THE WEEKLY MONSTER

PEDRO LASCH

PROSPECT
NEW ORLEANS

WITH AN INTRODUCTION BY TREVOR SCHOONMAKER AND A CRITICAL ESSAY BY NICHOLAS MIRZOEFF

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Dedicated to the life and memory of Dore Ashton, Srinivas Aravamudan, and John Berger, three intellectual giants who are no longer with us. More than ever, we are inspired by your critical brilliance, love of art, and commitment to social justice.

This book was published on the occasion of Prospect.4: The Lotus in Spite of the Swamp, New Orleans.

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Weekly Monster is a year-long series of images that Pedro Lasch created from November 8, 2016 through November 7, 2017. The work began as a series of social media posts on Facebook and Instagram and was developed into a set of prints that reimagine Mary Shelley’s Frankenstein in light of current world affairs. Throughout the year, Lasch made a weekly post on social media comprised of an appropriated image related to the classic story of the monster and his creator, which he paired with concise, incisive texts drawn from breaking news, positioned as political headlines of the day. While the work is undoubtedly a response to the 2016 Presidential election, Lasch refrains from directly using names or imagery depicting the United States’ 45th president, allowing viewers to create their own analogies. In many images, the monster is depicted as the notorious villain inflicting harm and creating mayhem, while in others the monster is the victim being persecuted as an outsider. On the occasion of Prospect.4: The Lotus in Spite of the Swamp, the series culminates with 53 image-text works presented as archival prints at the Contemporary Arts Center, a series of public workshops produced in New Orleans with students and mentors from the Youth Empowerment Project, as well as this comprehensive publication. A critical essay by visual culture scholar and NYU professor Nicholas Mirzoeff accompanies the artworks and texts written by the artist.

At first sight, Lasch’s use of black and white for his Frankenstein images gives them the look and feel of vintage movie posters. After all, the images are largely borrowed from popular films and television shows. While the imagery can appear to be playful, especially considering some of their sources of origin, Lasch uses the allure of dark humor to grab our attention and investigate serious issues. He is also keenly aware of art history and creates visual and conceptual connections to several of his influences. The simple words chosen for the works establish a dialogue with feminist artists like Barbara Kruger and Jenny Holzer, known for mining language, media, advertising, and popular culture. Those of us who first saw the images in real time, as they were being produced and circulated through social media throughout the year, also felt the political urgency of the issue being addressed by Lasch each week.
What is it that makes Pedro Lasch’s Weekly Monster project so disturbing and appalling (to adapt Richard Hamilton’s pop era title)? Each week in the year following the election of Donald J. Trump as President of the United States, Lasch posted a diptych online. To the right was a scathing critique of what the Monster, to use Lasch’s name for the president, had been up to that week. To the left, he placed a captioned black-and-white image of Frankenstein’s monster, appropriated from classic horror movies and other historical sources. At first, rather like Trump himself, the montages seemed as much funny and irreverent as scary. As time went on, both in the new political regime and in Lasch’s durational art project, the work came to seem more and more unsettling.

The key to this dynamic is Lasch’s choice of appropriated imagery. The obvious move would have been to take an image from the endless newsfeed of the Internet era relevant to the

week at hand. In particular, Trump’s endlessly talking head lives in a permanent present in which no past experience ever intrudes. In this echo chamber, what he said yesterday is as forgotten as the history of the United States as a whole. Lasch situates his response in the cultural unconscious. This is the way we recognize a logo whether we want to or not, how we have a sense of what is “cool,” and above all in settler colonies, how we recognize “race.”

For a century now it has been known that there is no biological basis for “race” in a relatively young species with limited trait differentiation. But “race” and racism are fully alive in the culture, even when official policy is to deny their existence. In this moment where even mainstream media refer to the administration as supporting white supremacy, the cultural unconscious is where the monsters of “race” live and the zombies of capitalism roam.

In his captioned set of engravings entitled Los Caprichos (1797-98), the Spanish artist Francisco Goya visualized this intersection in his famous work The Sleep of Reason Produces Monsters. A man in then-modern dress sleeps uneasily on a desk, as if he has fallen asleep while laboring
on a text, and while he sleeps, monsters fill the space around him. Owls seemingly mutate into bats, perhaps vampires, while a lynx or other form of great cat looks hungrily at the sleeper. The full caption mused: “Fantasy abandoned by reason produces impossible monsters.” But the monsters of unreason were already in the world, where they remain. Some of them we should certainly fear. Others are ways to designate revolutionary transformation as irrational.

The monster in Western culture had traditionally been the misfire of human reproduction, the statistically unusual forms of human embodiment. What we now call disability was part of such monstrousity, as were non-viable human fetuses that were preserved and displayed in the cabinet of curiosity at royal and aristocratic courts in medieval and early modern Europe. With the onset of the Atlantic slave trade and the formation of a global economy of forced labor, a new predatory and vampiric modernity was engendered that has persisted to the present day. The slaver preys on the bodies of the enslaved in ways that the monster story would later shift into the unconscious, once the enslaved person reshaped themselves into revolutionaries.

The monster as a part of modern white imagination emerged in response to the successful revolution against slavery in Haiti (1791-1804). In 1791 in a ceremony at Bwa Kayiman that began the Haitian Revolution, the warrior spirit Ezili Danto inspired the Haitian priest Cécile Fatiman, and the revolutionary Dutty Boukman. She called on the enslaved to “listen to the voice for liberty that speaks in all our hearts.” Liberty was placed not in Enlightenment thought or the French Revolution but as an ethical demand from within the one body part that cannot be “owned.” A monster to some, this liberty of the formerly enslaved becomes the principle of the “right to existence” that motivated people to create another world. “Libète ou Lamnò,” said the Haitian revolutionary: “Liberty or death.” To complicate this further, enslavement was, as Orlando Patterson has described it, a form of “social death.” To be enslaved was to lose social agency. To be ruled by a monarchy or other tyranny was also understood by revolutionaries across the Atlantic world as social death.

What, though, is death? In the cosmographic view of human and non-human space-time, death is just one event in a circular modality of existence. Enslaved human beings would often commit self-killing, to the baffled fury of the slave owners, because they understood that this death would return them first to the world of the non-human (spirits, divinities and other forms of non-embodied life) and then back to embodied life in Africa at some future time. To die was to access a transformed future.

This revolutionary and counterrevolutionary transformation of embodied life was reassembled in Europe as the formation of the modern monster: Frankenstein. In Mary Shelley’s 1818 novel, the monster is the creation of Frankenstein, seeking to become what she called the “modern Prometheus.” Prometheus stole fire from the land of the non-human. Frankenstein transformed electricity into life, a shifting of registers that has not ceased to create new modes of existence, from the Facebook-enabled gatherings of the Arab Spring to the 140-character assassination of the Twitter Presidency. Frankenstein’s potential to transform the assemblage of the natural world into power was visualized by the German artist Caspar David Friedrich in The Wanderer, a painting that is routinely used as the cover for Shelley’s novel. The wanderer, another version of Goya’s urban intellectual, dominates the natural world by visualizing it from
and mass incarceration is the definition of abjection, given by Sharpe as “dehumanizing abjection.” It is not abject to be black but to be born Black under conditions of enslavement that enslavement functioned “to turn the womb into a factory producing blackness as beings, especially in the Americas. African-American scholar Christina Sharpe shows even as the planet has become monstered, it follows the long monstering of human beings, especially in the Americas. African-American scholar Christina Sharpe shows that enslavement functioned “to turn the womb into a factory producing blackness as abjection.” It is not abject to be black but to be born Black under conditions of enslavement and mass incarceration is the definition of abjection, given by Sharpe as “dehumanizing trans*formative power.” This process extends from Thomas Jefferson’s outrageous claim in his Notes on Virginia, that the orangutan actively preferred Black women as sexual partners; to the many hundreds of lynchings of Black men for alleged or imagined assaults on white women, including the death of 14-year-old Emmett Till because a white woman falsely accused him of whistling at her in 1954; and former police officer Darren Wilson testifying to a St. Louis grand jury that eighteen-year-old Michael Brown was “like a demon” a “Hulk Hogan,” speaking in what he called a “grunting, like aggravated sound.”

The anti-monster revolution now is a turn away from this hierarchy that places (white) humans above all else, and a turn toward a new way of living in the world. Since Katrina, an annual Anba Dlo (Below The Water) ceremony has been held in New Orleans. Vodou came to New Orleans in the aftermath of the Haitian Revolution, when slaves fled the liberated island, bringing enslaved Africans with them. Organized by the mambo (priest) Sallie-Anne Glassman at the New Orleans Healing Center, Anba Dlo brings together discussions on science and engineering with a ceremony addressed to La Sirène, also known as Mami Wata, the syncretic water deity of the African diaspora. Glassman calls on her in order “to apologize for what we’ve done to the water, but also to bring us guidance to fix the damage and live more in harmony with the planet.” Mami Wata/La Sirène is not easy to placate. She is proud of her beauty, cold, concerned with material wealth, and yet able to bring about healing for her followers.

What about the people below the water? For now, white supremacy considers them—us—defeated. Instead, we’re just figuring this out. Water is life. The land owns us. Respect the ancestors, respect the spirits. Those on the ground, understanding that Black life matters, are making revolutionary time. The future is now, right alongside reactionary monster capitalism. Activist-philosopher Grace Lee Boggs took the negative of the post-capitalist situation in Detroit as a positive opportunity to shape the future: “we had been granted an opportunity to begin a new chapter in the evolution of the human race, a chapter that global warming and corporate globalization had made increasingly necessary.” With deep respect to Grace, it may now be that it’s not so much a new chapter as the first chapter, the beginning of a levelly-human human species that sets aside the monsters of race, that is our last best hope.

