

EXHIBITION TEXTS

Propaganda – Flooding the Zone with Shit – It's About Money, Stupid!

14. November 2026 – 7. März 2027

With the artists: Joshua Citarella (US), Ben Grosser (US), Ganslmeier & Zibelnik (DE/NL/SI), Playfool (Daniel Coppen, UK, and Saki Maruyama, JP) and Oguz Sen (DE).
In collaboration with the Institute for Democracy and Civil Society (IDZ Jena) and the "Aesthetics of Democracy" Research Training Group at the Goethe University Frankfurt and TU Darmstadt.

Propaganda in the "post-truth" era is loud, fast and emotional. On the streets and online, a battle for hearts and minds is raging. A debate centred on competing world views, over who belongs and who is excluded and, ultimately, over who holds power over whom. And this battle has already travelled from internet forums to the ballot box.
Flooding the zone with shit is the strategy of authoritarian populism. Public discourse is flooded with claims, provocations, contradictory narratives and biting memes. Such content spreads particularly easily on digital platforms: whatever attracts attention gets clicked and shared.

How and where do we encounter propaganda today? What strategies, aesthetics and technologies are used to shape people's beliefs and opinions? Who determines which narratives prevail? Who benefits, politically and financially? Every rumour and every piece of news produces winners and losers: It's about money, stupid!

As so often in our work, we approach the critical questions of our time through the lens of art and science. We are therefore delighted to collaborate with the Institute for Democracy and Civil Society (IDZ Jena) and the "Aesthetics of Democracy" Research Training Group at the Goethe University Frankfurt and TU Darmstadt, who will contribute research and exhibits on propaganda and online radicalisation. We invited seven internationally recognised artists who have spent years researching propaganda and online subcultures. They navigate the sprawling, emotionally charged communities of the internet and have ventured deep into the rabbit holes of its chaotic worlds of images and ideologies.

While today's fragmented public spheres are leading people into separate bubbles, culture venues and exhibitions offer shared physical spaces and experiences. Here, people can come together and discuss images collectively. This exhibition does not respond to propaganda with counter-propaganda. Instead, it aims to serve as a tool for understanding, exploring how images and media generate power, how attention is directed, how emotions become politically effective and which economic interests shape the infrastructures of our public sphere.

Propaganda – a Chronology

Chronology of selected turning points in propaganda from antiquity to the present day, 2026
Wall graphic
18 x 4 m

For the exhibition, the team of the Frankfurter Kunstverein has developed an 18-metre-long chronological presentation. It provides context and background information, tracing key historical stages in the history of propaganda. Through a timeline spanning antiquity to the present day, the team uses images and short descriptions to explore significant moments in the history of Western propaganda. The chronology presents a selection of key figures, historical events, innovative media and technologies and publications that have shaped political communication over the centuries. It also highlights individuals who have stood up to those in power and spoken the truth in difficult times. These include whistleblowers and those who have engaged in the act of speaking truth to power.

The compilation of this chronology was made possible by the advice and expertise of Martin Renz, Luna Vega and Robert Thyssen from the Research Training Group "Aesthetics of Democracy" at the Goethe University Frankfurt am Main and TU Darmstadt. Their contribution was essential in developing this highly condensed visual representation of key stages in the history of propaganda for the exhibition. Without the graphic design expertise of Damir Jellici and Veronica Simionato, who were responsible for the visualisation and production, this monumental wall installation would not have been possible.

The Research Training Group "Aesthetics of Democracy" at the Goethe University Frankfurt am Main and TU Darmstadt is an interdisciplinary research network that examines democracy not only as a form of government defined by institutions, elections and procedures, but also as a form of social coexistence. Its research therefore explores, across various disciplines, how democracy is perceived, experienced and practised in everyday life.

Concept and content: Franziska Nori, Philippe Flück, Pia Seifüßl, Kevin Berz-Kozubek

Layout and design: Damir Jellici, Veronica Simionato
Conceptual consultancy: Martin Renz, Luna Vega, Robert Thyssen, "Aesthetics of Democracy" Research Training Group, Goethe University Frankfurt am Main and TU Darmstadt

Oguz Sen

Immer ist Jetzt ist Hier, 2026
Spacial installations

Immer ist Jetzt ist Hier, I, 2026
Wood, posters, plaster and airbrush
270 x 270 x 250 cm

Immer ist Jetzt ist Hier, II, 2026
Wood, plaster and posters
⌀ 120 x H 300 cm

Immer ist Jetzt ist Hier, III, 2026
Political banners and projection
Various sizes

Immer ist Jetzt ist Hier, IV, 2026
Marker on foil
Various sizes

Courtesy Oguz Sen

Oguz Sen is a painter, choreographer and activist. For this exhibition, he engages with the architecture of the Frankfurter Kunstverein across several levels. *Immer ist Jetzt ist Hier* is a series of four works created specifically for the exhibition: an accessible cube with a volume of 18 m^3, a 3-metre-high cylindrical sculpture, graffiti on the building's stairs and an installation of political banners.

