

The Politics of: Pushing Paper



Illustrated by [abi.collins_illustration](#)

Systems and Processes

Which holds more value: the process of drawing, or the drawing itself?

The tension between process and end-product is not exclusive to art but is especially relevant to drawing. Some argue that drawing is a means to an end; a way of developing ideas for another, more complete work of art. Others argue that putting the value in drawing as a process of other artforms belittles drawing as a stand-alone practice. This argument can also be related to the political sphere.

In the Presidential election of 2020 Donald Trump lost to Joe Biden, it's pretty rare that an elected president will not serve a second term... so rare it's only ever happened once before in American history. Donald Trump succeeded in the process of becoming president but failed at the end product: serving as an effective head of state. Politics is more than winning elections. Democracy is more than campaigning. Several politicians throughout history have been criticised for valuing the process of campaigning and the glory of winning over the end product: effecting change.

As an exhibition exclusively for drawings, Pushing Paper elevates each piece to artworks in their own right, redistributing the value of drawing towards the end product over the process.

What would be your campaign slogan if
you ran for office?



Identity

To show how humble everyday items play a large part in curating identity, Bela Kolarova used cosmetics to make her drawings. Cosmetics in and of themselves can be very political. There's a lot of legislation involved in how cosmetics are produced, deemed safe to distribute and how they are marketed. However, the idea of using cosmetics to curate the self is a key theme in Bela Kolarova's work. A group of people who rely heavily on cosmetics to curate identity is Drag Queens, often made up of the LGBTQ+ community.

The LGBTQ+ community has unfortunately had a long and painful battle with equal rights. One that is still going on in many places around the world. One example of this is Section 28.

In 1988 UK Prime Minister Margaret Thatcher introduced a legislation called Section 28. Section 28 made the promotion of homosexuality by local authorities and schools illegal. The law acted to erase an entire community. This is just one example of how a country's politics actively oppressed people because of who they were.

Drag is often seen as political as it entirely rejects societal norms. Drag bars created a safe space for LGBTQ+ communities to express themselves under such governmental oppression. A lot of Drag artists use their persona to critique the inequalities their government imposes upon them.

If you could make any law,
what would it be?



Time and Memory

Memory is tricky and varies from person to person. How often do you remember something the same way someone else does? The same issue applies with how we remember history. When someone sits down to write an account of a historical event, the chances are someone else remembers it differently. The problem is when only one group of people get to have their version of the story heard.

The politics of how we remember and respect history has recently been at the forefront of discussion. A common way to memorialise prominent historical figures is to create and display statues of them. A lot of statues in England represent people who were involved in colonisation.

People are calling for the government to legislate that any statues of people with a racist past be taken down as the statues don't represent a history that we should be proud of. The counter argument is often something along the lines of 'we can't change history'. The UK government responded to the discussion by enforcing laws which protect historical monuments and statues from being taken down without planning permissions.

Whose statue would you build and why?



Place and Space

Drawing is essential to maps. Maps can be very political. Henri Lefebvre argued that space is just a social construct which does not exist without human thought and that space needs to be protected from political manipulation. This idea translates into map making as well, particularly the drawing of the political map.

Similar to the United Kingdom voting system, United States has a system called the 'Electoral College'. The map of America is divided into sections. The people who live in these sections will vote for someone to represent them in congress. The President is decided by the political party who has the most elected representative. In the United States the drawing of this political often falls to the politicians themselves, which means it can be manipulated for political gain.

In 2011 Thomas Hoffeler was hired to redraw the political maps of America for the Republican party. He became notorious for redrawing political maps for political gain, otherwise known as 'gerrymandering'. In 2016 and 2017 a couple of the maps Hoffeler drew were thrown out by federal courts as they were 'unconstitutional'. These maps specifically were found to be racially gerrymandered, intentionally working to dilute the democratic voice of black people. On his second go at drawing the maps Hoffeler split a district in half which had previously always returned a Democratic candidate. In 2019 the supreme court declared they could not weigh in this time as no constitution was broken. The new maps were allowed to stay in place.

What would you write a letter to your
local MP about?



Power and Protest

Drawing plays a powerful role in protest. Often when people protest, they need simple imagery intended to instantly and visually translate an idea. An example of this is the Extinction Rebellion logo: an hourglass in a circle representing their message that time is running out for the planet.

The protests of extinction rebellion are very political and are based on the idea that the entire world needs to be dedicated to the cause in order to effect change and keep the planet habitable. This cannot happen without government intervention.

An example of the political nature of the climate change fight is Brazil. The Brazilian president Jair Bolsonaro recently made headlines as deforestation under his presidency has been at an all-time high. Bolsonaro has accelerated deforestation to make space for new fields to grow crops improving Brazil's economy. Bolsonaro has good intentions but the accelerated deforestation has accelerated climate change.

What is an issue you would protest about? What would the logo be?



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What does politics mean to you?

How could you get more involved, and why should you?