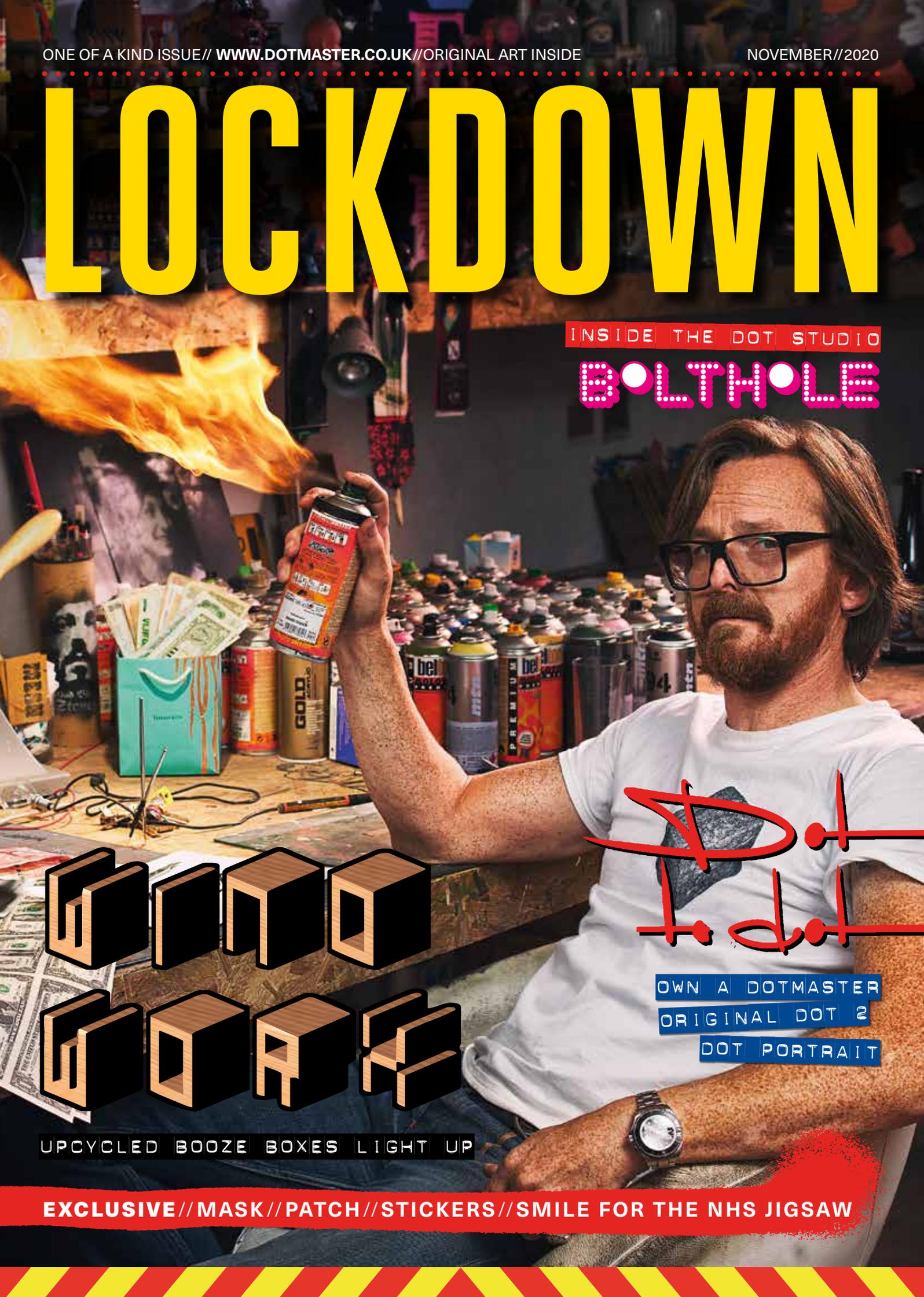


# LOCKDOWN

INSIDE THE DOT STUDIO

BOLTHOLE



WIND  
WARR

Dot  
to dot

OWN A DOTMASTER  
ORIGINAL DOT 2  
DOT PORTRAIT

UPCYCLED BOOZE BOXES LIGHT UP

EXCLUSIVE//MASK//PATCH//STICKERS//SMILE FOR THE NHS JIGSAW



# ONE MORE JOURNEY

Make one more bus journey if you run out of money on your Oyster card

Oyster cards which already have a negative balance won't be accepted

MAYOR OF LONDON



This body of work is dedicated to my lifelong friend and collaborator Tobias Lee aka 2B, C6, seesix, my brother. You will be sorely missed

## Welcome to Lockdown – the Magazine. Part catalogue, part diary, a record of what I did during lockdown.

Hard to know if it's a body of work, a coping strategy, or a compulsion – I'll let you decide. Perhaps it's the result of wishing to continue working with the folk I've worked with over the past 10 years... it's certainly seemed like a lifeline, a way of occupying my time and an excuse to work with collaborators and experiment with light and new materials.

I'm proud of the work I've made... part of the artistic process is "Show and Tell" and this magazine is one of the threads of presentation that, due to our current locked down situation, couldn't really follow the format of a normal gallery show.

In a way, it's a nod to my old ways of working under the name C6, producing nebulous events and multi-media broadcasts across web, print and real world. Today's "new normal" has dictated this approach, forcing us all to think outside the box and re-evaluate our strategies to make it through the day, month, season...

LOCKDOWN ART EDITOR:  
**Amber Stoddart** [amber@stodd-art.co.uk](mailto:amber@stodd-art.co.uk)

COVER & PRODUCT PHOTOGRAPHER:  
**Joe Giacomet** [www.giacomet.co.uk](http://www.giacomet.co.uk)

VIDEO EDITOR:  
**Louis Thornton** [www.louisthornton.co.uk](http://www.louisthornton.co.uk)

LASERS:  
**Chohan Innovations** [www.chohaninnovations.co.uk](http://www.chohaninnovations.co.uk)

PAINT:  
**Belton and Molotow**

PAINT SUPPLIED BY:  
**Chrome and Black** [www.chromeandblack.com](http://www.chromeandblack.com)

CARPENTRY:  
**Liam Hayhow** [www.hayhowart.com](http://www.hayhowart.com)

SILKSCREEN:  
**Mesh** [www.meshsilkscreen.co.uk](http://www.meshsilkscreen.co.uk)

SUB EDITOR:  
**Bronwyn Boyle**

STUDIO ASSISTANT:  
**Captin Sparkle Pants**

WALLS SUPPLIED BY:  
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 [www.dotmaster.co.uk](http://www.dotmaster.co.uk)  
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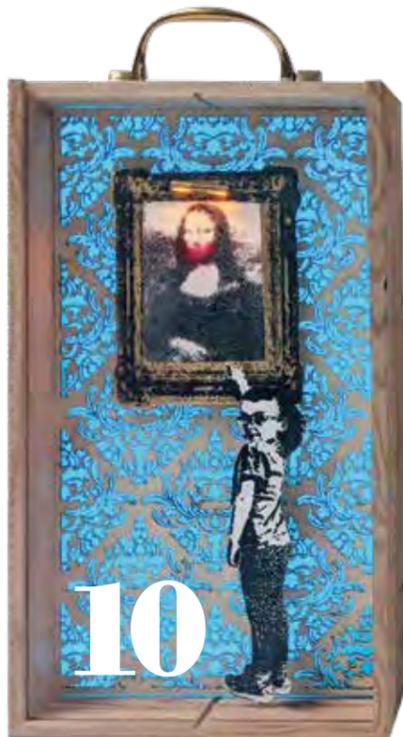
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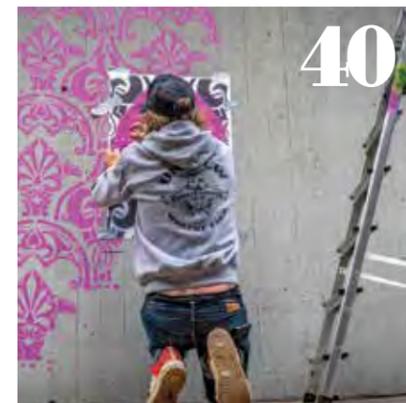
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A PEEP THROUGH THE KEYHOLE OF THE DOTMASTERS' STUDIO. SMELL THE FUMES, SEE THE MESS. LOCK DOWN, WINE UP, MAKE ART

# BOLT HOLE



# LOCKDOWN DOWN JIGSAW

## SMILE FOR THE NHS JIGSAW, FUNDRAISING FOR NHS HEROES DURING LOCKDOWN ONE

It's hard to make a difference during the lockdown if your medium is the street.

