

Bemusement Park

Dismaland

Andreas Hykade (Bavaria)

Amir Schiby (Israel)

Ammar Abd Rabbo (Syria)

Axel Void (USA)

Banksy (UK)

Barry Reigate (UK)

Ben Long (UK)

Bill Barminski (USA)

Block9 (UK)

Brock Davis (USA)

Caitlin Cherry (USA)

Caroline McCarthy (IRL)

Damien Hirst (UK)

Darren Cullen (UK)

David Shrigley (UK)

Dorcas Casey (UK)

Dietrich Wegner (USA)

Ed Hall (UK)

El Teneen (Egypt)

Josh Keyes (USA)

Julie Burchill (UK)

Kate MacDowell (USA)

Laura Lancaster (UK)

Lee Madgwick (UK)

Leigh Mulley (UK)

Lush (Australia)

Mana Neyestani (Iran)

Maskull Lasserre (Canada)

Michael Beitz (USA)

Mike Ross (USA)

Neta Harari Navon (Israel)

Nettie Wakefield (UK)

Paco Pomet (Spain)

Paul Insect & BAST (UK/
USA)

Peter Kennard & Cat Phillips
(UK)

Polly Morgan (UK)

Escif (Spain)

Espo (USA)

Fares Cachoux (Syria)

Foundland (Syria/South Africa)

Greg Haberny (USA)

Huda Beydoun (Saudi Arabia)

James Joyce (UK)

Jani Leinonen (Finland)

Jeff Gillette (USA)

Jenny Holzer (USA)

Jessica Harrison (UK)

Jimmy Cauty (UK)

Joanna Pollonais (Canada)

Pure Evil (UK)

Ronit Baranga (Israel)

Sami Musa (Palestine)

Scott Hove (USA)

Severija Incirauskaite-

Kriauneviciene (Lithuania)

Shadi Alzaqzouq (Palestine)

Suliman Mansour (Palestine)

Tammam Azzam (Syria)

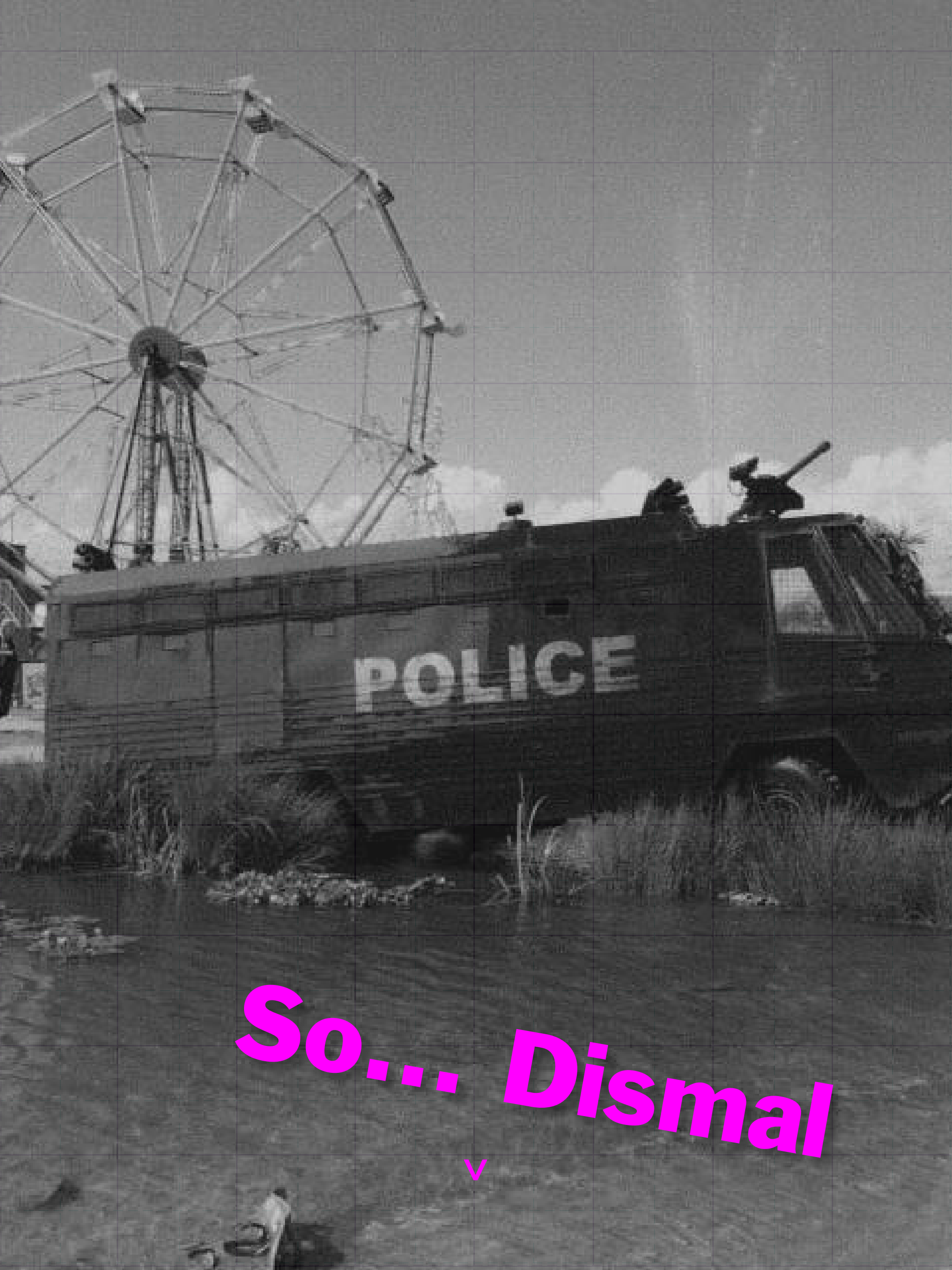
The Astronauts’ Caravan (UK)

