

edge

Protest

Spring 2026



Open College of the Arts

Welcome to Issue 17 – Protest.

This issue of the zine brings together a powerful collection of student work that examines protest not just as a public act, but as a psychological and domestic reality.

Our contributors investigate the theme of Protest in a diverse way, examining global and personal crises, including environmental destruction, gender-based violence, and the erosion of civil liberties. From the historical struggles of the Civil Rights Movement to contemporary outcries against social media misinformation, immigration policies, and the cost-of-living crisis, these works challenge the "invisible" structures of power.

You will encounter a vast array of media in this edition, demonstrating the tactile and experimental nature of Protest. Including traditional painting, printmaking, digital and mixed media, sculpture, textiles and photography.

Through these varied forms, our artists shift the focus from the "raised fist" to the act of witnessing; suggesting that the choice to look, remember, and refuse indifference is, in itself, a form of resistance.

To best experience the zine we've collated clusters of work together and they are followed by their accompanying text and statements from our contributors. Look at the work and read the information that follows a little further on in order 1 to 4.

Congratulations to everyone featured! Your comments and suggestions are very welcome, as well as your contributions for one of our next editions – stay tuned.

Thank you too to our student selector Razaz Ghani.

Your edge zine support team,
Joanne & Hollie
OCA

Contributors

Cathy Freeman – BA Hons Textiles

Christin Penz – BA Hons Creative Arts

David Bell Fine – Art Alumnus

Fran MacDonald – BA Hons Fine Art

Frances Marcellin – BA Hons Illustration

Holly James – Foundations Painting

Liz Manchester – BA Hons Creative Arts

Lucie Robson – Foundations Painting

Maya Mircheva – BA Hons Visual Communications

Michael Franklin – BA Hons Photography

Rain Caston – BA Hons Painting

Sara. Nick – BA Hons Fine Art

Simon Forster – BA Hons Graphic Design

Simon Pugh – BA Hons Photography

Stephanie Desmeules – Short Course Alumna

Tina Marshall – BA Hons Painting

Vicky White – BA Hons Fine Art

Viv King – BA Hons Fine Art

Rain Caston March of the Golems



Michael Franklin Palestine Action – September 25



Sara Nick
Anatomy of a Protest



Pages 1 - 4

1- This painting portrays modern society mindlessly scrolling on, guided by information we are given, told what to know by people who do not know. Putting a veil over our eyes. A few see what is going on and write their own story. My painting is a protest against Social Media misinformation.

2- This was my first attempt to document a protest organised by the group Defend our Juries against the proscription of the direct action group Palestine Action. In July 2025 the then Home Secretary, Yvette Cooper, proscribed Palestine Action with the result that anyone showing support for them could be jailed. On the 6th September around 1,00 - 1,200 peaceful protestors sat in Parliament Square, and at 13.00 hours wrote signs which stated ' I oppose genocide. I support Palestine Action'. Five minutes later the police started arresting protestors, or terrorist supporters, and over the course of the next few hours over 500 people were arrested. My work seeks to expose the reduction in the right to peacefully protest in our supposed free society, after successive governments imposed more and more restrictions on the ability of citizens to express views that challenge the government actions.

3- This work responds to the theme of protest by shifting attention from the raised fist to the act of witnessing. The eye dominates the composition, not as a passive organ of sight, but as a site of memory and accumulation. Within the iris, multiple faces are compressed together, suggesting collective presence, erased individuality, and the psychological density of living among constant unrest. At the center, a single red face interrupts the repetition, embodying both the individual voice and the marked body, the one who is seen, targeted, or remembered. The tear of blood is not symbolic of melodrama but of consequence. Protest is rarely abstract; it leaves residue. It marks the body. It stains perception. In this image, seeing becomes inseparable from suffering. To witness injustice repeatedly is to internalize it. The eye does not merely observe protest, it carries it. The surrounding greys create a suffocating atmosphere, reinforcing the tension between visibility and silence. The crowd within the eye suggests that protest is not only an external act in public space, but also an internal condition. It lives inside those who cannot look away. Rather than depicting a literal demonstration, this work addresses protest as psychological endurance: the burden of seeing, remembering, and refusing indifference. The image asks whether witnessing itself can be a form of resistance, and whether the cost of protest is ultimately paid not only in the streets, but in the body and mind of the observer.

