

## Brothers Sick

Portfolio of select works, publications, and installation images 2018-2024

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Brothers Sick (Ezra and Noah Benus) is a sibling artistic collaboration on disability justice, illness, spirituality, and care. Their practice has been supported nationally and internationally through projects and exhibitions at Perlman Teaching Museum (USA), Rochester Art Institute (USA), HAU Berlin (DE), VIVO Media Arts Centre (CA), Museion Bolzano (IT), MMK Frankfurt (DE), Pratt Manhattan Gallery (USA), Visual AIDS (USA), The Shed (USA), Shape Arts (UK), and Gibney Dance (USA). Commissioned print contributions are included in Blackwood Gallery's publication *SDUK: Linger*, and *Kingdom of The Ill* reader published by Hatje Cantz Verlag. Their work has been reviewed in publications such as Artforum, Pin Up, Mousse Magazine, Ocula, Art Agenda, Publico ípsilon, and Welt Kunst.

[Brothers Sick](#)

Two new works inspired by the traditional Jewish Passover *Haggadah* and story. To be exhibited as a print and can be modified for installation as a repetitive vinyl wall image. Includes accompanying texts.

*From Degradation To Dignity*, 2024, dye sublimation on aluminum, 16 in x 24 in.



מֵתָחִיל בְּגִנוּת וּמֵסֵיִם בְּשִׁבְחַ

begins with degradation and ends in dignity (Mishnah Pesachim 10:4)

The story of Jewish bondage under Pharaoh's rule in Egypt tethers us to legacies of pain and subjugation, all to profit powerful others. Has this really changed? The cycles of violence in our society will continue if we do not pressure the government to provide healthcare, housing, food, education, a guarantee of reproductive rights, demilitarizing police and regulating weapons, and account for everyone's freedom of movement. We cannot allow these fundamental rights to be attached to people's ability to produce capital – the ramifications of enslavement, incarceration, and subminimum wages are all connected to the foundational systems that cause and perpetuate disability and debility. We need to end eugenic practices and medical apartheid, pay reparations, and guarantee income to move towards liberation. This narrative must be included in the re-telling of our Passover story. Together with strong hands (בִּיד חֲזָקָה) and outstretched arms (וּבִזְרוֹעַ נְטוּיָה) we will carve the path from degradation to dignity .

In liberation, no one will be left behind.

*Enough* (2024), dye sublimation on aluminum, 16 in x 24 in.





## Brothers Sick

Enough:

war  
extractive labor  
fascism  
forced displacement  
starvation

gun violence  
nationalism  
medical apartheid  
climate catastrophe  
homophobia

ableism  
antisemitism  
misogyny  
islamophobia  
racism

**דיין**

### **Liberation**

If we cherish all life  
If we rest  
If we resist  
If we study Torah  
If we redistribute wealth, wouldn't that  
be enough?

### **Miracles**

If we fund accessible education  
If we end weapon manufacturing and  
sales  
If we provide healthcare for all  
If we build affordable housing  
If we would all have freedom of  
movement, wouldn't that be enough?

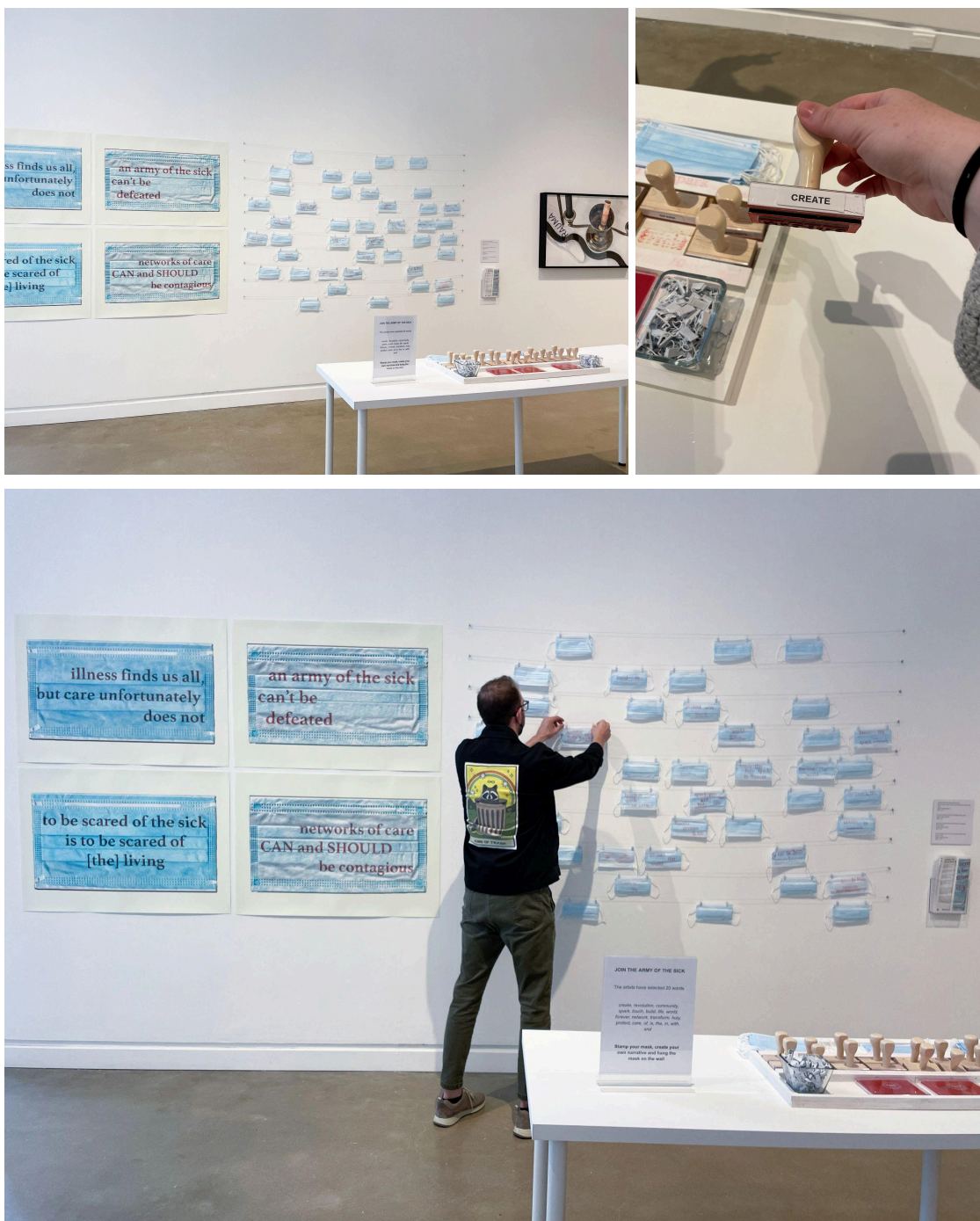
### **Community**

If we welcomed all refugees and migrants  
If we had democracy now  
If we act in solidarity with each other  
If we tended to the Earth  
If we tended to our differences,  
wouldn't that be enough?

