me.



This is expensive, it should be expensive. My body as a resource? I know that's expensive. But my creativity as a resource? I really have to remind myself to charge more... Even though I spread that message of 'charge more, charge more, charge more,' I'm spreading that message because it's what I have to remind myself of every day." Some might find Jacq's candid relationship to money arresting. But seen through the lens of an unequal, sexist and elite art world where work by female artists is still valued less than work by male artists, it's the obvious response. While at auction, women's artwork sells for significantly less than men's. In fact, only two works by women have ever broken into the top 100 auction sales for paintings, despite women being the subject matter for approximately half of the top 25.

Women's bodies - and her own - are Jacq's subject matter for the most part too. Some of the things that inspire her are "sluts having fun" as well as "painting my boobs". Her cartoons are carefully crafted like the set-up of a joke: "You need the set up, you need the hook, you need the punchline and you need it all to fit into one panel." It's in her watercolours, however, that the power of the female form most comes through. "Watercolour for me is more of an experiment. I don't really have a plan of what it's gonna look like. It's more finding something that inspires me visually and wanting to render it and wanting to sit with myself and enjoying that process."

In this post-Covid reality, our social lives have mellowed out. But is the eternal Groundhog day really good for the artist? Well, it turns out yes. "It's actually been really

great for me as an artist, because all I have is my own company and I don't have the insane social schedule of being a person in New York city. I'm actually really grateful for having all this time to myself and what it's inspired me to do, because I feel limitless as an artist."

When COVID-19 hit in the US however, these long periods of artistic introspection were a distant dream for Jacq. Having been completely excluded from all major US coronavirus relief packages, sex-workers were left with no source of income and zero government financial relief. "Because of the criminalization of our work, we are never available for any sort of funding from anyone. So we always just crowdsource everything." That's exactly what she did, putting a call out on her Instagram page for commissions to raise money for a SWOP (Sex Workers Outreach Project) relief fund. "I think I did about a hundred digital illustrations where I asked people to send me their favourite thirst trap, and I would render it digitally and turn it into a single panel comic. That was really fun and good practice but it really burned me out". Since then, she's been working with acrylic on a series of paintings of her boobs, an experience she describes as a romantic one: "I'm really enjoying the textures of just mashing paint around on a canvas."

So what's Jacq's advice to a new generation of unsigned talent? "It's funny, the way I used to reassure myself when I was younger was to tell myself: everyone's going to like it. Now, the way I reassure myself is: not everyone's going to like it. And it's true. Not everyone is going to like your work. That is the price you pay to be an artist."

Exposure, though, is key for a creative career. "The more opinions about your work the better, even if they're bad, because as an artist,

"WE ARE AFRAID TO ASK FOR WHAT WE'RE WORTH, ESPECIALLY AS WOMEN OR CREATIVES. WE'RE ALWAYS BEING TOLD 'WE CAN FIND SOMEONE ELSE'. YOU DON'T WANT TO BE PASSED ON. YOU'RE WORRIED IT'S YOUR ONLY SHOT. I THINK THAT MENTALITY HAS TO CHANGE."

you do need eyes on your work. You need a lot of eyes on your work." The revelation though, Jacq says, has been just how few people you need to survive as an artist. 12 to be precise, according to Jerry Saltz's influential book *How to be an Artist*.

The most important piece of advice, and something that's left off the curriculum of most art schools: get better at your own marketing. It's a vital component to any creative profession and one that is too rarely discussed. "You have to find a way to love selling yourself. You have to fall in love with yourself and you have to think that you're fucking amazing. However you get there, doesn't mean you have to love all of yourself, but you've got to start with something because nobody's going to sell it for you for a really, really, really long time."