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BELOW THE WATER

Even as the planet has become monstered, it follows the long monstering of human beings, especially in the Americas. African-American scholar Christina Sharpe shows that enslavement functioned “to turn the womb into a factory producing blackness as abjection.” It is not abject to be black but to be born Black under conditions of enslavement and mass incarceration is the definition of abjection, given by Sharpe as “dehumanizing abjection.”
Some time ago, artist Luis Camnitzer suggested that all of the world’s citizens should get to vote in the US Presidential Election, given the global impact that any leader of this country has. Today, the world hopes US citizens of all backgrounds will vote with all of us in mind, knowing that the monster created is one whose very makers cannot control. Democracy has many important principles, but two of them are central: the will of the majority, balanced with the protection of minorities. One without the other is not a true democracy. Frankenstein may win by a majority, but democracy is threatened by his blind disdain for women, minorities, and anything else standing in his way. Please remember also that you are yourselves a minority on the planet, one whose power we hope to see legitimized for all our benefit today. Image: Boris Karloff in Frankenstein, Film (1931).
In spite of an equal or higher number of Americans voting against him, today we have an official Monster Elect. This country is built on admirable democratic principles, as well as the brutal heritage of slavery, racism, and gender inequality. The Monster is a collective creation of the latter, fueled initially by a justified anger against the political elite. When Republicans speak proudly of the party of Lincoln they always forget to mention that they have spent decades fighting against the rights of the very populations whose emancipation he is celebrated for. Most of the millions of people who voted for Monster Elect do not think of themselves as racists or misogynists, but they have put him in power, knowing perfectly well about his openly offensive views of women, LGBTQ and ethnic minorities, immigrants, and even the disabled, not to mention the recognition by many of them that he lacks the experience or temperament to govern. Unchecked by legislative majority and sure to solidify the court system to the right for decades, the tragic decision for the US and the world is on them. The fight against him, the forces that made him possible, and the agendas he represents are on the rest of us. Fortunately, we seem to be more than they are if you count the popular vote in the US, and so many more if you think of the world’s population. We also have courageous youth clearly leading the struggle. Image: Jack Pierce working on Boris Karloff make-up for Frankenstein, Production Photo (1931).
Give Monster-Elect a chance. Wall Street, the Republican Establishment, Russia, and the European right already have. So have the media outlets that up to one week ago found it impossible to endorse him, calling him a unique threat to American democracy, a danger to the Republic, a reckless leader. Let him make a few decisions first, and see how many of the factually challenged and offensive things he said were just so-called campaign devices, or things that an unchecked government will not let him get away with. Do not worry. With massive protests in the streets, people of color, women, and minorities of all ages attacked and bullied across the country at levels not seen since the aftermath of 9/11/2001, Monster-Elect has already found the center (between the right and ultra-right) by choosing a Chief Strategist whose aggressive white nationalism in media will soon be translated into national and international policy. A wonderful cast of other such centrist Monsters is already in line to be named to the cabinet, including climate change deniers and racist Sheriffs. As to any misgivings about him running the US government and its foreign interests like a family business, naming three of his children to his transition team should not make us jump to any conclusions. Give him a chance. It will only take a few generations to rebuild what he destroys.

Monster-Elect invited the press to his national golf club for a live Monster Parade last weekend. But this was no Apprentice show or House of Frankenstein. This is the US presidency selecting its cabinet, and the act is being gobbled up worldwide by news and social media. Speculation on who is most offensive, dangerous, or unqualified among those potentially hired is followed by opinion contests on who should get fired right away. There is no escape to this game, or to watching it, no matter what you stand for. Monster’s fans will watch with pleasure, of course. But even those to whom it’s torture have high stakes in the insane reality show about to be stuffed down our throats for years to come. Not engaging it would imply accepting as normal a vice president who thinks gay people should be electrocuted into ‘becoming straight’, a white supremacist as chief strategist, an attorney general who thinks the KKK is funny and grabbing a woman’s genitals is not harassment, a national security adviser notorious for making things up, and a CIA chief who favors expanding surveillance of American citizens. These first six picks for the monster cabinet are also all white men (surprise!) and, judging from the other contestants of this week’s parade, there are many more to come. The more shit they throw on the wall, as the saying goes, the more of it they hope will stick. So much for cleaning up Washington. The stench from the future White House has started spreading across the planet. Image: *House of Frankenstein*, Film (1944).
This week is dedicated to the crude recognition that Monster-Elect and the outgoing President agree on a few things. Right after pardoning a Turkey, as is Thanksgiving tradition, the US government issued its eviction notice to the Oceti Sakowin encampments at Standing Rock. Much violence has already been perpetrated against the Standing Rock Sioux Tribe and those who stand with them to protect their land and water. It precedes and exceeds political parties, but so does its opposition. The current struggle has its roots in the historical oppression of the first Americans, as well as the ruthless exploitation of their land. Ready to make his last memorable act in office a shameful refusal to stand up for their rights, the outgoing President does not seem to consider this Indigenous alliance to be worthy of his legacy. For all the social justice gains and popular mandate that distinguish him from our upcoming ruler, this one may still go down in history for two emblematic failures: the initial one of not holding the power of Wall Street accountable, and this last one of taking sides with oil, against the rights and lives of Native Americans. Neither one can be seen as a simple mistake in policy. Beyond being directly related to the financial and corporate control of government, these deliberate actions are evidence of the continued and brutal segregation of Native Americans from our forms of political representation. Image: Benedict Cumberbatch and Noamie Harris in Danny Boyle’s Frankenstein, Theatrical Production (2011).
This past Sunday, United States House Speaker stated that he does not care whether Monster-Elect’s social media propaganda content is true or false. “It doesn’t matter to me. He won the election.” His former campaign manager has recently also made fun of journalists for taking Monster’s words literally. The twitter assault on American voters from last week, with Monster-Elect claiming without a shred of evidence that millions of people had voted illegally was spoken of as ‘refreshing’ by Vice Monster-Elect. Monster’s chief strategist is well versed in this game, too, and has dedicated a good amount of his time at Breitbart to attacking the very foundation of the notion of common truth and fact in our democracy. We are in the early stages of a systematic war against the most basic rules and habits of an independent media, intellectual and academic integrity, and any debate based on a factual understanding of social and scientific issues, as well as policies. 

A gullible man with a rifle has literally shot his rifle at a pizza store in DC this week, acting on information taken from fake news and conspiracy theories disseminated by the son of Monster-Elect’s national security adviser. If we had heard or read this narrative two years ago, we would have assumed the whole thing was a bad parody, but with the vast exposure to lying and deception from Monster’s campaign and his transition team, it has all been normalized to a frightening degree. If a journalist’s job was to report the facts and challenge representations that defy them, what will her job be during a period when the President’s words are not supposed to mean anything? 

