

THE MUSEUM OF UNREST: AN INVITATION TO JOIN A CONVERSATION

John Phillips



Figure 1

In 1975, Pippa Smith and I set up Paddington Printshop, a community graphics centre in west London with the unattractive invitation “Come to our unheated semi-derelict factory and homemade press to promote your cause on the following condition: nothing sexist, racist, or commercial”.

It worked: within days the place was full, and soon numerous printshops, based on our DIY model, sprang up around the country.

The Printshop was an educational resource. The first thing I learnt was to listen – a skill notably absent from my fine-art training. The second realisation was that our role might extend beyond designing posters.

Unwittingly, we became a hub to float ideas and mobilise. Let’s: start a campaign, open a women’s centre, create a community farm, and so on. The Printshop became an incubator for new organisations and resources locally, nationally, and internationally.

Things didn’t change overnight, but during the 80s demand for posters waned. Rebranded as London Print Workshop, we turned to providing resources for artists, alongside the continuation of our community activist role.



Figure 2

In 1999, at Impact 1, I presented our new plans for a purpose-built, fully accessible, artists’ print facility and gallery complemented by comprehensive community engagement and an MA programme: londonprintstudio. Over the next two decades, we supported thousands of artists and delivered dozens of community projects. Then, in October 2020, confronted by unremitting lockdown and a legacy of ever-dwindling state support, we closed that facility with a promise to return.

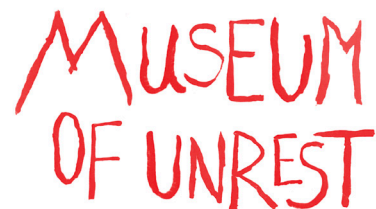


Figure 3

Figure titles and information
 Figure 1: Paddington Printshop Opens
 Figure 2: Joe Strummer: Past, Present and Future at londonprintstudio
 Creator: John Phillips
 Figure 3: Museum of Unrest Logo
 Creator: Naho Matsuda

Hello, we're back with Ips21 and the launch of The Museum of Unrest. Ips21 is London Print Studio's phoenix, an umbrella organisation supporting projects such as archives from our past and new initiatives like The Museum of Unrest: an educational resource for artists, designers, and communities engaged in social and environmental justice. We are proud to launch The Museum of Unrest here at Impact 12.

Occasionally, I've wondered how things might have turned out had we started in 1985 or later. As I've described above, the studio has a history of reinventing itself, but only once before, back in 1975, did it have the freedom to start from scratch.

Although it didn't feel like it at the time, that clean-slate, everything-is-possible moment was an extraordinary, seemingly never-to-be-repeated luxury. Unless of course you are overrun by a global pandemic and manage to turn the wolf at the door into your pet truffle hunter or something of that ilk (Fig. 4).

A key problem that haunted all our previous guises was the urgent need to prioritise tomorrow's destination over yesterday's debris. For years, the poster archive lay undisturbed. Then, in 2017, an email enquiry led to a collaboration with Four Corners Books and the publication of posters from Paddington Printshop. Almost everyone agreed they'd survived the test of time. Many proposed that they were as relevant today as they had been 30 or 40 years before. Sadly, many of the themes are as important now as then: struggles against discrimination and for justice and better housing.

Our values haven't changed much either: nothing sexist, racist or commercial might need a little elaboration. Yet the issues are more acute. If in 1975 it was not unreasonable to fear that rich, powerful, and irrational interests might destroy all humans and half the planet, today we have scientific proof of their imminent success, supported through minute-by-minute updates on their progress.

But many other things: the way we organise, communicate, and distribute information has changed so profoundly that I wager few today would respond to an invitation to an unheated, semi-derelict factory and homemade press to promote their cause (Fig. 5).

So, if we displace antiquated metaphors such as 'new slates' with the 'unbounded metaverse', where exactly might we go from here, and more precisely how might we begin again?