Tinsel Edwards (UK)

Wasted Rita (Portugal)

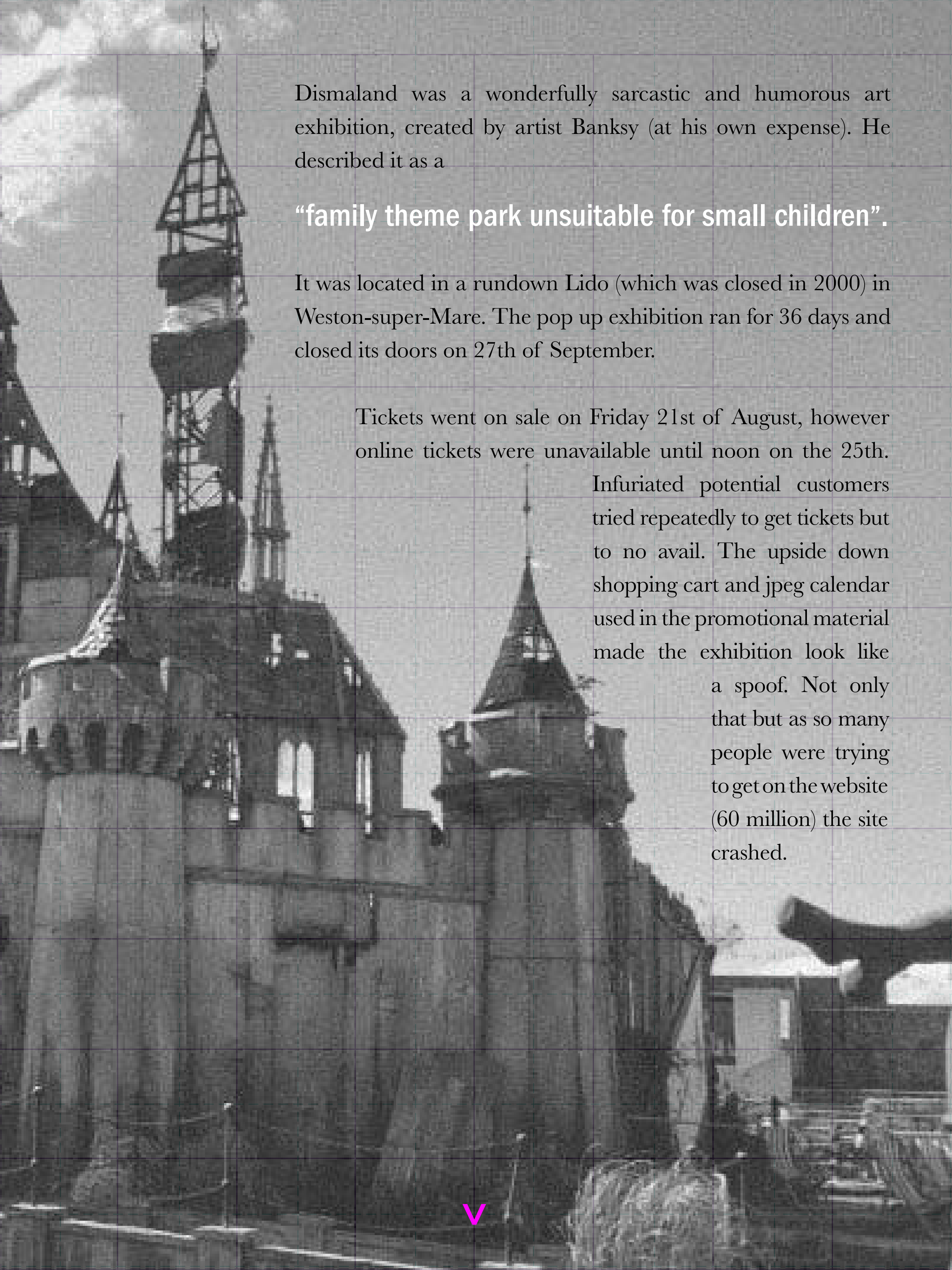
Zaria Forman (USA)