*Image: Frankenstein Unbound, Film (1990).*
A week before the United States electoral college meets to officially mark the victory of the most unpopular President-Elect in decades, additional information from the Central Intelligence Agency has emerged about Russia’s direct intervention to aid said Monster’s election. As early as September, the current administration learned of a consensus assessment from intelligence agencies about Russia’s interference in the US electoral process. To prevent claims of partisan involvement, a secret briefing was organized for twelve top bipartisan congressional leaders at that time. Republican leaders opposed addressing the matter or making it public. Strongly against doing so, was the same Republican Senate Majority leader who now thinks there should be an investigation. Too little, too late, especially given the fact that the FBI did decide it was appropriate to issue controversial public statements in October that they knew would benefit Monster-Elect’s victory. Apparently, national security and the legitimacy of our voting process only matters to these congressional leaders if fighting for them benefits their party. The shameful Republican art of gerrymandering and voter suppression now has this additional international dimension, with a clear refusal to take timely action to protect the integrity of the voting process from the influence of foreign powers. The corruption of Republican leadership comes into additional focus with Monster-Elect’s choice for Secretary State announced yesterday. The ExxonMobil CEO to hold this job – yet another cabinet member without government experience, is not only an affront to climate change. The CEO of State has very strong ties to Russia, clearly aiding the further enrichment of the Kremlin and its oligarchy. All kinds of ghosts from the infamous W years are set to come out in his support before confirmation. The CEO may not need government experience after all, given that the plan is to openly run our government like a multinational real estate and fossil fuel enterprise. Image: The Son of Frankenstein, Film (1939).
With only seven dissenting votes, the United States electoral college has now confirmed Monster-Elect to become President Monster, despite having won almost three million fewer votes than his contender. But this week saw the much larger tragedy of men, women, and children buried alive in Aleppo, Syria’s ancient jewel and most populated city. With thousands unable to leave by the day to escape a similar fate, the shocking brutality and lack of humanity is the direct outcome of years of failed policies by the United Nations and the current US administration, including the Democratic Presidential contender. Monster-Elect’s position on Syria and his proximity to Russia are clearly set to continue and expand on such failed intervention in the region. Secular and moderate Syrians from around the world have consistently called out the mistaken approach since opposition to the Assad regime erupted years ago, arguing that such covert and overt interventions only strengthen fundamentalist factions like ISIS, leaving civilian populations and popular movements fighting against repression to suffer the most. If we want to stick to this century alone, the insistence from a few powerful players on controlling the region for their own economic and military agendas of course goes back to the disastrous invasion of Iraq, falsely connecting that country to the WTC attacks and creating the vacuum progressively filled with ethnic and religious fundamentalism. It is upon us, as citizens of the world, to help those who have paid the highest price for these interventions in the Middle East, even as we struggle to find local allies who have not been pushed to death, exile, silence, or extremism in the process. Image: The Bride of Frankenstein, Film 1935.
As the year comes to an end, this week has provided much needed rest in the calm before the storm. The monster will rise with the new year, so very soon. Image: Son of Frankenstein, Film 1939.
The face for this week’s monster has been cut out to honor the late John Berger. His long and prolific life just ended, but his work will continue to change the way we see the world. He was a lover of images and a persistent iconoclast, all at the same time. Berger opens his monumental BBC TV production of *Ways of Seeing* (1972) by walking into an art gallery, pulling out a knife, and cutting out a face from Botticelli’s famous *Mars and Venus*. This radical staging leads to the series’ initial exploration of the relationship between painting, image-making, and mass reproduction, as the face appears repeated in the rolling pattern of a fast-paced off-set press. With its unusually wide creative and analytical range, Berger’s fiction, critical writing, and constant reinvention have been a regular source of inspiration. He beautifully argued that images, and our visual understanding of the world more broadly, are best understood in relation to systems of power, methods of production, consumerism, and other contemporary social structures. The present-day political nature and historical scope of the Weekly Monster, as well as its forms of social circulation, are greatly indebted to this intellectual giant. We will miss you greatly, dear John. **Image:** Theodor von Holst frontispiece for Mary Shelley’s *Frankenstein*, Engraving (1831).
Monster-Elect has made it clear that there are no legal tools the people may use to prevent him from running the US government as his family business. Citing the various ways in which conflict of interest rules that apply to his cabinet and congress do not apply to the presidency, he has passed on his international holdings to his sons and promised he will not discuss any business with them. Such relief! His word has been so reliable in the last two years. His daughter will be in Washington, too, and her husband was just announced as senior advisor to the President. Any business discussions will also be avoided in that household. Ethics rules that may apply to Monster-Elect’s son-in-law are still being determined as we speak. To be fair, however, this Monster Family is only the most aggressive recent development in the decades long rise of political families in the US. Some names are required here: Kennedy, Bush, Clinton, all names that, before the Monster Family, have laid to the test the notion that hiring and involving family in government leads to nepotism and incompetence. Many professions have evolved with family operations and social networks as central and legitimate. What we are learning to determine as a society is whether elected positions and political functions are not degraded by this process, and where we have to draw strict lines. Clinton’s loss in 2016 can be understood in part by a public disenchantment and opposition to this growing dynastic tendency. Too much hope in Michelle, the logic goes, strengthens the role for Ivanka. Unless we want to move towards a parliamentary monarchy in the US, let us hope we have learned from the disasters of our second Bush Presidency, as we draw new lines and strengthen old ones, resisting the branding and name recognition afforded by political families who may be getting ‘too big to fail.’ Image: The Munsters, TV Series (1964-1966).
Monster-Elect is not a friend of the arts, to put it mildly. The feeling seems to be mutual. Alienating artists of all colors through the tone and message of his campaign, as well as his more recent cabinet nominations and proposed policies, he already had to face the inability to secure any top performers for his inauguration. This week brings a report from The Hill where the budget proposed by the new President will not just reduce funding for the National Endowment for the Arts (NEA) and National Endowment for the Humanities (NEH), but cut it entirely. Republicans have of course promised to eliminate the NEA before, but given the recklessness of President Monster, we should take him at his word and assume it will actually happen this time. Artists have already learned over the decades to not rely on such government funding, slashed as it has been multiple times by right wing figures like Jesse Helms during the culture wars. Direct support for artists had already been eliminated decades ago. The threat to eliminate the agency entirely, not to mention also punishing the Humanities for their lack of alignment with business and finance elites, will most directly hurt everyday Americans who are not rich, but like to attend museums and performances, or enjoy non-commercial programming on radio, TV, and other media. Tiny as the support for these agencies is already, its elimination is entirely insignificant for the national budget in economic terms. But President Monster and his unchecked Congress know that. More than a simple act of vengeance against dissent, the move is meant to bolster a populist strategy that claims only the elites care for the arts and humanities. Museum attendance and other such data of course shows the opposite. One more way for Monster to show he is not governing for the people, as much as he loves to make speeches about them. Image: Frankenstein Meets the Wolf Man, 1943.
This week’s tragic inauguration of President Pussy-Grabber was dwarfed by a powerful Women’s March, the most massively attended protest in United States history. Led by women and their supporters around the world on the following day, and continuing the great struggle of the Civil Rights movement, the march tripled the inauguration attendance in Washington DC alone. President Monster’s great humiliation was shown by a chain of lies that were surprising even for his standards. Claiming once again without any evidence that it was voter fraud by the millions that cost him the popular election, he went on to state inauguration attendance numbers entirely disproven by every objective account. He even lied about the weather, saying it had stopped raining when everyone present had witnessed the opposite. His press team now refers to such direct challenges to physical reality as ‘alternative facts.’

Those of us who still rely on our senses and brains to distinguish lived experience from the alternate reality of his tweets, know that January 21st is much cause to celebrate. Monster President, his almost entirely white-male Cabinet, and his Unchecked Congress will of course keep pretending nothing of relevance happened on that day. But we know the formation of a powerful grassroots movement has shown its first signs, with women of all ages as its leaders. As these brave women continue leading an intersectional movement that has matured over the decades to include all genders, ethnicities, and sexual orientations, we will be there with them, in greater numbers by the day, fighting every destructive policy already put in motion, replacing it with an inclusive and reinvigorated vision of democracy. Image: Frankenstein, Film (1931).
President Monster loves spectacle. Even though he has an unchecked Republican Congress ready to embrace any agenda he may wish to pursue, he has spent a good part of his first week in office signing Executive Orders secretly prepared by his closest advisors. Ignoring all standard legal procedures and staged for TV like a surprise unveiling of the inner workings of power, the mediatized signing of these orders communicates the unavoidable might of a king’s edict. Consistent with the hateful strand of ethnic nationalism that was a constant throughout his campaign, this first week’s round of edicts have launched a deliberate scapegoating strategy well known in the history of totalitarian regimes. Populist autocrats need external and internal enemies to rally their supporters and distract them from the theft and corruption happening right in front of their eyes. So, just as a cabinet of oligarchs whose least concern is the working man gets rushed through Congress, and Wall Street gets deregulated back to prefinancial crisis levels, the world is shocked with the more immediately cruel repercussions of orders for the construction of a border wall, and the banning of all individuals from seven majority Muslim countries to enter the United States. The ensuing social and constitutional chaos of these orders can only be seen as a deliberate result, as much as we may want to explain it by sheer incompetence of the order’s drafting. Massive protests at airports all over the US, joined by lawyers, governors, legislators, and judges have shown a clear opposition, but thousands of innocent refugees, visa holders, and even legal residents have been stranded without hope. Along with the undocumented immigrants who are to be deported and kept from returning by that big wall (the internal enemies), the victims of this ban are the first necessary scapegoats of President Monster’s cruel and intentionally chaotic regime. Image: House of Frankenstein, Film (1944).
While taken from a different monster film, our image for this week is a sequel to the previous one. One week dedicated to blocking the entry of immigrants and refugees from seven majority Muslim countries, the next one devoted to arresting immigrants already residing here, both scapegoats in a deliberate policy of Christian, ethnic nationalism. Over 600 arrests happening across the country this week through the coordinated raids of ICE officials, have instilled predictable fear among the residents of Hispanic and other immigrant neighborhoods. The statements of President Monster and his Homeland Security Chief are of course contradictory, one taking credit for cleaning up and keeping up his campaign promises, the other saying these are standard operations. It is true that the previous administration put in place the very mechanisms that allow such massive arrests, one of the more shameful aspects of that period. What is new is that the current President, in his blitz storm of executive orders, has recently expanded the definition of criminality to make it possible to detain and deport basically any undocumented immigrant living in the United States. Described by experts as “the largest expansion of any president in terms of who is a priority for removal,” the legality of this executive order, like the immigration ban, is also being challenged on individual cases, but this one will be much harder to limit through the constitutional and judicial process. Of course, no one truly knows who is being detained for what reason. We are just to trust the man and administration who has lied persistently about even the most basic, provable facts. He already said during the campaign that Mexicans in the US are rapists. It is not hard to see what his choice of neighborhoods will be as target for raids against ‘criminals.’ A big supporter of incarceration and privatization, we can also predict how happy he and his business partners will be with all the new income this will generate for the most highly privatized and unregulated area of the US prison sector: Immigration (INS) Detention Centers. In only a few weeks in office, President Monster and his Republican endorsement machine have managed to instill fear across the world by designating Muslims across seven countries as terrorism suspects, and immigrants across the United States as criminals. The famous time when they come to get your neighbor has started, even if most Americans are not ready to see it. Image: Frankenstein, Film (1931).
While most of the chaos from the first few weeks of this presidency has been deliberately created by the White House, this week’s intelligence leaks and brave media reporting brought unintended consequences for Monster in Chief. The information released to the public forced him to fire his National Security Advisor for directly lying to his team and the general public. Only two weeks before, President Monster had fired the Attorney General who shared with him the very facts that would be later reported by the media. In response to the scandal, President Monster held a long press conference where he defended the man he had just fired, failed to explain why he did not fire him earlier, and attacked the ever growing list of media networks he now calls fake news. The problem is clearly not that his staffer was dishonest, but that the American public learned about the lies. The anti-press press conference was coordinated with a series of polls sent out by the White House to further undermine the credibility of independent media and fact-based reporting among his supporters. The Monster now strangles its creators, the very networks who brought him to the highest office by offering constant free air time to him and his pundits, embracing the circus of hatred of his campaign for higher ratings, and providing disproportionate coverage of the private email server affair of his campaign opponent. Not content with an Unchecked Congress that will rubber stamp his extremist, billionaire-packed, antigovernment cabinet, President Monster has just called the media an Enemy of the American People. He thinks he also deserves an unchecked media that will applaud every aggressive policy he wishes to unleash on the American majority that voted against him, as well as the world community that watches with horror each new day of bad ideas from his administration. But we know that any dictatorship is based on eliminating or discrediting the so-called fourth power of independent media, forcing the population to hear only the message of their supreme leader. We also know that, without an independent media, his dishonest National Security Advisor would still be working at the White House. Suspicious as we may be of the networks after the irresponsible role they played in his election, we cannot abandon our commitment to free and independent reporting in this crucial moment for democracy in the world. Image: Young Frankenstein, Film (1974).
In the world’s first cinematic representation of Mary Shelley’s Frankenstein, the Doctor’s creation is not born of electricity. Instead, the 1910 version has him rise like a priest from a vat of chemicals. In 1909, only a year before, Teddy Roosevelt coined the term ‘bully pulpit’ to speak of the White House as a superb platform to espouse views and shape public opinion. In those days, bully was used to describe something magnificent, fantastic, or extraordinary. In our days, Monster has become President, and the way he uses his pulpit has adapted to the contemporary meaning of the word, that of a person who “uses force, threat, or coercion to abuse, intimidate, or aggressively dominate others.” With social media as his favorite medium, President Monster has used his bully platform to attack anyone who disagrees with him or corrects his daily falsehoods, from labor leaders, to journalists, to vulnerable teenagers. He has even used it to bully American voters, by claiming without evidence that millions of them voted illegally in the election where he lost the popular vote by large numbers. His most regular bullying subject, in words and action, are the undocumented immigrants that ICE agents across the country are now detaining and deporting by defining them as criminals, something shown to be untrue from many cases of detainees whose minor offenses hardly fit this description. A most disturbing thing about this new version of the bully pulpit is its implication of religious morality: the silence, complicity, and outright support for these inhumane raids and detentions from Christian conservatives and their ever more extreme preachers. Hard working parents separated from innocent children, a DACA recipient detained for speaking up at a press event, a sick woman removed from a hospital and denied treatment at the risk of losing her life, the spouse of a US citizen removed because of misfiled paperwork when the detainee was a teenager, all of these actual examples of the brutality of our new antiimmigrant regime in the last two weeks. The bully pulpit of the most immoral President in decades thus echoes the hypocrisy and cruelty of right-wing Christians whose compassion seems to apply only to fetuses, or people who share their skin color and religious worldview. Image: Frankenstein, Edison Kinetogram (1910).
President Monster’s Attorney General has been under fire this week, caught lying under oath. He has been forced to recuse himself from the investigation into Monster’s campaign relations with the Russian government. While not being asked directly if he had been in contact with Russian officials, he volunteered the lie, stating both that he was a surrogate for the campaign and that he had not met with any such officials. Having had weeks to correct his testimony to the congressional committee, his statements were contradicted by evidence of two meetings with a top Russian official, brought to light through a media story that created one more week of chaos for the White House. In a carefully worded letter in response to the controversy, the attorney general simply said he ‘does not recall’ what the topics of the conversation were with this Russian official, and likewise, ‘does not recall’ any conversations related to the campaign. This all happened just one day after President Monster was enjoying unexpected praise for being able to read a full speech with the lowest number of nonsensical rants in his first address to Congress. Angered by the attorney general’s story derailing his short-lived positive opinion cycle, President Monster tweeted away accusations a few days later - without evidence as usual, of his predecessor having personally ordered a wiretap to his campaign offices. The FBI has already asked the White House to withdraw this claim for its falseness, but we all know fact and truth will not hold Monster back and Republican congress members of the intelligence committee have already agreed to investigate his unfounded claim. He may not be able to get a positive message out, but he surely knows how to distract us all from Republicans dismantling the government as we know it, as their happy majority in both houses passes every right-wing bill they possibly can.