The Museum of Unrest is an idea predicated on the observation that many artists, designers, and communities are addressing issues of social and environmental justice with inspiring results, but this work is scattered, and sometimes difficult to access because we lack the spaces dedicated to promoting, supporting, and embracing the common unity of these initiatives.

These practices range from high-profile artworks in major international settings such as Sonia Boyce's *Feeling Her Way* installation at the British



We are a little worried about our landlord.

Figure 4

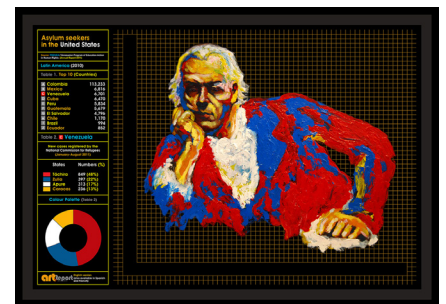


Figure 5

Figure 4: We are a little worried about our landlord Creator: John Phillips

Figure 5: Asylum Seekers in the United States, Creator: David Palacios

pavilion of the Venice Biennale 2022, to open-source design projects such as *A Litre of Light*.

Boyce's installation, which won the prestigious Golden Lion Award for the Best National Pavilion, features a collaboration between the artist and five black female musicians: Poppy Adjuda, Jackie Dankworth, Sofia Jernberg, Tatita Tikaram, and Errollyn Wallen. Boyce's work explores the question: what does freedom look, sound, and feel like?

A Litre of Light employs recycled transparent bottles filled with water, a little bleach, and some simple electronics to create solar lighting. From a small community initiative, launched in the Philippines in 2011 by Illac Diaz, litres of light illuminate today hundreds of thousands of homes throughout the developing world.

Both projects, alongside many others, would be equally welcome in The Museum of Unrest (Fig. 6).

So too would the artists participating in the exhibition we've brought to this conference: Conversation Pieces from The Museum of Unrest, which I hope you'll visit. Some of the participating artists will be visiting the conference on Saturday, so I hope that you'll meet them too.

Conversation Pieces contains works that provoke, invite, or record conversations about social issues. Included are street posters that I designed almost forty years ago as part of a campaign that unveiled political corruption at the heart of Thatcher's Westminster through to the more recent scandal of Grenfell.

Liliana Romero's contribution is also steeped in a history and tradition of empowering graphics, which for her embraces black-feminist activism and the defence of endangered communities.

David Palacios takes the data sets that underpin our institutional conversations: crime stats by police area, the economic cost of violence by county, etc., and converts their categories and percentages into an equivalent colour palate from which he constructs images related to the data's topic.

Naiza Khan's work (Fig. 7) addresses geography as a heterogeneous assemblage of power, colonial history, and collective memory. In 2019, Khan represented Pakistan at the 58th Venice Biennale with the project *Manora Field Notes*.

In this exhibition, we are presenting work that Khan created at londonprintstudio, in which she recreated pages from a 1960s naval almanack discovered in Manoa. However, integrated into these reconstructions are fragments from political speeches eaten into the pages by Urdu- and English-literate bookworms (Fig. 8).

Naho Matsuda's *This City is...* harvests the Twittersphere to gather real-time global-urban conversations. When a viewer enters a city's name in

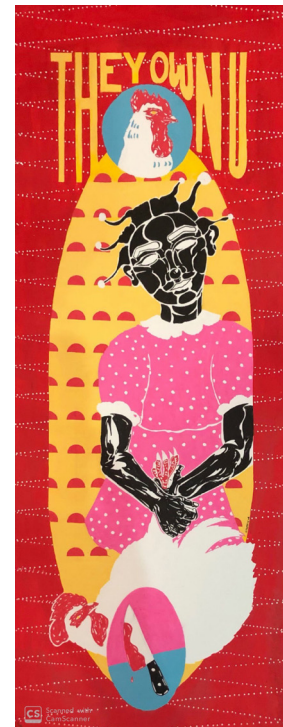


Figure 6



Figure 7

Figure 6: They Own U, Creator: Liliana A. Romero Segura

Figure 7: Vision and Position, Secrets from the Nautical Almanac 1966, Creator: Naiza Khan

a box at the lower right end of the screen, they are instantly confronted with contemporary comments being made about that location. The project is live on the internet. Naho has also created city-site-specific installations, such as projecting a continuous real-time commentary about Bristol onto the façade of the city's Central Library in 2020.