The artist explores how the aesthetics and symbols of right-wing propaganda created for public spaces have changed over time. At the centre is the cube installation *Immer ist Jetzt ist Hier, I*. Sen builds a room within a room and pastes layer upon layer of political posters onto its outer walls, combining them into new visual constellations through controlled tearing. His material is drawn from the archives of German history, spanning the 1920s, the Nazi dictatorship and the present day.

The cube has an opening close to the floor, where visitors must stoop to enter. The space bears the hallmarks of architectures of violence in which totalitarian systems, past and present, isolate, torture and systematically destroy people. It is cell-like, empty, cramped, dark and oppressive. The atmosphere inside the cube creates a stark contrast with the visual clamour of its outer walls, yet both reveal different faces of the same reality.

For *Immer ist Jetzt ist Hier* at the Frankfurter Kunstverein, Oguz Sen employs the techniques of décollage, contemporary freehand spraying (airbrushing) and tagging. Décollage involves deliberately tearing away upper layers to expose older posters, fragments of text, colours or images beneath, allowing new visual compositions and aesthetics to emerge. This art form originated in the French avant-garde movements of the 1950s – with artists who had survived the Second World War and the effects of totalitarian regimes: the construction of enemy images, the slogans and the military annihilation of human beings by other human beings.

This confronted art with new challenges or, as Adorno wrote in 1949: “To write poetry after Auschwitz is barbaric.” Art sought words and images that still seemed possible after the existential shock of mass extermination. The French Affichistes established this art form through their use of posters found on city façades, laying the foundations for the conceptual art and street art of our time. Oguz Sen’s work at the Frankfurter Kunstverein draws on this tradition.

Sen sees himself as a painter and advocates an anti-elitist approach to art. His best-known paintings were created on the streets of his city. They serve as monumental political statements: the portrait of Alan Kurdi, the young refugee who drowned, painted in Frankfurt’s Osthafen district, and the 27-metre-long memorial mural beneath the Friedensbrücke commemorating the victims of the racist attack in Hanau in 2020.
For *Immer ist Jetzt ist Hier, IV,* Oguz Sen uses black markers to tag the words of thinkers from different eras onto the stair risers at the Frankfurter Kunstverein. Niccolò Machiavelli, Gustave Le Bon, Antonio Gramsci and Hannah Arendt all sought to understand the relationship between power, the masses and emotion. At the foot of the stairs, the artist places a three-metre-high sculpture resembling an advertising column. Sen has likewise covered it with political posters and used controlled tearing to create a décollage.

Oguz Sen’s art seeks to address people directly, involve them and bring them into relation with one another. He does this through his choice of materials, surfaces and locations, often in urban spaces. For *Immer ist Jetzt ist Hier, III*, the artist uses the very media through which he engages in political action, creating a densely layered space of banners made for political actions. These were made available to him by humanitarian and anti-fascist movements, initiatives and associations.

In spring 2026, Oguz Sen and Honji Wang created *La La Land – Aufhören anzufangen* for the Frankfurter Kunstverein as part of the exhibition *Hidden History*, curated by Heiner Blum. Children and young people who would not usually visit art spaces drew freely and playfully on the walls. What one group began was taken up, changed, expanded or overwritten by the next. Against the backdrop of an increasingly atomised society, art became a social project.
Oguz Sen’s practice continually opens up a broader possibility for art: to go beyond depicting or analysing public life and create spaces where people can act together, produce images and negotiate social reality collectively. His art both allows people to discover something new and brings them together.

Robin Jaspert

Geschäftsmodelle der Big-Tech Konzerne, 2026
Vinyl print on plexiglass 150 x 84 cm
Courtesy Norris & Espinosa

Anteil von Profit und Arbeit am US-Nationaleinkommen, 2026
print on plexiglass
150 x 84 cm
Courtesy Bureau of Economic Analysis

Gesamt-Werbeausgaben USA, 2026

Vinyl print on plexiglass 150 x 84 cm
Courtesy Robert J. Coen & Statista

We invited political economist Robin Jaspert to explore the key relationships between Big Tech corporations, their profits, labour and fiscal policy for the exhibition. He has contributed three economic charts, which can be read in spatial dialogue with Ben Grosser's artworks. Robin Jaspert examines the relationship between the growing power of global technology corporations, the advertising industry and political influence. His central thesis is that advertising and propaganda are not peripheral phenomena, but essential components of an economic system increasingly controlled by a small number of dominant corporations. Companies such as Meta and Alphabet generate most of their revenue through personalised advertising. This business model relies on the systematic collection and analysis of personal data. Digital platforms make it possible to target people with commercial and political messages with ever greater precision and to influence their behaviour. At the same time, the distribution of socially generated wealth is shifting: while corporate profits rise, the relative share of income going to wages declines. And the market power of large corporations is further strengthened by tax avoidance and their ability to exert political influence.

Jaspert argues that the increasing commercialisation of our communication has far-reaching consequences for democracy. Political opinion formation increasingly takes place on privately owned platforms whose business models are based on profit maximisation, and the rise of artificial intelligence threatens to intensify this development further.

He therefore advocates stronger regulation and taxation of large corporations, restrictions on commercial and political advertising and the democratic organisation of the public sphere beyond profit-driven platforms. Furthermore, he regards trade unions, associations and political organisations as central spaces for social change.