(Ceasefire תשקע אש : Numbers 11:2)

## Brothers Sick

*Masks* (2020), updated work as a print installation intervention with stamps and masks, 2024. Installation view in [Chronicles of the Chronic](#) at Rochester Art Center.



## [Brothers Sick](#)

*Alchemy of The Ill*, 2023. [Video](#) and [score](#)



our medicines, our warmth,  
our survival hacks while living

*Alchemy of the Ill*  
BROTHERS SICK

Original Video (EN)

**Score**

find some material in your vicinity that you can form into a sculpture - clay, paper, a paperclip, dirt, anything. keep it nearby.

now, retreat into the mind and body.

try to sense your pulse. feel this rhythmic magic flow through your veins. phase into the spirit realm.

take your material and hold it in your hands. imagine bodies being formed out of clay. think about how your body was formed.

commune with your ancestors: their prophecies flow through you.

as the video plays, try to bring your own golem creature for protection to life out of your material. whisper your own words into it, calling upon your own magic and feel the alchemy take over.

Commissioned by [Presents](#), online and screenings at [HAU Berlin](#), and VIVO Vancouver



*A Sign To Linger*, digital print, 2023

Commissioned for [SDUK: Linger](#), Blackwood Gallery

# LINGERING

Issue 14

The Society for the Diffusion of Useful Knowledge

January 2023

## An Army of the Sick Can't Be Defeated

Brothers Sick

"AN ARMY OF THE SICK CAN'T BE DEFEATED"—printed in red capital letters and repeated—frames a pair of intravenous medical devices. At each corner of this border, black triangles buttress the phrase as an unrelenting gesture to pay attention. Together, this diction and series of triangular emblems recall the coalitional ethos and visual language established by LGBTQ+ activist groups, such as ACT UP (AIDS Coalition to Unleash Power), who in the 1970s reclaimed the pink triangle to underpin a similar rallying cry: "An army of lovers cannot lose."<sup>1</sup> Carrying forward these legacies, Brothers Sick—a collaborative art project by siblings Ezra and Noah Benus—juxtapose text with images drawn from their personal archive to centre the collective and often stigmatized experience of the chronically ill, disabled, and queer communities of which they are part.

Brothers Sick forge alliances across time and space in *An Army of the Sick Can't Be Defeated* (p. 16), calling for participation in mutual aid and movements for health and disability justice. Reminders to "GIVE CARE" and "TAKE CARE" transmit as neon blue messages across the screens of two IV monitors, the right of which is inverted. The parallel apparatuses, carrying medication bags, tubes, tags, and other medical equipment, suggest embodied experiences of healthcare through their connection to and nurturing of the body. Creating an echo and doubling effect, the duplicated IV instruments allude not only to the multiplicity of disability experiences and the interdependency needed within systems of care, but also to the reciprocal practice of the artist duo's collaborative work.

The intravenous therapy seen in *An Army of the Sick* unfolds as remnants in *A Sign To Linger* (p. 17). Capturing the discarded

IV kits, the mirrored composition of undulating cylindrical tubing and fluid solution bags within a disposal bin becomes an acknowledgment of harmful ableist practices, which undervalue and abandon sick and disabled bodies. Obscured and grainy like a photocopy, the black-and-white image evokes the abstract quality of medical imaging, such as MRI scans and X-rays, while the entangled refuse emulates the contours of a seated human figure. Breaking the image's symmetry, two scroll-like pages, one in Hebrew and the other in English, are inscribed with a verse found in tefillin.<sup>2</sup> Embracing their Jewish heritage, Brothers Sick join the long tradition of *midrash*—the practice of Torah interpretation done in *hevruta*, with study partners—to reconceive the intergenerational prayer ritual through the lenses of illness and disability. Drawing affinities between the markings left on the body by the tefillin and IV insertion, *A Sign To Linger* ruminates on the enduring practices of activism and social justice that bind us in community and resistance.

Following spread: left, Brothers Sick; *A Sign To Linger*, 2023. Digital print. Right, Brothers Sick; *An Army of the Sick Can't Be Defeated*, 2020. Digital print. Images courtesy the artists.

1 "Queers Read This," ACT UP-NY, June 1990, <https://www.actupny.org/document/queers-read-this.pdf>. Brothers Sick cite artist Gregg Bordowitz, who reads this phrase when he says, "an army of the sick cannot be defeated," in conversation with Corinne Fitzpatrick at the performance lecture *Glenn Felder*, presented at Tropic Canopy on March 29, 2019, <https://www.tropiccanopy.com/website-events/320209>.

2 Part of Jewish prayer rituals, tefillin is a set of two black leather boxes that contain prayer scrolls. Worn on the head and arm, the boxes are secured by leather straps that are tightly wrapped around the arms and hands.



## Brothers Sick

ועד לעולם / *for the world eternal*, 2022

Vinyl print, installation dimensions variable.

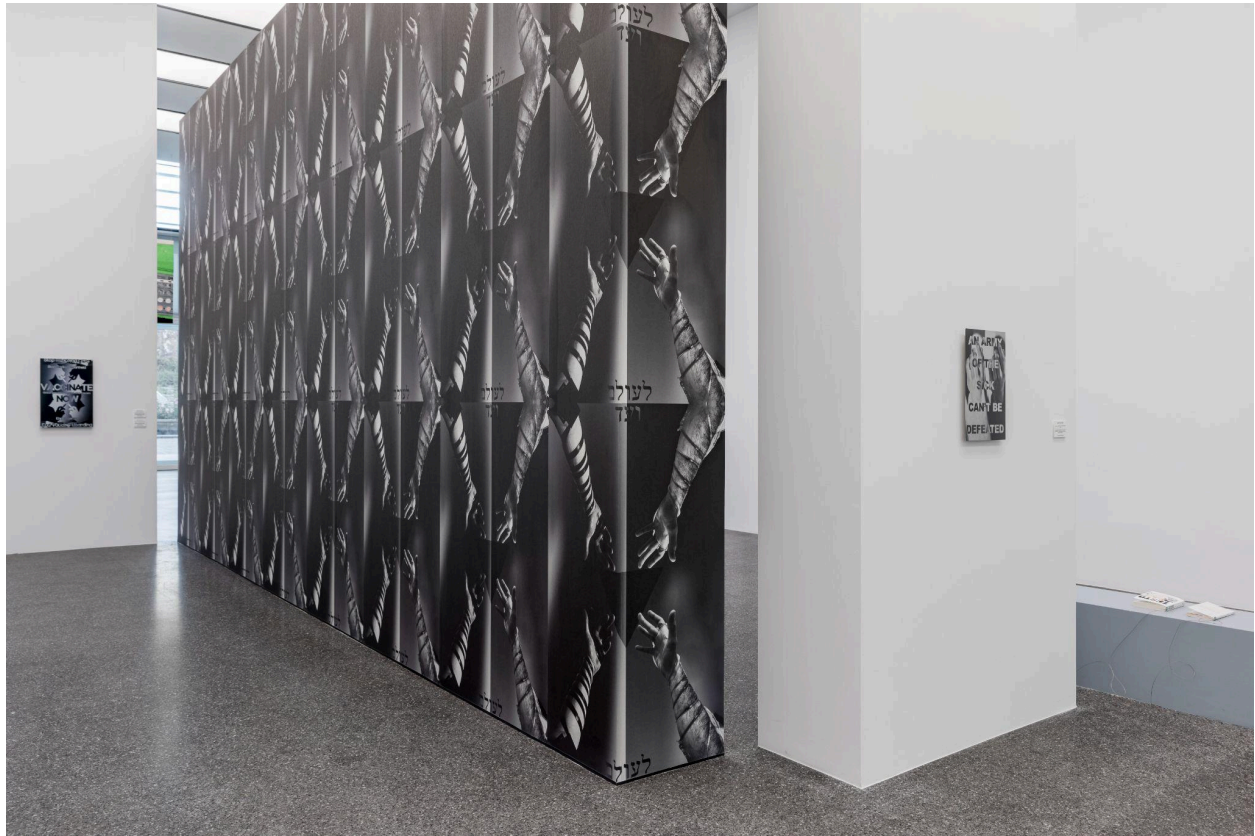
Installation view: [Towards a Warm Embrace](#), Perlman Teaching Museum, 2024





