

Artist's Page

UGANDA (AFTER ALFREDO JAAR) 2014

The P Lab Collective

These posters, scattered around the streets and squares of Malmö, reduced the rhetoric of advertising to a cry of grief. But they also served notice on a complacent public: You – in your tidy parks, on your bicycles, walking your dogs – look at this name, listen to this name, at least hear it, now: Rwanda, Rwanda, Rwanda ... The posters were a raw gesture, produced out of frustration and anger. If all of the images of slaughter and piled corpses, and all of the reportage did so little, perhaps a simple sign, in the form of an insistent cry, would get their attention.²

Alfredo Jaar

This project is a homage to the RWANDA public poster project created by Alfredo Jaar in 1994¹. Jaar's project was produced in response to the human rights atrocities occurring in the region at that time and, in particular, to the failure of the West and the UN to intervene in the killing of over 800,000 people – the figure estimated by the United Human Rights Council.

Print as public art and protest has had a long history through the artists and agitators who have launched their concerns into the public domain. Institutional hatred and violence – government, religious and social – against homosexuals and other members of the LGBTQI community is very much alive in many parts of the world. Uganda is just one of many places around the globe where this sort of oppression is sanctioned and perpetuated.

In February 2014 the Ugandan government passed an Anti-Homosexuality Act that included the death penalty, as well as 5–7 years imprisonment for even advocating on behalf of homosexuality. The day after the law was passed, a popular Ugandan newspaper published its "top 200" list of homosexuals in the country, many of whom had not come out publicly. One can only wonder how it would have felt to have been named on that list. On the day that Oscar Wilde was arrested in London in 1895, an estimated 600 men queued to get onto a boat to France in order to avoid being implicated in the scandal. I can imagine that a similar exodus occurred in Uganda during this episode.

The UGANDA project is both particular and general in scope, in the sense that it brings to our attention not only the situation in Uganda but, through implication, other parts of Africa and the world where LGBTQI communities are persecuted to various degrees through legal, social and religiously motivated anti-homosexual intimidation and violence.

Our P Lab UGANDA Project involved the printing of large (104cm x 75cm) double-sided posters printed in black on white card. These posters, in an edition of 25, went on sale for \$50 each in order to fund the postage of the smaller (A3) coloured Risograph leaflets. To date, we have posted out 60 Risograph leaflets and as money comes in through the sale of the posters, we will continue to send them out in batches. We are sending them initially to print and arts organisations such as art schools, and to our various networks in the arts sector including a range of galleries.

Readers can go to the website below and find the poster available for them to print out for themselves. Please pass on this address so that others may do the same.³

P Lab – Bon à Tirer and Emboss

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The **P Lab Collective** at the Print Studio, Dunedin School of Art at Otago Polytechnic, is committed to engaging in political issues.

- 1 Alfredo Jaar, *Rwanda Rwanda* (1994), Public intervention in Malmö, Sweden, offset print. 68 1/2 x 46 1/2 inches. © Alfredo Jaar; courtesy Thord Thordeman, Malmö, and Galerie Lelong, New York. <http://www.pbs.org/art21/images/alfredo-jaar/rwanda-rwanda-1994>
- 2 <http://imaginarymuseum.org/MHV/PZlmhv/JaarRwandaProject.html>.
- 3 Visit <http://dunedinpintlab.wordpress.com/projects/uganda/> to print your own copies of the A3/A4 colour UGANDA leaflet and see some of our other projects.