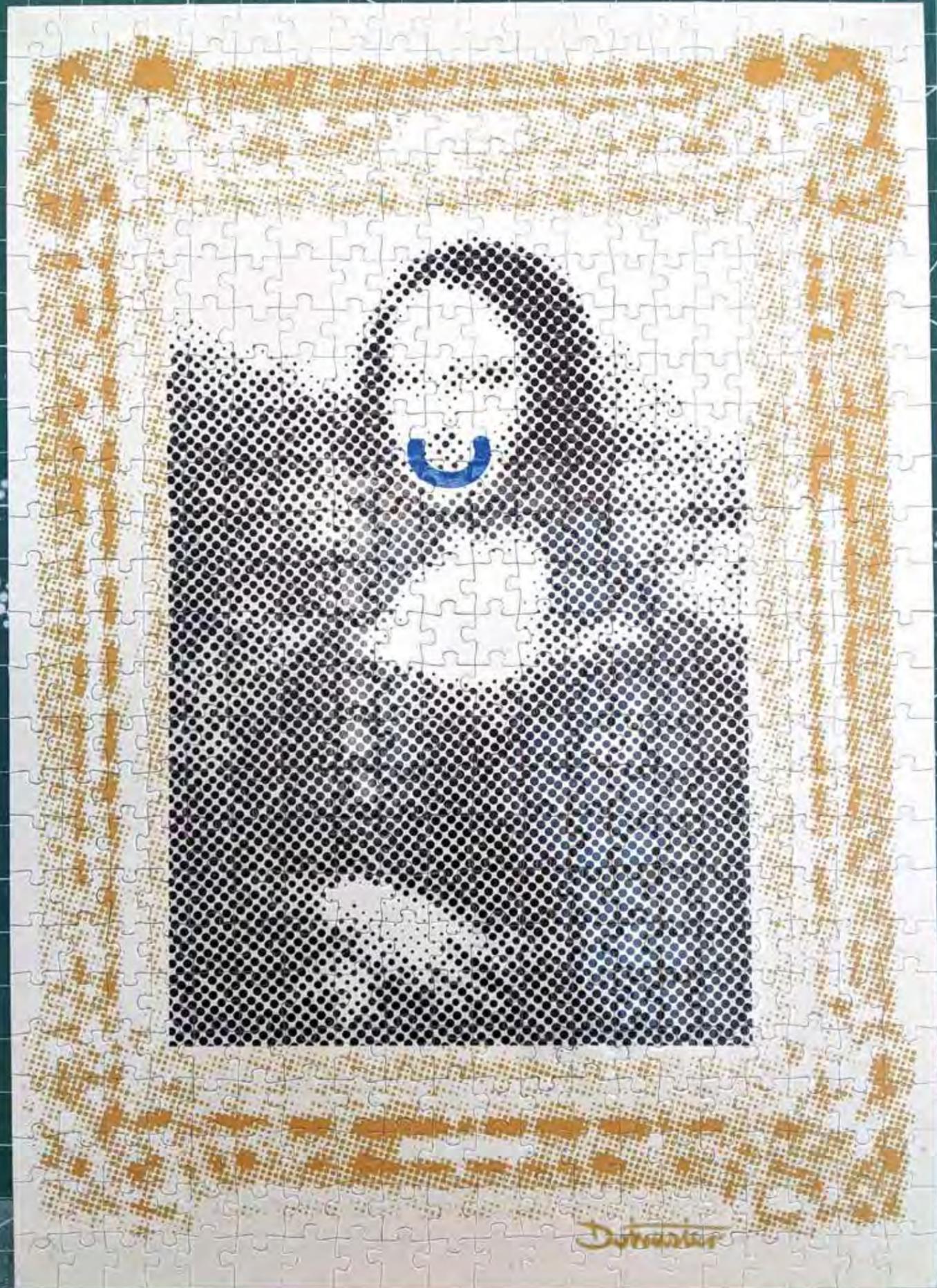
It's like Christmas day out there all week! As any graffiti writer knows, Christmas day and its deserted streets are the gift that keeps on giving.

But should you as an artist take advantage of it? I did an early straw poll – a few posts online, a half hinted enthusiasm for getting some new work out there; I was unsure, I did a peer review and found the answer was a resounding NO! What could I do to help? **What use is art on a deserted street anyway?** "Why don't you make a puzzle out of one of your works that people can do at home?" the wife suggested. I could make it in halftone, I thought, and make it fiendishly hard, Burn some furlough hours round the kitchen table for those stuck at home.

So I have – it's an old Dotmasters favourite, a framed Mona Lisa with a blue NHS smile. Completely made out of halftone dots, with very little help from the picture on the lid of the box.

Proceeds donated to the NHS and hopefully this 500 piece puzzle can help while away some time for those stuck at home.

**What use is art on a deserted street anyway?**



“WORK IS THE CURSE OF THE DRINKING CLASSES”\*

# WINDY BOXES

\*OSCAR WILDE QUOTE



had a wedding anniversary early in 2020. We'd booked a weekend away in some swanky country hotel and kitchen, we'd been looking forward to it for months, it was so posh that you had to book ages in advance.

Lockdown meant it was all off, no waffle robes, no tasting menu, nothing. I'm sure many of us experienced similar disappointments with weddings and birthdays cancelled, even funerals and wakes ironically.

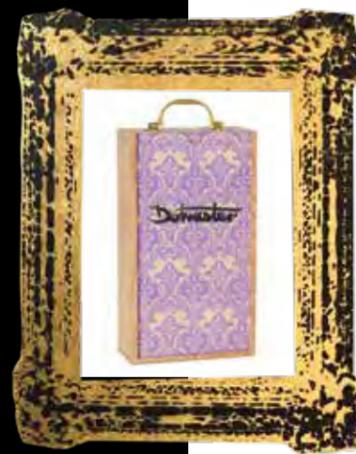
One of the only things that made the day special was a gift of two nice bottles of red that my sister-in-law sent... they came in a little wooden box with a handle and sliding lid.

The wine was great and the little box was just too damn cute to throw away. It sat on the bench for a week, I wanted to fill it with something. I'd decided that during Lockdown I was going to play, it seemed pointless making canvases for closed galleries. I was going to muck about a bit, play with techniques and new material and find ways of showing some of my more popular subjects for canvas in new and novel ways.

Indigo Gets Up has always struck a chord with people. I've always thought it's the candid act she's caught in that makes it so appealing. A small girl in a polka dot dress (my niece, also known as Inky), tagging a masterpiece.

The depth of the box made the contents dark so I came up with the idea of illuminating it somehow...Playing with LEDs I had lying around, I knocked a prototype up, I made a false back to the box with some frosted acrylic sheet, cut a stencil of one of my wallpaper patterns to fit. Put the lights in at the back, cut characters and rude kids out of card with small spacers stuck on the back and assembled them as a little scene inside the box. It looked cute..I started to shop for components and play around with dolls house fittings and Infrared controllers. Experiments are fun – there's no right or wrong, there are plenty of false starts and dead ends, but the little shonky prototype, although rough and ready, showed the idea worked. Puzzles are a good way to take up time, and it was weeks before the final versions were finished and ready to switch on.

These boxes are an open edition and will be launched on the 26th November. They will be available for order between midnight on the 26th and will close at midnight on 30th November. Orders will be made in December and will be shipped by Christmas. Each box comes with a power supply and infrared controller.



TITLE: Indigo Gets Up  
 SIZE: 36 x 20 x 10cm  
 Mixed media & 24k gold  
 Open edition



TITLE: Astrid Gets Up  
 SIZE: 36 x 20 x 10cm  
 Mixed media & 24k gold  
 Open edition





TITLE: Edgar Gets Up  
SIZE: 36 x 20 x 10cm  
Mixed media & 24k gold  
Open edition

★ ★ ★ ★ ★  
**KEEP THE  
IMMIGRANTS**  
—  
**DEPORT THE  
RACISTS**  
★ ★ ★ ★ ★

# LOCKDOWN LIFE WORK

**EXCITED** by the results I was getting with the wine boxes, I wanted to use some of my other Rude Kids stencils, but they were all at a different scale. The wine boxes were tiny, nearly half the size of the stencils I use for canvases.

If I wanted to use these 40cm stencils, I would have to build the box to house the kids and frames.

The weather was cracking, my newly built studio with skylights and glass became an oven. If it was 30 degrees outside, it must have topped 40-45 in my hot box. Sweating bullets, I put a set of trestles up in the garden and made myself a little outdoor workshop, manufacturing larger replicas of the wine boxes in nothing but a pair of shorts.

The wine box wallpapers were laser-cut ply and with these larger boxes I could experiment with different plastics. I ordered a mix of opaque and translucent acrylics, worked out the scales and sent to files off to Aaron, my laser-cut guy. While I hand-cut all my large-scale stuff for the street, Aaron's my go-to guy for laser-cutting at smaller scale or on weird substrates.

During the coming months, **plastics were dead-dropped from cars on suburban streets**, both Aaron and myself socially distant, masked, gloved and liberally coated



in hand sanitiser. None of the processes were quick, nearly everyone shut down. Materials were scarce. The blinds I'd ordered to cover the skylights and keep the sun out never came. **I cooked, I cut, I melted.**

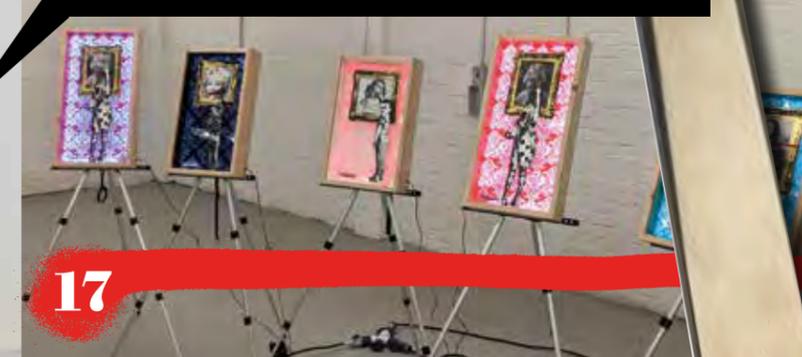
In the end, I made a set of four kids with different wallpapers and little framed Dotmaster pieces. I also made one extra (an Indigo of course) and decided to make one customisable. I made three extra frames and portraits and fixed a split baton onto the back of each, with a corresponding baton mounted above the cut-out of Inky. This way, I could swap out the portraits depending on how I felt each day – like a rehang in a gallery. I hinged the top of the box so the frame could be swapped out through the top and bought a couple of stands so the alternative works for the box could be displayed beside it.