## [Brothers Sick](#)

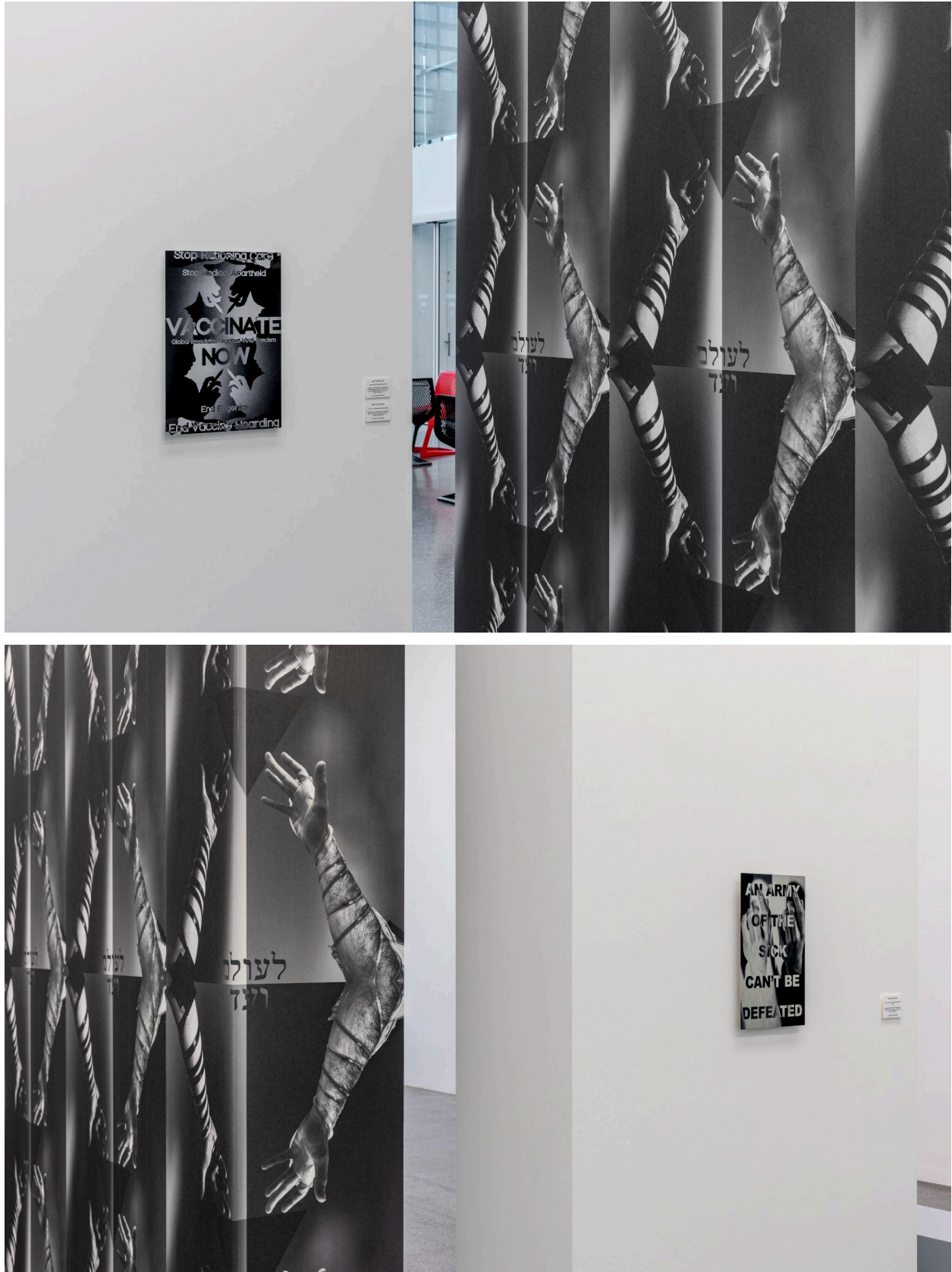
Installation view, *Kingdom of the Ill* at [Museion](#) 2022



This work was commissioned for the dual purpose of exhibition display and use in exhibition identity for posters and book cover.

Outstretched arms offer a gesture of supplication: around one we see the twisted cord used during intravenous therapies; while around the other are the leather straps of the tefillin, bound on to arms by Jews during weekday morning prayers, with the Hebrew words repeated, forming the phrase *לעולם ועד* (*l'olam va'ed*), that translates as “forever and ever.” Lifted from a morning prayer, the phrase is excerpted from the recitation “Blessed be the name of the glory of His kingdom forever and ever.” At the center is a shadowy inverted black triangle, a symbol the Nazis developed for concentration camp prisoners to delineate those termed “a-socials” or unfit for work, such as the sick and disabled, to remind us not only of this atrocious past, but also point to the symbol’s reclamation through the galvanization of disability groups around the black triangle, as well as the iconic Silence=Death Project that reappraised the pink triangle in a bid to raise awareness during the AIDS crisis.