Ben Grosser

Redaction Poetry of Andreessen's Techno-Optimist Manifesto, 2023
Wall graphic
ca. 35 x 3.25 m

Lux Affirma, 2026
Interactive AI chatbot

Paying Attention (Mm-hmm), 2026
Single-channel audio installation

Courtesy Ben Grosser

Ben Grosser is an artist, programmer, researcher and former professor of new media at the University of Illinois Urbana-Champaign. Art is Grosser's tool for uncovering invisible structures of power. He examines code, interfaces and algorithms of affirmation to expose their deceptive principles. And software deconstruction is his artistic method.
At the Frankfurter Kunstverein, Ben Grosser's *Redaction Poetry of Andreessen's Techno-Optimist Manifesto* dominates every wall of the large gallery on the first floor to the left: pages

of text enlarged to a monumental scale with their lines largely blacked out. The text is the manifesto of Marc Andreessen, the US software developer and billionaire investor. Largely unknown to the wider public, he shapes opinion and the accelerationist ideology of Silicon Valley as co-founder of the venture capital firm Andreessen Horowitz (a16z). His ideas and his money are shaping the conditions under which future technologies emerge.
Grosser isolates recurring words from the text to expose the radically anti-humanist obsessions of the tech ideologue. “Grow or die”, “no limits”, “we believe in aggression” and “we believe rich”. Andreessen’s rhetoric, indeed his entire manifesto, seeks openly and unabashedly to normalise an extreme world view. His argument is always economic, never humanist. What matters, he maintains, is not how unequally the wealth generated by innovation is distributed, but that technology creates greater prosperity.

Redaction Poetry of Andreessen’s Techno-Optimist Manifesto is part of Grosser’s trilogy of redaction poems. He has also worked with Mark Zuckerberg’s AI manifesto *The Future is for Everyone: The Path to a Positive AI Future* (2026) and Sam Altman’s manifesto *The Intelligence Age* (2024).

In Frankfurt, Ben Grosser also presents his latest work, *Lux Affirma,* which is still in development. Visitors interact with an AI companion using a keyboard. The artist deliberately downplays the questions and answers while amplifying, to the point of absurdity, the praise and prompting that surround a typical ChatGPT interaction. He applies his characteristic method of interface simplification: reducing the interface to its basic operations so that its underlying mechanisms become visible.

Chatbots are designed by their creators to simulate closeness. They invariably agree with the user’s views and reinforce them with supporting information. Their affirming conversational style strengthens the impression that developers have deliberately given a digital tool a human guise: that of a conversational partner who responds to us with a sense of shared understanding. This excess of human-like qualities lowers scepticism and blunts the tools of criticism. We perceive a benevolent, gentle presence that agrees with us.

Users increasingly treat systems such as ChatGPT, Gemini, Grok and DeepSeek as digital companions through life, personal confidants and digital guardian angels. Mundane questions become personal ones, revealing intimate details about users. And these systems become far more than co-creators – they become therapists, friends and lovers.
Chatbots are widely used by teenagers and children. Years ago, Andreessen predicted what is now, disturbingly, becoming reality: every child will have an AI tutor available around the clock.

The power of Grosser’s work lies in his astute editorial interventions. His method is to foreground what already exists and alter it so that essential elements intended to operate in the background become apparent. Through his artistic interventions, we recognise that developers seek more than our attention: they seek familiarity and an intimate bond. The “attention economy” becomes the “intimacy economy”.

The Latin title *Lux Affirma* suggests a sacred and ritual quality. Lux means light, while affirma is the imperative form of a verb meaning to strengthen or confirm, also echoed in the English word “affirmation”. AI chatbots generate emotional attachment through language. This recalls the biblical passage from the Gospel of John: “In the beginning was the Word, and the Word

was with God, and the Word was God." In Ancient Greek, logos denotes "word", "meaning", "thought" and "reality". Language and words are tools through which we grasp the real world, structure it and share it with others. Language does more than passively represent the world: it shapes how we perceive it. And if words bring reality into being, who holds the power to speak, disseminate and multiply them?

With Paying Attention (Mm-hmm), Grosser also applies his method to the voice features of chatbots. From a live voice conversation between himself and ChatGPT, he extracts only the chatbot's voice, though not its actual contributions to the conversation. Instead, Grosser collects the human-sounding "mm-hmms", "ahs", "yeses", "ohhhs", "rights" and other sounds that ChatGPT quietly utters while he speaks to it. These are known as discourse markers, which companies incorporate into their products to simulate active listening and encourage users to keep talking, keep going and reveal more about themselves. The voice features of AI chats likewise seek to change how people perceive the interaction between humans and machines. They are designed to increase trust, closeness and perceived authority. This, in turn, makes people more willing to entrust AI systems with their personal problems.

As ever, the ancient question "cui prodest?" offers a useful starting point. Who benefits? Who stands to gain from the radical social changes brought about by AI? Who benefits from the ubiquity of these technologies? With the help of developers, tech bros have translated behavioural psychology, cognitive psychology and human–computer interaction into product design. They have understood that specially trained patterns of AI behaviour can also shape human behaviour – a practice known as "behavioural design". These manipulative functions are part of a business model. In alliance with political power, ubiquitous technologies become what Asma Mhalla calls the two-headed Leviathan. The longer we engage with them, the more transparent we become: interests, needs and innermost desires become data on billions of people. These data make people measurable, transparent and susceptible to control. It's about money, stupid!