Image: Keith Jochim as the Creature in Frankenstein, Broadway Play (1981).
President Monster has learned a few tricks from previous administrations, particularly that of George W. Bush. One of these is that, if an untrue statement or an ineffective policy are rejected, you simply need to repeat it enough times and you may have a chance of it passing. This is what takes us to the Muslim Ban 2.0, the new executive order released this Monday after its previous version was put on hold by multiple courts for its unconstitutionality. Other than eliminating some technicalities that most directly exposed the original executive action for what it was, a fear mongering effort to criminalize Muslims overall and all citizens from only Muslim-majority countries, the 2.0 version is effectively as illegal as the first one. Especially when the President’s past statements and those of the architects are taken into account, there is no doubt about the actions’ intent and application if it is not successfully challenged. As importantly, this action will do nothing to improve security and, like the wasteful building of the wall on the border with Mexico, it is simply an exorbitantly expensive media campaign device paid for by American taxes. The trick of simply repeating the same thing until it works, however, is not to be underestimated. As we have said before, Monster throws so much shit on the wall that some of it is bound to stick. With the constant bombardment of extreme rightwing policies, cabinet picks, and twitter distractions, a much less vigorous opposition seems to be showing for this new Muslim ban when compared to its original version. Let’s not forget those W years, which were supposed to go down in history as the worse Presidency for a long time. We must fight back every time, with the same energy. Image: The Simpsons, TV series (2007).
The 1975 Roger Corman movie providing this week’s Frankenstein image is set in a dystopian American Society that is about to celebrate its 20th annual Transcontinental Road Race. Competitors get extra points for killing pedestrians. A resistance movement rises and plans on kidnapping the star driver Frankenstein to hold him hostage in their struggle against the President. The March 8th 2017 Women’s Strike and its thousands of participants around the world were set in a dystopian present, where President Frankenstein attempts to undermine every battle that women have won in recent decades. Their temporary work stoppage, timed to coincide with International Women’s Day, led to the closing of US schools and nearly 400 actions in over 50 countries. Building from the massive power of the earlier Women’s March, and the subsequent Immigrants’ Strike, this intersectional resistance movement led by women is only beginning, and we will soon also see many of its leaders run in local races. Frankenstein fans beware! Image: Death Race 2000, Film (1975).
For the last seven years Republicans in the US congress have made it their top priority to block and boycott every aspect of the 2010 Affordable Care Act. President Monster assured his voters during the 2016 campaign that he would repeal and replace this comprehensive healthcare program to improve it, keeping its most popular components, and not letting anyone lose coverage. This week, with a full majority in both houses and a President from their party in the White House, Republicans have quickly and dramatically failed to deliver what they promised to do for the American people. Their inability to come to an agreement does not come as a surprise to those who know that Republicans are simply against affordable healthcare.