4- This digital collage was created as a part of the final assignment for the level 2 unit Understanding Visual Communications. I chose the theme of of the Civil Rights Movement in the USA and the struggles of the black minority for equality. My research on the topic was inspired by the movies The Black Power Mixtape 1967-1975 by Göran Olsson and Black Panthers by Agnes Varda. The Black Power Movement (1965-1975) was a counterculture of the Civil Rights Movement and its more radicalised branch. It pursued its goals with all means, including more violent ones. Black Power philosophy was supported also by other ideologies at the time such as socialism and communism. After the 1970s it experienced a decline but never disappeared completely. Some claim that the modern movement Black Lives Matter is its direct successor. The collage uses images from the Library of Congress and The US National Archives.

Cathy Freeman

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David Bell

Great British Cover-Ups – 60 Years of Selective Memory



BELFAST



CARLISLE



NORWICH



SHEFFIELD (11:00)



BRIGHTON



CEREDIGION



WINDSOR



WELLINGTON



INVERNESS

Stephanie Desmeules

What is exposed



[Click here to view the
What is exposed video](#)



Pages 5-8

5- This piece was borne of my frustrations at the growing horrors happening globally. My frustration is mainly with the people going about their lives as if nothing is happening. So much of what is happening makes me incredibly angry, and I was wondering exactly what it would take before other people get angry. Where is your line exactly?

6- My piece is a direct response to listening to Jess Phillips MP, who every year reads out the names of women killed or suspected of being killed by a man. Jess does this every year in Parliament as a reminder that violence against women must be tackled and must end. On March 12th she read out 107 women's names that have sadly died over the last year. These names are forever linked by this chilling statistic. I have stitched together 107 pieces of fabric (each fabric different) and then woven them together. This is a rough version of my idea and so far I have tried out two colours for the warp thread. Both colours giving a different effect. I have hand stitched the number 107 over the weaving. Its not overly visible which is probably the point.

7- Great British Cover-Ups is a participatory artwork that uses the UK postal system as a form of quiet protest. It focuses on what is missing from official histories—events that are overlooked, downplayed, or not widely acknowledged. The image shows nine people across the UK posting envelopes on the same day, Remembrance Sunday (9 November 2025). This date is widely associated with national remembrance, and here it is used to question what we choose to remember—and what we leave out. Each envelope represents a different “witness,” creating a network of individual actions that together form a larger artwork. The project was inspired by an interest in how national identity is shaped through symbols like stamps and official messaging. By using these familiar formats in a different way, the work challenges their usual meaning. A key challenge was identifying a set of five commemorative stamps that could meaningfully represent cover-ups, despite these events rarely being acknowledged in official imagery. This required careful selection and interpretation of existing material. Coordinating participants across different locations was addressed through clear instructions, standardised envelopes, and a fixed posting date. Rather than showing everything directly, the work holds information back. This creates space for reflection and asks viewers to think about how history is recorded—and who decides what is included.

8- I signed up for the Psychogeography course on a whim, having never heard of this obscure concept. Against all odds, I immersed myself completely in it, drinking in every dispensing information, enjoying every interaction with my peers. My subject of study are the clear-cut forests on the snowy plateaus of the high mountains of Chics Choc, in Quebec, Canada, accessible only by snowmobile and ski touring. My creative process began with a 'drift' – a fancy word for a random exploration immersed in observations – during which a massive collection of photos and videos were taken as well as a compulsive collection of abandoned objects, then some research into archives and scientific data and interesting toponymies discoveries. Through an exploratory aesthetic, I wanted to impose on my works of art all the violence that we inflict on our forests, all the while mapping my moods and sketching atmospheres that are not always comfortable. This highlights the experience of observed behaviors and spheres of influence, in parallel with the fragility and importance of social and natural ecosystems. My intention in this project is beyond the aestheticisation of archives and I truly wish to deliver a form of environmental awareness based on the affect of the place, through different media and forms while taking historical cultural sensitivities into account.

Simon Pugh I'm Every Woman



Instagram - @simonpughphoto

Viv King Above and Below



Instagram - @viv_king_art

Lucie Robson
The Birdcage Jump



<https://outsidein.org.uk/galleries/lucie-robson/>

Christin Penz
Pippi is dead!

PIPPI IS DEAD!