Ganslmeier & Zibelnik

Bereitschaft, 2024
4-channel video installation
12:12 min
Motion design: Studio RNDR
Sound: Daniel Hermann-Collini
Produced by paradox

Repeat After Me, 2026
6-channel video installation
15:36 min
Motion design: Studio RNDR
Sound: Daniel Hermann-Collini
Produced by paradox

If a Flower Bloomed in a Dark Room, Would You Trust It?, 2025
Framed photo series
90 x 120 cm, 160 x 120 cm

If a Flower Bloomed in a Dark Room, Would You Trust It? (of *Bereitschaft* and *Repeat After Me*), 2024–2026
Wall graphic
900 x 250 cm
Graphic design research map: Studio Sallali

Courtesy Ganslmeier & Zibelnik

Ganslmeier & Zibelnik are an artist duo based in The Hague. Their work explores the increasing infiltration of radical ideologies into popular and seemingly apolitical social media trends. Years of researching online trends have given them a deep understanding of the mechanisms that draw young people who embrace these hypes into processes of radicalisation. They map the latest developments, identifying parallels and mechanisms through comparative viewing. The artists work with archives, study historical propaganda films and closely follow YouTube, Instagram and TikTok channels. And they consistently use found material, removing it from its original context, editing and rearranging it, and translating it into physical space.

In 2024, they embarked on an unsettling visual investigation of hundreds of TikTok channels, observing how people drift from self-improvement trends towards online spirituality and extreme hyper-individualism. This gradual process is vividly portrayed in their latest audiovisual work, *Repeat After Me*, which is being presented to the public for the first time in this exhibition.

Across TikTok, countless content creators offer simple answers to difficult times, providing step-by-step guides to wealth, self-improvement and spiritual awakening, while consistently promising users greater personal autonomy. The proposition is tempting – a better, wealthier and more harmonious version of oneself. All it takes is to act correctly, think correctly, demonstrate the right attitude and finally reject mainstream thinking.

Ganslmeier & Zibelnik sift through and collect material, drawing out patterns. They apply Aby Warburg's method of comparative viewing to digital worlds, creating collages and new combinations. And their precise editing brings industrial mass production, endless convoys of cars, video statements in standardised formats, military training exercises and esoteric self-presentations into a shared visual space.

The power of their work lies in the combination of this material, which they bring together into an immersive, unsettling and powerful audiovisual work. The monumental piece is orchestrated like a musical score: rapid visual collages flow in tightly timed sequences between pattern and accumulation, accompanied by a powerful choreography of sound.
As Siegfried Kracauer observed in his essay *The Mass Ornament* (1927), modern mass cultures produce their own aesthetic forms. Within them, the individual becomes an interchangeable part of a larger system. While Kracauer examined individuals whose choreographed movements formed an overall image, in the contemporary mass ornament, people are arranged alongside one another by algorithms. Content creators draw on the same

aesthetics – from the standardised appearance of their bodies to the design formats and templates they use – remixed samples and AI-generated vocal inserts. Everything follows the trend, becoming uniform within the mass.

Bereitschaft (Readiness) is the title of another work by Ganslmeier & Zibelnik. The title refers to the 1939 sculpture of the same name by German sculptor Arno Breker, which symbolised the German people's readiness for combat. The two artists take this sculpture as the starting point for their aesthetic exploration of the contemporary desire among young men to restore a masculinity they perceive to be under threat. Like a monolith, Ganslmeier & Zibelnik's video installation stands before visitors, tilting at a menacing angle.

Ganslmeier & Zibelnik have thoroughly investigated the worlds of the manosphere, particularly its staging and glorification of the muscular, young male body. A political message of the New Right appears seemingly apolitical: "become strong", "take control", "be a real man". These slogans are accompanied by promises to restore strength, physical discipline, financial independence, sexual dominance and control over supposedly lost male autonomy. It is not necessarily women, but rather feminism, that is portrayed as the cause of social decline: it is accused of turning men and women against one another, destabilising families and depriving men of their central role in society. "Restoring natural order" is the slogan of the New Right, calling for the reinstatement of a supposedly "natural" gender order.
The duo have translated their years of research into a seemingly forensic visual mapping of online subcultures. These elaborate graphic works are entitled If a Flower Bloomed in a Dark Room, Would You Trust It? In large-scale diagrams, the artists visually map the ideological positions, convictions and fragments of belief held by atomised identity groups, revealing the blurred boundaries between different outlooks. The work presents a snapshot of an ever-changing network of online communities, political identities and personalities.

Playfool

[OP]erator, 2026
Android smartphones, cables, metal and thermal printer
340 x 340 x 153 cm

The project was realised within the framework of ONX Seeds, co-produced by Onassis ONX and co-produced with the Frankfurter Kunstverein.

Courtesy Playfool

Playfool are a London-based artist duo consisting of Daniel Coppen and Saki Maruyama. Their work combines mechanical engineering, design and legal expertise to investigate hidden structures of power and control. Through playful interventions, they shift decision-making between humans and machines.

