Dystopian novels magnify real world conflicts to create a vision of a distorted potential future. In preparation for this body of work, I read five dystopian novels: *Animal Farm, 1984, Brave New World, Fahrenheit 451, and Atlas Shrugged*. *Brave New World* presents a future in which technology dictates every aspect of life as citizens are genetically engineered and later educated for the jobs they will be assigned. *Fahrenheit 451* portrays a world in which its inhabitants censor dissenting views and destroy knowledge not only by burning books but also by punishing inquiry and encouraging conformity through mindless hedonism. In writing these books, Aldous Huxley and Ray Bradbury were both responding to the dangers they observed in the real world – Huxley concerned by the rise of totalitarianism in Europe leading up to World War II and Bradbury, responding to the McCarthy hysteria that dominated during the Cold War Era. All of the aforementioned novels detail the dangers of ideological possession, a force that drives the creation of the dystopian society.

Like my previous body of work, *The Sky is Falling,* these drawings, paintings and prints come together as an anthology of related narratives. By employing this structure, I have the flexibility to explore various loosely related topics that, when understood collectively, paint a broader picture of a topic or themes. Inspired by dystopian literature and the anxiety manifest in our society and in our politics in 2017, this body of work explores the concept of ideological possession, a phenomena present among contemporary feminists. Works within the series explore the concept of ideologically possession generally as in the pieces *Love Trumps Hate, Berkeley is Burning,* and *B is for Bigot* or explores the presence of ideological possession among contemporary feminists as in the works *Sis Boom Bah* and *All Men. S*ymbolically and visually rich, viewers are presented with narratives that reference events from 2017 like the Women’s March, the James D’amore memo and the Manchester Bombing. The drawings and prints of *Entartete Kunst* are encompassed by white boarders of varying sizes, evoking the pages of novels and signaling to viewers that history and literature are heavily imbedded in the conceptual framework of the series. *Entartete Kunst* culminates in an examination of ideological possession among contemporary feminists - critiquing the movement’s contemporary identity, the fanaticism of the movement’s proponents, feminisms amorphous and subjective platform, and the inability of the movement to address global feminist issues.

Humans display a remarkable propensity for tribalism or the tendency to identify as members of groups. Tribalism separates us into camps. Even in our everyday lives, we identify as die-hard fans of sports teams or lovers of brand name products – Blues vs. Blackhawks. Coke vs. Pepsi. Ford vs. Dodge. While some of these groups and their rivalries are innocuous - based on voluntary brand loyalty- these artificial binaries draw lines between us and inflame bad habits. Not every group we identify with and the beliefs these groups inculcate are as innocent as sports rivalries. As we begin to rely more heavily on websites that use algorithms to curate individual content, we make ourselves especially vulnerable to programming our biases into the information and entertainment we consume. Algorithms curate the content we see on websites like Facebook, Instagram, Twitter and Youtube. Because these algorithms generate suggestions for new content based on what we voluntarily seek out or rate favorably, we are rarely presented a full range of ideas.

In 2017, our political identities became especially polarized. The left hates the right. Conservatives deplore Liberals. And snowflakes melt over Trumptards. Our politics even prevented us from engaging with our friends, neighbors and families. Tribalism asks us to treat the tribe as sacred and in doing so we must be quick to detect outsiders and enemies, condemning them with unrestrained vitriol. After the massacre in 2017 in Las Vegas that kill 58 and injured several hundred more, one twitter user commented, “lots of white trump supporters in Las Vegas at route 21 watching Jason Aldean. Pray only trumptards died! #prayforvegas.”1 The ideologue can champion tolerance all the while praying for the deaths of their political enemies. This sentiment is explored in the piece *Love Trumps Hate.* The viewer encounters a monochromatic still life containing several recognizable objects – batteries, a clock, some wires, a magnifying glass, and tweezers. A heart shaped sticker that reads “Love Trumps Hate” adorns the desk upon which these items are strewn. Upon careful examination of the piece the viewer realizes these are materials for making a bomb. This drawing juxtaposes the innocuous nature of still life as a genre with the lethal items used within the drawings composition. What’s disconcerting is that a scene that appears to be quite innocent is in actuality, very dangerous.