Pippi Longstocking, a symbol of independence and self-determination, lies here in the red of violence. In Germany, every third day a woman is killed by her partner or ex-partner. Worldwide, every hour more than five women or girls are killed by those they should be able to trust. This figure stands as a quiet reminder that strength alone does not guarantee protection.

Pages 9-12

9- This photo was taken in Brussels during the recent protests by European farmers. Faced with a large group of angry young men, the calm air of defiance by this female police officer and her bike really struck me.

10- My practice explores our complex relationship with water, shaped by lived experiences of rivers and flooding. The work negotiates the human intervention and ecological process, demonstrating the material sensitivity, as well as being open to change by recording residues, as well as the boundaries formed by the overspilling water. By combining found objects with the open water, I want to further explore the intersection between human waste and natural lifelines. Using the open water as a living entity, rather than just a resource, as it carries the chemical and physical history of the land as it flows through.

11- In 2013 i jumped out of a first floor window in a one woman protest about surveillance and was sectioned.

12- This work was developed as part of the course Assembling Sculpture and engages with the themes of domestic violence and femicide. Through research, I became increasingly aware that violence against women is not limited to specific social groups, but is a structural issue rooted in patriarchal systems. The more I read, the clearer it became that all women are potentially affected. Strength, independence, or self-confidence do not provide protection. The figure of Pippi Longstocking functions here as a symbol of independence and self-determination. She represents an image of strength that many associate with resistance and freedom. However, within this work, she is placed in a context of violence, lying in a red-stained environment that evokes injury and loss. This contrast highlights the central idea of the work: even those who appear strong and autonomous remain vulnerable to gender-based violence. The use of a tea towel as material reinforces the domestic context in which many acts of violence occur. The everyday, familiar object becomes a carrier of a disturbing narrative, pointing to the fact that femicides often take place within the home. I imagine the work presented on a table, accompanied by a recorded voice recounting a fictional femicide of Pippi, further intensifying the tension between fiction and reality. Statistical references underline the urgency of the topic: in Germany, a woman is killed by her partner or ex-partner every third day; worldwide, more than five women or girls are killed every hour by someone they know. The work seeks to raise awareness of this reality and to encourage reflection on the visibility and normalization of such violence.

**Simon Forster
Anti-Trump**

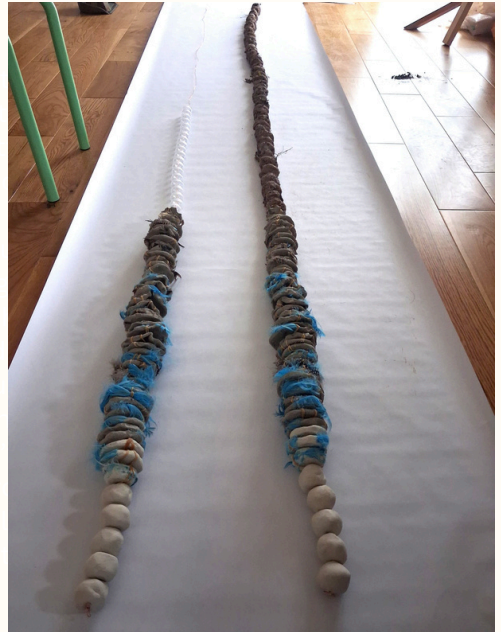
M  G A

Make America Great Again

Fran MacDonald

The fallacy of ignoring the power of the 50 plus woman

I had to smile. This was a new rule, especially created for those who sent out standard printed family newsletters with their Christmas cards. Mother was personal and the perpetrators of such things scribbled out with much



There was silence and I felt my blood run cold. Eventually, I became aware that the doctor was speaking again. He was rolling out bland meaningless sentences, that it was impossible to say, that it was different for everyone, that the main thing was to take each day as it comes. Mother stopped him again, with a hand on his shoulder.

[Click here to view](#)

[The fallacy of ignoring the power of the 50 plus woman video](#)

Frances Marcellin

ICE ICE BABY



Five-year old Liam Ramos was taken by ICE on Tuesday 20 January, one of four children detained in Minnesota that week.

3,800 minors, including babies and toddlers, were booked into detention by ICE between January and October 2025.