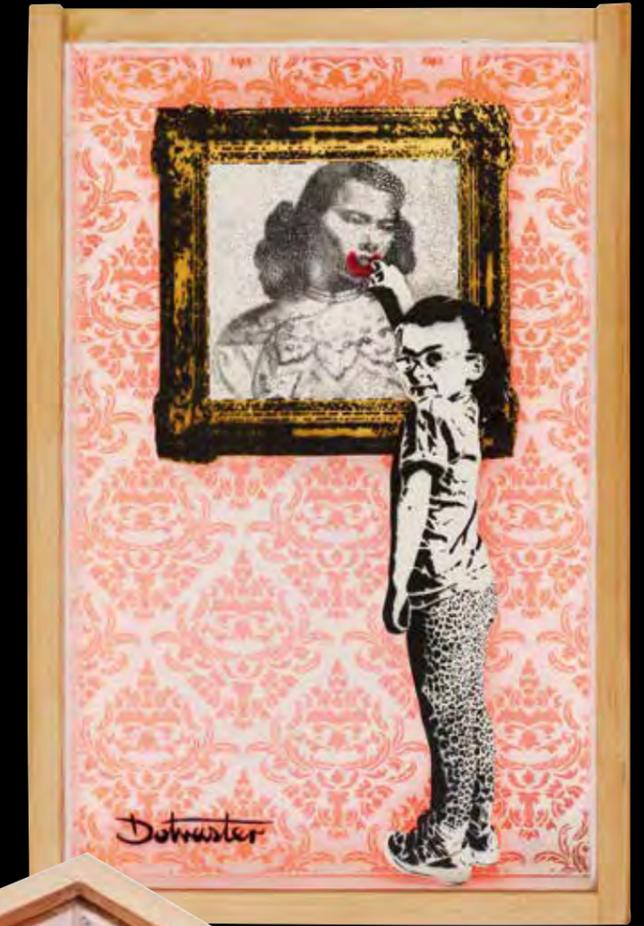
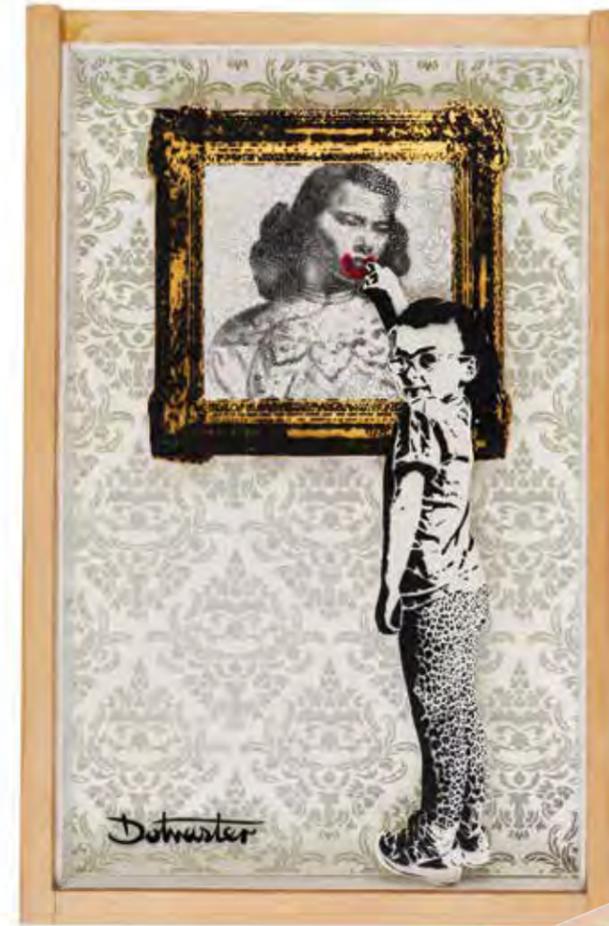
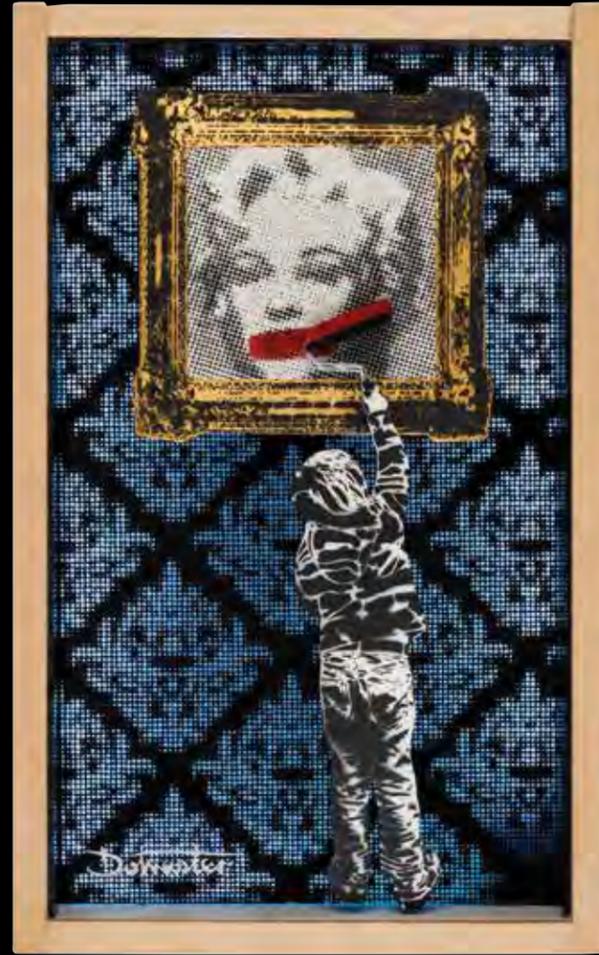
Although it's the trickiest piece I made during lockdown, the Indigo fluoro gallery box is my favourite. With the changeable lights and changeable artwork, it's a work that is never static.

All the box works were quite an experience to make, involving electronics, plastics, laser cutting and gold leaf. Driven by the success of my little prototype, **the plastic, lights, 24k gold and spray paints create little dioramas for my Rude Kids to live in.**