In the novel *1984,* The Party – the governing body of Orwell’s dystopian England – tortures citizens with divergent views; Winston Smith, the story’s protagonist encounters this fate. Faced with execution or succumbing to The Party’s will, Winston realizes that controlling the beliefs of Party members is integral to the power the Party holds. What The Party says is truth, never to be questioned or criticized. Although Smith is a fictional character, his experiences reflect many who have been crushed at the heels of ideological regimes. Possession as a concept invites sensational visuals – malevolent demons torture their host who decays physically and psychologically, gradually losing their freedom and their soul. The ideologically possessed encounter a similar fate. Ideological possession is an ardent willingness to turn a blind eye to truth, especially truths that create contradictions within one’s worldview. The ideologically possessed cling to dogma to avoid moral and intellectual responsibility. Ideological possession is what allowed the German’s to think of themselves as a great people as their countrymen were hauled away in freight cars. Ideological possession motivated Soviet citizens to inform on their friends and neighbors who suffered much the same fate in the Siberian gulags as the Germans did in places like Auschwitz and Dachau.

Ideological possession also requires the individual to become an advocate of censorship. If new ideas cannot be presented, one’s ideological premises cannot be questioned or corrupted. Every day we can encounter new information. Yet as we become more polarized and reliant on social media as our main source of news and entertainment, we program ourselves to become more entrenched in group think. Group think diminishes one’s ability to make rational decisions. Because of pressures to adhere to group doctrine, individuals insulate themselves from outside opinions, ignoring alternative ways of thinking about a situation or issues. In fictional dystopias as well as in any tyrannical regime, censorship is integral to controlling minds. The Soviet Union established special governmental bodies- the Goskomizdat, Goskino and Gosteleradio to enforce censorship of all forms of communication and media including radio, television, cinema, print including newspapers, literature and poetry and art. Artists were forced to adhere to the dictates of Socialist Realism which was enshrined as state policy by Stalin in 1932. This kind of explicit censorship still exists in parts of the world today, for example in North Korea Socialist Realism is still enforced by the Kim regime.

In an interview with Dunya Mikhail, the female Iraqi poet juxtaposed censorship in the West with censorship in the Middle East; she commented “censorship in America is implicit and it precedes speech as opposed to in Iraq, where censorship is explicit and it follow speech.”2 In 2015 alone the Iraqi government, who owns and controls the majority of the country’s communication networks, turned off all broadband and mobile broadband connections – in essence shutting down the internet – reportedly fifteen times. In the United Stated, the first amendment provides safeguards against tyranny including censorship by ensuring citizens freedom of the press and freedom of speech. But implied censorship is an insidious force. It can manifest it’s self in companies marketing schemes and policies, the slanted bias of news channels and in the pressures to adhere to political correctness. At some point, each of us has encountered the fear to speak our mind for being wrong or misunderstood. Conversation is a collaborative process and through speech, one is able to more concretely define their beliefs. When we self-censor, we rob ourselves and others of the opportunity to engage in this process of discovery and engagement. Implied censorship shapes our minds without the direct threat explicit censorship entails. When we give credence to salacious gossip instead of listening openly to someone’s argument and criticizing its veracity, we fall victim to implied censorship.

Historically, universities have stood for and modeled the importance of rational discourse to society. At a time when debating ideas with reason and logic seems necessary to quell the tides of political hysteria, university campuses in the US and in Canada have displayed a bad habit of de-platforming controversial speakers. The reasons for disinviting speakers varies by university, nonetheless these actions set a dangerous precedent of sacrificing debate to comfort and inclusivity. In 2017, the ramifications of stifling debate and implied censorship were demonstrated on college campuses. At UC Berkeley, the home of the free speech movement of the 1960’s, protesters implemented drastic measures to shut down a speech by right wing speaker Milo Yiannopoulous. Protests turned into violent, destructive riots - causing “$100,000 in property damages as well as numerous hospitalizations.”3 The images from these events are amalgamated in the drawing *Berkeley is Burning*. In this drawing, a fire rages to the right side of the piece and a crowd gathers to pay homage to the destruction. A protest banner stating “this is war” has been abandoned. In the foreground a figure in a red hat lays incapacitated, possibly dead.

