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## Passion Projected: Deva Pardue on Designing For All Womankind

By: Amanda McCorquodale | June 7, 2017

In the disorienting wake of the 2016 presidential election, graphic designer Deva Pardue was asked to contribute to an article on powerful protest art. She quickly centered on the clenched fist motif, a graphic form that mobilized masses during the Paris rebellion, Vietnam protests, the Black Panther movement and women's liberation in the 1970s. After looking into its power and prevalence, Pardue says she was struck by the fact that there were no feminine versions of the fist.



"I was hopeless, angry and scared about what the new administration meant for me as a woman but also for all marginalized communities," says Pardue, who had just transitioned to freelancing after five years designing at the Pentagram agency in New York. Inspired by the complete lack of a female form of such an iconic protest symbol, she got to work illustrating a print with three clenched fists donning red nails and varying skin tones. She also created a typographic print with a pink background and alarm-red type that reads "For All Womankind."

"Feminism has gone through so many expressions and negotiations," says Pardue. "Putting red nail polish on a protest fist would have gotten really shit on in a different era but because of all the progress of prior feminist waves, there's no longer any reason to consider strength incompatible with femininity."

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Looking back, Pardue says she was primed to notice the lack of feminine protest art because one of her last projects at Pentagram was helping design the brand identity of The Wing, New York City's social club for women that combines empowerment with unapologetic femininity.

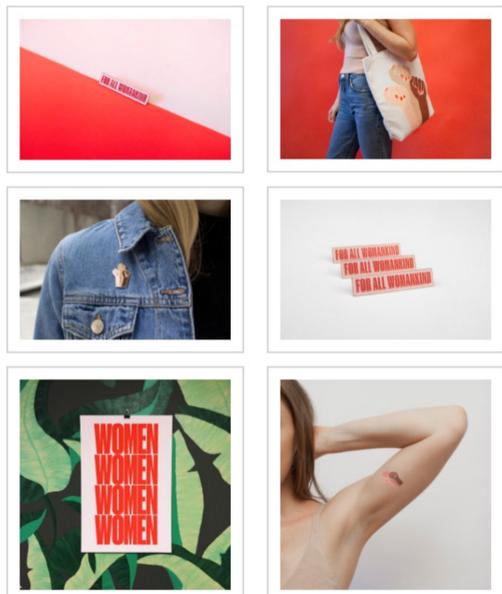


brand identity for The Wing

Pardue initially sold the prints online through For All Womankind, which she considers a design initiative for "fempowerment," with all proceeds benefiting the Center for Reproductive Rights and Emily's List, an organization that supports pro-choice Democratic women running for office. In the lead-up to the Women's March on January 21, Pardue offered free digital downloads of For All Womankind prints, created additional designs, and received mentions in the press. Suddenly the prints went viral.

"I was getting thousands and thousands of downloads across the globe, and celebrities like Reese Witherspoon were posting the prints on Instagram," says Pardue. The wave of interest led to requests for more products so she created For All Womankind shirts and pins, both of which sold out within hours.

"I find it funny that I'm now known for an illustration, because I really don't consider myself an illustrator," says Pardue, who admits when pressed that she's more into type-driven work. Born in Ireland, she moved to the states as a teenager, studied Psychology for two years before attending the School of Visual Arts for a Bachelor of Fine Arts.



At Pentagram, in addition to doing brand identity work for The Wing, she was part of a team that created the title sequence to NBC's *Unbreakable Kimmy Schmidt*. She also worked on campaigns for Bike New York and the Minneapolis Institute of Art.

"I was lucky that I got to do a lot of non-profit work while at Pentagram," says Pardue, "but after five years, I felt I needed a new experience." In July 2016, she left Pentagram to freelance, first spending three months traveling Europe and Africa. "I can be very routine-oriented so I wanted to push myself into the chaos of traveling."

Now as she considers next steps for For All Womankind, the exposure has brought some interesting clients to her freelancing. "I design print materials for ArtTable, a program that supports women in the arts," says Pardue. "True to their mission, they really respect my designs and treat them as art." She's also doing identity branding for Girls Build LA, an organization working to close the gender gap in STEM fields.



"These are passion projects for me. I'm both proud of my work and proud of the message they contribute to," says Pardue, who admits that the challenge is also doing enough other freelancing work to offset designing for non-profits. "I think large design agencies have an ever greater responsibility to incorporate non-profit work because they can afford to," she adds.

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In May Pardue spoke on her experience creating work with a social narrative for the AIGA/NY lecture panel, "Design from Necessity." As she explains, "Designing For All Womankind was eye-opening. At first, I was hesitant to put the fists print out there because I'm not an illustrator. But it just goes to show that when strong emotions are involved – in my case, I was really pissed off about the election – the feelings can take your designs to the next level. It's like when I used to make my mom tea growing up, she always said she could tell when I was mad at her, because she couldn't taste the love."



See more work from Deva Pardue here.

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### About Amanda McCorquodale

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