Source: Deportation Data Project



Vicky White
At the pump



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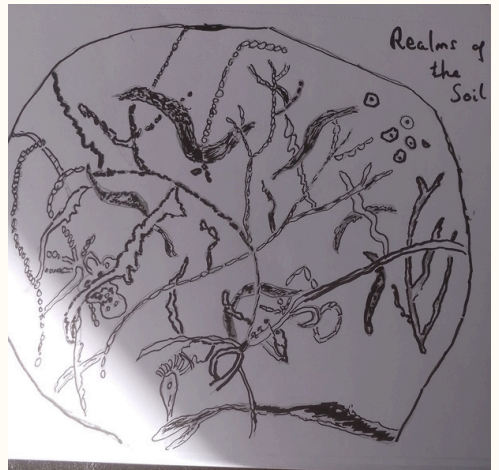
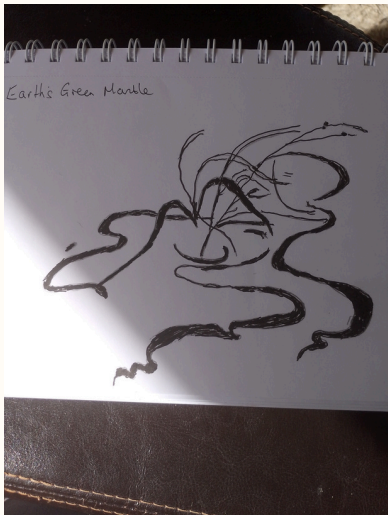
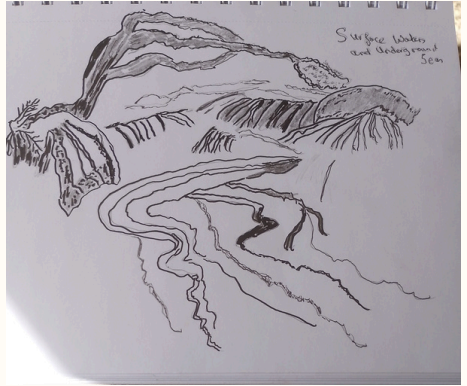
13- This submission is a protest against the rise of Trump by means of satire, and was a piece of student work for one of my modules. The MAGA logo is a play on words, using the visual of Trump as the letter A, and highlighting the word 'ME' in America, showing how Trump's way of working is all about himself rather than those he is meant to govern.

14- This work is a protest about the fallacy of ignoring the power of the 50 plus woman. The work is in two sections, one which represents historical time where at 50, a woman's role was done and she became invisible and ignored by society and the second which shows the growing power of the 50 plus woman; that she has many years to be useful to society, express herself and her wisdom. It explores the physiological themes of a journey, time, transformation, the self, as well as Carl Jung's animus – the release of the male side of the female (her power) to create a more whole self. Each work has a series of clay spheres which represent a year of a woman's life. The first 5 spheres are the same for each. These represent the early years of life where you are whole, unconstrained and yet to acquire layers of experience. From 5 to 50, a woman's life is reflected in the attachments, marks and constraints that define these years. The first work finishes at 50 and her remaining 20 years are represented by plastic balls (she is invisible and empty). The second work continues after 50 to 100, with the spheres being larger, unconstrained and texturally interesting. The work is an expression of two different versions of a journey through time for a woman; the one we had/have and the one we are capable of.