On the third floor of the Frankfurter Kunstverein, Playfool present their latest work, *[OP]erator*, an interactive sculpture consisting of 101 smartphones. Each smartphone runs an X account (formerly Twitter), is equipped with a SIM card and is connected to the internet. A central input station stands within the semicircular arrangement. *[OP]erator* is both an artwork and a functioning bot farm.

Bot farms are centralised networks of automatically controlled accounts. Through coordinated posts, likes, comments and shares, such systems can simulate mass activity, artificially amplifying reach, attention and the appearance of public support. Bot farms generate automated campaigns and are deployed strategically around the world to distort political debate, influence elections and deepen social divisions. Authoritarian states, populist parties and spin doctors use bot farms as instruments of hybrid warfare to destabilise societies and spread geopolitical narratives. The aim is usually not to persuade people to embrace a particular ideology. Instead, the sheer volume of automated posts is intended to sow confusion, destroy trust in established media and create the impression of an outraged and divided society – flooding the zone with shit.

At the Frankfurter Kunstverein, visitors enter the semicircular arena of mobile phones, type a message into the smartphone placed right in the centre and experience how their post spreads within seconds, generating entire threads of discussion through automated dissemination. They witness in real time how a flood of messages emerges, swelling into an uncontrollable cacophony of voices in the space.

Playfool transform a system designed to operate out of sight into a striking aesthetic and sensory experience. Their installation reveals how digital systems manufacture synthetic crowds, making artificial content indistinguishable from posts by real users. The title *[OP]erator* points to a reversal of power relations, and in this way, Playfool give control back to the viewers. They enter the arena of opinion-making and send their messages from the art space into the digital public sphere in real time.

The form of the work is equally considered. It stands in direct contrast to the closed structures of hidden bot farms. The open semicircle of *[OP]erator* draws on a recurring form in architectural history. Since the theatres of antiquity, the semicircle has offered an ideal space for human encounters and public gatherings through its optimal sightlines and acoustics. To this day, it shapes democratic spaces such as parliamentary chambers, plenary halls and lecture theatres, where dialogue and the search for compromise take centre stage. [OP]erator also includes a thermal printer. The paper makes visible the fleeting messages that users enter into the central smartphone. The words appear on the paper through the application of heat, yet gradually fade, as its chemically treated surface prevents them from remaining permanent.

Institute for Democracy and Civil Society (IDZ Jena)

For the exhibition Propaganda – Flooding the Zone with Shit – It's About Money, Stupid!, we have collaborated with the Institute for Democracy and Civil Society (IDZ Jena). The institute researches phenomena that threaten democracy, including right-wing extremism, antisemitism and discrimination. It examines processes of digital radicalisation and mobilisation, as well as democratic engagement and civil society self-organisation in Thuringia, eastern Germany and beyond. This collaboration has resulted in striking contributions to the exhibition in Frankfurt: an immersive VR installation exploring the connections between tech oligarchs, politicians and political donations; a glossary of terms, codes and symbols used in radical online communities; and films providing background on

online radicalisation. Our thanks go to Ann-Kathrin Benner, Maik Fielitz and Harald Sick from IDZ Jena, and to the journalist Rina Wilkin.

Institute for Democracy and Civil Society (IDZ Jena)
Eine Topografie der Tech-Eliten, 2026
Three-dimensional network visualisation (augmented reality)

This three-dimensional network map shows connections between influential actors in the US tech scene. Some are loose or coincidental, while others suggest closer relationships. In an immersive journey through this complex web, we highlight connections that we, as researchers, consider significant. At the end of this guided tour, visitors have the opportunity to delve deeper and explore this network for themselves at close range.

Every network visualisation constructs a reality from a potentially infinite amount of data. The starting point for this network was the much-debated question of whether the convergence of economic and algorithmic power is giving rise to a new form of "tech fascism". Are tech elites working strategically and ideologically towards an authoritarian shift and, if so, how? Our analysis combines publicly available, machine-readable data on prominent figures in the tech world, with information about their ideological affiliations and political donations in US election campaigns.

To this end, we loaded Wikidata entries for 74 actors in the US tech scene, along with selected aspects of their relationships with one another, into a database. This formed the basis of an initial network, which was then expanded through a further sampling loop to approximately 41,000 Wikidata entries. Using a PageRank algorithm, we identified and subsequently analysed around 4,000 of the most significant entries. A note of caution, however: the underlying data tells us only that, for example, Mark Zuckerberg is associated with libertarianism in his Wikipedia entry, but not whether this association is positive or negative. In other words, the data only shows who or what is publicly associated with whom or what. In addition to Wikidata, the analysis draws on data from the US Federal Election Commission (FEC). The FEC provides comprehensive information on donations to US federal election campaigns, including presidential, Senate and House of Representatives elections. This also includes information on Political Action Committees (PACs and super PACs), which play a significant role in financing US election campaigns.