The health benefits that most upper and upper middle class people enjoy in this country are actually subsidized in massive ways by our taxes, but these subsidies are negotiated through employer and corporate relationships to the State. The problem for Republicans is when those outside the regular job system, namely working class people and others with irregular or part-time employment, have direct access to healthcare. To put it differently, Republicans can only understand the concept of insurance if it is understood as a tax cut or financial benefit for the wealthiest Americans. No matter how much President Monster and this Monster Congress will try to blame the horrible state of healthcare in this wealthy nation on Democrats and the previous administration, even those who voted for them will have to come to terms with the fact that their President and Representatives do not care the least bit for their uninsured or underinsured citizens. Image: Charles Burns for The New Yorker, Illustration (1994).
In the brief time that President Monster has played the role of Commander in Chief, the civilian casualties caused by US bombings have reached levels not seen since the initial years of the invasion of Iraq, that root cause of a human and economic disaster brought to us by the last Republican administration. With two-hundred killed in one day alone in Mosul, Iraq’s second largest city, the death toll from recent weeks is thought to be above one thousand. The victims include women and children who are buried in the rubble. Bombs have fallen right next to schools and mosques, as the Pentagon tries to blame ISIS and terrorism for their own disregard for Iraqi civilians. We do not need to sympathize with Islamic extremists to understand that the real reason for these bombings in the region is the US’ continued role as military keeper of a global fossil fuel Empire, a trend that is only getting worse with President Monster’s worldview and policies. Even progressive media in the US fail to recognize that the global outrage over these bombings is also rooted in the brutal military imbalance that lets Americans wage wars with minimal casualties of their own. Bombing civilian neighborhoods is not only unacceptable on humanitarian grounds, but also from this perspective. With three consecutive US Presidents systematically building up this strategy of war without US casualties, those of us who are US citizens need to come to terms with the fact that historical precedents of such great imbalance have come to be understood as imperial or colonial oppression in the best case, and even genocide at its worse. Image: Still from deleted scene, Bride of Frankenstein, Film (1935).
Democrats also produce great monsters, and this week’s poster is dedicated to one of them. The North Carolina Democratic Governor who was put into office by constituents in great part due to the outrage and opposition against his Republican predecessor’s support of the infamous HB2 legislation, used his office this week to betray his voters and reach a compromise with local Republicans to repeal the so-called bathroom law. Anyone who cared to read the original HB2 law knows that it is about much more than bathrooms, representing policies that openly institute governmental discrimination across the spectrum against LGBTQ individuals and communities. The new HB142 law we are supposed to accept as a repeal and compromise is effectively the same policy under a different name, including a years-long moratorium on the passing of any local ordinances that would try to protect the rights of LGBTQ people. Many national and international organizations that had joined a powerful boycott against North Carolina for turning discrimination into law have expressed their continued opposition to this renamed bill. Sadly, however, too many have fallen for the Governor’s shameful rebranding campaign, betraying their LGBTQ neighbors, friends, and relatives. This includes the NCAA, who had taken a leadership role using the leverage of basketball in the boycott, but has already announced the end of their participation after the so-called repeal was signed. Image: Heineken Halloween, Advertisement (2003).
Even if this terrifying period of a Monster Presidency ends up being an aberration in the life of American democracy, this week has cemented its lasting legacy with the confirmation of a new Supreme Justice, the youngest to serve on the Court. A known supporter of corporations over people, our new Supreme Monster reinstates the right-wing balance to the US court system at a time when judicial powers have proven to be one of the few mechanisms left in place to safeguard against executive overreach and partisan legislative abuse. Unable to achieve the required votes to approve the nominee, Republicans refused to accept the centrist notion of consensus and deliberation in this process, imposing instead a change to long established Senate approval rules to pass the new Supreme Monster with a miniscule number of votes. The new rules will also ensure more ideologically oriented judges being approved in the future, further entrenching divisions made painfully visible during the last electoral campaign and the first few months of this Presidency. Beyond that, these Senators’ actions are a final blow to the laws they are supposed to embody, as they literally stole this Supreme Court seat from the previous Democratic administration, refusing for a year to even hold a hearing for the legitimate nominee. There seems to be no limit to what these representatives, their elite donors, and safely gerrymandered districts are able to accomplish without any democratic accountability. There may be a way to unseat the bastards through future elections, but there is no way for us to recover the highest judicial seat they have stolen. Image: House of Frankenstein, Film (1944).
President Monster’s extravagant and frequent visits to his Mar-a-Lago private resort will cost American tax payers an approximate $600 million in his four years in office, according to a recent article by The Independent. This is more than the total of four programs he has proposed to eliminate: The National Endowment for the Arts, the US Interagency Council on Homelessness, the Senior Community Service Employment Program, and the Woodrow Wilson International Center for Scholars. The solution to these proposed cuts seems simple, all without raising taxes. If President Monster stayed at the White House, where he is supposed to be, we could secure access to the arts by all people, not just the rich, meals for the homeless, and support for the poor and elderly. Image: Van Helsing, Film (2004).
The original Frankenstein story warns of science gone astray as it produces a monster it cannot control or truly understand. The parallels to the story of our Monster President tell a different story, one where an outdated electoral system, media spectacle, and financial greed, as well as massive prejudice or the willingness to ignore it, create a most powerful global leader whose collective fabrication threatens our planet, quite literally. In a full narrative twist, our present story features science and scientists as the voice of caution and opposition against the monster. Last weekend, on April 22nd, the March for Science brought together people from around the world in over 600 cities and seven continents, including Antarctica. Rallies included over 100,000 people in the US capital, a march of penguins, an underwater march, and many other creative actions staged by scientists and their supporters in opposition to a regime that has risen to power through an open disdain of facts, a constant and strategic misrepresentation of reality, a disrespect of knowledge and its institutions, and a dangerous celebration of ignorance best represented by Monster in Chief’s diarrhetic flow of contradictory tweets and irresponsible false claims. The current administration’s defunding of scientific research, climate change denial, and clear attempt to further dismantle an already weakened public education system, has brought scientists to engage in political activity at unprecedented levels since the anti-nuclear activist days of the Cold War. As one of the signs at the rallies read ‘You know there is trouble when the geeks are in the streets.’ The massive success of the science march also attests to the building of a wide solidarity movement, bringing these voices of knowledge together with those of previous actions by immigrants, women’s rights advocates, and other groups directly threatened by the mad political system failure and lightning storm whose strike gave life to the Monster we now call the US President. Image: Frankenstein Meets the Wolfman, Film (1943).
President Monster descended to a new low in his recent interview for AP released April 21st. Boasting of the attention he brings wherever he goes, he stated that his ‘Face the Nation’ appearance produced ratings for the CBS Sunday morning show that had not been that high since the 9/11 World Trade Center attacks. Leaving aside the tastelessness of a President using the largest tragedy in his nation’s recent history to promote his own image, the comparison seems helpful in understanding just how twisted Monster’s celebrity-obsessed mind is. His statement means to imply that high TV ratings are the standard by which we should judge the popular support of a public figure. Even if we decided to ignore his historically low approval numbers, his own 9/11 reference clearly shows that people watch TV news, not necessarily to follow up on political celebrities, but rather to witness great disasters as they unfold. If high TV ratings were the measure by which a politician’s success were determined, as President Monster likes to believe, Osama Bin Laden and Al Qaeda could have well run for political office, given the excellent ratings they secured from their horrific attacks. Unintentionally, the offensive TV ratings comparison also expresses the feelings of so many Americans and people around the world, whose level of fear and insecurity brought on by Monster’s election, had not been as high since the aftermath of 9/11. Perhaps there is no such thing as bad publicity after all, but comparing one’s success with that of the 9/11 attacks surely is a sick thing for any US politician to be doing. Image: *Bride of Frankenstein*, Film (1935) with 9/11 WTC attacks background image.
In a little over one hundred days in office President Monster has shown little regard of his reckless actions leading to impeachment, knowing he can count on the complete loyalty of a Republican Congress that owes him everything. This week’s firing of FBI Chief Comey, however, is taking him closer to the edge. We now have President Monster’s own words from his NBC interview to confirm that Comey was fired for pursuing the investigation into connections between Russia and the 2016 Monster Campaign. As this story continues to unfold, Comey himself has demanded that any testimony he give related to this matter be made in public. Judging simply from this gesture, it seems like Monster and his Republican rubber-stamping machine are the ones who have most to hide from American voters. 2016 campaign chants of ‘lock her up,’ perversely tied to the FBI Chief himself and his previous actions, seem to echo and haunt the White House now as they try so hard to suppress the investigation. We have a long list of lies, but no evidence of guilt at this point, and all people, including President Monster, should be considered innocent until proven otherwise. The White House could, however, just let justice take its course and proof their innocence through an independent and trustworthy investigation. Their actions on the matter, including their obstruction of justice, point in a very different direction, one that could in fact lead to the President’s impeachment. Image: The Ghost of Frankenstein, Film (1942).
On April 17th, 1,500 Palestinian prisoners began a hunger strike to demand basic issues like visitation rights and humane treatment from the Israeli State. Their hunger strike passed the one month mark this week, with many of the strikers hospitalized, all without any response from the government. Putting aside that many of the strikers are believed to be political prisoners, without any actual criminal wrong-doing, the conditions of their imprisonment are unacceptable under any terms. Called the Dignity Strike, this massive, peaceful and courageous collective act has met with much support from Palestinian civil society - who generally know what it is like to be imprisoned and abused by the same authorities, as well as supporters around the world. With minor media attention given the scale of the situation, however, little political pressure has been put on Israel to address the prisoners’ legitimate demands. President Monster himself visited Israel this week and strategically avoided any involvement in the strike, instead making empty statements about resolving the Israel-Palestine conflict. 