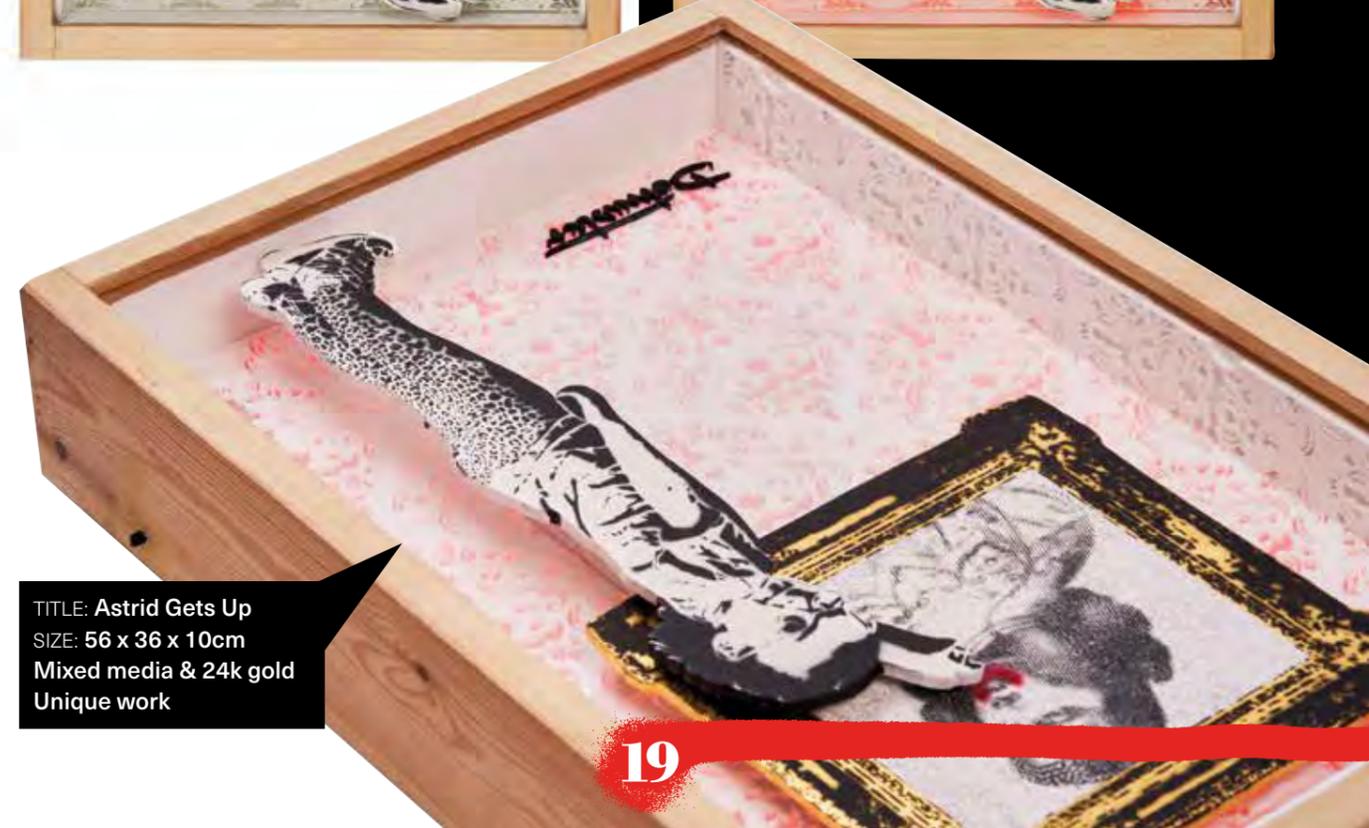


**...the plastic, lights, 24k gold and spray paints create little dioramas for my Rude Kids to live in**

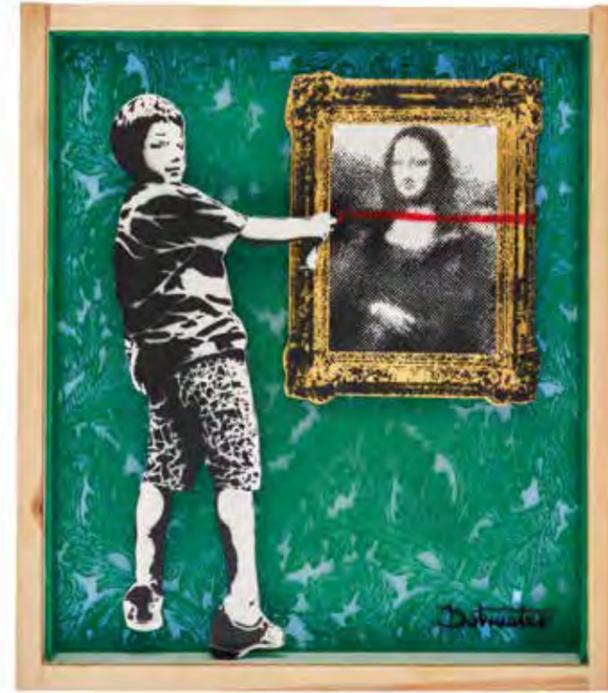
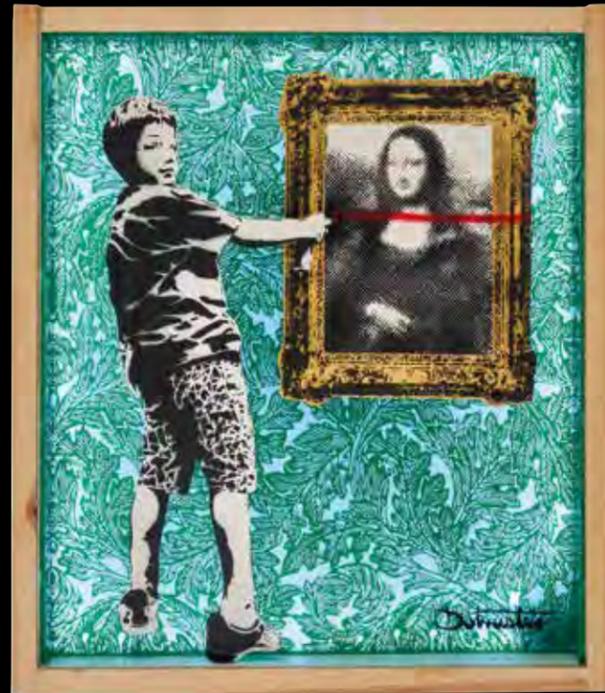




TITLE: Edgar Gets Up  
SIZE: 59 x 36 x 10cm  
Mixed media & 24k gold  
Unique work



TITLE: Astrid Gets Up  
SIZE: 56 x 36 x 10cm  
Mixed media & 24k gold  
Unique work

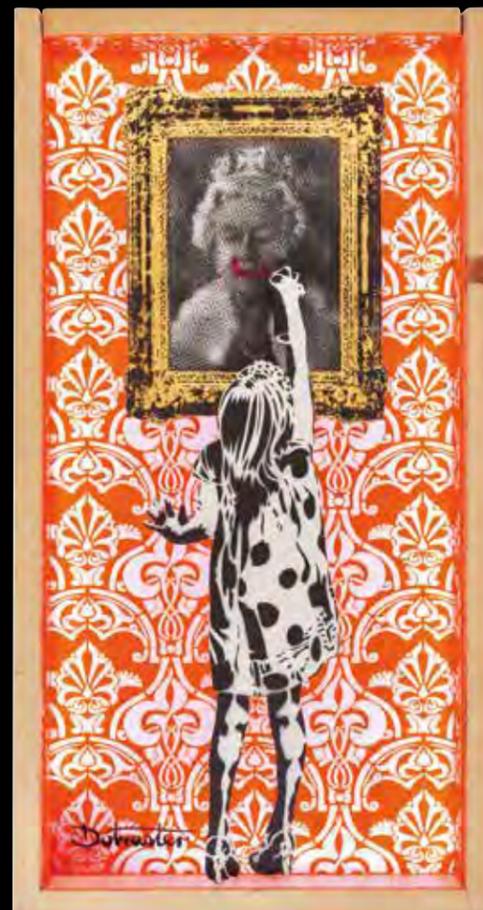


TITLE: Louie Gets Up  
SIZE: 54 x 57 x 10cm  
Mixed media & 24k gold  
Unique work



TITLE: Indigo Gets Up In Pink  
SIZE: :70 x 38 x 10cm  
Mixed media & 24k gold  
Unique work





TITLE: Indigo Gets Up Gallery  
SIZE: 70 x 38 x 10cm  
Mixed media & 24k gold  
Includes three interchangeable frames, 26 x 26, and Perspex stands.  
Unique work

# Fatima's not fucking retraining.

(this isn't her hobby, it's her calling)

Rethink. Reskill. Reboot





# SPECIALS

**D**uring Lockdown I was conscious that all the people I work with were suddenly in the same boat as I was – no work, not much to do and bills piling up on the mat.

Ben from Mesh Silkscreens was busy doing decals for builders' vans and keen to get back to the silk screening he is so well known for. I decided to do a print edition, a set of three of the kids I was basing most of these Lockdown experiments on. Using the same idea in various different mediums left me free to explore new techniques to the maximum. Astrid, my dentist's extrovert kid, Edgar, the son of my friend Joe Hunter, half of the legendary clothing designers Vexed Generation, and Indigo (Inky), my wonderful niece.

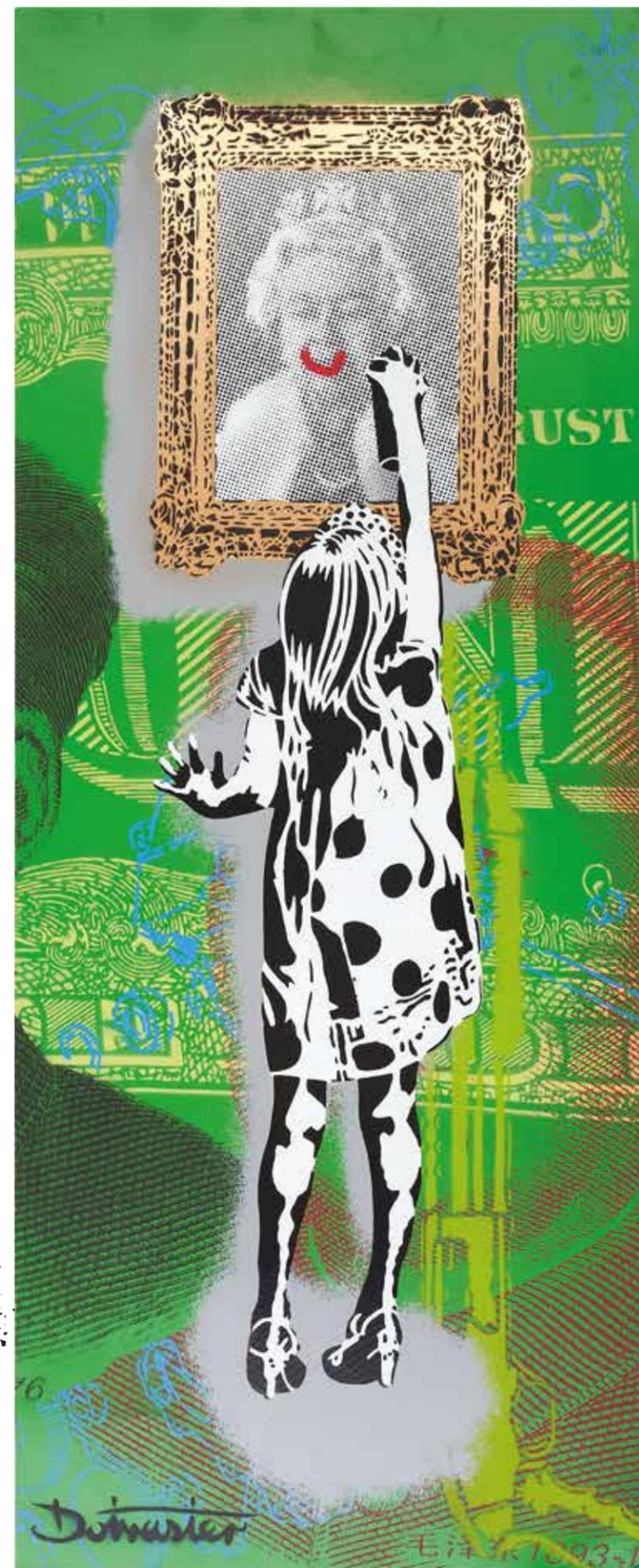
**Like the boxes, these rude kids were going to be tagging Dotmaster portraits against the background of one of my wallpapers.**

I decided to do a small edition through my website and another in a custom colourway for each gallery I work with: Graffik Gallery in London, GCA in Paris and Stella Dore in Hastings. That way we could all keep busy and perhaps pay a few of those bills that keep on piling up..

**Usually I do a few special prints with Ben, he seems to be able to print on anything – veneers, plastics, even dollar bills, nothing seems to faze him.**

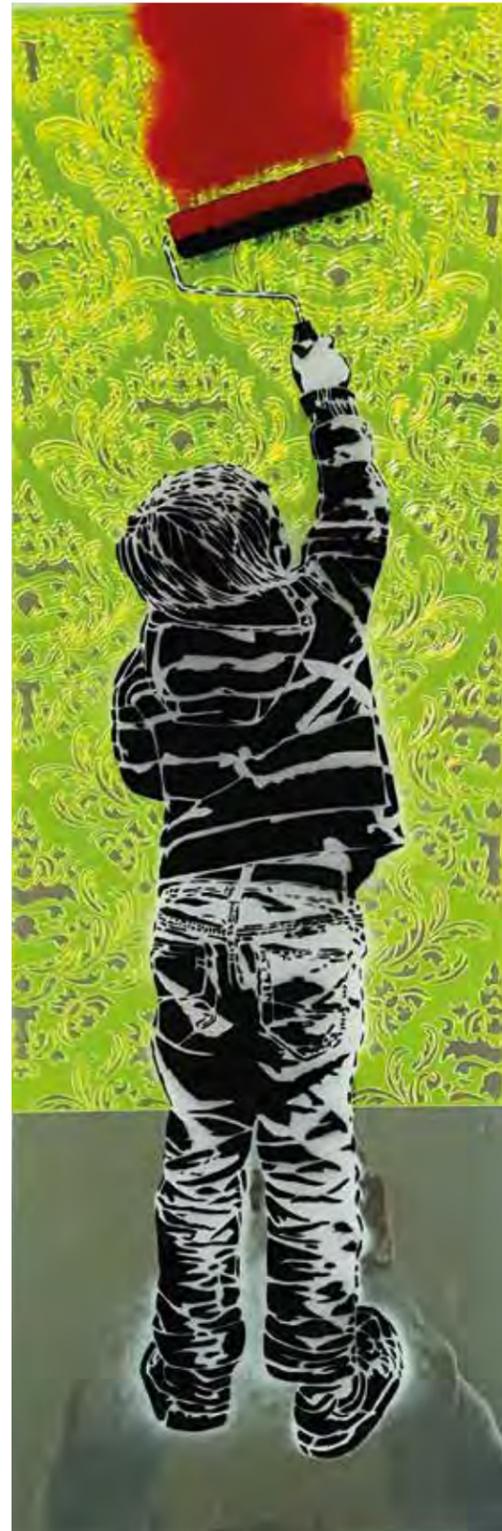
Always keen to upcycle and guilty of never throwing anything away, the specials from this print edition were made from old lithographic plates that I'd been printing stuff on for the last 10 years but had never resulted in a finished work, as well as some 10mm acrylic rescued from a skip at a new underground station.