## Brothers Sick





## Brothers Sick



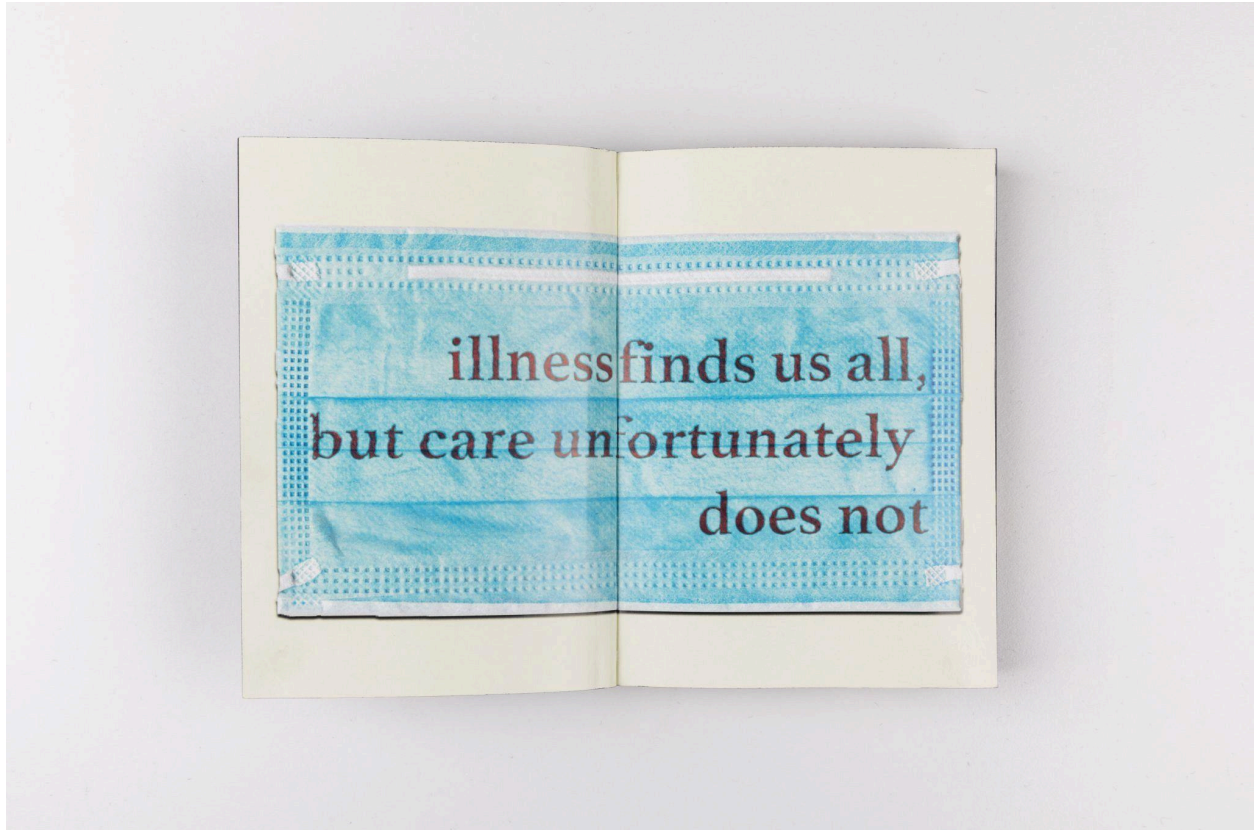
[Brothers Sick](#)

*Kingdom of the Ill*, [exhibition reader](#) published by Hatje Cantz Verlag





Brothers Sick





[Brothers Sick](#)

ניט טאן שטעלן באריערן / *Do Not Place Barriers* / *Keine Barrieren Setzen* / באריערן  
(*Aktion Access*). 2021. Off-set printed poster on paper, installation dimensions variable.



[Video documentation](#). For audio description and statement [click here and scroll down](#).



## [Brothers Sick](#)





*Pareidolia (Vaccinate Now)*, 2021. 16 in x 24 in, dye sublimation on aluminum.

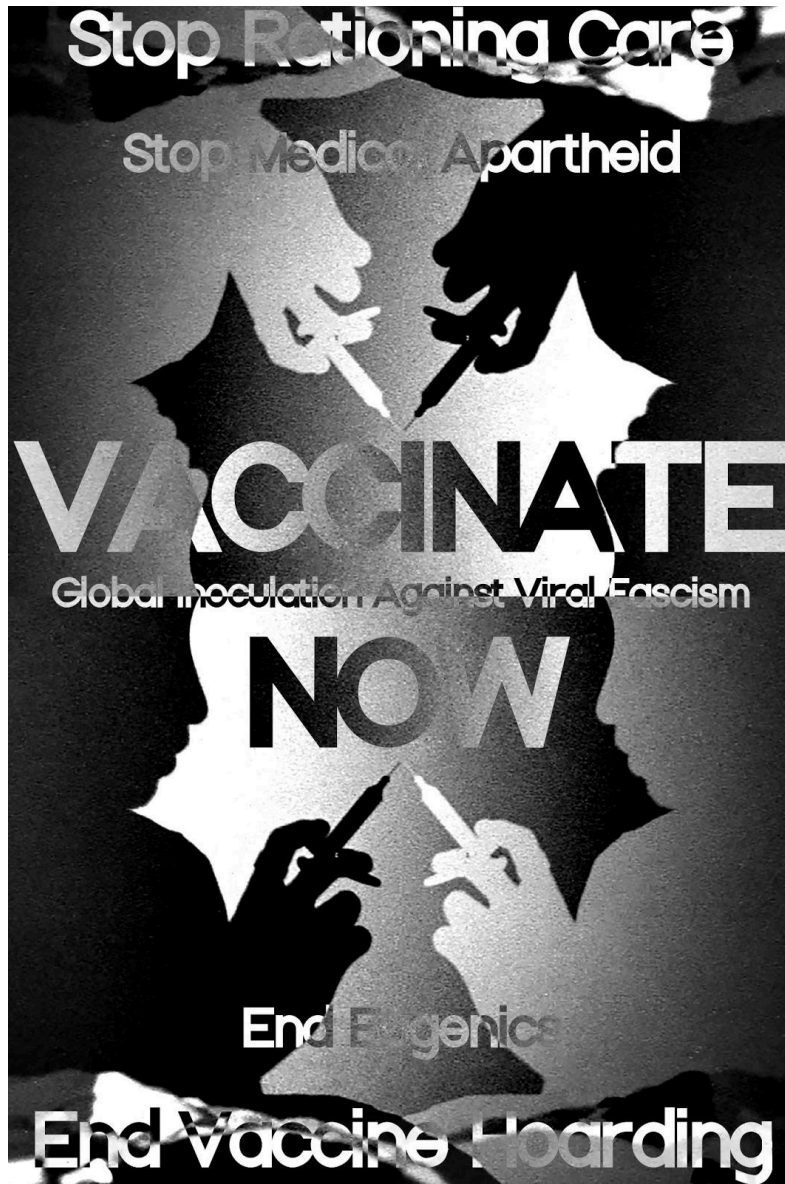


Image Description:

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

*Work Will Not Set Us Free*, 2021. 8 in x 10 in, dye sublimation on aluminum.



Image Description:

An image in grayscale shows manipulated x-rays of a torso revealing a root-like system or tree-like formation of internal organs such as lungs, bladder, and the aorta that are branching out and creating systems of connection. This image is mirrored and flipped creating a split image in two halves. Centered is an eerily revealed x-ray image of a set of teeth in a frontal smile formation. Text is overlaid on top and repeated on the bottom that reads “work will not set us free”. The words “work” and “free” are spotlighted in opposite corners of the image. It is overlaid in black, white, and gray, shifting in legibility.