That's where Jacq's experience as a stripper really comes into its own, but it's an insight creatives and artists alike can learn from.



lydia\_garnett

@lydia\_garnett

Dyke bar

she was a beautiful boy

clit

Von butch

rainbow  
fantasy

set

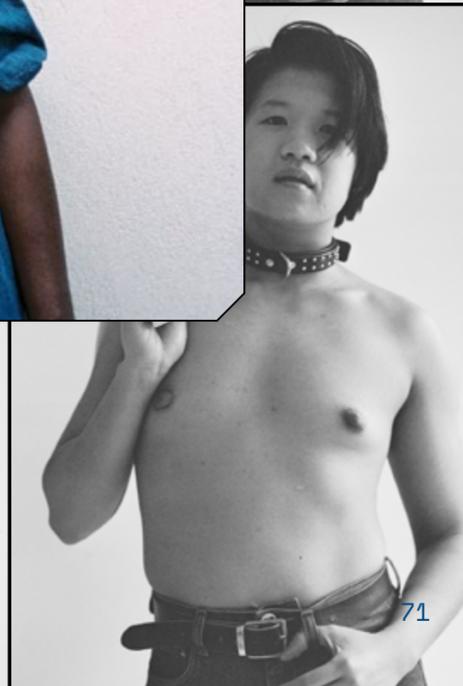
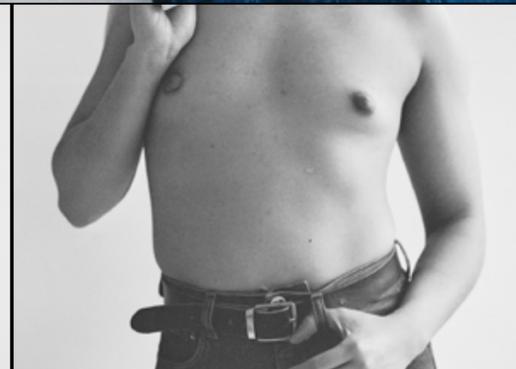
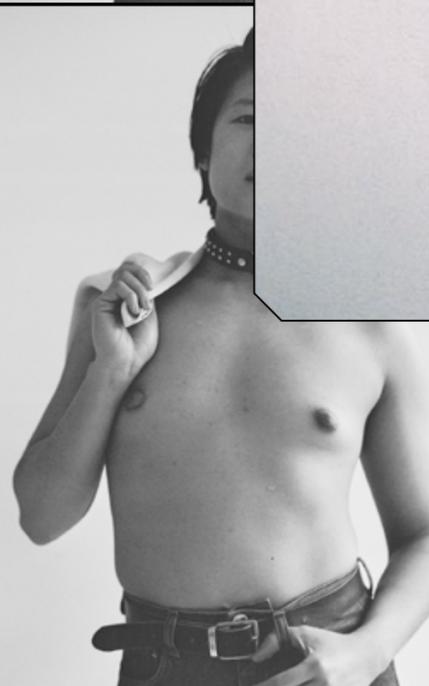
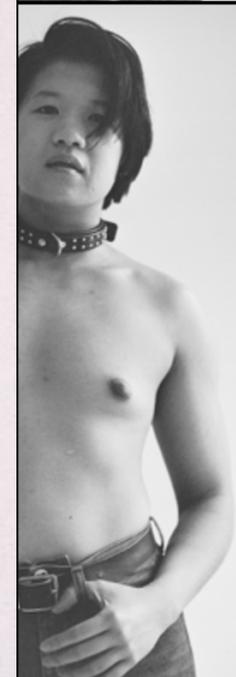
base bitch

TRANS SUPREMACY NOW!