So why have we chosen to launch The Museum of Unrest at Impact 12? Firstly, because our history is intertwined with print and, secondly, because I'm sure that, while open to all visual art and design disciplines, The Museum of Unrest will continue to have close links to the printmaking community and vice versa.

The Museum of Unrest has neither roof nor walls, it aims to be an internet hub with outreach projects, documenting, linking, initiating, and promoting real-world actions.

It is inspired by abstract values: justice, creative democracy, and inclusivity. It is homeless, stateless, global and in need of friends, allies, collaborators, contributors, and supporters.

Almost half a century of creating organisations, building studios, and developing projects has taught me that you can't do these things alone. They grow, sometimes in unexpected directions, from multiple conversations and collaborations.

This presentation is an open invitation to join this process: to help us build and shape a new organisation that will support the engagement of art & design in social & environmental justice, and to explore how we can develop and sustain a network and resource dedicated to this goal.

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<https://www.paddingtonprintshop.org>

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Figure 8

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John Phillips (b.1951) is an artist, designer, printmaker and curator based in UK and France.

He studied fine art at Sheffield Polytechnic (now Sheffield Hallam University) and has a PhD in Fine Art from the University of Brighton.

His work is held in a number of public collections including Victoria & Albert Museum, the International Institute of Social History in Amsterdam, and Rhode Island School of Design Museum.

As a designer and curator, he retains a strong interest in socially engaged art practice. Active in arts debates, John is a regular platform speaker at print seminars and conferences in the UK and abroad.

John co-founded and worked at Paddington Printshop in 1975-89, then Director London Print Workshop/londonprintstudio1989-2021, and now Director Ips21 2021.