I believe in the power of ideas. While I consider many ideas heinous and dangerous like those espoused by Louis Farrakhan, Richard Spensor and David Duke, allowing figures like these to spew their hatred and ignorance is not unconscionable to me. ALL IDEAS MUST BE FREELY DISCUSSED. As a society, we must be able to fight bad ideas and to accomplish this, we must identify bad ideas and fight them through discussion. The success of is this tactic is demonstrated by the success of Daryl Davis, author of *Klan-Destine Relationships: A Black Man’s Odyssey in the Ku Klux Klan.* Over the past thirty-one years, Davis has spent his time befriending Klan members, even collecting 200 robes of members who have left the Klan because of Davis. In an interview with NPR Davis states, “[befriending them] began to chip away at their ideology, because when two enemies are talking they're not fighting. It's when the talking ceases that the ground becomes fertile for violence.”4 Demonizing the expression of speech does not exhaust the polarization of our society but fuels it. As we retreat further into our political and ideological bubbles, animosity between camps festers, furthering the divisions between every day Americans. I fear where this road takes us. If we look to history for guidance, her pages illuminate the dangers of letting divisions widen until we are swallowed by the impending abyss.

In art, criticism is an essential part of the learning process. Critique inspires growth when it is done effectively. Effective criticism does not merely address the strengths of a work. One must also be given feedback regarding how the work is ineffective or maladaptive. The same premise can be extrapolated to providing criticism in general. When contemporary thinkers critique feminism, especially young women, we are curtly reminded of how different our futures might look without it. Throughout much of history, women have faced great odds in obtaining equal rights and opportunities as men. Indeed, the efforts of women throughout the centuries have culminated in one of the most prosperous times for women. Especially for Western women, the efforts of our mothers and grandmothers can be seen in the educational, political and economic opportunities we enjoy today. Yet despite this fact, one can keenly observe the increasing intolerance of contemporary feminists.

In examining feminism as a set of ideas, one encounters radically different voices ranging from early feminist icon Mary Wollstonecraft who championed women’s education as well as women’s roles as mothers and wives. To Simone de Beauvoir, the famous French feminist who stated that women should NOT have the choice to remain at home to raise their children. Today feminism is presented as a monolith and it encompasses all political or social movements and organization predicated on championing causes for women. For example the term is retroactively applied to the first-wave activism of the Suggragettes. Contemporary feminists conveniently ignore the torrid history of the label and its oppositions. In the book *No Turning Back: The History of Feminism and the Future of Women*, author Estelle B. Freedman states, “The term feminism was first coined in France in the 1880’s... The term combined the French word for woman, *femme,* and -*isme*, which referred to a social movement or political ideology. At a time when many other ‘isms’ originated, including socialism and communism, feminism connoted that women’s issues belonged to the vanguard of change. The term was always controversial, in part because of its association with radicalism and in part because proponents themselves disagreed about the label…[Many socialists] believed that middle-class demands for suffrage and property rights did not necessarily speak to working women’s needs for a living wage and job security. Middle-class women also hesitated to call themselves feminists, especially when the term implied a claim to universal rights as citizens rather than particular rights as mothers. In the United States this conflict over the political meaning of feminism split the women’s movement for almost half a century.”5

With a fractured platform from infancy, feminism has remained structurally amorphousness, allowing the movements proponents to constantly “shift the center”6 or address new and evolving Feminist causes. At the 1985 Nairobi conference which concluded the UN’s Decade for Women, participants lauded a new feminism -“feminism responsive to the different needs and concerns of different women, and defined by them for themselves.”7 The application of this principle of self-defined feminism is reflected by the contemporary movement. Succumbing to relativisms ideological end, this principle of self-defined feminism prohibits the creation of a hierarchy of goals for the movement nationally and internationally. By defining their own feminism, Western feminists ignore the plight of women globally. Instead taking to the internet to vehementl*y* condemn the social plague of mansplaining, campaign for female crosswalk signs and viciously denounce the Patriarchy.