# LONELY COWGIRL

DIRECTOR: LYDIA GARNETT  
STARRING: LUCY AS THE HERO  
LILISQUEE AS LONELY COWGIRL  
MUSIC: TROUBLE WANTED

"100% LESBIAN" "TRULY ORIGINAL"  
"THE SEXIEST FILM OF THE YEAR" ★★★★★



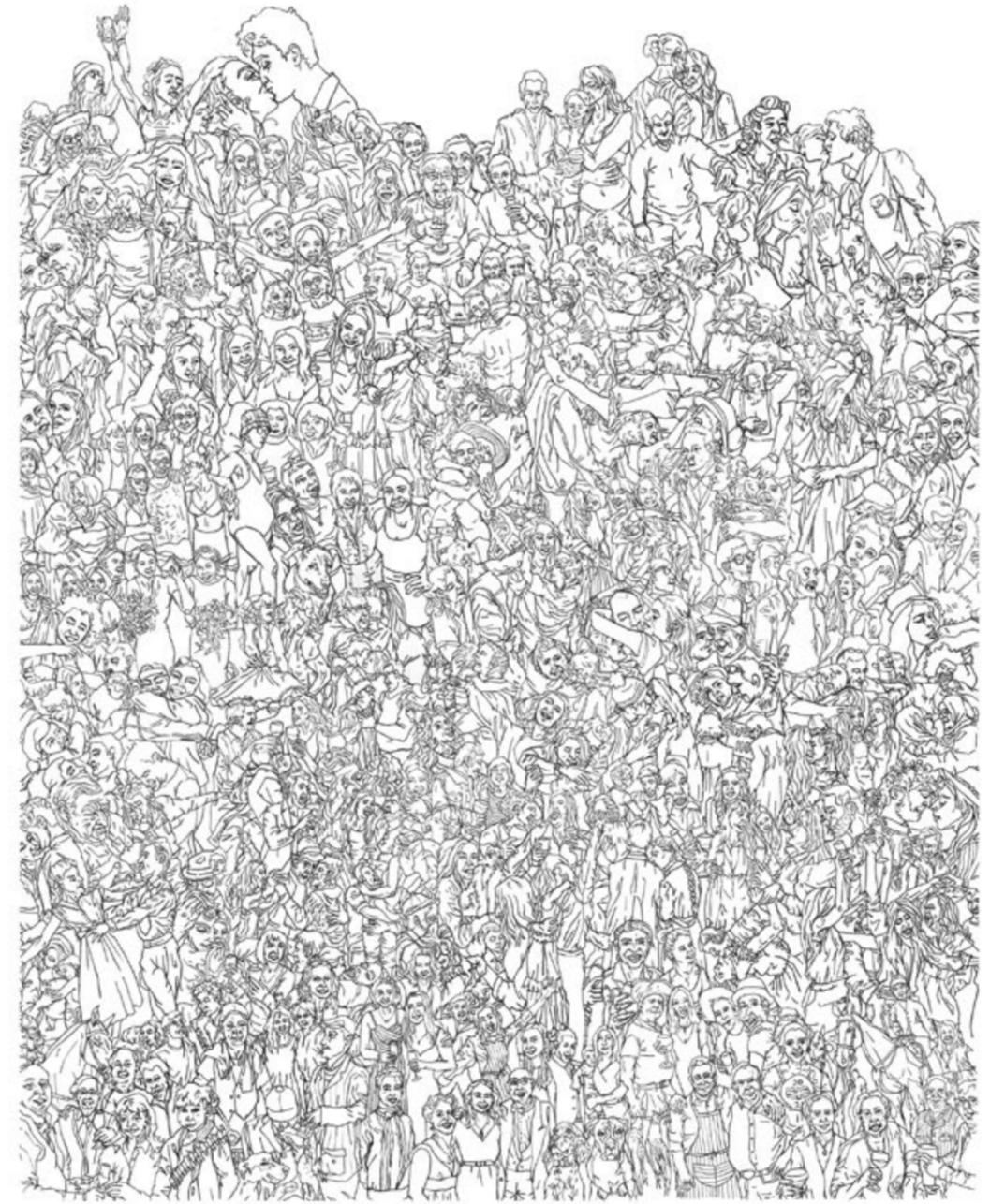
COVID-19 HAS BEEN A TIME OF SECLUSION, SADNESS AND UNCERTAINTY AND SO THE EMPHASIS ON MY LATEST SERIES IS ON THE JOYFUL CELEBRATIONS WITH LOVED ONES WHEN WE FINALLY REUNITE.