So... Dismal

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Dismaland was a wonderfully sarcastic and humorous art exhibition, created by artist Banksy (at his own expense). He described it as a

“family theme park unsuitable for small children”.

It was located in a rundown Lido (which was closed in 2000) in Weston-super-Mare. The pop up exhibition ran for 36 days and closed its doors on 27th of September.

Tickets went on sale on Friday 21st of August, however online tickets were unavailable until noon on the 25th.

Infuriated potential customers tried repeatedly to get tickets but to no avail. The upside down shopping cart and jpeg calendar used in the promotional material made the exhibition look like a spoof. Not only that but as so many people were trying to get on the website (60 million) the site crashed.



This made many more people think this was a spoof exhibition, and ask the question had Banksy created an exhibition or not,

Did it really exist?

The fact that it appeared that you could not buy tickets and the site crashing causing great confusion but in the end it was all just part of the Dismaland experience. I personally tried to get tickets but after 2 hours on the internet trying I was about to give up, when suddenly the calendar came to life, there were entry times and the shopping cart was the right way up. Tickets were priced at £3 each (plus £2 booking fee) and because I was intending to drive down from Scotland (8hr drive) I wanted to make sure I was certain to get in before setting off.






I find it incredibly impressive that only a handful of people knew what was really going on. The local residents of Weston super mare were told the old unused lido was to be used as a film set, locals had no idea until Thursday (20th), when it was announced what Banksy had actually been creating:



“A festival of art amusement and entry-level anarchism.”

