לא תתן מכשל / Do Not Place Barriers / Keine Barrieren Setzen / ניט טאן שטעלן באריערז (Aktion Access)
2021. Brothers Sick (Ezra and Noah Benus). Off-set printed poster on paper. Site specific installation in Frankfurt, on advertising pillar by MMK.

E: **Image description:** the image is of grey cobblestones with text inlaid on the uneven, tripping, slick and slippery, cobblestones. On top it has a quoted excerpt from the Torah (Leviticus 19:14), translated from Hebrew to German, Yiddish, and English -- portals of translation and knowledge through time and place. Each poster has one of the translations. The text reads in Hebrew *לא תתן מכשל*, in English: *Do Not Place Barriers*, in German: "*Keine Barrieren Setzen"*, and *ניט טאן שטעלן באריערז* in Yiddish. The text on the lower half reads "Aktion Access".

E: Towards the bottom left corner of the poster is a blue surgical facemask, discarded and trampled on the cobblestone pavement. Towards the lower-center area of the image between the two blocks of text, is one bronze cobblestone referencing the brass Stolpersteine (a stumbling stone memorial to victims of the Holocaust).

N: **Prompt for the person engaging with the work:**
As you come upon the tower of many languages, take a moment to rest, to stop and reflect. Think of a moment of care that you have recently experienced and cherished, a moment between you and someone else, moments of both receiving and of giving care. Hold onto that memory and feeling.

Now take a moment to ask yourself:

What do I need? Who can I ask to help with that?

What can I do to care for someone else's needs and wants?

How can I create openings of access and care for others?

How can I advocate for building up access in the places I hold power?

N: **Artwork statement:**
With our poster we include a call to action: Aktion Access. A call to activate access in the most basic form, to confront the ways in which we are all complicit in upholding systemic barriers constructed in our society. The word choice is a direct reference to the

horrifying Aktion T4 Nazi euthanasia program, in which disabled and sick people were experimented on and killed. This is flipping the militarized connotations to the word Aktion, to instead be used in a context for a call to build collective access and care. It is also used here as a positive command in relation to the negative command from the Torah : “Do Not Place Barriers”. Our artwork is steeped in knowledge, language, and imagery references relating to our ancestors, heritage, communities, cultures, and bodyminds. The phrase from the Torah placed in relation to the cobblestones points our attention to the baseline, the ground level, of inaccessibility. It conjures references to barriers created in our lives that impede people’s ability of movement, to access community, to nurture dreams, and to rest.

E: Cobblestone pavement is characteristically uneven, haphazard, and inaccessible. They also carry a weight of history, of a specific time and place. These associations are brought into our work to relate issues of access to historical and contemporary erasure and violence.

Noticeably, there is one bronze cobblestone amidst the grey cobblestones. It is a reference to the Stolpersteine artistic project. We acknowledge the role it has in creating widespread memorials specifically for individuals who died in the Holocaust. These are typically installed at sites where an individual victim of the Holocaust once lived. Unlike the Stolpersteine project though, our work is intentionally holding space for reflection on, and to pay tribute to the collective; to the masses of unnamed disabled, sick, mad, queer, ill, Native, Jewish, Roma, enslaved people, incarcerated people, and all people not considered as worthy to be counted or remembered. The need to highlight the unnamed, the uncounted, is to bring light to historical and active erasures of lives, communities, knowledge, and heritage.

N: The underpinning ideology of eugenics persists in our society still. The discarded blue surgical mask seen in the poster is another symbol of the contemporary displays of eugenics. It references the harmful attitude of prioritizing individual responsibility and health over considerations for building infrastructure for collective responsibility and communal health. It is simultaneously a straightforward critique to those unwilling to adhere to simple forms of enacting access and safety for others through their refusal to wear a mask.