'When This Is Over' started with personalised drawing commissions of friends and family with the proceeds being donated to TASC (The Ambulance Staff Charity). This poster is a digital image of all the individual commissions combined, along with a colourful title to pay tribute to NHS staff and key workers. I have since ended the series with a large acrylic painting composed of figures embracing. The piece is an emotional reflection of 'When this is over...' and is euphoric in its warm colour palette used.

Although the prospect of the virus ending seems like a distant dream now, I feel thankful to be a creative who can use painting and drawing as a way to escape, reflect and spread hope that someday this will be over.

'When This is Over'

# WHEN THIS IS OVER...



H. Arnold

In uncertain times, it's often difficult to tap into our creativity, as most of us these days are preoccupied with the idea of simply trying to survive. However, this year's fleet of Unsigned directors have found a way to stay hopeful. FREE THE WORK, a nonprofit initiative and talent discovery platform, dedicated to identifying systemic inequalities for underrepresented creators, connected with our 2020 directors, Angela Steps, Lou Jasmine, Naomi Berrio-Allen and Lydia Garnett - here to encourage you with the unique ways they've found to access and adapt their art, while remaining true to their authentic voice.

## UNSIGNED X FREE THE WORK



### HOW DO YOU HOLD ONTO YOUR TRUTH AND PERSONAL VALUES ON A COMMERCIAL PROJECT?

ANGELA: For me this process begins before you even consider a job. Don't follow the money and a guilty conscience won't follow you.

LYDIA: With every fibre of my being! The commercial work I'm most proud of is when I've been true to myself and the project has allowed others to tell their story, like the film I made for Nike with *Girls In Film* or the queer fantasy of *Lonely Cowgirl*.

NAOMI: It's so important to champion your beliefs and creativity within commercial projects, and clients should pick director's based on their body of work, and what this speaks of and to. I've been lucky enough to work on a lot of jobs that have had a lot of free rein.

### HOW WOULD YOU DESCRIBE YOUR SIGNATURE STYLE?

LOU: I'd say that my signature style is somewhat dreamy at times and usually tinged with nostalgia. I wouldn't say I'm obsessed with nostalgia and it's definitely an interest of mine. As are dreams, I'm definitely someone who lives in my head a lot so I think there is an element of that to all of my work. It's seeing themes in a way that makes you feel like you are not quite there but very much part of it. It's also raw and visceral - if nostalgia and rawness could co-exist...I'd say that's what my signature style is!

### HOW HAS COVID AFFECTED YOUR CREATIVITY?

ANGELA: It proved to me that creativity can not only live but thrive within the boundaries of confinement, and that my choice of medium can adapt. I chose to lean into my musical side during lockdown and found a whole new way to express myself.

NAOMI: It's meant that some shoots have been cancelled, but it also allowed me to make a piece of archival work that I don't think I would have pursued otherwise - and it's something that I'm really proud of.

### TO KNOW ME AS A FILMMAKER IS TO KNOW...

LYDIA: It's a very queer experience!

LOU: How much I care about joy and bringing that and other human emotions out of my subjects. But also bringing it out in my audience and wanting them to feel something. I believe that art should make you feel something - whether that's anger, disgust, joy, love - it should always make you feel.

### AS AN ARTIST, WHAT KEEPS YOU HOPEFUL? WHAT ARE YOU LOOKING FORWARD TO, IF NOT WANTING TO MANIFEST FOR 2021?

ANGELA: Understanding that we're in a constant state of change, collectively and individually, makes me hopeful. Art has this ability to reflect the world back at us as a utopia or dystopia. We can imagine a better world or fear what the world might become, both can lead us forward. Feeling connected to my motherland has been integral to my growth as a person and an artist in recent years, so I hope 2021 gives me the opportunity to return to the Philippines.