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IMAGE GALLERY

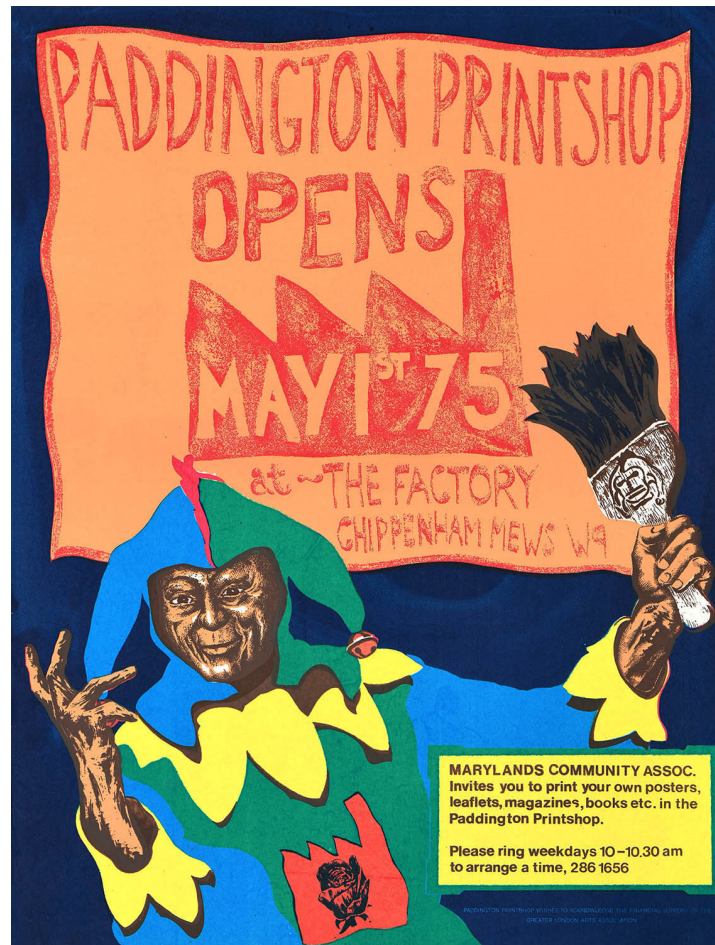


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MUSEUM OF UNREST



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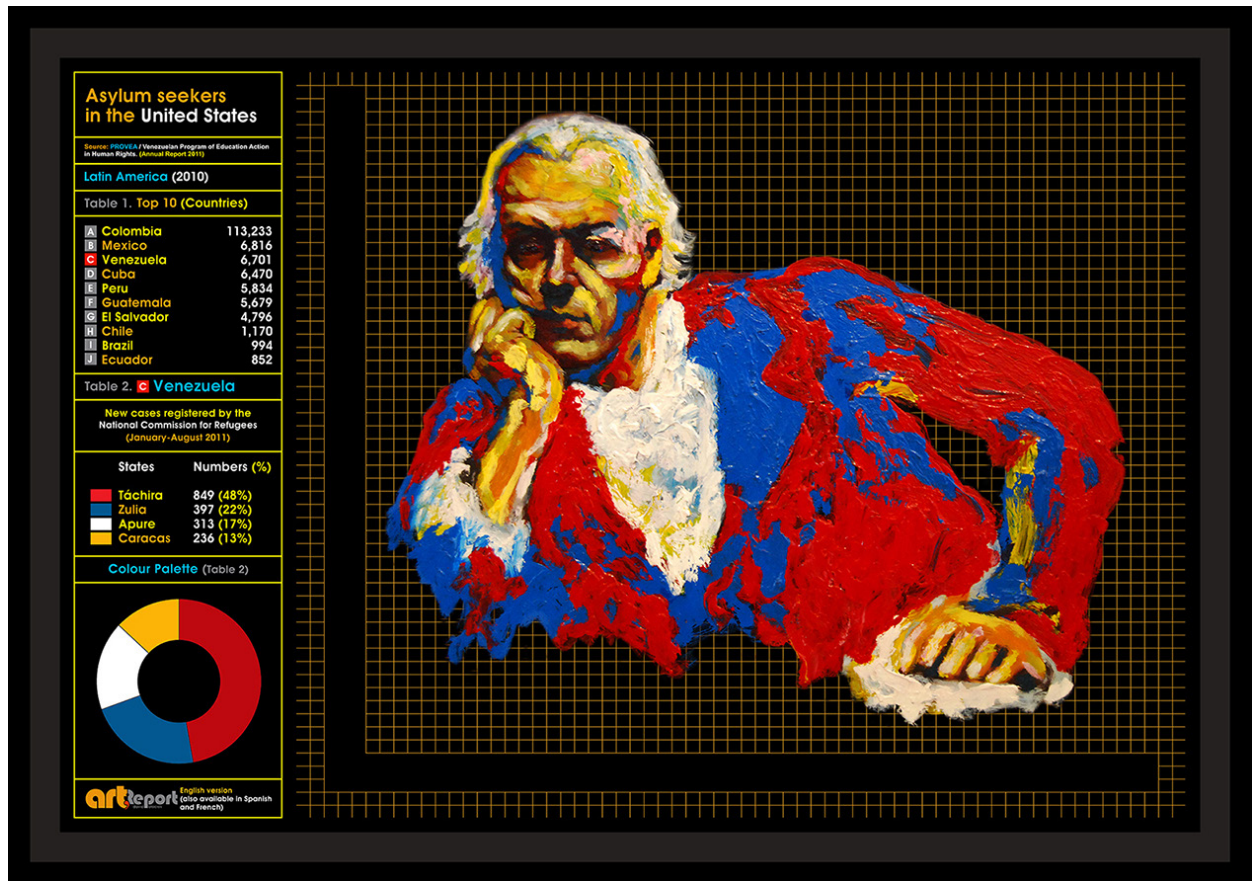


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Figure 8: This City Is projected onto Bristol Central Library, October 2020
Creator: Naho Matsuda