Disabled and sick people have long demanded and fought for changes to the physical environment of our lives insisting on adding curb cuts to streets, maintaining smooth pavement, ramps, and elevators, to rights of equity and access in transportation, housing, medication, care, and employment. We understand liberation to be collective, encompassing an understanding that the actions of individuals are important, but only in context and relation to the collective. Wear a mask, save lives.

E: The placement of the posters on the Litfaßsäule (advertising column) beckons the viewer to pause and take a closer look in their journey. With the column leading the gaze upwards towards a sky filled with clouds, the installation shape and form alludes to chimneys. This signifier is an association to the horrors of the crematoriums in the Nazi death camps, smoke stacks as terror symbols of the mass exterminations during Nazi rule. As descendants of Jewish refugees, one from Nazi controlled Germany, we grew up learning about and seeing imagery of extermination camps, of gas chambers and crematoriums, the sites and instruments of genocide. These were places dedicated to the eugenics driven killings of: Jewish, Roma, sick and disabled people, socialists, marxists, people deemed "unfit for work", and all those categorized as "undesirables" according to the twisted Nazi supremacy ideology. The crematoriums were places in which Nazis attempted burning the evidence of the atrocities they committed during the Holocaust. Hiding and erasing histories of injustice is yet another barrier we aim to break down through a call to action based in disability art, community, care, and education.

N: **Image description:**
Pareidolia (Vaccinate Now) is a photograph on aluminium with imagery of 2 mirrored sets of one black, one white silhouette of a face, part of a torso, and a hand holding a syringe against a grayscale pixelated background. On top are two upside down silhouettes sitting atop of the same image flipped over horizontally. The silhouettes point to one another, as if in a whisper with the syringe, needle tipped as a vector towards the center of the image. The negative space In the center of the photograph, is similar to an ink blot pattern. The text in the center in the largest font says "Vaccinate Now" in black, white, and gray variants with a metallic sheen. Sandwiched in between those words is a smaller text "Global Inoculation Against Viral Fascism". Text on top of the image reads "Stop Rationing Care" "Stop Medical Apartheid", and on the bottom of the image text reads "End Eugenics" "End Vaccine Hoarding". The layout of words and silhouettes create a contour of an hourglass shape, connoting time is of the essence.

E: **Image description: "***Work Will Not Set Us Free***" II "***Right To Rest In The Rhythm Of The Sick"* 2021. Diptych, each 8 in x 10 in, dye-sublimation on aluminium.

Work Will Not Set Us Free is an image in grayscale that shows manipulated x-rays of a torso revealing a root-like system or tree-like formation of internal organs such as lungs, bladder, and the aorta that are branching out and creating systems of connection. This image is mirrored and flipped creating a split image in two halves. Centered is an eerily revealed x-ray image of a set of teeth in a frontal smile formation. Text is overlaid on top and repeated on the bottom that reads “work will not set us free”. The words “work” and “free” are spotlighted in opposite corners of the image. It is overlaid in black, white, and gray, shifting in legibility. *Right To Rest In The Rhythm Of The Sick* is an image in grayscale of a bed leveled with the top of the mattress, revealing a diagonal grid texture of the blanket in the foreground. Focused in the center are three plastic pill bottles laid out resting on the bed, ranging in size with the largest one on the left, to the smallest on the right. A couple of white pillows are seen out of focus on the top of the photo. Overlaid on the whole image is a shifting grayscale text that repeats itself in a spiral formation that reads “right to rest in the rhythm of the sick”.

Artwork statement:

E: The three metal prints were created in the context of a global pandemic, exacerbated by political upheaval. They are composed of imagery taken from our archive of personal rituals and regimens of care, including medical scan images. These images are overlaid with text referencing historical moments and machinations of oppression. Printing on aluminium aesthetically echoes the sterile qualities associated with spaces of grim depersonalization towards goals of profit, such as hospitals and factories.The works are urging necessary changes to societal norms, structures, and values that deepen debility and burnout.