Authors: Harald Sick, Wyn Brodersen and Ann-Kathrin Benner

Institute for Democracy and Civil Society (IDZ Jena), Machine Against the Rage
Glossar, 2026
Terms, codes and symbols used in far-right online communities, wall graphic
538 x 230 cm

The glossary of the online magazine *Machine Against the Rage*, excerpts of which are reproduced here, explains terms relevant to the analysis of far-right online communities. It covers slogans, concepts, rhetoric, metaphors, emojis, jargon, memes, codes and other tools of far-right online communication. It also explains terms used by researchers to analyse dynamics within these online cultures. Technological developments that facilitate these

digital practices are also included where they help to explain particular dynamics and the conditions under which they emerge.

A glossary can, however, only ever provide a snapshot. The digital practices of far-right communities are subject to processes of appropriation, contestation, hijacking and shifts in meaning. Their emergence and disappearance depend on trends, affects and attention economies, as well as on the participation of a multitude of actors who sometimes act in an organised manner, but often without coordinating with one another or contributing to any larger common project. The knowledge produced about these practices is therefore, necessarily, similarly transient in nature.

Authors: Ann-Kathrin Benner, Holger Marcks, Maik Fielitz and Mona Gusinde

Institute for Democracy and Civil Society (IDZ Jena), Rina Wilkin
#Stolzmonat: Anatomie einer rechtsextremen Online-Kampagne, 2026
Video
10:23 min

In late May 2023, far-right activists on Twitter (now X) launched "Stolzmonat": a nationalist online campaign conceived as a counter-model to the LGBTQ+-friendly Pride Month. What appeared to be spontaneous outrage was in fact a carefully planned propaganda campaign organised around a hashtag (#stolzmonat). Within less than a month, more than 889,000 posts using the hashtag were circulated. From AfD members of parliament to militant neo-Nazis, thousands of accounts rallied behind a German-themed flag modelled on the design of the rainbow flag. And ready-made memes and accompanying slogans served as an invitation to participate.

This video shows how, with a degree of digital know-how, nationalist propaganda can be strategically carried into the societal mainstream. In principle, this requires little more than a small group of committed activists, a few supporters with a large reach and a polarised public. The committed activists provide the material and set the tone, and they operate fake accounts that like and share their own content hundreds of times within a very short period. Influential channels, such as Björn Höcke's, adopt the campaign's visual language and call on their audiences to support it. Even opponents of the campaign inadvertently contributed to its success: outraged responses, counter-campaigns from the left and even warnings issued by security authorities increased the hashtag's visibility and brought it to the attention of the media.

This reveals the central dilemma that anyone seeking to raise awareness of digital propaganda also contributes to the visibility of the campaigns in question. The pattern of amplification surrounding Stolzmonat is typical: a topic already under public discussion is appropriated and filled with specific content, an army of hyperactive accounts pushes a memorable hashtag into trending topics and, eventually, the media can no longer ignore the artificially generated momentum. Once the media begin to contextualise such content, the strategically disseminated digital propaganda has achieved its objective.

Text, research and data: Maik Fielitz and Harald Sick

Institute for Democracy and Civil Society (IDZ Jena), Rina Wilkin
#Sylt: Wie ein Ohrwurm zur rechten Hymne wurde, 2026
Video
08:22 min

In May 2024, a short video went viral of affluent partygoers on the German island of Sylt who were filmed chanting racist slogans to the song "L'amour Toujours" – slogans otherwise associated with neo-Nazis. Until then, the altered version of the song had mainly been an insider phenomenon, sung provocatively at local festivals, but the Sylt video took it to a new level. The local incident made the national evening news, and even the German Chancellor commented on it. The case then took on a life of its own: suddenly, almost everyone knew the racist version of the song. For the far right, this was a stroke of luck; for the digital public sphere, a disaster.
This video shows how this dynamic unfolded on TikTok. In the week following the incident on Sylt, tens of thousands of posts appeared on TikTok under related hashtags. Whether motivated by approval, the pursuit of reach or criticism, it was precisely this interplay of widely differing actors and motivations engaging with the incident that created the viral moment. This momentum was further amplified by media coverage that turned a local event into a national debate. It was also at this point that public condemnation was accompanied by expressions of solidarity with the perpetrators: many perceived the public response, which displayed elements of a moral panic, as excessive. At the same time, actors ranging from the right to the far right deliberately appropriated the song and turned it into a political code: at Querdenken demonstrations, European Championship fan marches, on merchandise and on the walls of buildings. And internationally, too, it became a symbol of xenophobia and fundamental opposition, as well as an anthem for those presenting themselves as victims of a supposed culture of prohibition.

Remarkably, most of the videos surrounding the incident were posted by critics. Through their counterspeech, they inadvertently kept the catchy tune alive. This created a dilemma: racist slogans cannot be left unchallenged, yet responding to them can undermine the very cause being defended and play into the hands of those who deliberately use provocation to elicit overreactions from the state and society. The case demonstrates that digital propaganda often spreads spontaneously and unpredictably. It was hard to foresee that this particular incident, among many similar ones, would trigger a nationwide debate. Yet it can serve as a case study in how digital propaganda thrives on overreaction and how decentralised mechanisms of dissemination can be particularly effective.