## [Brothers Sick](#)

*Right To Rest In The Rhythm Of The Sick*, 2021. 8 in x 10 in, dye sublimation on aluminum.



### Image Description:

An image in grayscale of a bed leveled with the top of the mattress, revealing a diagonal grid texture of the blanket in the foreground. Focused in the center are three plastic pill bottles laid out resting on the bed, ranging in size with the largest one on the left, to the smallest on the right. A couple of white pillows are shown out of focus on the top of the photo. Overlaid on the whole image is a shifting grayscale text that repeats itself in a spiral formation that reads "right to rest in the rhythm of the sick".

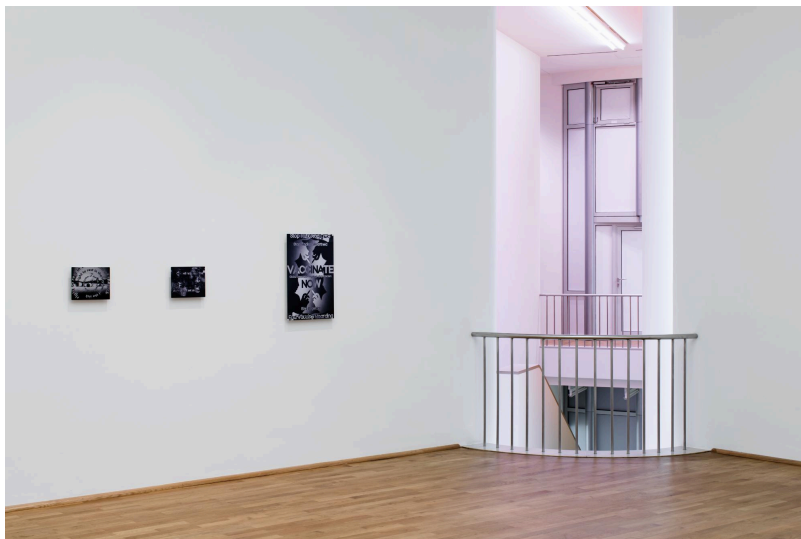


## [Brothers Sick](#)

Installation view at Pratt Manhattan Gallery in Political Intimacy



Installation view in [Crip Time](#) at MMK Frankfurt




[Brothers Sick](#)

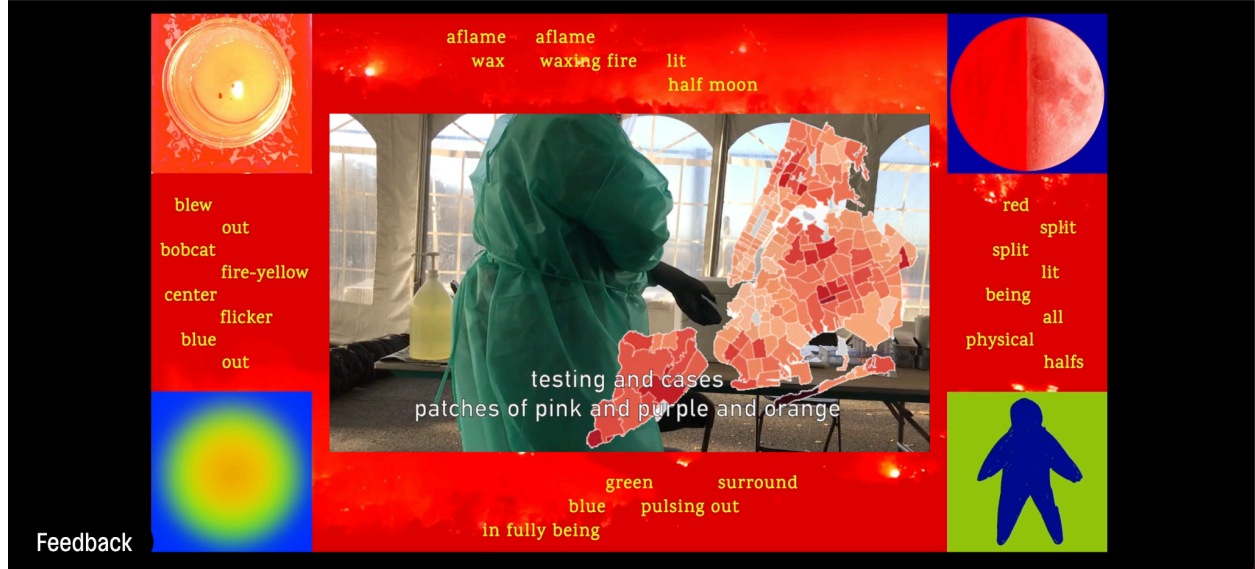
[Phases and the In-Betweens](#), The Shed, January 13-February 11, 2021

A website specific intervention reflecting on collective care in pandemic time(s).

Collaboration with Yo-Yo Lin and danilo machado. Scroll down on webpage to view.

THE SHED

 Log in 



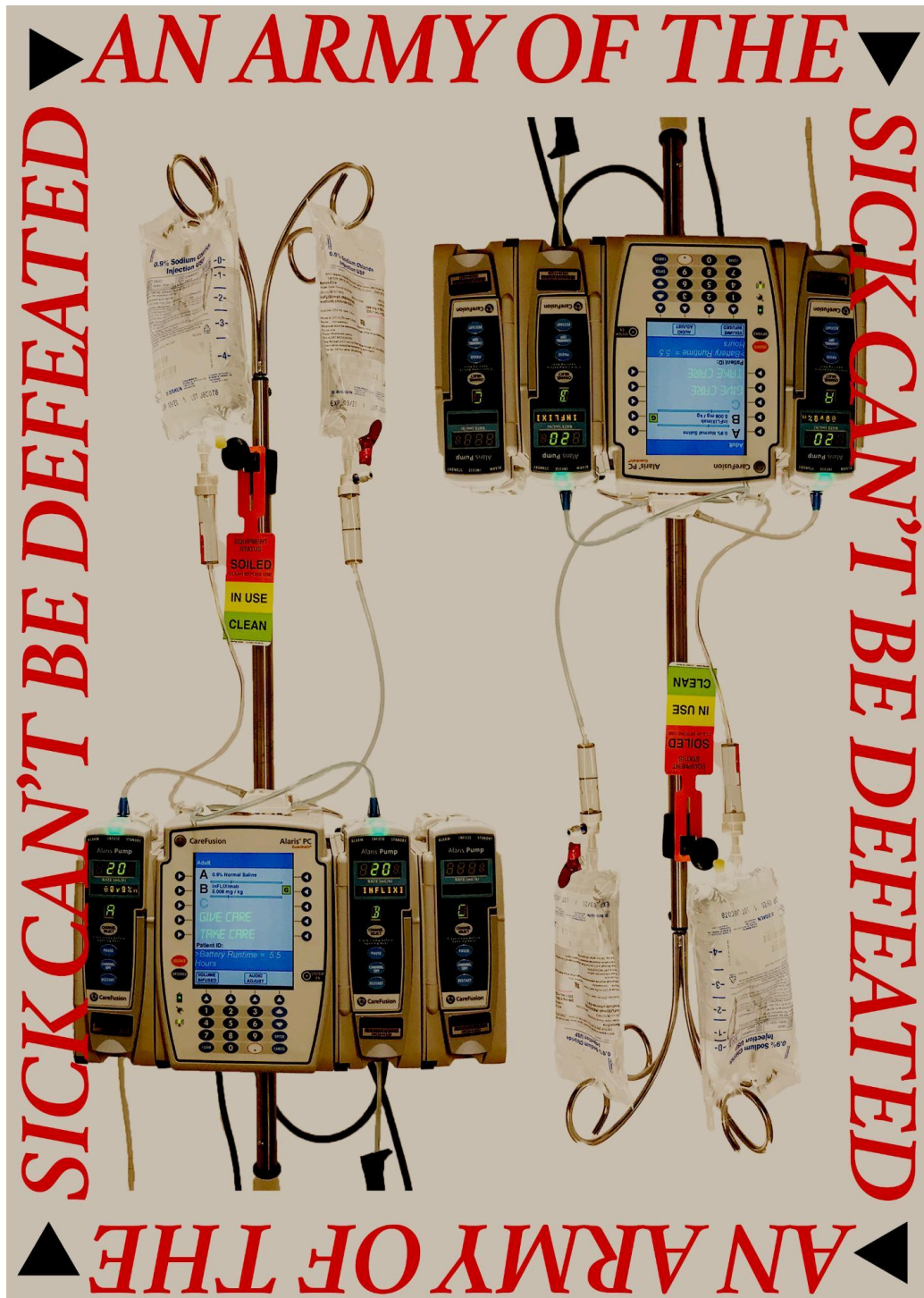
(video has open captions. unmute the video to hear the text read aloud, if sound is a primary way of your engagement with artworks)