N: *Pareidolia (Vaccinate Now)* was made in early January 2021 coinciding with the insurrection in Washington D.C, and published for The Daily Trumpet. The ideas for the artworks were spurred by, and in opposition to, the inadequate response by the United States government to provide access to medical care, supplies, and vaccines on a local and global scale.
The ongoing pandemic has forced societal and cultural conversations about ableism and equity. Conversations about the reopening of cultural centers, economic hubs, and social life, while also ignoring the wellbeing of disabled and sick people, emphasises a notion that disabled lives are disposable.

E: Eugenics mindsets are present in the anti-vaccination movements, and displayed blatantly with Covid vaccine hoarding by wealthy nations. Anti-government protestors, anti-vaxxers, and conspiracy theorists alike have been utilizing a narrative that public health measures, such as mask mandates and vaccine requirements, made by governments are akin to the forced experimentations the Nazis did on prisoners. The

comparisons minimize the experiences of Holocaust victims. The use of misinformation is similar to how the Nazis also used anti-semitic tropes about Jews being disease spreaders in order to justify their eugenics driven medical experimentations. This is the violence of eugenics, propagated by individualism and capitalism. It is in direct contrast to interdependent models of society that disabled and sick people have long crafted and relied on to survive.

N:
While our society is oriented towards reinforcing capitalist notions of profit over people, we feel the conditions are over-ripe for a paradigm shift towards abolishing capitalism and all oppressive systems steeped in the destruction of our lives and planet.

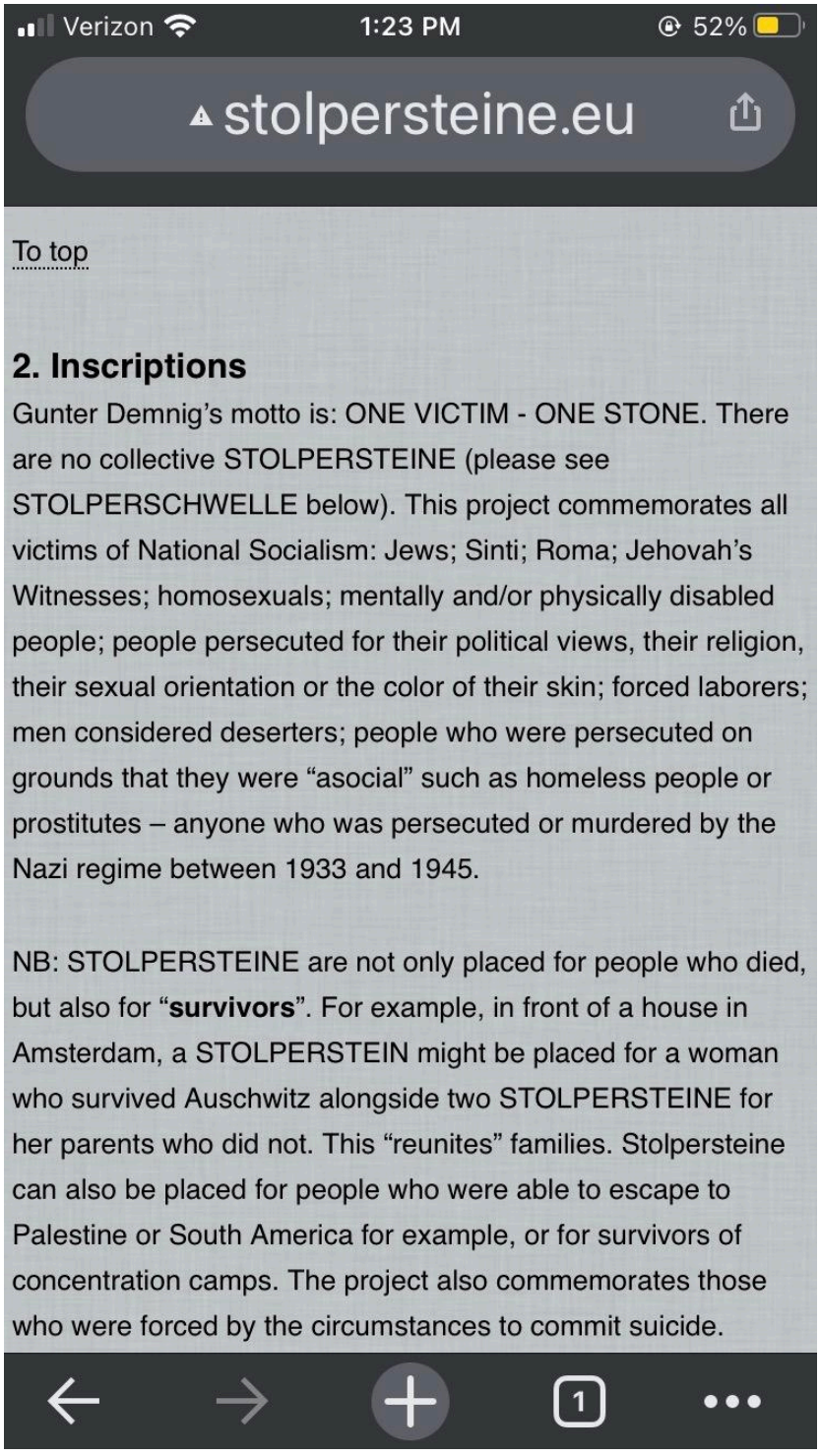
The diptych **"***Work Will Not Set Us Free***"** and **"***Right To Rest In The Rhythm Of The Sick"* directly confront the ableist notions of proving "worth" based on ability to "produce".