TITLE:  
Indigo Gets Up  
Litho Sheet  
SIZE:  
85 x 35cm  
Spray paint and  
silkscreen on upcycled  
lithographic sheet  
Unique work





TITLE:  
Indigo Gets Up Fluro,  
Mirror & 10mm acrylic  
SIZE:  
85 x 30cm  
Mixed media  
Unique work



TITLE:  
Edgar Fluro Mirror  
SIZE:  
93 x 28cm  
Mixed media  
Unique work



TITLE:  
Junior Fluro Mirror  
SIZE:  
93 x 28cm  
Mixed media  
Unique work



TITLE:  
Yumi Fluro Mirror  
SIZE:  
93 x 28cm  
Mixed media  
Unique work



CREDIT: STREET ART ATLAS



PICTURE CREDIT: STREET ART ATLAS

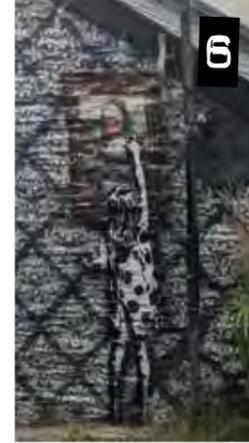
The summer wasn't a total blow-out for painting on the street. Hoops were jumped through, masks worn and distances kept. International travel was out. Festivals were called off. So I got busy organising a few walls around the UK and got so bored I painted a couple of things in my garden.

Big thanks to **Rockpoint** in New Brighton, The Wirral, **Sea & Slate** in Llangranog, Wales, **London Calling Blog** for the walls in Penge, **Graffik Gallery** for helping out with the spot in Portobello Road and **Cheltenham Paint Festival**.

Thanks for all the help making a local mark..

*DeMaster*





## LOCATIONS

- 1 Penge//
- 2 Secret location//
- 3 Secret location, Chablis France//
- 4 New Brighton//
- 5 Secret location, Essex//
- 6 Sea & Slate Gallery, Llangranog Wales//
- 7 Portobello Road//
- 8 Cheltenham//



PICTURE CREDIT: STREET ART ATLAS



# Portraits

**GET YOUR FACE, OR THAT OF A LOVED ONE, TRANSFORMED INTO YOUR VERY OWN DOT-TO-DOT PUZZLE PICTURE**

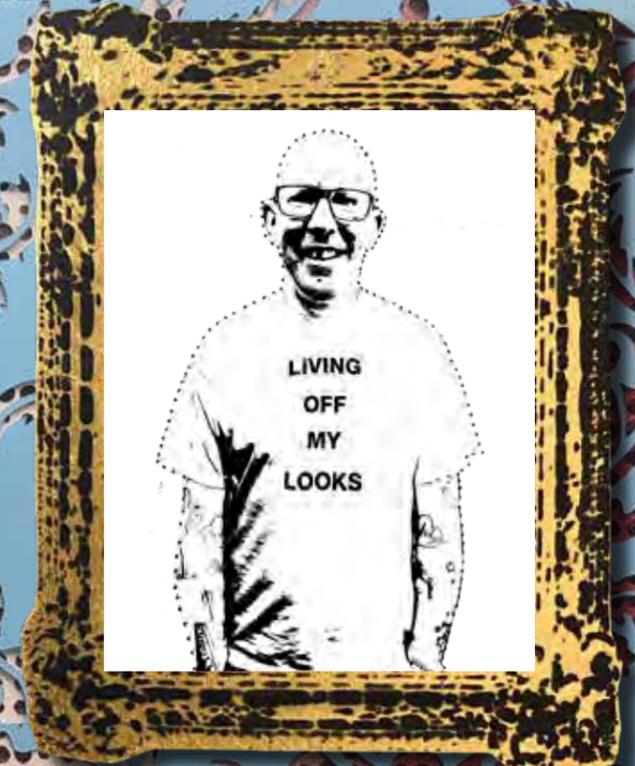
**E**xclusive offer to Lockdown subscribers. A one-off offer of a Dot-to-Dot portrait by The Dotmasters.

A mixture of digital and hand drawn, your unique portrait will be delivered as an A2 giclee (archival print) on 250gsm paper and a digital file to share on your socials. Orders before December the 10th will be delivered before Christmas

Simply email a high-res portrait to [ihaveaquestion@dotmaster.co.uk](mailto:ihaveaquestion@dotmaster.co.uk) quoting your Lockdown edition number found on the back cover (this offer is only open to subscribers of Lockdown). A one-off chance to have a unique portrait drawn and transformed into a Dot-to-Dot by Dot – £350 (gold frame not included).



**EXCLUSIVE  
CUSTOMISABLE  
PERFECT XMAS  
PRESENT**





# DOT PORTRAIT LAMPS

I'd been given a few sheets of 10mm recycled acrylic out of a skip from an undisclosed underground station in London. It was so thick, it called for an idea that could make it stand up on its own – upright, like a screen of thick glass.

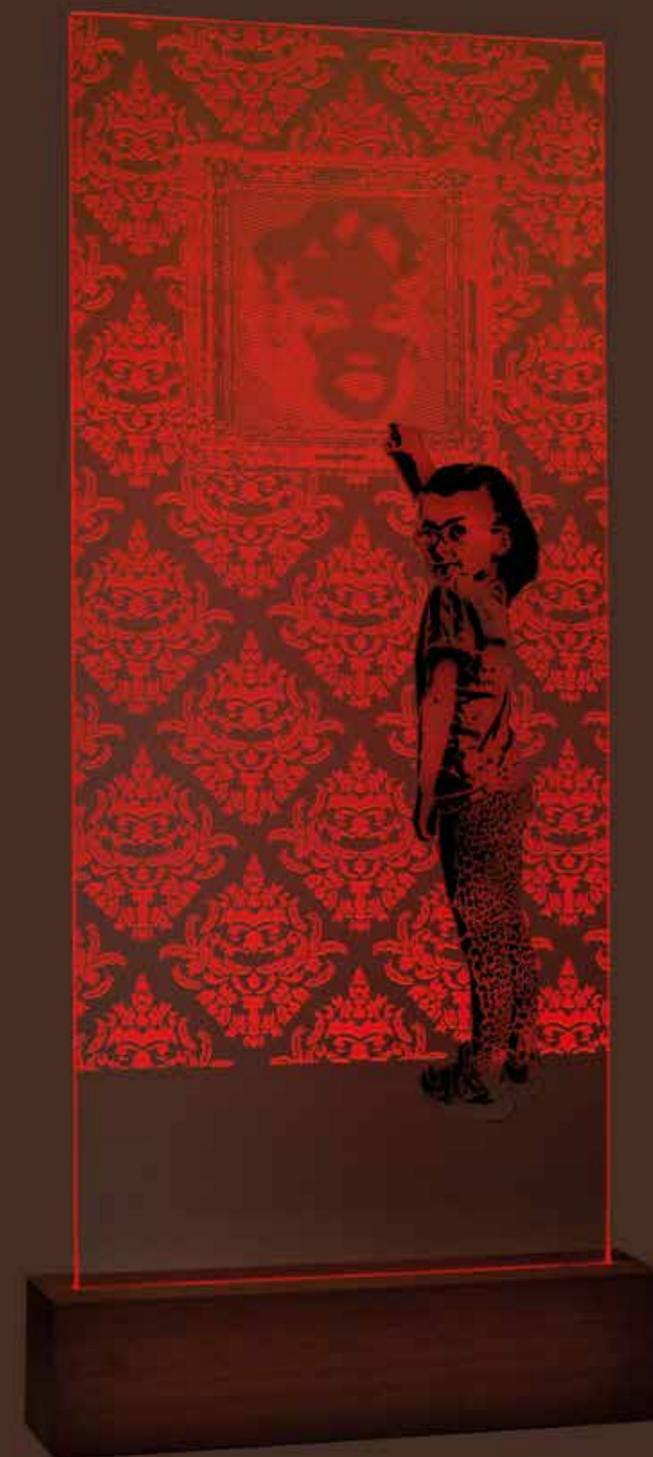
Another few laser tests with Aaron and some makeshift bases to prove the idea worked, and I was ready to do an open ended edition., I just had to find a way of housing the LEDs that shone through the sheet and hit the etched low points engraved on the back.

Thankfully, each year at Glastonbury I work with a bunch of very talented makers. One of the best is a mate called Liam Hayhow. He's a jack of all trades, as well as a talented artist in his own right. His broad knowledge of materials and invaluable skills would make developing this wooden based acrylic light possible . We made a prototype to prove it could all work, Liam's another hoarder and has a wide range of tatted wood and bits and pieces gathered during his eclectic work and squatting life.

We found a wonderful red hardwood post that was just the right length to produce five of these lamp bases. I left the LED controllers and power supplies with Liam to try and work out how to hide them elegantly into the base.

Most of the to and fro on the designs of these were done over WhatsApp from one studio to another. The first videos of these working upright were truly a highlight of these Lockdown experiments.

All of these works made during these troubling, isolating times have been a mix of a desire to create, experiment with new materials and a need to keep working with the people I have worked with over the last 10 years. It's been a tough year for all of us, I am just glad I've had the opportunity to try something new with friends I usually work with.