Women and men take to the streets to march in the hundreds of thousands for the cause of women but utter not a single word about honor killings, compulsory dress codes, child marriages, male guardianship, genital mutilation, polygamy, apostasy or slavery. In US, the anti-slavery movement of the 1830’s served as a catalyst for the birth of the women’s movement as well as a blueprint for the movement’s organization. The Grimke sisters, Lucretia Mott, Abby Kelley Foster, Lucy Stone, Susan B. Anthony, Elizabeth Candy Stanton, and Sojourner Truth are just some of the women that played vital roles in the abolition of slavery. In the abolitionist newsletter, *the Liberator,* it was recorded in 1847 that, “ the Anti-Slavery cause cannot stop to estimate where the greatest indebtedness lies, but whenever the account is made up there can be no doubt that the efforts and sacrifices of the WOMEN, who helped it, will hold a most honorable and conspicuous position.”8 Think what women in the States could do if we embodied the spirits of these great women and mobilized to target slavery globally. In the US, “women make or influence between 70 to 80% of all consumer purchasing decisions.”9 Today we enjoy a plethora of services and products that bring us comfort and enjoyment – a package can arrive every month with goodies tailored to you from shoes and clothing to snacks and groceries, make-up, workout clothes, razors and more. If one abstained from a subscription service like this for even 2 months and instead donated this money to charities that fight slavery globally, what progress could we see made on this front in a year? Two? How about ten?

With a movement guided by subjectivity, it is no wonder how the conservation never extends beyond selfish ends. Contemporary feminism is weakened by relativism and subjectivity which facilitate the movement’s failure in addressing global feminist issues. Among western feminists, there is little acknowledgement of the atrocities committed against the Yazidi women, the Chibok schoolgirls or women who face hardship on a daily basis, the likes of which Western women have not endured for decades. Western feminists remain willfully blind to the struggles of women internationally as to avoid being deemed culturally insensitive, or even worse – bigoted. Where do we leave our sisters who face very real threats when they speak truth to power and we remain silent? Maybe we should ask the Girl of Enghelab Street. Homage is paid to the victims of oppression worldwide in images like *Aisha* and *Honor. Aisha* depicts a stoic child bride; she confronts the viewer directly, vying for our attention with her quiet, dignified misery. *Honor* depicts a nameless victim of an honor killings and serves as a tribute to all those who have suffered the fate of this barbaric practice.

Today Western feminism is also divisive. Feminists champion the idea of equality for all while lambasting men and men’s causes whenever possible.

On twitter, feminists bid followers a Happy New Year by proclaiming two goals for 2018:

1. {To} Cultivate female friendships
2. {To} band together to kill all men10

Rabid celebrities like Lena Dunham call for the abolition of father’s day and the term father Christmas. Misandry is now an acceptable tenet of contemporary feminism as we come to accept the Dworkian doctrine that all of our sons are our potential betrayers, rapists and exploiters.

Radical feminist theory asks its proponents to see the world through a Postmodern, Neo-Marxist lens. Through this lens, power is seen as the driving force of conflict in our societies and in our lives. Thus, power must be challenged and the acquisition of power is deemed the ultimate achievement. Like Marxist theory, Neo-Marxism divides society into groups, based not on economic status but on societal oppression. Historically, men were given the right to vote, own property, hold elected office, manage their finances and obtain education and employment long before women acquired these freedoms and opportunities.

These historical advantages confer special status to men today, thus as historical beneficiaries of power and privilege men present a unique problem to the achievement of societal equality. This explanation of conflict and societal relations is not only simplistic, it is dangerous. When we see men only as the beneficiaries of power and privilege, we dehumanize our brothers, our sons, our fathers and our husbands by eradicating their individuality and belittling their experiences of suffering and hardship. The condemnation of men and the misandry of contemporary feminists is illustrated in the drawing *All Men.* In it, the prototypical radical feminist displays a stone tablet on which the phrase “all men must die” is engraved. A crowd behind the protagonist gasps at the revelation of this divine artifact.