[Short essay](#) written by Brothers Sick

Program: [Penumbra: Full Moon Party](#)

## Brothers Sick

*An Army Of The Sick Can't Be Defeated*, digital print, dimensions variable, 2020.  
The Future Is Loading... Shape Arts, UK. 2020, [essay](#) and [visual works](#)







## Brothers Sick

Masks, digital prints, dimensions variable, 2020.

Printed in [What Does a COVID-19 Doula Do? Zine PDF](#), April 2020 Pages 27-28

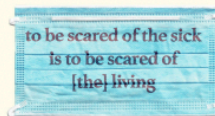
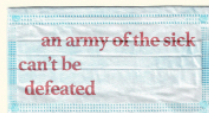
### EZRA AND NOAH BENUS

#### AN ARMY OF THE SICK CAN'T BE DEFEATED: REFLECTIONS ON CARE WORK IN PERPETUAL SICK TIMES

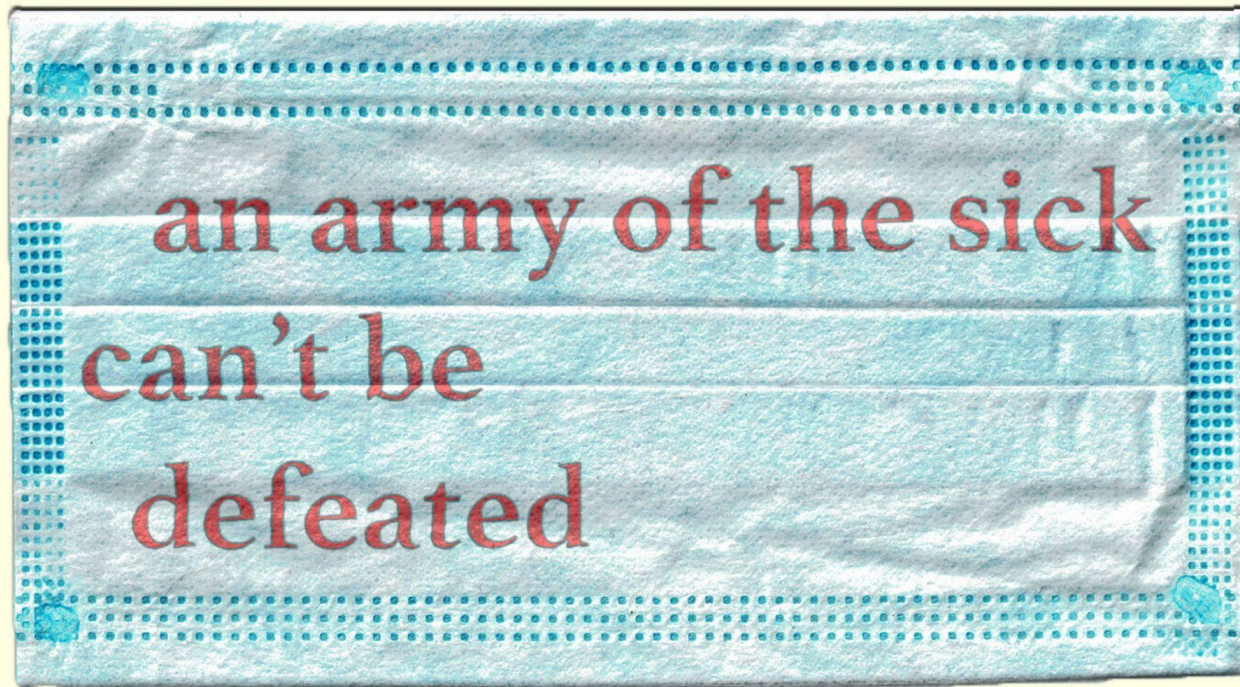
On the following page: two images formatted the same with different text on the two blue face masks centered in frame, arranged like a blue equal sign on a pale yellow background. The masks each have a red typed message on the fabric. Masks read "an army of the sick can't be defeated" "to be scared of the sick is to be scared [the] living" "networks of care CAN and SHOULD be contagious" "illness finds us all but care unfortunately does not".

