

Fighting Inequality, Interrupting the Canon, Questioning the Status Quo

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Please note this article refers to a pamphlet that uses racist language

In February 2019, over two consecutive Mondays, first-year BA Graphic Design students from Camberwell College of Arts visited Conway Hall Library to take part in the Victorian Blogging zine-making workshops.

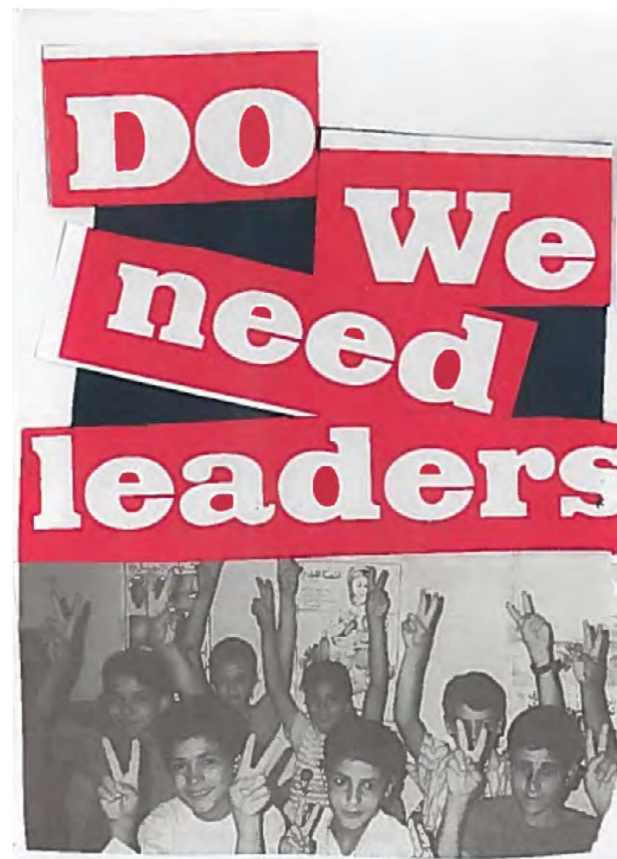
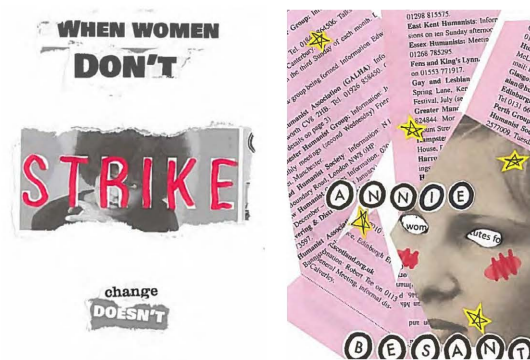
This was part of a pilot unit called *Whose history?* – a unit that challenges students to interrogate and interrupt the canon of graphic design history, which is described as ‘read[ing] like most other histories: a single narrative account that charts the lives and works of white middle-class European and American men. And, like most other histories, this single narrative solidifies itself... to become not just the ‘truth’ but often ‘the only way’ to think about a subject’.