TITLE: Astrid Gets Up  
 SIZE: 68 x 30cm  
 BASE: 8 x 8 x 37cm  
 Mixed media  
 Unique work



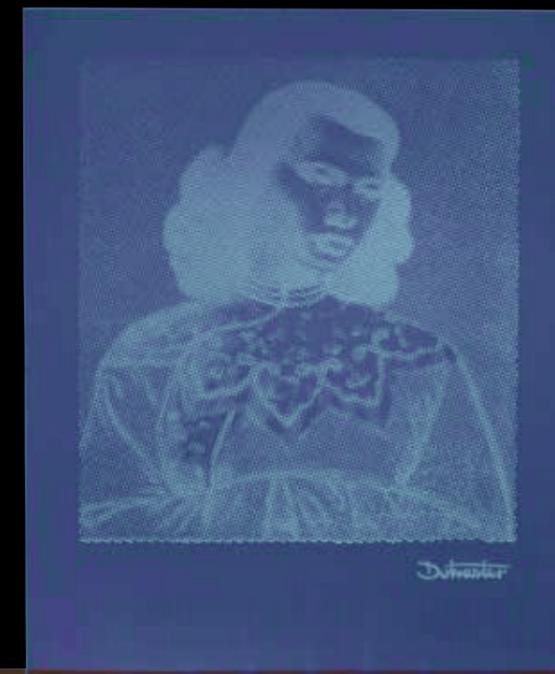
TITLE:  
Marilyn  
SIZE:  
36 x 30cm  
BASE:  
8 x 37 x 8cm  
Mixed media  
Open edition



TITLE:  
Mona Lisa  
SIZE:  
50 x 30cm  
BASE:  
8 x 37 x 8cm  
Mixed media  
Open edition



TITLE:  
QE2  
SIZE:  
54 x 30cm  
BASE:  
8 x 37 x 8cm  
Mixed media  
Open edition



TITLE:  
Chinese Girl  
SIZE:  
40 x 30cm  
BASE:  
8 x 37 x 8cm  
Mixed media  
Open edition

It's rare that an interviewer researches enough to ask the right questions, to pull the story of what you do out of you. Questions like "how did you start?", "what inspires you?" or "do you know Banksy?" leave the tale untold – trite, bored responses, rehearsed and repeated. Even though this interview is a good few years old now, I've always loved the way Rebecca Laing from *Zeitgeist Magazine* asked the right questions to pull an explanation that I was unable to write down myself

**You've been an artist for longer than you've been The Dotmasters, tell us a little about the early part of your career as an artist. When did you start painting on the streets?**

In 1997 I formed the art group C6, primarily for one group show to stage the work "Man in a Box", a surveillance 168 hour, solitary confinement event. C6 ran club nites, broadcast strange rituals, wrote software and painted a lot of stuff in a lot of random places... well you get the idea, it was pretty eclectic. Most events were accompanied by some sort of street campaign with stickers, paste-ups and stencils. I had started painting on the streets in Brighton in 1993. Brighton has a strong history of graffiti and stencil work – painters around at the time included

Req, She, Morn and Nema, who was a close friend. There were always lots of stencils thrown up by Pablo Fiasco and an active scene around the Bob Dobbs crew. I'd seen stencil stuff before in Paris in the mid 80's and cut some of my own over the years for lots of different reasons. My mum used to teach silkscreen printing and taught me about stencils when I was 12. Brighton street art in the early 90's showed me there was an audience and platform for stencils in the streets and I wanted to get involved.

**How did The Dotmasters and you working in halftone come about? Is it a technique you've always admired?**

Yes, I've always loved the dots. The halftone effect has always fascinated me, from early comics to being very young and noticing it in newsprint, its one of those simple illusions that work so well. When I first used Photoshop, it seemed like the only impressive feature of the programme, that and a cool new photocopier. During the early years at Nuart street art festival in Norway, I struck up a good friendship with James Powderly ex NASA engineer and Tibetan rights activist from Graffiti Research Laboratory (G.R.L.). In their lab in NYC, they had a >>

laser-cutter, I squatted their studio and had a play around with the machine. I didn't want to do something that could be done by hand, so halftone it was. Instead of sight-seeing on my first trip to New York, I spent four days drawing out the image in vectors and just managed to bash it all over Brooklyn before I left. The first stencil to test how the halftone worked was the image of the Mona Lisa – I thought it would be a good icon to test out the concept. The idea of a whole series of Dot Masters started from there.

**Early Dotmasters works saw you adorn gallery walls with your own halftone takes on masterpieces from the likes of Da Vinci, Raphael and Michelangelo, only your works were left without permission on the outside of these galleries.**

We did a few early pranks to accompany the vandalism: we posted surveys asking for reactions to our Arts Council funded work (of course we were lying) and asking whether any galleries had used their Arts Council funds to clean away funded public art.

We tagged them in all the posts online and our online rankings were better than the galleries'. we'd been online since 1996, so our pages always appeared at the top of searches. As word spread, we were invited to paint of some of the galleries, one of the highlights was being allowed to paint the Cabaret Voltaire in Zurich.

Other pieces, such as the one in Cork Street, were illegal but stayed on the street for over six years. It was an odd mix of invite, successful placement and crass conceptual vandalism.

**You've just returned from painting in Japan, how did people react to your street pieces or, due to their stricter anti-vandalism laws, did you not stick around to find out?**

Japan was a lot of fun. Fuji Rock Festival took me out there to show mine and Sam Haggerty's sideshows from the

Unfairground Glastonbury. So the first two weeks were spent in the mountains of Naeba, but I managed to postpone my return ticket and get an extra week of painting. Tokyo is not really a great place to find walls, it can take a year and can cost money to get somewhere to paint legally – illegal painting is an instant custodial sentence in Japan. I managed to find a couple of spots in Tokyo in the end, thanks to Gypsy Eyes, but the real eye-opener was Osaka, a great place to paint, drink and eat. I loved it! I was well looked after by the OK Crew, we drove all over town, painting all sorts of weird places. You need local guides, I was lucky Ben Eine pointed me in the right directions as he's been there many times. I was also lucky to travel with Gaz Mayall, his 25 years of travelling to Osaka showed me a very different side of the city.

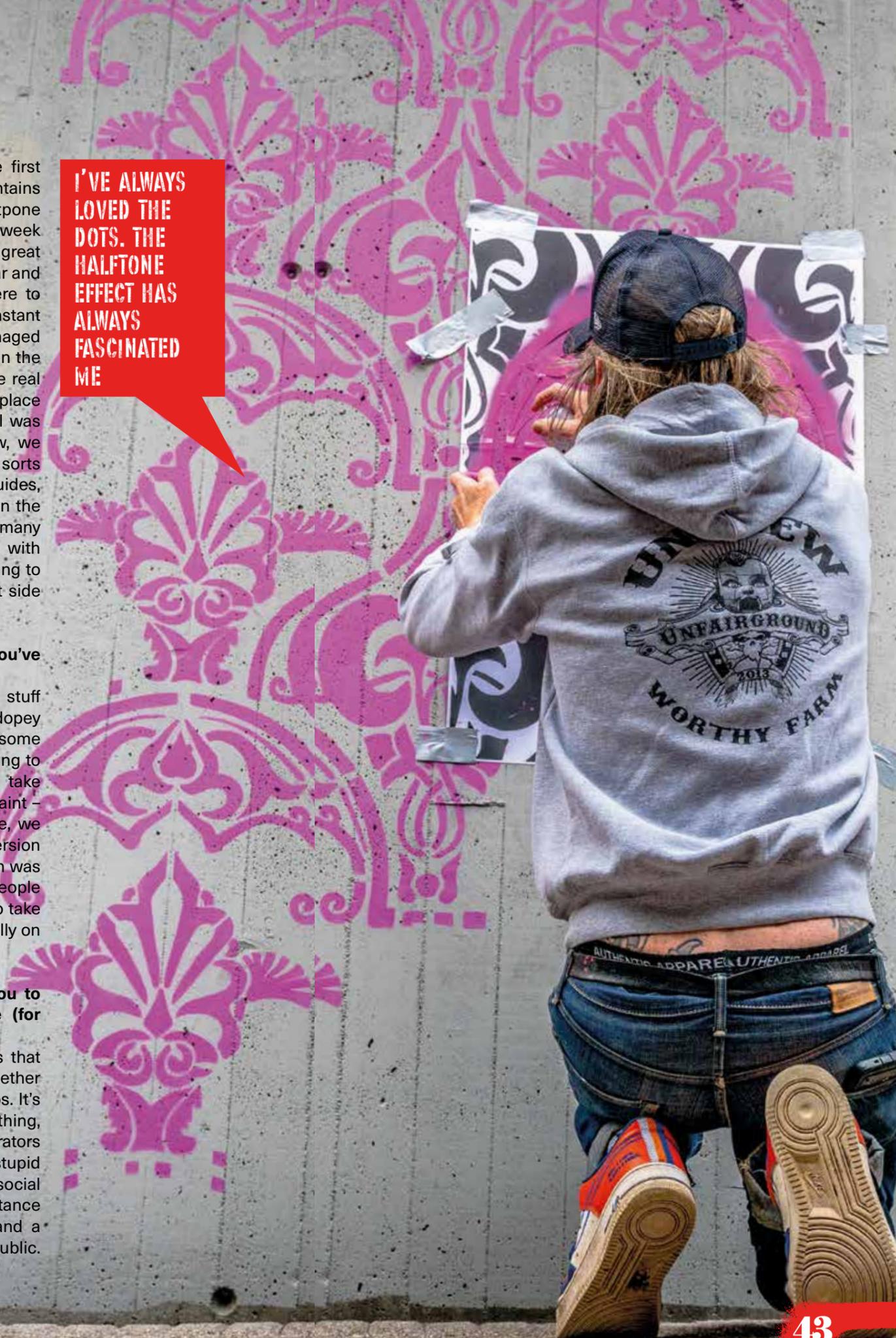
**Is Japan the trickiest place you've painted?**

Cuba was harder. I painted some stuff there back in 1994, just some dopey bubble-writing throw-ups and some tagging. Getting the paint and having to illegally score petrol so we could take trips to the places we wanted to paint – looking back, we were really naive, we could have been arrested for subversion under a totalitarian authority. Japan was tricky, but I was lucky with the people that helped me. It's always tricky to take your shit to other cultures, especially on the street.