The Nazis viewed their victims as disposable resources for slave labor, and emblazoned the entrance of many concentration camps with "Arbeit Macht Frei" which translates to "Work Sets You Free". We are purposefully creating a negation of that phrase in our work *"Work Will Not Set Us Free"* to bring to light the ways in which eugenics and capitalism are intertwined. **"***Right To Rest In The Rhythm Of The Sick"* addresses rest as a right, a need, and also a value. The artwork amplifies the directive for prioritizing rest in a world that exploits humans and the Earth for profit, and thrives on burnout culture which creates and furthers debility and disability. This value of rest is instilled in our lives from our Jewish upbringing, with the ritual, rhythm, and practice of Shabbat. Rest as a value, a ritual, a rhythm, and practice is also deeply aligned with the notion of crip time, our nod to the intersections at play here.

Acknowledgements here are from some key thinkers and influences on our knowledge and understandings of histories and outlooks that address systemic ableism and racism, anti-capitalism as an ethos, interdependence, and collective care. It is not an exhaustive list, but a space to share and prompt the viewer to learn more too.

TL Lewis
Perel
Kenny Fries
Constantina Zavitsanos
Democracy Now (Amy Goodman, Juan Gonzalez, Nirmeen Sheikh)

Black Power Naps
Shannon Finnegan
Johanna Hedva
Sins Invalid
Mia Mingus



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2. Inscriptions

Gunter Demnig's motto is: ONE VICTIM - ONE STONE. There are no collective STOLPERSTEINE (please see STOLPERSCHWELLE below). This project commemorates all victims of National Socialism: Jews; Sinti; Roma; Jehovah's Witnesses; homosexuals; mentally and/or physically disabled people; people persecuted for their political views, their religion, their sexual orientation or the color of their skin; forced laborers; men considered deserters; people who were persecuted on grounds that they were "asocial" such as homeless people or prostitutes – anyone who was persecuted or murdered by the Nazi regime between 1933 and 1945.

NB: STOLPERSTEINE are not only placed for people who died, but also for "**survivors**". For example, in front of a house in Amsterdam, a STOLPERSTEIN might be placed for a woman who survived Auschwitz alongside two STOLPERSTEINE for her parents who did not. This "reunites" families. Stolpersteine can also be placed for people who were able to escape to Palestine or South America for example, or for survivors of concentration camps. The project also commemorates those who were forced by the circumstances to commit suicide.