Text, research and data: Maik Fielitz, Michael Schmidt and Wyn Brodersen

Joshua Citarella

When Guys Turn 20 No.1: DKP is Market Socialism, 2022
Video
05:59 min

When Guys Turn 20 No.2: The Slow Red Pill, 2022
Video
04:44 min

When Guys Turn 20 No.3: On Platforms, 2022
Video
03:55 min

EU speech at the panel discussion: *The Internet Left: Progressive Politics in the Digital Age*, 2026
Video
10:02 min

Doomscroll with Francis Fukuyama, 2025
Video
55:28 min

Doomscroll with Dino Guastella, 2026
Video
74:36 min

Doomscroll with Naomi Klein, 2026
Video
52:05 min

E-deologies, 2022–2025
Flag prints
Each 154 x 94 cm

Courtesy Joshua Citarella

New York-based artist Joshua Citarella is now regarded as one of the most important chroniclers of “extremely online” culture. His artistic material is the political and aesthetic culture of the internet: online communities, memes, political radicalisation, ideologies and the ways in which platforms produce political identities.

Over the years, he has investigated how memes, reels and algorithms on platforms such as Instagram, TikTok and 4chan draw young people into radical, niche political ideologies. Following an initial period of photographic, video and installation work, he expanded his practice in 2024 and describes himself as an “artist and internet-culture writer”. Joshua Citarella produces online content as an art form in its own right. Since 2024, he has hosted the *Doomscroll* podcast, which has become one of the most influential online talk shows internationally. By October 2026, he had conducted 56 conversations, each lasting several hours. During this year’s Biennial, the Whitney Museum in New York served as one of his recording studios. A new episode is released every two weeks, attracting hundreds of thousands of views. The artist reaches audiences by also defining alternative platforms such

as Substack, YouTube and Spotify as sites for his art. After years of field research into alternative communication structures, he now applies this experience to build a left-wing counterculture in response to right-wing dominance.

His guests include academics and political theorists, journalists, trade unionists, artists, YouTubers, podcasters and avant-garde thinkers of the New Left. The artist is interested in the intersection of politics and culture, and his subjects include media power and its relationship to political organisation. He seeks to understand how deindustrialisation, wage stagnation despite increased productivity and class inequality make people increasingly susceptible to radicalisation. In conversations with his guests, he repeatedly asks what a countermovement to the resentment-driven appeals of the New Right might look like.

Citarella walks a fine line between art, intellectual work and political education. He does so in a country where the populist-nationalist government censors the cultural work of museums and universities. Unlike Germany's Basic Law, the US Constitution contains no separate article explicitly guaranteeing the freedom of academic inquiry and art. The central constitutional protection derives from the First Amendment (1791), particularly its provision on "freedom of speech".

In April 2026, the artist was invited to the European Parliament to share his extensive knowledge of online subcultures and the technological strategies of online propaganda. For this exhibition, the team of the Frankfurter Kunstverein has chosen to present the recording as an exhibit in its own right, reflecting our interest in how art shifts its sphere of influence in response to the conditions of our time.

This exhibition marks Citarella's second appearance at the Frankfurter Kunstverein. In 2023, he participated as an online artist in Eva & Franco Mattes' server installation *P2P*, presented as part of their exhibition *Fake Views*.

Towards the end of the exhibition, visitors encounter several works by Citarella. At their centre is the 2022 video essay trilogy, *When Guys Turn 20*, that he made with Jacob Hurwitz-Goodman. It takes its title from memes suggesting that, around the age of twenty, men suddenly embrace an extreme ideology or reshape their entire personality around male historical role models. Citarella himself appears on camera, moving between different settings, roles and parodies. The first part, *DKP is Market Socialism*, focuses on the online community of *World of Warcraft*. Using the game's Dragon Kill Points (DKP) system as an example, Citarella examines how people organise themselves to distribute resources. He uses the DKP mechanism to make economic and socialist theories, such as market socialism, more tangible. In the second part, *The Slow Red Pill*, he traces the mechanisms through which young people become gradually radicalised online. Initially, these communities used numerous meme accounts to mock the mainstream and established elites. Over time, however, they were deliberately hijacked by actors from the white supremacist scene. The deliberate shifting of the boundaries of acceptable discourse normalised radical ideologies. In the third part of the trilogy, *On Platforms*, Citarella asks who owns the digital infrastructure and who profits from radicalisation. Initially promising participation and freedom of expression in the early 2010s, platforms gradually became instruments of neoliberal principles, and the monetisation of data and attention emerged. What had once created a digital public sphere became a privately controlled commercial space.

The films unfold at a rapid pace. Citarella is familiar with the codes of the subcultures through which young people, primarily young men, seek to escape loneliness, find a new sense of belonging and shape their identities online, and the artist spent years in close contact with them. The video trilogy draws its energy from its density of information, rapid cuts and succession of countless pop-cultural references. He re-enacts iconic figures associated with these subcultures: Officer K from *Blade Runner 2049*, Orson Welles in *Citizen Kane*, Ivanhoe from *Robin Hood*, Robert De Niro in *Taxi Driver*, Joe Rogan in his podcast studio, a *World of Warcraft* gamer, an incel and the Californian gunman responsible for the Santa Barbara shooting, among many others.