**Do you feel it's important for you to always have a street presence (for your art) as an artist?**

I like the invasion of it, the hooks that you dangle to grab attention, whether that's stickers, stencils or paste-ups. It's unsanctioned, unmediated... if anything, security guards are the new curators of our public space. It's as much stupid stuff in the loos as it is worthy social comment that turns me on. It's resistance against a profit-driven dialogue and a direct communication with the public.

I'VE ALWAYS LOVED THE DOTS. THE HALFTONE EFFECT HAS ALWAYS FASCINATED ME



It's become a thing, a formula, accepted and commodified, but there is still a space for disrupting the usual message in whatever way you want to.

**Trash has been a recurring theme within your work for a few years now, what about trash exactly is it that inspires you?**

It seemed a good reaction to the gentrification problems associated with street art. Beautification of the streets always seemed like playing the wrong game – I wanted to create icons out of the everyday. I have always loved the Brillo boxes Warhol did. They are so real, copies of an everyday object becoming something else, something valued... In the 60's it was all soap, today it's all rubbish – you can read that as you like.

The bin bag or branded local shop bag full of cat litter, dumped on a street corner are most people's only interaction with the street, mine don't get picked up on bin day, but are buffed by the same authority a few days later. They always make me laugh, they are inherently comic, a dark humour in fabricating everyday detritus.

**We know you've been heavily involved in Nuart. For those who don't know about Nuart, tell us a little about it as an art festival?**

It started in 2001 with six artists, no budget, buying paint from a local artist Atle's little shop in Stavanger. It's grown every year, we've brought out books, helped charities, made local and international news. We take over the town, produce some sort of gallery show and every year we're donated more and more walls around town. Local people, institutions, authorities and businesses give us an increasing amount of walls to make the town our canvas. Over the years, we've peppered the town with amazing work, most of it remaining year after year, making Stavanger one of the largest collections of street art that I know in any city centre.

PICTURE CREDIT: BRIAN TALLMAN

As well as Nuart you've been involved in some fantastic projects down the years both as an artist and an organiser, the likes of Mutate Britain, Cans Festival and so on. Do you have a project that stands out as a favourite?

The Cans festival was pretty bonkers. I flew in to the artists' opening night from LA, having just painted with Thierry Guetta (Mr Brainwash) in what later appeared in Banksy's Exit Through the Giftshop film. We'd got busted on Melrose and Thierry talked down the LAPD – with four hours to my flight, the tunnels of Waterloo looked like they would never happen. That was all very rock and roll... Nuart's also been a big thing – we've turned round an attitude in a city to the inventive tactics of street art, the city is behind us, willing us on each year to bigger and better things.

**A PROPER FAMILY OF PROPER WRONG 'UNS, PLAYING THE PART OF CARNEY FOLK A LITTLE BIT TOO WELL.**

The Unfairground is probably what I take most pride in. It's a shame it's so transient, how it's easily lost in the melee that is Glastonbury. It is a thing that is beyond me, something bigger than what I normally do. I can take ownership of bits, but it's a proper family of proper wrong 'uns, playing the part of carney folk a little bit too well.

**You've also worked with and alongside the biggest names within graffiti and street art, but away from those big names, whose work really stands out to you?**

I've loved working with Herakut... over the years we've collaborated a number of times. Their truly amazing talent has inspired my ideas on staging and production and allowed me to use my scenic know-how to create some truly memorable installations.

I paint with Ben Eine a lot and enjoy his company, it's rare that we collaborate but we seem to end up in the same locations painting alongside each other almost by accident. I've learnt a lot from him.

I probably work closest to Sam Haggerty, the ringmaster at the Unfairground. We plan and plot each year for Glastonbury and the Unfairground has become a wonderful mix of performance, art, interaction and humour. It's a weekend that's a total immersion into an idea that's become bigger than the sum of its parts. Its experiential – frustratingly, the documentation is never enough to explain what happens in that little field in Pilton. It's one of those "you had to be there" type things that never sounds much cop in the retelling, a bit like an explanation of acid trip... it's not what happened, it's about how you felt.

PICTURE CREDIT: BRIAN TALLMAN



# PULL UP, PITCH UP

TRESPASSERS WILL BE PROSECUTED!

A summer lockdown meant no festivals – I’m sure I’m not alone in missing them. With the passing of years, I’ve thinned them down to one... Glastonbury. I’ve always believed that being part of a festival is the only way to experience it and the true highlights of Glastonbury for me over the years have been the build for the Unfairground, the off-key fairground in the South East’s Naughty Corner. This year was going to be the big one – the festival’s 50th anniversary and the Unfairground’s 10th.

Over the years I’ve become the Unfairground’s Artistic Director. I still have no idea what that means, but it tends to contextualise how involved I’ve become. It’s a tight-knit family that produces an incredible, wonky fairground on the fringe edges of the festival.

It’s the meeting point for a gathering of disparate tribes from across the country. The one time we are all in one spot – united, Unfair and Uncrew. [unfairground.co.uk](http://unfairground.co.uk)

In the background, we’ve been working highlighting traveller rights – the following text was written for *The Big*

*Issue* but never published.

Damian Le Bas is the author of *The Stopping Places: a Journey through Gypsy Britain* and an occasional filmmaker. Sam Haggarty is a founding member of the “Mutoid Waste Co”, artist, and director of the Unfairground at Glastonbury festival.

“It’s a Conservative tradition, during election campaigns, to vilify Romany Gypsies and Travellers,” as George Monbiot recently said.

This time the government have upped the stakes. They suggest treating Travellers so ruthlessly that the police think it’s over the top.

And if the new laws being tabled get brought in, they’ll affect far more people than just Gypsies and Travellers.

The Conservative manifesto promised to give councils more powers to “tackle unauthorised traveller camps” through the planning system. A more ominous line came next: “We will give the police new powers to arrest and seize the property and vehicles of trespassers who set up unauthorised encampments”.

The Brighton-based charity Friends,

Families and Travellers consulted police forces to find out what they think about this idea. 84% of them said they did not support criminalising unauthorised encampments. Two thirds said a lack of site provision was the real problem.

Now the Conservatives have been elected with a solid majority, they are consulting the public about their plans to change trespass law. (You can respond to the consultation on the website [Gov.uk](http://Gov.uk) – it’s called ‘Strengthening police powers to tackle unauthorised encampments’.)

But in the consultation document, they don’t use words like ‘Romany’, ‘Gypsy’ or ‘Traveller’. The government is careful not to look like it intends to break equalities law, which is meant to stop them targeting people on the basis of their identity. (I’ll come back to that shortly.)

Instead, they refer to the act of ‘trespassing when setting up an unauthorised encampment’.

This is very precise language. This isn’t about stopping the sort of trespassing where someone is coming to burgle or attack you. This consultation is about people who are trying to find a place to

UNFAIRGROUND. THE TWISTED CARNIVAL & OFF-KEY FAIRGROUND IN THE SOUTH EAST’S NAUGHTY CORNER



PICTURE CREDIT: RAMONA CARRARO PHOTOGRAPHY

live. To eat, rest and sleep.

Without using words like 'Gypsies' and 'Travellers', it's them the Home Secretary has in her sights. The phrase 'trespassing when setting up an unauthorised encampment' is specific enough to target certain minorities, and a new law criminalising this would hit them hard.

But it's also general enough that it could be used against homeless people, peaceful protesters and anyone whose presence is disliked by the authorities. It's never just about Gypsies and Travellers. We are just the perennial guinea pigs: a way of testing the water before chipping away at everyone's civil liberties.

It could become a crime just to put up a tent or set up a trailer somewhere without permission. Think of what that would mean in reality. Marginalised people having their only shelter confiscated whilst they face the prospect of jail.

Gypsies and Travellers are the ones primarily being targeted, but this about more than the rights of minorities. **It's about the right to liberty. It's about the simple freedom to move around this country without always requiring someone's permission to do so. It's about the right to congregate, to meet and gather, and seek shelter in this land.**

It's about not being punished just because you don't have an authorised place to live.

What the Conservatives are trying to do is the central government equivalent of what many local councils have already been doing with their 'injunctions against persons unknown'. These are bans that apply to various pieces of land. They can be parks, commons and open spaces, but also industrial land, unused land, even completely derelict land. They ban anyone from 'occupying' the land. It's a way of targeting Travellers and people of no fixed abode without saying you are.

Liberty's Sam Grant says that "If you're a member of the Gypsy, Roma and Traveller communities, these injunctions, like the Government's proposals to criminalise trespass, are a real threat to your entire way of life."

Fortunately it's not all bad news.

Lawyers acting on behalf of London Gypsies and Travellers and the campaign group Liberty have already won a huge victory against these injunctions in the Court of Appeal. These lawyers deserve a mention by name. Marc Willers QC and Tessa Buchanan acted for London Gypsies and Travellers and Jude Bunting acted for Liberty.

The Court's judgement referred to case law showing **"that the Gypsy and Traveller community have an enshrined freedom not to stay in one place but to move from one place to another."**

"An injunction which prevents them from stopping at all in a defined part of the UK comprises a potential breach of both the ECHR and the Equality Act," it said.

This is bound to affect the government's attitude to the issue. If the local injunctions breach equalities law, surely it must be wrong to pass legislation aimed at doing the same thing.