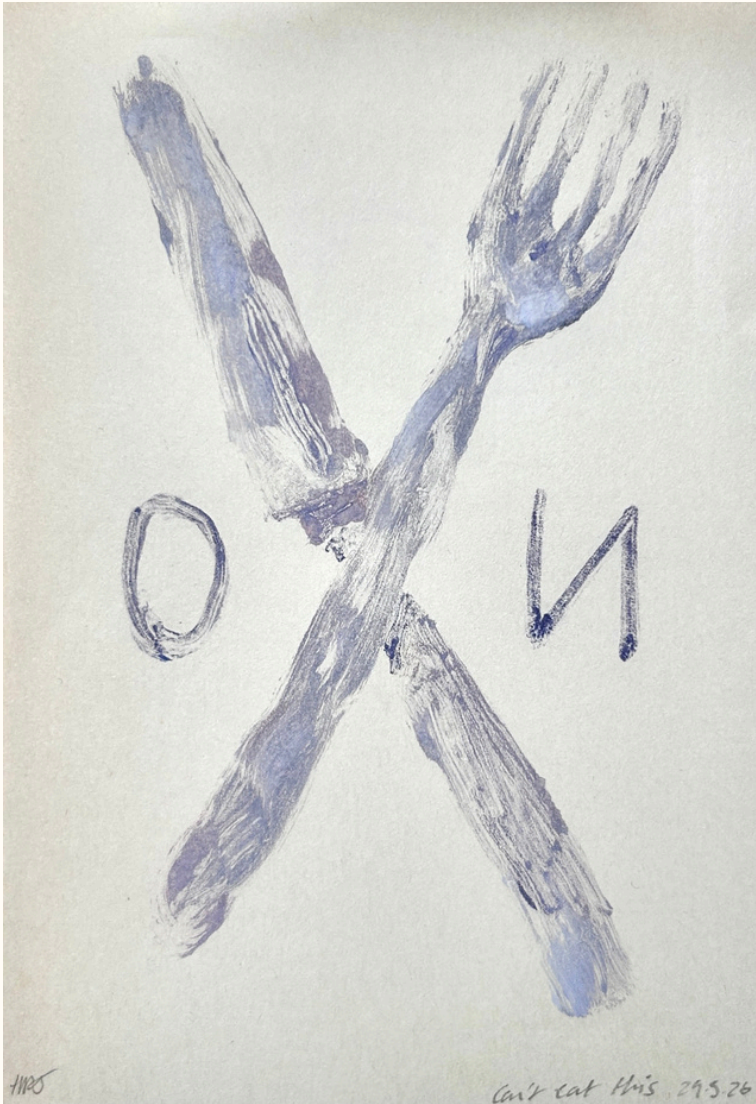
15- The theme of your zine is Protest and ICE ICE BABY illustrates the case of five-year-old Liam Ramos who was taken by ICE on Tuesday 20 January 2026 and thrown into detention. Outraged day after day with what is happening in the US and Gaza particularly, I discovered that he was one of four children detained in Minnesota that week. As a mother of four children I can't imagine the pain that all these families are going through. Liam's cute blue bunny hat and the adult hand (slightly mechanical/claw like although still human hand) grabbing him shown all over social media was immediately something I wanted to draw – a scream, a protest, a roar on the page. We saw after this incident how this little boy and his hat became symbolic of the terrible plight many children are being subjected to in the US. I then did a little research and decided to add a caption explaining that 3,800 minors, including babies and toddlers, were booked into detention by ICE between January and October 2025. If it was that then, imagine what it is now. I hand-drew the image in Procreate using certain brushes and textured layers to give it an analogue look and feel. The epidemic we face of children being abused, maimed and slaughtered with impunity by those in power is sickening and unbearable.

16- I used water soluble oils for this 40 x40cm painting on canvas. They don't behave like regular oil paints as they somehow lack lustre so the painting process was a learning curve. The world continues to be in turmoil, so it seems, without respite. The latest surge in fuel prices affects everything. Already deep amidst a spiralling cost of living crisis, this commodity is well on its way to being reserved only for essential travel to work. I am questioning then for the Zine's theme on protest, why the majority of our society pays for the decisions made by the few.

Tina Marshall Rachel Carson Revived



Holly James Can't Eat This



Instagram - @hollyj_artist

Pages 17-18

17- It links an environmental activist with modern day problems with soil, subterranean matters, water shortages and energy shortages. We follow Rachel Carson of the Silent Spring. We look at parts of the book "Creative People must be stopped". The four images are redrawn from the book - "Elixir of death", "Surface waters and underground seas", "Realms of the soil" and "Earth's green mantle". Drawn in pencil, and then black pigment liners.

18- This monoprint made with oil paints on paper symbolises the many misunderstandings that those with ARFID (Avoidant Restrictive Food Intake Disorder) face in their relationship with food. It silhouettes the recognisable forms of the knife and fork, tools we use everyday to eat and set our dinner table, but crossed in reference to the resistance I sometimes feel, in protest of being forced to eat 'unsafe' foods. Mealtimes are a cornerstone of culture, important for our health, wellbeing and socialising, but for those with ARFID these daily gatherings can be experiences of great distress and horror. So much of my life has been spent trying to explain what I can and can't eat, which has many times been rejected by those around me. This print is a protest to those moments, the bad memories, and to future encounters marked by ARFID.

Our next theme will be 'collaboration'.
Submissions opening soon via the OCASA
webpage.



Ocasa.org.uk



@ocastudentassociation