LYDIA: Seeing a meaningful power shift in the advertising and creative industries where people of colour, queer people and other marginalised groups own their narratives on and off screen.

NAOMI: I would love to be represented next year! What keeps me hopeful is how inspirational and resourceful my creative peers and the art world continues to be, through particularly difficult times.

LOU: The fact that I get to wake up every day and do the thing that I love, is a blessing in itself. Ever since I was a child, I've wanted to do this. I've had a career in TV and it wasn't serving me in the way that I needed it to and I was fortunate enough to change that. I know that there are so many stories to be told and I'm never going to tell them all... but I can try! So on the down days, when things are dark, the responses from people about the content I've made keeps me hopeful. I'm doing the thing that I'm really meant to do.





perfect marriage of styles, one which Fummo proudly identifies as his genre today.

The guerilla fashion show shot for Dazed Beauty saw hundreds of real models strut for self-love in London's Trafalgar square. The event welcomed anyone to take part - regardless of size, gender, sexuality, colour or ability - and has since become a safe space for all in the community to ultimately generate kinder surroundings. Fummo felt compelled to capture the event in the hopes of challenging the high standards of beauty the fashion industry regularly imposes. He finds joy in being able to draw the beauty out of those who often fail to see it within themselves, saying: "the role of the photographer is to uplift your subjects and create a sense of happiness for them". With his calm and friendly demeanour, he has a natural ability to make his subjects feel immediately comfortable, creating an organic intimacy between them. Fummo explains: "It was so uplifting and inspiring to see these models so comfortable in their own skin at the event". From the abundance of hair flicks and power stances entwined with Fummo's signature low angle capture, you really feel the sense of empowerment from each model captured.

When speaking of what inspires his work, Fummo gives credit to the "the various selves that shape our society no matter their differences - or rather thanks to their differences" and aims to celebrate them in the work that he creates.

The Real Catwalk has fuelled the fire for Fummo's creative ambitions and he has been busy working on projects that aim to continue disrupting the narrative of beauty. His advice to upcoming photographers is to "look at everything around you and take it in. But never let the conventions and tropes of what is popular, change you as an artist" - an outlook evidently embedded in the work Fummo has created during his relatively short journey as a visual artist. ■

WORDS BY TOM BURNS



UNSIGNED ALUMNUS: DANIELE FUMMO



GOOD NEWS  
OPEN BRIEF



MY PIECE TITLED  
'A NEW BEGINNING'  
DEPICTS A YOUNG  
COUPLE FINDING OUT  
THEY ARE EXPECTING.

The composition contains a number of subtle symbolic references, such as a single flower representing new life. The inspiration behind this piece was in relation to one of the few positives that came from lockdown, which was the increased number of pregnancies! As I focused on this small positive, I found a correlation to this within my own practice. Ironically, my career as an artist has flourished which I put down to the stability of the art market. People are spending more time at home and therefore want nice things to look at on their walls.

I hope that many other people have experienced good news over the course of the last few months. People should continue to be creative, hone their practice and most importantly take no notice when told to retrain and find a new job in a different industry!

'A New Beginning'



UNSIGNED ARE  
a launching  
UNION.

ARE UNSIGNED  
launching  
UNION. a

UNSIGNED ARE  
a launching  
UNION.

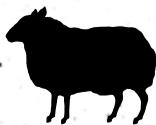
2021 is about  
resetting &  
moving forward.

So, we're launching  
a Union to join the  
fight for equality in  
our industry. We're  
holding ourselves  
accountable for  
the severe lack of  
representation in  
commissioned roles  
in advertising and  
we're asking other  
agencies to join us.  
The Union was started  
in support of Black  
Lives Matter and will  
fight tirelessly for  
impactful inclusion.

IT LAUNCHES EARLY NEXT  
YEAR - WATCH THIS  
SPACE -

**UN** **SIGN**  
U N I

# UN SIGNED



2020 MAGAZINE