*Image: Frankenstein, Film (1931).*
In their shared passion for personal enrichment, President Monster and his son-in-law are diversifying their businesses with our money. Through their intermediary role as political representatives they have found even more lucrative adventures in the global weapons trade. This week, both men traveled with family to Saudi Arabia. It is the first time any US President has made this country the first stop on an inaugural foreign trip, and the Saudis have worked very hard to make it so. Spending $5.4 million dollars on one lobbying firm alone (Sonoran Policy Group), the Saudi government is eager to reestablish their privileged place as once time favorites of the American oil industry and its paid for Republican representatives. Hosted like royalty by the most repressive regime in the region, President Monster and King Salman performed a sword dance together as they celebrated an arms deal with Saudi Arabia of 110 billion dollars, brokered by no less than the son-in-law himself. No wonder our elected President has proposed to cut every possible social and education program in the US so he can increase spending on the military. A new art of the deal is born as these two real estate moguls, turned politicians, turned weapons dealers, build on more basic ideas like tax breaks for the wealthy to expand their business influence and line their pockets with our work and income. Image: Death Race 2000, Film (1975).
Monster's family visit to the Vatican on May 24th produced endless images and news around the globe. In spite of significant public differences on topics like multi-national dialogue, religious pluralism, immigrants' rights, climate change, and other key topics, President Monster and the Pope seem to have put differences aside. Piously dressed, Monster's wife, daughter, and son-in-law made picture perfect appearances in black and white. In previous months, some speculation had developed about right-wing characters at the Vatican who are very critical of the Pope, like US Cardinal Burke, aligning with Monster campaign and White House top ideologist and strategist Steve Bannon. Regardless of whether we accept these reports as relevant or sheer conspiracy theory, the Vatican visit and its overall positive reception seem to show that both President Monster and the Pope are doing their best to legitimize each other. This will come as no surprise to those who, regardless of the current Pope's popularity and relatively progressive views, are painfully aware of the history of colonialism, misogyny, and corruption represented by the Vatican as a political institution. The fact that we place such high hopes on the Pope as a progressive voice in the current global political landscape, may in itself serve as evidence of the tragic situation our world finds itself in. Image: The Bride of Frankenstein, Film (1935).
Consistent with his campaign statements that climate change was a Chinese hoax, President Monster announced this week that the United States would withdraw from the Paris Climate Accords, a powerful blow against decades of diplomatic work and international consensus building around actions that need to be taken by all nations to avoid the further concentration of greenhouse gases, higher global temperatures and climate change, as well as the melting of the ice caps and related change in Ocean levels. This action will make the United States, the largest polluter on the planet, one of only three countries in the world not signing on to the Paris agreement according to the United Nations, accompanied only by Syria, and Nicaragua, the last of which refused to join in protest because in their view the Paris agreement was not doing enough. Beyond the lack of concern for the fate of our planet and future generations, the irresponsible isolationism of Monster’s ‘America first’ decision ignores the fact that climate change and its damaging impact will obey no national borders, no matter how much he and his followers may wish to hide their head in the sand. Image: Ghost of Frankenstein, Film (1942).
Last Thursday, former FBI Chief James Comey testified before the United States Senate Intelligence Committee. He did so as a private citizen, one month after being fired by President Monster, who had asked him earlier for his loyalty, also suggesting he should drop the case against his top National Security Advisor. The title of this weekly item is no surprise, however. Monster himself had already stated publically that he fired Comey because of the Russia investigation, clearly pointing to an open act of obstruction of justice. The value from the Senate testimony is perhaps best represented with the following quotes from the former FBI Chief himself about this growing governmental crisis: “Although the law requires no reason at all to fire an FBI director, the administration then chose to defame me and more importantly the FBI by saying that the organization was in disarray, that it was poorly led, that the workforce had lost confidence in its leader.” “Those were lies plain and simple.” (“And I am so sorry that the FBI workforce had to hear them and I am so sorry that the American people were told them. I worked every day at the FBI to help make that great organization better.”) “It’s my judgment that I was fired because of the Russia investigation. I was fired in some way to change or the endeavor was to change the way the Russia investigation was being conducted. That is a very big deal.” “Not just because it involves me. The nature of the FBI and the nature of its work requires that it not be the subject of political consideration.” In response to Monster’s tweet saying he had tapes of their conversations, Comey said “Lordy, I hope there are tapes.” Image: Son of Frankenstein, Film (1939).
Many cinematic representations of Frankenstein show the monster tragically killed by fire, but this week’s real tragedy is about the death of more than eighty immigrants and second class citizens in the UK, one of the world’s wealthiest countries. On June 14th, Grenfell Tower in London, the building housing these victims and those who survived them, went up in flames across its twenty-four story height, right next to its affluent neighbors. No other local authority in the UK shows a higher wealth disparity than the Kensington and Chelsea borough where this tragedy occurred. Already suffering a loss at the recent elections, Brexit architect and anti-immigrant Prime Minister Theresa May was slow in her response, causing the crowd of mourning and outraged protesters at Kensington and Chelsea Town Hall to chant ‘Justice for Grenfell’ and ‘May must go.’ The working class and immigrant residents of the city housing complex and their Grenfell Action Committee had complained about their living conditions and fire safety concerns since 2013, and many believe much if not all of this enormous human loss was preventable, if the authorities had acted responsibly, not just before the accident, but also as the fire was unfolding. Image: Frankenstein Must Be Destroyed, Film (1969).
In spite of the militaristic core of American society, the United States’ internal political system has long taken pride in the fact that all top military decisions are made by an official elected by civilians. This equivalence between the figure of the President and that of Commander in Chief is fundamental to modern American democracy. For reasons that range from his incompetence and lack of interest in educating himself on matters he does not care for, to his inability to take responsibility for any of his actions, our 45th President has been quick to relinquish authority on a wide range of processes that have made previous Commanders in Chief accountable to the American public for military decisions. While we should not be calling this a military takeover, but rather a handover, this is effectively a massive power transfer from the White House to the Pentagon. Recent examples include giving Defense Secretary Mattis the authority to set troop levels in Afghanistan, letting Pentagon officials generally manage troop levels across the world, control of decisions on airstrikes in places like Somalia and Yemen and, beyond the Pentagon, allowing the CIA to conduct drone strikes without Presidential oversight. The Pentagon is not complaining of course, not only empowered but also continuously flattered in public statements by Monster and his ethno-populist-macho-militarism. How far he will go with this transfer of power in four long years we do not know, but American voters and civilians should know that no military people will give up powers they have gained without a fight. Image: On the set of Son of Frankenstein, drinking tea, Photo (1939).
On June 22nd, two watchdog groups (CREW & National Security Archive) sued President Monster and the Executive Office of the President for intentionally deleting communications whose preservation is mandated by the 2014 Presidential Records Act. Very much like a White House version of the popular snapchat, apps like Confide and Signal are being used to ‘self-destruct’ or ‘auto-delete’ messages after the receiver has read them. “Such communications could involve correspondence among the president, aides, advisers, contractors, lobbyists and others.” Evidence suggests that President Monster and others within the White House are “either ignoring or outright flouting these responsibilities,” according to the suit. CREW spokesman Jordan Libowitz has stated that the only reason to delete these messages is to “keep them secret from the American people.” He said it’s part of a “larger, troubling pattern” of information suppression in the current administration. Image: Mezco Toyz One 12 Collective Universal Monsters Frankenstein, Action Figure (2017).
Monster Junior was recently forced to release damaging correspondence with foreign individuals in 2016, preempting their publication by The New York Times. Interestingly, he decided to omit the fourth page of the communications, where many compromising statements appear, including the offer from the sender to provide helpful materials for his father during the 2016 presidential election. Included in that page is the following quote: “This is obviously very high level and sensitive information but is part of Russia and its government’s support...” At the time, Junior replied by saying “If it’s what you say I love it especially later in the summer.” Rob Goldstone, the sender of the message and mediator between Junior and Russian pop star Emin, then worked to arrange a meeting with him and attorney Natalia Veselnitskaya in New York. Junior made sure to invite Monster’s son-in-law and his then campaign manager to the meeting. According to their statements, nothing related to this matter was discussed, of course. Son-in-law Kushner even had to revise his official records of meetings with foreign individuals, since he had conveniently forgotten to include this meeting. We may never know what was actually shared, or if it actually came from the Russian government. The correspondence does show, however, that Monster Junior, Monster’s son-in-law, and his then campaign manager agreed to meet with someone offering help for the US Presidential campaign directly from the Russian government. Image: Son of Frankenstein, Film (1939).
The monstrous government of Theresa May has confirmed that in spite of her promise of amnesty to the victims of the recent Grenfell Tower tragedy, those coming forward could be deported after twelve months. Beyond the cruelty of such a measure as pertains those whose relatives died or were injured in the recent fire that shook the city of London, the decision makes sure that no one comes forward with claims for fear of being deported. No cost, no accountability, just insult upon injury. Jolyon Maugham QC, a prominent barrister who has volunteered to offer free legal services to Grenfell victims, said: “You can’t really call this an amnesty. The Government is offering not to deport you immediately if you give it the wherewithal to deport you later. It’s hard to see that it will have the response the Government says it desires.” Image: Ghost of Frankenstein, Film (1942).
If you thought Fox News and Breitbart were the end of fact-based reporting and journalistic integrity, just brace yourself for the nation-wide shock therapy that is about to be launched on the American public. Boris Epshteyn, former special assistant to President Monster and White House employee who drafted the infamous Holocaust Remembrance Day statement that forgot to mention Jews or Judaism, has become the host of ‘Bottom Line With Boris’, a White House propaganda segment thinly disguised as a news program running eight to nine times a week on Sinclair Broadcast Group’s 173 local TV stations in 81 markets across the United States, reaching over 2.2 million households. A proposed Sinclair mega-merger with Tribune Media could make that grow to 72 percent of households in the United States. Fitting neatly between the local traffic and weather reports, Boris’ unapologetic Presidential propaganda snippet refers to itself as the ‘real news’ and promises to do with local news what Fox News has done to cable news, Breitbart to online journalism, and Monster’s own Twitter fictions to social media reporting. While Monster himself has promised to cut independent tax-supported TV programming, his FCC has already greatly aided Sinclair’s expansion. It may soon no longer matter what the so-called fourth power of the free press is reporting, since it will be immediately discredited and contradicted for the majority of TV viewers by this profitable propaganda machine, a massive rabbit hole of sorts, leading us all into a world where facts are fake news and tweets are the only reality we need. Image: Frankenstein (Phil Hartman) on Saturday Night Live, Season 21, TV (1986).
After their first unsuccessful attempt four months ago to take away affordable healthcare from millions of Americans, Republican lawmakers in the Senate gave it another try this week with their so-called ‘skinny repeal.’ Fortunately, they failed again. Senator John McCain has gotten most of the credit for this with his last minute ‘no’ vote, but the reality is that only three Republican Senators voted against a repeal attempt that had no guarantees or trustworthy measures for the famous ‘replace’ part in their ‘repeal and replace’ language. This is a clear sign that, with the Presidency and majority in both houses, Republicans are either unwilling or unable to resolve the issue of healthcare that a large majority of Americans want permanently addressed. After many years of boycotting and fighting any healthcare reform as the opposition party, they are having a hard time with the responsibilities of being in power. The only reason they seem to even care about the issue, other than the overwhelming pressure received from their constituencies, is that they hope to use any repeal they can agree on to free up massive tax cuts they have promised to their wealthiest individual and corporate donors. With tax reform on the upcoming agenda, they will soon be running out of options.