We'll soon find out whether our leaders agree. And we'll find out whether they think freedom for all people is something to be protected, or crushed. – *Damien Le Bas*

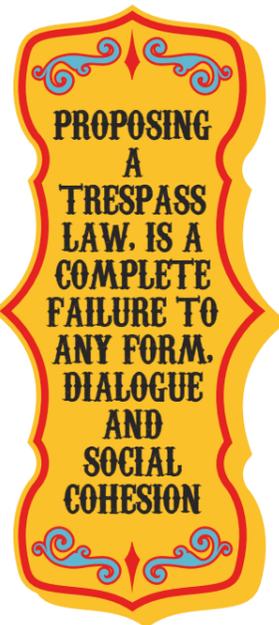
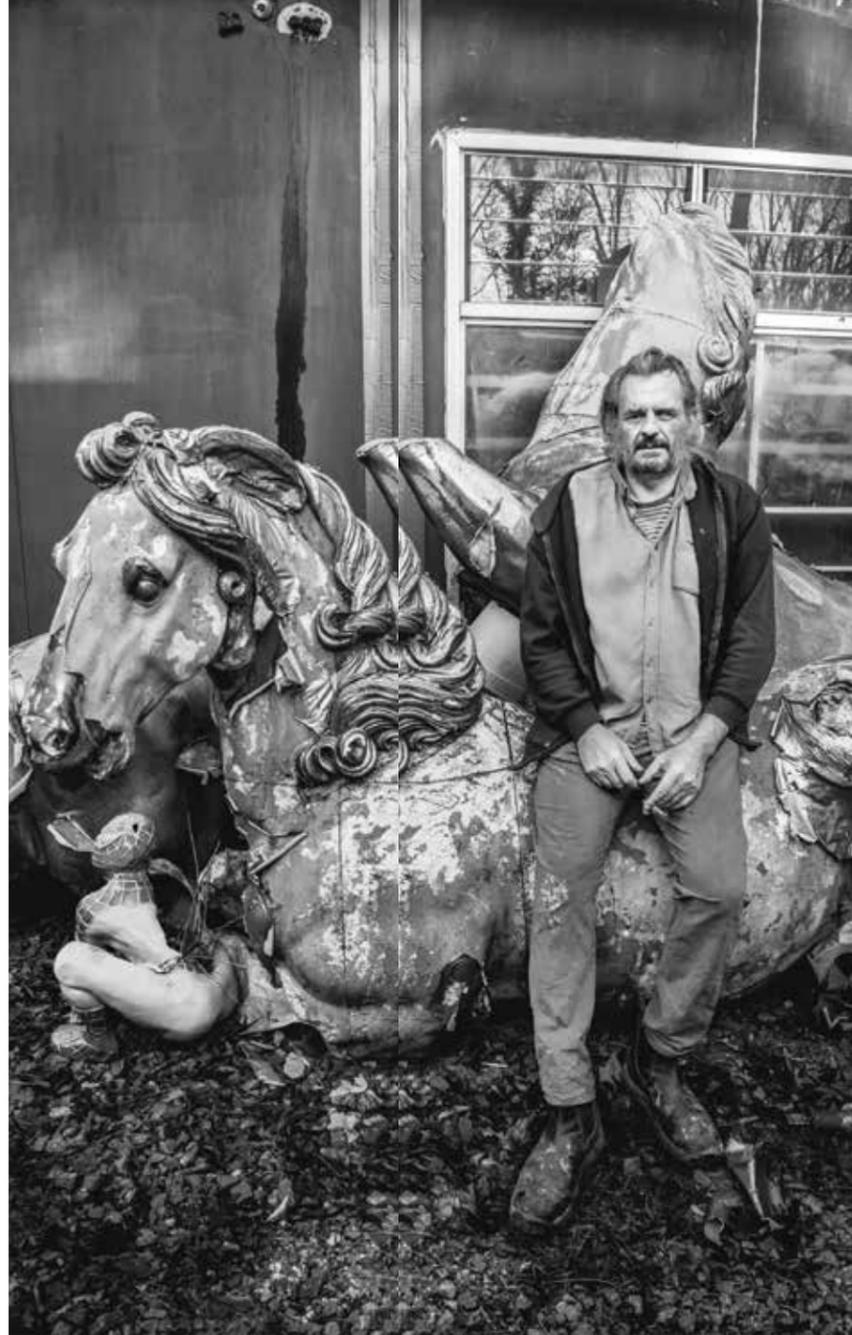
The arguments about acceptable co-existence across the population's cultural diversity form a timeless story.

None the less, UK citizens conform to this "reasoned governance" as it evolves, to provide our social parameters for co habitation.

The way land is accessed, occupied and perceived is a consequence of this dialogue. The right of free movement to convene with one's own community, wherever and for whatever purpose, can be a road that its citizens travel on, with a knowledge of entitlement and security.

The circuitry enabling free movement for the nomadic communities, has for years been regularly edited, adjusted and squeezed.

Solutions found are rarely in the travellers' favour. Often, those who consider themselves as representing the "moral majority" are intent on denying the liberty of this excludable social class. Successes in the defence of travellers rights are rare and far between.



PICTURE CREDIT: RAMONA CARRARO PHOTOGRAPHY



**Top left clockwise:** Sam Haggarty; Site; Art; Damien Le Bas  
**Visit:** [www.vimeo.com/465293830](http://www.vimeo.com/465293830) by Mandy Briggs is a documentary of how lockdown has affected the travelling community

For a twenty first century government to pursue a programme of restriction to the movement of those whose very nature is the transient occupation of land, by **proposing a trespass law, is a complete failure to any form of dialogue and social cohesion.**

Should this be made law and get onto the statute books, it will further fuel an accepted intolerance toward an ethnic and cultural minority, and curtail a right of every citizen, whether they believe it to be relevant to their lives or not.

It is no wonder why many from the nomadic communities continue to ignore and refute what is on offer as an alternative to their lives, history and culture.

The choice of self-determination and social engagement is in the hands of the travellers and not to be determined by a blustering central government. This leaves local and county councils exasperated in their respective obligations to local travellers and their surrounding communities. For some councils, it enables a continuous denial of the acute shortage of pitches and temporary stopping places, while other councils invoke "persons unknown" injunctions.

New age traveller', 'new English traveller'.. somewhere between these categories is where I reside.

My family has traveller status, it allows us to live on a limited number of licensed sites, and we do, alongside others from the community.

Our shared experiences stem from four, and in some cases five, generations back, harking from the 60's free spirit movement. The Summer of Love of '66, Stonehenge, the Battle of the Beanfield in '84, Castle Morton in '92 – these are all our histories. The defining moment for today's travelling communities has yet to reveal itself.

'Turn on, tune in, drop out' is in my mind, as relevant now as when it first became a mantra in the late 60's. So, whilst sitting on my hill, gazing out to ponder the horizons ahead, LSD sounds good.. It might mean chewing on my fist, maybe that will stop the ranting.

– *Sam Haggarty*

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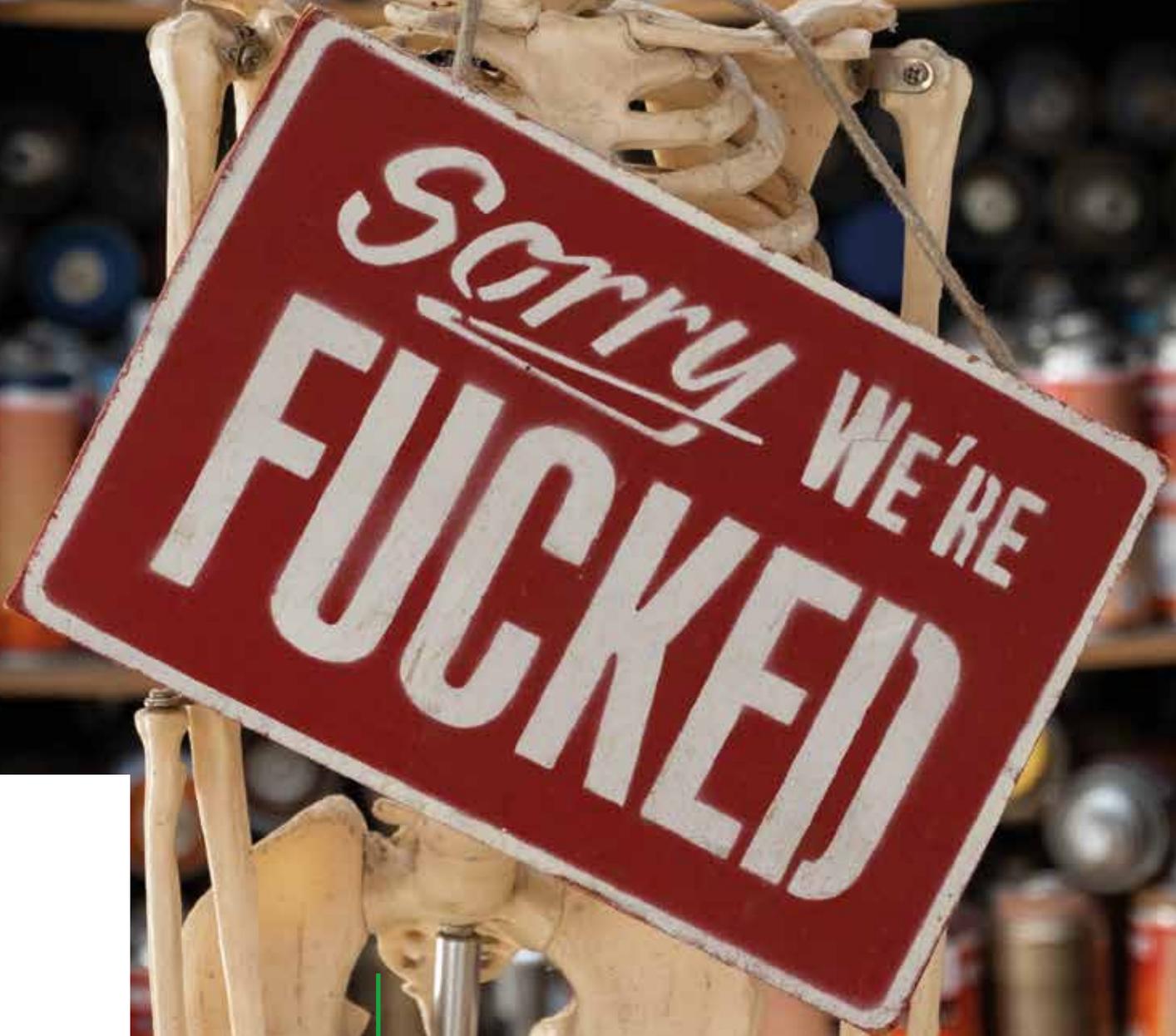
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