Feminism blinds women to the challenges unique to manhood and to men. Fervor to dismantle the patriarchy overshadows the ways in which men suffer as men constitute the majority of victims of violent crimes, homelessness, homicide, workplace fatalities, combat deaths and suicides. While Western societies like the US have created legal protections from domestic abuse and increased access to social services for female victims, our brothers who suffer at the hands of their partners – “nearly 40% of all domestic abuse cases”11, find little respite. Fathers are treated as second class citizens when it comes to child custody disputes and in academia, as standardized test scores,K-12 rates of disciplinary action and high school and college graduation rates for boys illustrate, our treatment of males in the classroom is impacting learning and long term success.

Anger toward men is a binding force among contemporary feminists yet feminism in general is replete with anger and proudly so. In 2017, Lindy West, in an article for the New York Times dubbed feminism the “collective manifestation of female anger.”12 At the 2017 Women’s March actress Ashley Judd proclaimed with pride “I AM A NASTY WOMAN. A loud, vulgar, proud woman.”13 Yet anger is not a trustworthy guide, especially for political activism. As Jane Austen once observed “angry people are not always wise.”14 Yet the most inoffensive statements spur outrage among contemporary feminists for example, the notion that men and women are different. James D’amore learned this last year when he released his now infamous Google memo.

The former Google engineer wrote the memo as a means of identifying differences among men and women, to encourage the development of working environments that identify the unique characteristics and needs of each group, as well as individuals, to stimulate greater productivity within the workplace. Yet despite D’amore’s carefully constructed, scientifically researched message, contemporary feminist saw this as a condemnation of women in the workplace, especially within STEM fields. D’amore was eventually fired because of the memo. The drawing *Don’t Speak It, Don’t Think It* exemplifies the reaction to this event. Borrowing from the life of St. Sebastian who was tied to a stake and shot by archers’ because of his Christian faith, this drawing portrays a hand shot through with arrows. Under the hand, we can identify an assortment of papers including a memo that reads “les hommes et les femmes sont different” -referencing the hashtag “je suis James D’amore” that appeared on Twitter in D’amores defense.

Even feminist heroes like Margaret Atwood, author of *The Handmaiden’s Tale*, became a victim of contemporary feminist rage last year. Why? Atwood was condemned a betrayer and an enemy of the movement because she had the gall to sign an open letter calling for due process for a University of British Columbia professor facing allegations of sexual misconduct. Confronting her attackers, Atwood states “in times of extremes, extremists win. Their ideology becomes a religion, anyone who doesn’t puppet their views is seen as an apostate, a heretic or a traitor, and moderates in the middle are annihilated.”15 The outrage that followed these events, like many others in 2017 was excessive to say the least. The danger in a movement fueled by anger and outrage is that neither allow for self-reflection, discussion or correction.

The ideologically possessed can claim to be for women but in the same breath condemn any woman who does not mold to the vague and fanatical contemporary feminist agenda. Instead of branding outcasts with a scarlet A, today we brand them with a B – for bigot. Influenced by the novel *The Scarlet* Letter as well as playing on the idea of a witch hunt, the piece *B is for Bigot* places the viewer atop the gallows. Facing down the rope that will soon be placed around the viewer’s neck we begin to notice the strange nature of the crowd – dressed in black robes with hoods reminiscent of clansmen, the viewer realizes those witnessing this execution are the true fanatics.