The exhibition presents 12 flags from Joshua Citarella's larger series *E-deologies*. They originate from online communities that the artist mapped through a form of cyber-ethnographic research. He immersed himself in the meme subcultures of Generation Z teenagers, aged 12 to 17. Still a niche phenomenon in the 2010s, these subcultures have since entered the mainstream. The flags symbolise sampled and recombined fragments of possible identities and ideologies among these teenagers. The individual titles of the flags may seem contradictory, yet each represents a specific self-designation. And these categories functioned as a gamified form of exploring roles and identities. Citarella draws an analogy with the bedrooms of earlier generations, where posters of a favourite band or film hung on the walls.

Young people adopt elements of anarchism, transhumanism, nihilism, socialism, monarchism, libertarianism, primitivism or accelerationism, combining them with queerness and veganism without necessarily feeling committed to a historically coherent political tradition. Citarella thus demonstrates that the once binary classification of political identities into left and right has become increasingly obsolete. The so-called 8Values Test, with its eight opposing values, is now one tool for mapping political positions. Its four axes run between equality and markets, nation and globalism, liberty and authority, and tradition and progress.

These are twelve flags from Joshua Citarella's *E-deologies* series.
Here you will find the meanings of each flag, as described by the artist during his research into online subcultures.

Christian Nationalism
Recently popularised by conservative figures like Andrew Torba, founder of the conservative social media platform Gab, and Congresswoman Marjorie Taylor Greene (R-GA), Christian Nationalism understands the United States as an essentially Christian country in its founding and history. Christian Nationalists seek to restrict immigration and to end the separation of church and state. Similar groups exist in Canada, Finland, Russia, Scotland and more.



Blockchain Socialism
An online community and content stream consisting of podcasts and newsletters by writer and researcher Joshua Dávila. Dávila is the author of *Blockchain Radicals*, a book that explores the potential for decentralised cooperative organisations online. Their token, $BREAD (pegged to the stablecoin $DAI), is "a currency for solidarity", the proceeds of which fund post-capitalist projects on the blockchain.



Effective Accelerationism
Effective Accelerationism (e/acc) seeks a technological singularity (the historic moment when technological growth becomes irreversible, uncontrollable and unpredictable) alongside the emergence of artificial intelligence. Its iconography depicts a parabolic curve of rapidly increasing technological advancement. The movement has significant philosophical overlap with Effective Altruism but rejects anthropocentrism. Instead, e/acc understands humanity as the steward of an emergent techno-capital singularity.



Anarchist Unity
A rallying cry for anarchists of all tendencies to unite under a common banner. The colour stripes signify (from top to bottom): Egoists, Mutualists, Anarcho-Communists, Queer Anarchists, Feminists, Anarcho-Collectivists, Transhumanists, Pacifists, Individualists, Platformists, Primitivists, Syndicalists, the Post-Left and Green Anarchists.



Gender Accelerationism
A number of radical writers have attempted to claim Gender Accelerationism as a political theory or movement. Among these competing interpretations are ambitious essays about time-sorcery and destroying the class system. Most commonly, there is an acknowledgment that the development of petro-capitalism has a materially feminising effect on living creatures, like rising sea temperatures turning all the turtles into females (this is real). For Gender Accelerationists, this process may be understood as a Deleuzian deterritorialisation of the patriarchy.



Anarcho Transhumanist Solarpunk
Radical life extension and morphological freedom (this means having complete self-determination over one's own body) flourish within a sustainable, post-capitalist future. Science, nature and communal space are intertwined through avant-garde architectural forms and renewable energy.



Mutual Transhumanist Social Democratic Distributist Georgism
A highly ethical society in which private farmland is administered by the state. Family units each own their individual means of subsistence (the farm) and are entitled to the full value of what they produce. Families are largely self-sufficient and do not rely on markets to obtain the necessary goods for survival. This and a lot of other things from the internet.



Progress Pride Constitutional Monarchy
This flag was first unveiled as the Twitter profile image (pfp) for the UK Parliament in June 2020. It was quickly picked up in a story by Breitbart News Network and became a viral sensation.



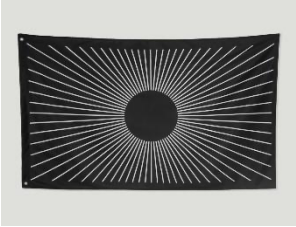
Libertarian Neo Monarchism
Drawing on the work of Hans-Herman Hoppe, Curtis Yarvin (aka Mencius Moldbug), as well as other Neo Reactionary online personalities, the group seeks to privatise all of society including the state. Monarchy is private ownership of government itself. The future they envision is a cloud-based feudalism ruled by benevolent dictator CEOs.



Post Brexit European Union
Visually effective but completely inaccurate in terms of content, the missing star is meant to represent the UK's departure from the EU. The dozen stars do not signify individual nations but instead represent their agreed points of unity. The EU contains 27 countries in total.



Praxis
Founded in 2021, Praxis is a start-up company seeking to build a new sovereign city-state in a special economic zone. The flag depicts a “Black Sun”, or Sonnenrad, a symbol popular with far-right groups.



American Monarchism
Thirteen stars represent the American colonies for an alternate history in which the United States gained independence from Britain but appointed its own monarch rather than becoming a republic.



Further texts can be found at www.fkv.de.

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Frankfurter Kunstverein Press Office: presse@fkv.de

+49 69 219 314 30