Monster hires and fires people at the White House with the same speed he did in the Apprentice show that brought him to fame. But no one has risen and fallen as spectacularly as Chief of Communications Anthony Scaramucci, also known as “the Mooch.” Lasting ten days on the job, the Mooch managed to spread more foul language across American mainstream media than any gangster rapper. His cursing was so generous and regular in his short tenure, that it is perhaps best represented by journalists’ abundant use of the word ‘expletive.’ Provided here is only the most famous example from his conversation with the New Yorker’s Ryan Lizza, where the Mooch said that Stephen K. Bannon was trying to “[expletive] his own [expletive],” that Priebus was a [expletive] paranoid schizophrenic” who was trying to “[expletive]-block” rivals. He said he wanted to [expletive] kill all the leakers, who, he said, are “going to have to go [expletive] themselves.” As entertaining as these ten days have been, it is hard to comprehend how someone like the Mooch was chosen as White House Communications Chief, and how little ‘expletive’ seems to stick on President Monster for his poor choices, especially when one could assume that the pure, prude and devout Christian Republicans he claims to represent should be deeply offended by such language. It seems like Monster is laughing at their expense and ours, turning the highest office of the nation into a permanent media circus, shaped in the image of his successful TV shows and Presidential campaign. Image: The Son of Frankenstein, Film (1939).
When deaths have been caused by Islamic fundamentalists around the world, President Monster has been quick to tweet his condemnations against terror. When, at the August 12th Unite the Right rally in Charlottesville, VA a white supremacist drove his car into a group of counter-protesters, killing 32-year old Heather Heyer, it took him two days of hard criticism to condemn those responsible and, even then, he has continuously blamed ‘both sides’ for the violence. White supremacist hate groups have celebrated the President’s response and continue to rally behind him, seeing the White House Supremacist that so many Americans are still in denial about. Monster’s response, only to be understood as an open endorsement of racist violence against African Americans, Jews, and other minorities, has caused so many CEO resignations in top advisory councils that Monster was forced to disband two of them. All 17 members of the White House arts panel also resigned in protest. Mostly tragically silent, however, are top Jewish staffers of the current White House, including Monster’s own daughter and son-in-law, his top economic advisor Gary D. Cohn, secretary of the Treasury Steven Mnuchin, and others. Who knows what they tell themselves when they hear the President say that ‘fine people’ were also at the rally where KKK, neo-Nazi and other Unite the Right torchbearers were chanting the ‘Jews will not replace us.’ At what point does silence become complicity in the rotten, hate mongering machine that Monster has so carefully assembled to sustain his power? Image: Frankenstein, Film (1939).
Dozens of deaths have been caused by cars intentionally driving into innocent crowds by ISIS, most recently in Barcelona. But it took the murder of Heather Heyer by a white supremacist similarly driving into anti-fascist protesters right here in Charlottesville for Republican lawmakers in six states to drop efforts they had launched months before to protect drivers killing protesters from prosecution. The GOP ‘driver immunity’ legislations were proposed in response to massive protests over last year against police shootings of black men, the Dakota Access pipeline and policies of Monster’s administration. “It is intellectually dishonest and a gross mischaracterization to portray North Carolina House Bill 330 as a protection measure for the act of violence that occurred in Charlottesville this past weekend,” that bill’s sponsors, Reps. Justin Burr and Chris Millis, said in a joint statement. Their message seems to be lost to President Monster’s supporters, however, whose social media posts commenting on the laws stated they would make it legal to “run down protesters” when the president visited Tennessee, also including internet memes showing a car driving over protesters with the title ‘All Lives Splatter.’ The use of a car as a deadly weapon against Black Lives Matter and other activists opposing the President is clearly on the mind of his most deranged supporters. All we need for their hate and terror to turn into actions are laws that will let them go unpunished. Image: Death Race 2000, Film (1975).
With ever lower approval ratings caused by his disastrous government, President Monster has returned to what he is successful at, campaigning. Less than a year into his Presidency, he has registered for the 2020 Campaign, holding an official campaign rally in Phoenix to a gradually dwindling audience. As baffling and unprecedented as this is for any previous US President, his long speech, packed with the usual lies and shocking remarks, the rally itself, and his apparent intention to make his Divided States Campaign a permanent thing, cannot only be explained by his constant need for attention and adulation, the latter of which he seems to only find amongst his base these days. His absurdly early return to the campaign trail lets him fundraise for many more years, of course, a good business decision regardless of his political fate. Most importantly, however, Monster wants to make sure that even if his regime ends in disaster, he has a large group of people who will blame everyone else but him and themselves for its failures. This group thrives from the kinds of events they loved during the 2016 campaign, a fictional parallel world where they get to dismiss all facts being reported as fake news, and pretend that their views must apply to the rest of us, no matter how offensive they are, and how opposed to them a majority of Americans may be. If Wall Street, wealthy donors, Corporate tax break beggars, and even the Republican establishment politicians ever abandon Monster, he will still have this loyal group of political customers. Image: Ghost of Frankenstein, Film (1945).
Unable to deliver the news himself, President Heartless sent his executioner and Attorney General today to officially announce their decision to cut the popular DACA program that has protected immigrants in the United States who were brought here by their parents when they were children. Over 800,000 people will be impacted by his decision, throwing their lives, their families, and communities into further despair. Facing a deadline from ten States’ AGs who wanted to see the end of the program, Monster could have let the courts decide the case. Instead, he canceled DACA to satisfy his anti-immigrant base, in spite of the program’s favorable view among almost 80% of the population, immigrants and their advocates, business leaders, and even his own party’s top legislators and advisors. The same President we have seen happily sign televised executive orders enacting unpopular policies on a regular basis, says that the reason for the cancelation is that DACA was an executive overreach from the previous administration. We are asked to believe that Congress will resolve the matter in a provided six-month grace period. Never mind the fact that DACA was created in the first place because Congress has been unable for years to produce any comprehensive and acceptable immigration reform. This unnecessary and politically motivated blow against the nation of immigrants, is ever more painful since it is directed at its children and youth. Big heart of gold Monster keeps saying he has. Image: Ghost of Frankenstein, Studio Still (1943).
Boasting earlier in tweets of his ‘complete power to pardon’ anyone, including himself, Monster used this presidential power for the first time on Friday August 25th, pardoning the criminal Arizona Sheriff Joe Arpaio. On the one hand, this was a clear message to his anti-immigrant base, with the Sheriff’s well documented record of illegal actions and inflammatory rhetoric against immigrants in Arizona. It also sent a strong message to anyone ready to testify against Monster in the Mueller investigation on collusion between 2016 campaign associates and Russia, suggesting they should remain loyal and silent since he could pardon them if needed. As with so many things about this monstrous regime, this is uncharted territory. Constitutional experts are debating whether this egregious misuse of the pardon itself can be added to the growing list in the case for Monster’s impeachment. Various legal organizations are also challenging the Arpaio pardon directly, arguing it is anti-constitutional in nature, since it nullifies the constitutional rights of those victimized by a Sheriff who was already found to be guilty. Regardless of the outcome, and in case anyone still had any doubts, our President is not afraid to show that he considers himself and his associates to be above the law. Image: House of the Wolfman, Film (2009).
Not long after his ouster from government in the aftermath of neo-Nazi violence in Charlottesville, former campaign manager and White House Chief Strategist Steve Bannon held his first formal TV interview this week at no less than ‘60 Minutes’. Quickly meeting billionaire Robert Mercer and reinstated as head of the alt-right media platform Breitbart, Bannon came back with a vengeance as he spoke with Charlie Rose. Expressing nothing but devotion and loyalty to President Monster, hitting left and right, he even accused the Republican establishment for attempting to nullify the 2016 election. Claiming that the United States is a country built by border protection and citizenship, rather than immigrants, forgetting to bring up slavery in the process, and reprimanding Rose’s mention of Native Americans as being ‘beneath him’, Herr Bannon told the story of this tumultuous year from his perspective, a heroic narrative of nationalist populism where he and Papa Monster fought the evil swamp that now threatens to destroy their dream. For anyone baffled by the apparent contradiction of his populist vision and his attacks of ‘the left’, one need only remember earlier right wing manifestations of ethno-populism, with the ‘socialist’ part of National Socialism as the most obvious one. Much has been said of Bannon’s Leninist side, but let us not forget that the White House he helped create filled its cabinet with the largest number of billionaires in history. A populist theology for the masses, not to be obeyed by its leaders.

A few days ago, President Monster addressed the United Nations General Assembly for the first time since he took office, obsessively using the word ‘sovereignty’ throughout his speech, addressing North Korea’s leader as ‘rocket man’, and threatening to destroy his entire country if needed. His monstrous North Korean counter-part responded swiftly, calling him a ‘dotard’ on national TV. The unexpected Shakespearean term caused equal sensation, as English speakers themselves were forced to look it up and learn it was meant for old men who have become weak or senile. As is the case with everything he touches, the spectacle of Twitter controversy and reality TV has thus fully entered United Nations diplomacy. Monster encouraged all those present to represent first and foremost the interests of their sovereign nations. It would of course be naïve to misread this as a plea for international federalism. Just in case there was any doubt about how Monster understands things, he actually congratulated African leaders because so many of his friends are trying to get rich off their countries. America Uber Alles, and all nations against each other, seems to be the vision of the United Nations for the current White House. It’s the perfect plan to run an empire, not an organization of independent and sovereign nations. Image: Ghost of Frankenstein, Publicity Photo (1942).
Puerto Rico comes last in President Monster’s distorted America First worldview. He seems to be among the 41% of Americans who in a recent poll wrongly stated that Puerto Ricans do not hold US citizenship, even though decades old laws (1917 and 1941) have given them that status. Dealing with the most devastating natural disaster in modern history after Hurricane Maria hit the island, Puerto Ricans now also have to deal with a President who thinks of them as colonial subjects. His delayed and insufficient response was followed by personal attacks against San Juan’s Mayor, shared as aggressive tweets on his weekend break from the comfort of his New Jersey Golf Club. His anger at the Mayor was caused by her pleading for additional help, simply repeating a request that his own military leader involved in the effort had already made. Even earlier, in Maria’s immediate aftermath, Monster had already shocked people by bringing up the island’s debt situation, one that has in fact been maintained by Republicans preventing the island in its unincorporated status from applying for bankruptcy protections that benefit all States in the Union. Of course, no debt issues were brought up by him in the weeks before when speaking to distraught Texans after Hurricane Harvey, or Floridians after Hurricane Irma. Conditional help tied to more debt seems to be reserved for those who, like other minorities in the US mainland, only have second class citizenship in the eyes of their current President. It will apparently be left to us to treat our fellow citizens as equals and adequately support them in this time of suffering. Image: *Frankenstein*, Film (1931).
After weeks of massive hurricanes and natural disasters, President Monster has done nothing to address a crumbling infrastructure he promised to fix and rebuild. Instead, he is now using the lives of 800,000 DACA recipients as hostages for his idiotic border wall. An ineffective way to protect the country at best, the wall has been estimated to cost between $21 and $70 billion, all to be paid for by us, the American tax payers. Just think how many levees can be fixed and raised with those funds, how many roads built, how many bridges fixed. In spite of promises to Democrats saying he would help find a solution for those affected when he canceled DACA, the list of demands that Monster’s White House submitted to Congress this Sunday makes clear he never had any intention of doing so. Demands now added to the DACA negotiation include the wall, the hiring of 10,000 immigration agents, tougher laws for those seeking asylum and denial of federal grants to “sanctuary cities”. Even sicker than all of this is the fact that Monster’s immigration hawks never spell out what they intend to do with the estimated 11 million immigrants now living in the country. Do they intend to round them up and deport them all as they build their wall? If that is their intention, we should know that any State able and ready to find and arrest that many people is by definition a police state. If they do not intend to address this population in any way other than by terrorizing them, what is the point of their ridiculous wall? To reduce the whole immigration debate to the extremes of DACA and the wall may work well for Monster’s base and his permanent campaign, but it can only distract this nation of immigrants from dealing with the real and humane reforms that have been so urgent for decades. Image: Lynd Ward Illustration for Smith & Haas Edition of Shelly’s Frankenstein, Wood Engraving (1934).
Almost a year after he was elected, with a majority in Congress, and a cabinet stacked with billionaires, President Monster has not produced a single legislative accomplishment. Instead, he has used his executive power to systematically destroy his predecessor’s legacy. His ‘to undo list’ has already led to dismantling the healthcare system by canceling subsidies to insurance companies, ending the popular DACA program, pulling out of the Paris Climate Agreement, killing the Clean Power Plan and, most recently, decertifying the Iran nuclear deal, which may force a US pull out from the historic agreement. To these major anti-accomplishments that will hurt millions of lives, if not the entire planet, one needs to add many others, like his reversal of the Keystone XL Pipeline decision, rolling back women’s access to reproductive rights, removing protections for LGBTQ and other minorities in the workplace, eliminating measures to curb student debt, walking away from the Asian Trade Agreement, and the list goes on. Other reckless moves like pulling the US out of UNESCO, however, cannot be explained simply by his clear wish to erase the previous Presidency, even if they are consistent in their readiness for destruction. Monster has built a powerful brand on the foundation of the many ugly towers and golf clubs that bear his name, but consensus building is not his thing. Oh, great divider, when will your loyal subjects see that destruction is easy and does not make a legacy, but building things together is what gives life a chance for the future? Image: Andy Warhol’s “Frankenstein” or “Flesh for Frankenstein”, 3D Film (1973).
Even Fox News polls show the unprecedented low levels of popularity of President Monster, but none of it has translated to lower support from our elected officials. There is no surprise about Monster himself governing as if he had won in a landslide, even though he actually lost the popular vote. There is also no surprise about Republicans not caring for fixing the healthcare system or working on the urgent issues that a majority of the population wants to see addressed. Other than the President passing executive orders and Congress rubber stamping decisions that satisfy their ever-shrinking and most loyal base, both have had their eyes fixed from the outset on the upcoming tax reform that will deliver another round of massive giveaways to their wealthiest donors. We must ask ourselves, however, why these legislators can act against the opinions of their citizens without negative impact. The truth is that Republicans have developed a winning formula that does not require a functioning democracy. Constant shock and distraction from the President, discrediting journalism and destroying fact-based political discourse, an abdication of executive authority to military powers, a gradual take-over of the judicial branch at the local and federal level, widespread gerrymandering and voter suppression, all of these have worked very well for the GOP across the country, especially when paired with a dysfunctional Democratic party that struggles with its own history of neoliberal corruption and the difficulties of developing a coalition as more and more Americans move away from the center. Americans are justifiably disenchanted with their two-party political system, but as we develop alternatives, we must come to terms with the fact that Monster and his party will keep winning if fewer and fewer people vote, and the actual majority has no effective coalition, no matter how big this majority may be. Image: Young Frankenstein, Film (1974).
One year after President Monster was elected, we celebrate All Hallows’ Eve. While many of us love trick-or-treating, Halloween parties, and monsters of all sorts, this All Hallows’ Year has brought out monsters of a different sort, many of them of our own creation. The first year of the nightmare has shown there is no limit to the amount of shit that our President can throw around, his actions forcing us to confront the systematic failure of checks and balances we thought would protect our system of values and government. His kleptocracy has also further entrenched the corruption of other elected officials. But it still seems wrong to think that a different electoral result would have saved us from these monsters. Regardless of the result, we are living a deep global crisis of governance and trust in democracy, much of it related to the realities of the economic system that has been maintained and imposed by the very media and authorities who now lament our Monster’s rise to power. As we take stock of the collective failures that led to this disastrous phase of American politics, it is important to remember how the monsters were created. Throughout the year, this series has focused attention on political stories from each week, connecting them with the story of Frankenstein. At the time of its release, each Weekly Monster has lived in the present tense, circulating as a hybrid of journalism, commentary, and visual activism. In retrospect and as an artwork overall, the series must be seen as a desperate effort to remember, even as the avalanche of shit goes on. Always invoking a distorted past, the Monster we now call government feeds on amnesia and exhaustion. We must fight back with care, persistence and memory. Image: CBS Halloween TV Special with Cher, Sonny Bono, and Jerry Lewis, Photo Still (1973).
ART BY PARTICIPANTS