In *1984* and *Fahrenheit 451* both Winston and Montag become disillusioned with the regimes they live under and come to reject their parts in them. Searching for outlets, Winston begins journaling and Montag reading. Prior to and throughout the creation of this body of work, I began strengthening my sketchbook practice, keeping notes on my historical and literary research and I began journaling – a practice very new to me. Reading, writing and speaking transform the mind. Winston and Montag both experienced this. As have I. *Entartete Kunst* touches on themes of bias, feminism and reflection. Both this series and my previous body of work *The Sky Is Falling,* engage a process of critical self-reflection - my previous body of work detailing the ramifications of dissecting and restructuring my personal beliefs including my faith in God, my role as a woman, the impact of technology on our social interactions and other anxieties. While *Entartete Kunst* expands the scope of my thematic content beyond the personal, this work also illustrates how critical self-reflection has helped me identify my own fanaticism, intolerance and ignorance. It is only through the recognition of my own biases that I have stumbled out of at least a few ideological bubbles. And now I believe I see like Rand, Orwell, Bradbury and Huxley, sinister forces brewing in the world that present enormous potential dangers to our future. The recognition of my own vulnerability to ideological possession is captured in the piece *All Hail the Rallying Call.* A centralized female figure, modeled after me occupies much of the composition. She is frozen in mid shout, her mouth agape and arm raised in triumph or rage. Other figures occupy the street which is dissected by flags, leaving the viewer with only glimpses of the scene. The viewer focuses their attention on the main figure and notices her attire – overalls embroidered with the name Winston and a red sash.

As this work focuses on a critical analysis of feminism and because of the futures I fear, I must voice my concerns for the zealotry, misandry, and moral relativism I observe in the contemporary feminist movement. I abhor the narrative contemporary feminism pushes regarding the powerlessness of women. From Joan of Arc to Hatshepsut, Harriet Tubman to Margaret Thatcher, Johanna van Gosh, Abigail Adams, Nefertiti, Rosa Parks, Gertrude Stein and countless more, women have helped shaped the story of mankind. As women, we are given great power – to create life. The creation of life expands past the womb and extends to the ways in which we mold the world. Power of this sort requires great deference and an understanding of duty. But I do not see a respect for this power and duty as of late. I do not see a movement that inspires positive change and nurtures a future where we see one and other as individuals and treat each other as such. Instead I see women displaying more and more signs of ideological possession like endorsing censorship in petitioning for the removal of historical paintings like John William Waterhouse’s *Hylas and the Nymphs* or contemporary ones like Dana’s Schutz *Open Casket* at the 2017 Whitney Biennial.

As I watch my fellow countrymen rage, I am reminded of a quote by Orwell, “It was always the women, and above all the young ones, who were the most bigoted adherents of the Party, the swallowers of slogans, the amateur spies and nosers out of unorthodoxy.”16 Orwell’s observation about the radicalism of young women in *1984* is now mirrored in real life. In an article by the National Association of Scholars titled *From Suffrage to Suppression: Women Now Lead in Anti-Speech Sentiment,* author Keli Carender details the recent findings of a poll that surveys college student’s attitudes toward free speech. Conducted by Gallup and the Knight Foundation, the survey found only 51% of female respondents found the protection of free speech rights to be “extremely important” while 33% of female respondents agreed that it was “important for colleges to create a positive environment by prohibiting speech that is offensive or biased against certain groups.”17 Youths are motived by messages of hope and change thus radical sentiments fall not on deaf ears. Mao Zedong capitalized on young radicals including students, who comprised much of the Red Guard during the Cultural Revolution in China between 1966 and 1968. It’s not just young feminists who are radicalizing in this country though. In 2017 we witnessed throngs of masked black block Anti-fascists assaulting counter-protestors and in Charlottesville, Nazi’s marched through the streets.

Anger plagues our everyday interactions. As we continue to polarize our society, I fear how our callousness towards malice and tyranny will affect our future. As an artist, I most fear censorship and its repercussions. History illuminates how artists have been treated when they are deemed dissidents. From Nazi Germany to Soviet Russia, in North Korea, Iran, Venezuela and Cuba – artists are dismissed from teaching positions, subject to sanctions, forbidden from exhibiting, selling, or even creating work as well as face imprisonment and death. In Nazi Germany, art that did not fit party dictates was deemed “entartete kunst” or degenerate art. In July of 1937, the Nazi’s even held an exhibition of art they deemed degenerate including works by Otto Dix, Max Ernst, Paul Klee, Piet Mondrian, Emil Nolde and 110 others. With growing support for censorship as well as increasing societal divisions, I wonder if our future will be a murderous one, like the futures of so many ideologically possessed peoples throughout history and in our greatest fictions.

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