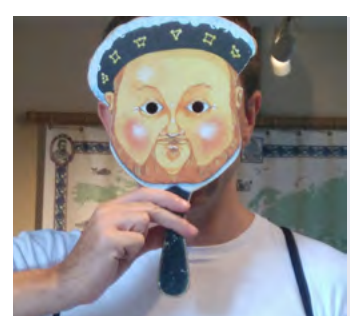
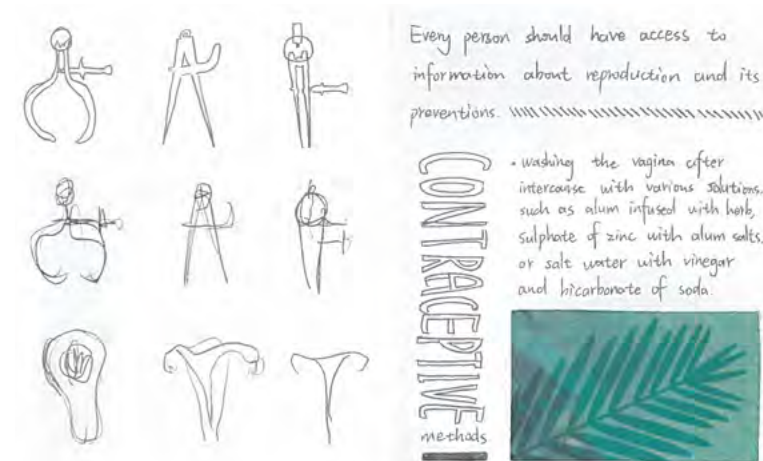
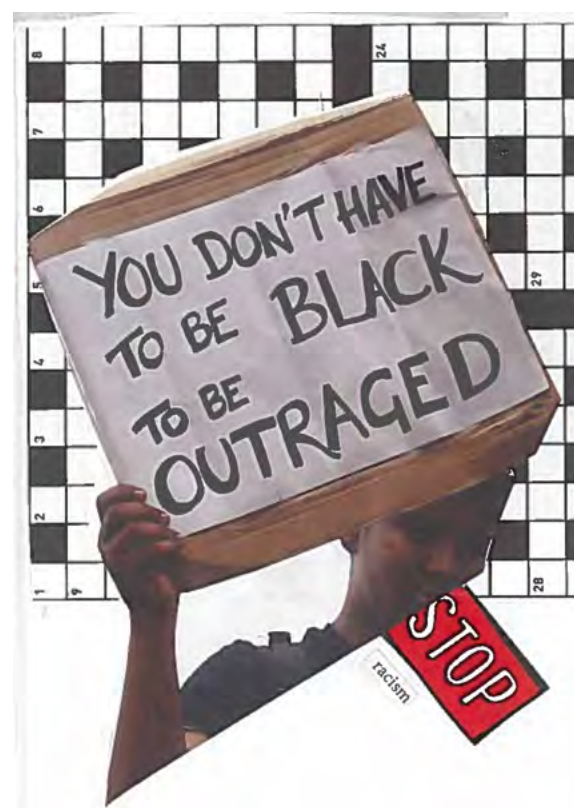
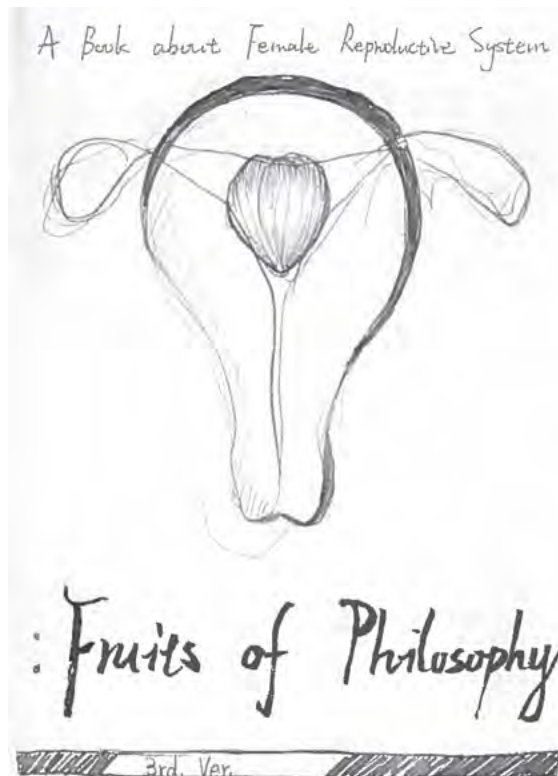
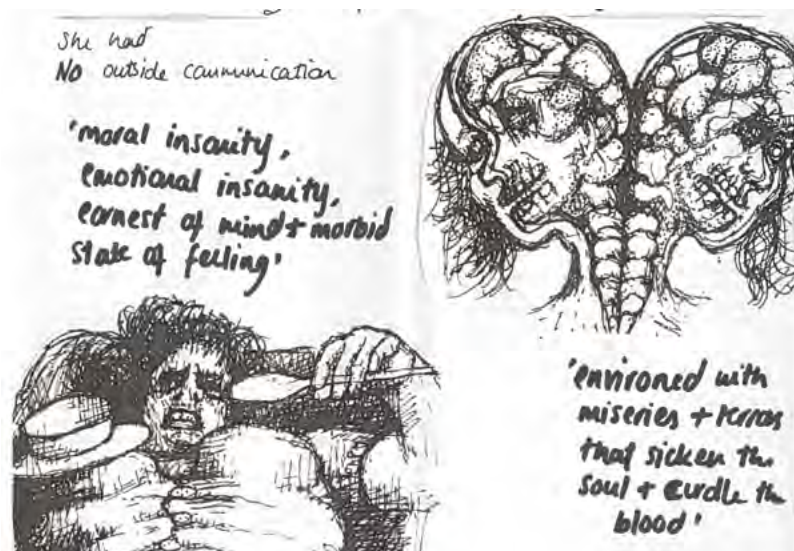
Conway Hall has a long history of championing the fight to call out injustices and redress balances, and of being a place for ‘those who dare to dream of a better world’. As such, I saw this as an opportunity to introduce the students to Conway Hall Library’s amazing collection of Victorian pamphlets, many of which questioned the dominant narratives of the time and offered up different ways to think about life and society.

After a short introduction to Conway Hall and its pamphlet collection, and an overview of the Victorian Blogging project, the students were given paper, pens, scissors, glue and collage materials – and the task of creating zines in response to one or more of the pamphlets. When making their zines, a number of students commented on how the issues the nineteenth-century pamphleteers were fighting for are still relevant today.

The zines shown here were created in response to the following pamphlets from the collection:

- Lydia B. Denny, *Statement of Mrs. Lydia B. Denny, Wife of Reuben S. Denny, of Boston, in Regard to Her Alleged Insanity* (1863)
- Charles Knowlton, *Fruits of Philosophy: an Essay on the Population Question* (1878)
- Annie Besant, *The Political Status of Women* (1880s)
- James Hunt, *On the Negro's Place in Nature* (1863).





Adam Ramejkis works at University of the Arts London, running workshops, seminars and projects for staff and students on criticality, creativity, communication and collaboration. He also runs a workshop series in Conway Hall Library, *Thinking and Language*, exploring the links between thinking and language. Adam has worked on the Victorian Blogging project, co-facilitating workshops for students and has volunteered to help catalogue and upload the digitised pamphlets online.