Katelyn Jones - Deceitful

Zack Watts - The Human Predator

Kyte Darenbourg - Phase

Ishman Clarke - Dead Weight
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Our various collaborations were also made possible through the Franklin Humanities Institute’s Social Practice Lab, with the crucial support of Duke University’s Provost Sally Kornbluth, Vice Provost for the Arts Scott Lindroth, Arts & Sciences Dean Valerie Ashby, Humanities Dean Gennifer Weisenfeld, FHI Director Deborah Jenson, incoming Director Ranji Khanna, as well as Chris Chia, Sarah Rogers, Mary Williams, and the fantastic staff at FHI. Our regular social media interventions were in great part the product of the hard work and creative ideas of FHI SPL communications managers and student assistants Tierney Marey, Sarah Sculco, Haoyang Zhou, and Katie King. I am also grateful to my Chair Sheila Dillon, and Interim Chair Neil McWilliam for their ongoing support, as well as my colleagues Tom Rankin, Annabel Wharton, and Sara Galletti for all the extra hours spent on reviewing my work. These and many other incredible colleagues have made North Carolina my home. I became a United States citizen on the morning of the 2017 Presidential Inauguration and, in my new and previous life, I cannot imagine making this or any other art without the courage, ideas, and love provided by my life partner Esther Gabara, and our little rebel, Eva.

Some monsters are to be vanquished, others embraced, but as Nicholas Mirzoeff argues in his essay, if we don’t want them to haunt us, none of them should be ignored. I would like to end these acknowledgments by thanking all those ready to confront the monsters of our dark political times, be it to own them as a collective creation we have the power to control, or to fight them as aberrations we want to see abolished. It has surely been a challenging year, but also one filled with the inspiring words and actions of journalists, activists, artists, and people from all walks of life who care for truth and social justice. My deepest hope and reason for doing this work is that together we will succeed in shaking off our current nightmare. We owe it to the planet, all of its life forms, humanity, ourselves, and the ones we love.

Pedro Lasch
CONTRIBUTORS’ BIOS

Pedro Lasch is a visual artist, Duke professor, and 16 Beaver organizer. He is also director of the FHI Social Practice Lab at Duke. His solo exhibitions and presentations include Open Routines (QMA), Black Mirror (Nasher), Abstract Nationalism (Phillips Collection) and Art of the MOOC (Creative Time); group exhibitions include MoMA PS1, MASS MoCA (USA); RCA, Hayward Gallery, Baltic (UK); Centro Nacional de las Artes, MUAC, National Palace Gallery (Mexico); Prospect.4 Triennial New Orleans (2017), Gwangju Biennial (2006), Havana Biennial (2015), Documenta 13 ANDANDAND, 2012, and 56th Venice Biennale (CTS, 2015). The author of four books, his work has appeared in numerous catalogues, as well as journals like October Magazine, Saber Ver, Art Forum, ARTnews, Cultural Studies, The New York Times, and La Jornada. His online pedagogical artwork ART of the MOOC has had over 22,000 enrolled participants in 134 countries between 2015 and 2017.

Nicholas Mirzoeff is Professor of Media, Culture and Communication at New York University. He is one of the founders of the academic discipline of visual culture in books like An Introduction to Visual Culture and The Visual Culture Reader. He is also Deputy Director of the International Association for Visual Culture. Since 2013, he has been Visiting Professor of Visual Culture at Middlesex University, London. His book The Right to Look: A Counterhistory of Visuality (2011) won the Anne Friedberg Award for Innovative Scholarship from the Society of Cinema and Media Studies in 2013. In 2012, he undertook a durational writing project called Occupy 2012. Every day, he posted online about the Occupy movement and its implications. Open source anthologies of the project are available. In 2014, he launched After Occupy: What We Learned, an open writing project on the lessons of the social movement. In 2015 his most recent book How To See The World was published by Pelican. Currently, he is working on a project entitled The Visual Commons #BlackLivesMatter. It looks at the formations of the visual commons from the Haitian Revolution, via Reconstruction and 1968 to the Black Lives Matter movement.

Trevor Schoonmaker is Artistic Director of Prospect.4 New Orleans. He is also Chief Curator and Patsy R. and Raymond D. Curator of Contemporary Art at the Nasher Museum of Art. Since joining the Nasher in 2006 as its first curator of contemporary art, he has been instrumental in developing the museum’s contemporary collection. Past exhibitions curated by Schoonmaker at the Nasher include: Street Level: Mark Bradford, William Cordova & Robin Rhode (2007); the 2008 retrospective Barkley L. Hendricks: Birth of the Cool; Big Shots: Andy Warhol Polaroids (2009); The Record: Contemporary Art and Vinyl (2010); Building the Contemporary Collection: Five Years of Acquisitions (2011); Sound Vision: Contemporary Art from the Collection (2014); and the 2013 exhibition Wangi-Mun: A Fantastic Journey. His recent Southern Accent exhibition, is an in-depth exploration of the complex identity of the American South and the region’s profound influence on American culture. Schoonmaker is also a member of the board of directors for the Andy Warhol Foundation for the Visual Arts, Inc., in New York.

Youth Empowerment Project (YEP) engages underserved young people through community-based education, mentoring, and employment readiness programs. YEP Design Works is a youth-run business in YEP’s Work and Learn Center that offers youth a competitive edge on the pathway to sustainable creative careers. Ambitious young designers get a job that pays an educational stipend to do real client work under the mentorship of experienced design professionals. YEP mentors guide and collaborate on every step of the design process, focusing the young designers’ fresh insights and raw talent. As part of the training program, youth pitch to clients, receive and implement critical feedback, and deliver a final product to local and national clients. YEP Design Works artists for Prospect.4’s Weekly Monster series include: Jennifer Castro, Ishman Clarke, Kyte Darensbourg, Judge Evans, Dehab Fauz, Miracle Gills, Katelyn Jones, Van Ruffin, Sly Watts, and Zack Watts, as well as professional mentors Alberta Wright and Bernie January. Their original artworks and designs for the project can be found at Facebook/WeeklyMonster. YEP Design Works students’ art and opinions are solely their own expressions and do not necessarily reflect the opinions or views of Youth Empowerment Project.
The Weekly Monster began on November 8th, 2016. Taking the form of weekly black and white social media posts, special workshops, a gallery print edition, and posters displayed in public sites, the project collapses different aspects of the story of Frankenstein with contemporary world affairs. The original image-text pieces created by Lasch also serve as the starting point for others to produce their own monsters through public workshops, open calls, and direct invitation. Published on the occasion of Prospect.4: The Lotus in Spite of the Swamp, New Orleans, this special publication brings together all the weekly artworks and texts from the first year, as well as documentation of the installations and workshops produced in New Orleans. Additional texts include an introduction by Prospect.4 curator Trevor Schoonmaker, and a critical essay by Nicholas Mirzoeff.