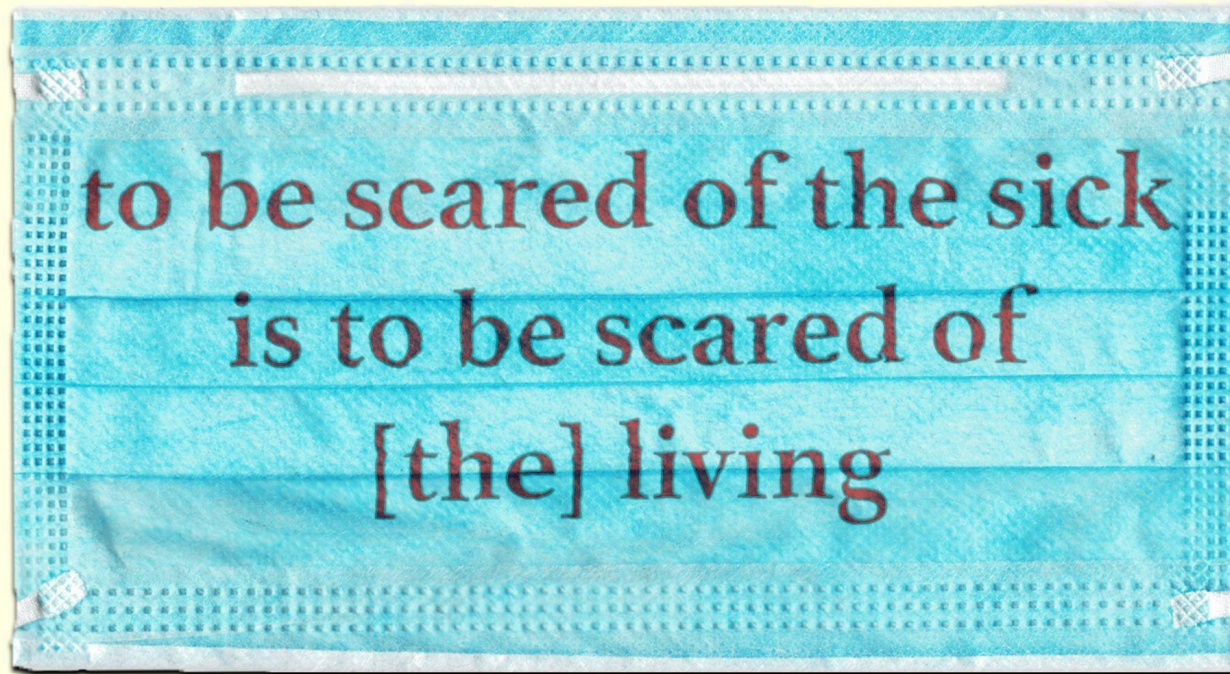
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### /BROTHERS SICK





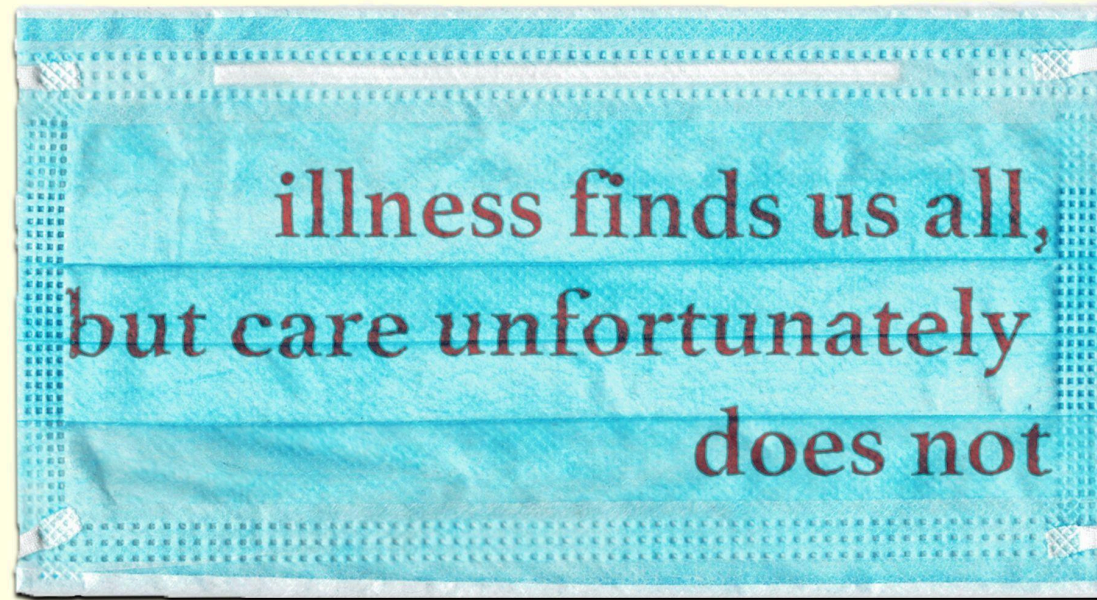




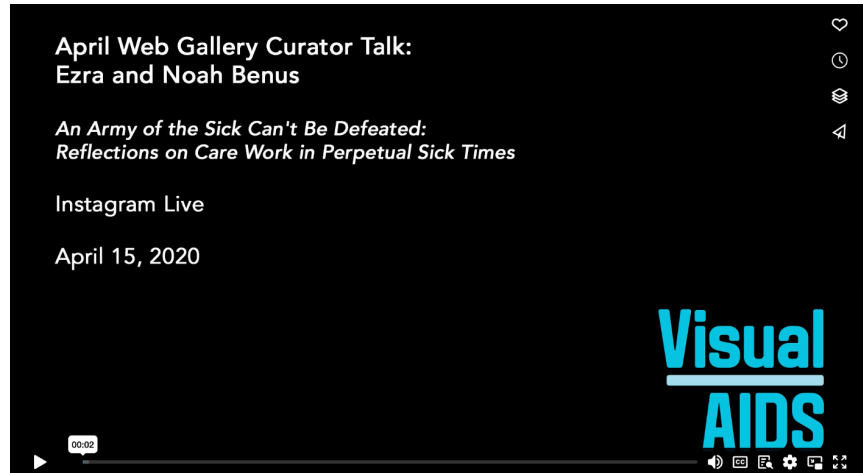








[\*An Army Of The Sick Can't Be Defeated: Reflections On Care Work In Perpetual Sick Times\*](#)



[Web Gallery](#) and [curator talk](#) for Visual AIDS, April 2020

In the essay and the curator talk we expand on our ideas along with sharing more specific references that have influenced our work *An Army Of The Sick Can't Be Defeated*

[Brothers Sick](#)

*An Army Of The Sick Can't Be Defeated*, 2019, 11 x 17 inches, dye sublimation on aluminum.

Exhibited at [My Body Is The House We Live In](#) at Gibney Dance. [pdf](#) info

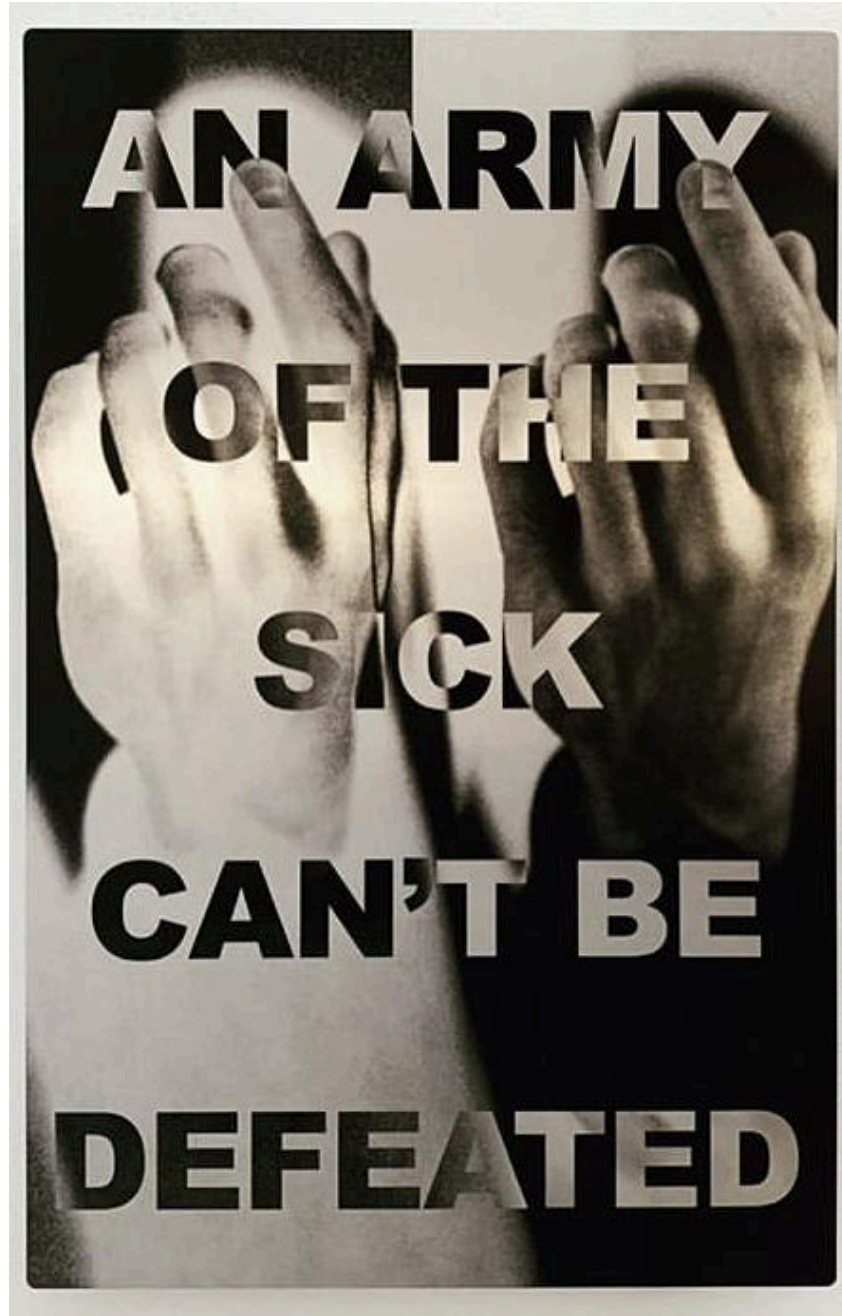
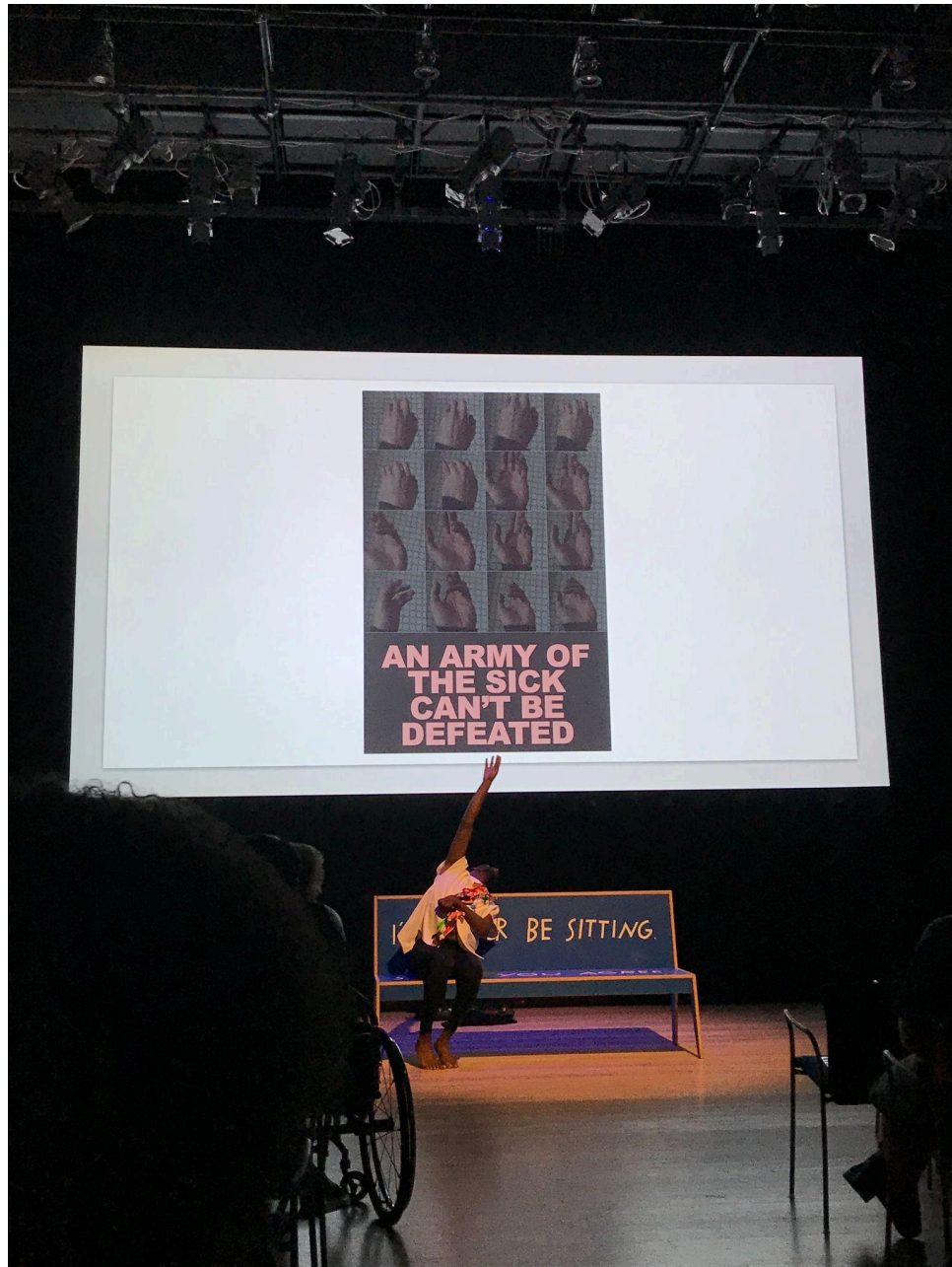


Image description: The whole image is in variants of greyscale, reminiscent of x-ray or other scans. bisecting the frame there are two images of the same back of the hand posed with most of the fingers curled inwards, with the pointer finger fully raised. Overlaid on the image is text that reads An Army Of The Sick Can't Be Defeated.



## Brothers Sick

*An Army Of The Sick Can't Be Defeated*, 2018  
original poster, dimensions vary



First exhibited at The 8th Floor gallery in [Locus: Art as a Disabled Space](#)  
Prominently featured in Jerron Herman's performance [Many Ways To Raise a Fist](#) at the Whitney Museum, featuring Brothers Sick artwork. Jerron's expanded thoughts in [Wordgathering](#) about our art in his work.