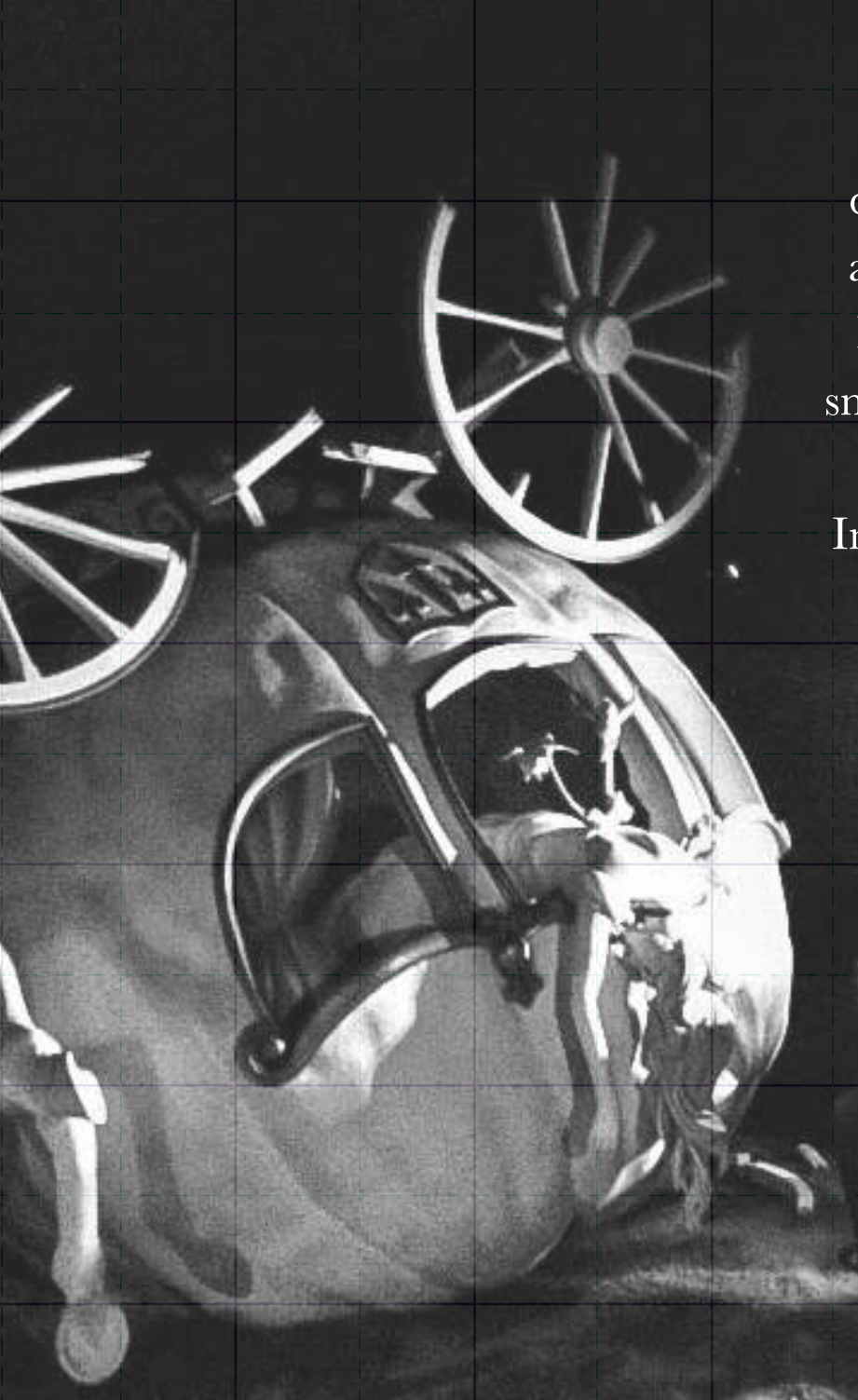
The exhibition contained 10 new pieces of art, created specifically by Banksy for the pop up event, Cinderella crash, sea world whale, little mermaid, Mickey in a snake, woman being attacked by birds, death on a dogem to name but a few.

Banksy is also responsible for choosing the 58 artists , well known and not so wellknown, who's work features alongside his in Dismaland. Damien Hirst and Jenny Holzer are the more well known artist but this exhibition also gave lesser known artist a chance to showcase some of their recent work.



Having gone to Dismaland I experienced first hand the artistically engineered dull and gloomy atmosphere, I almost did not get through security because I could not stop smiling “STOP SMILING - do you understand?” barked the “security” guard. As soon as I entered I was “greeted” by an un-enthusiastic woman in a pink hi-vis jacket with Mickey mouse ears and no smile, who eventually gave me a map of the park but looked at me as if saying;

“why would you want this?”



The park was crammed full of things to do, everywhere you looked there was something different. I went passed the little mermaid exhibit and directly to the centre piece castle as I entered I was rudely directed to “stand there” and “don’t smile” as my picture was taken. I was then allowed to enter the castle through some black curtains. Inside Cinderella was hanging out of an upturned carriage surrounded by paparazzi flashing pictures, hard art to view with constant flashing of the cameras.



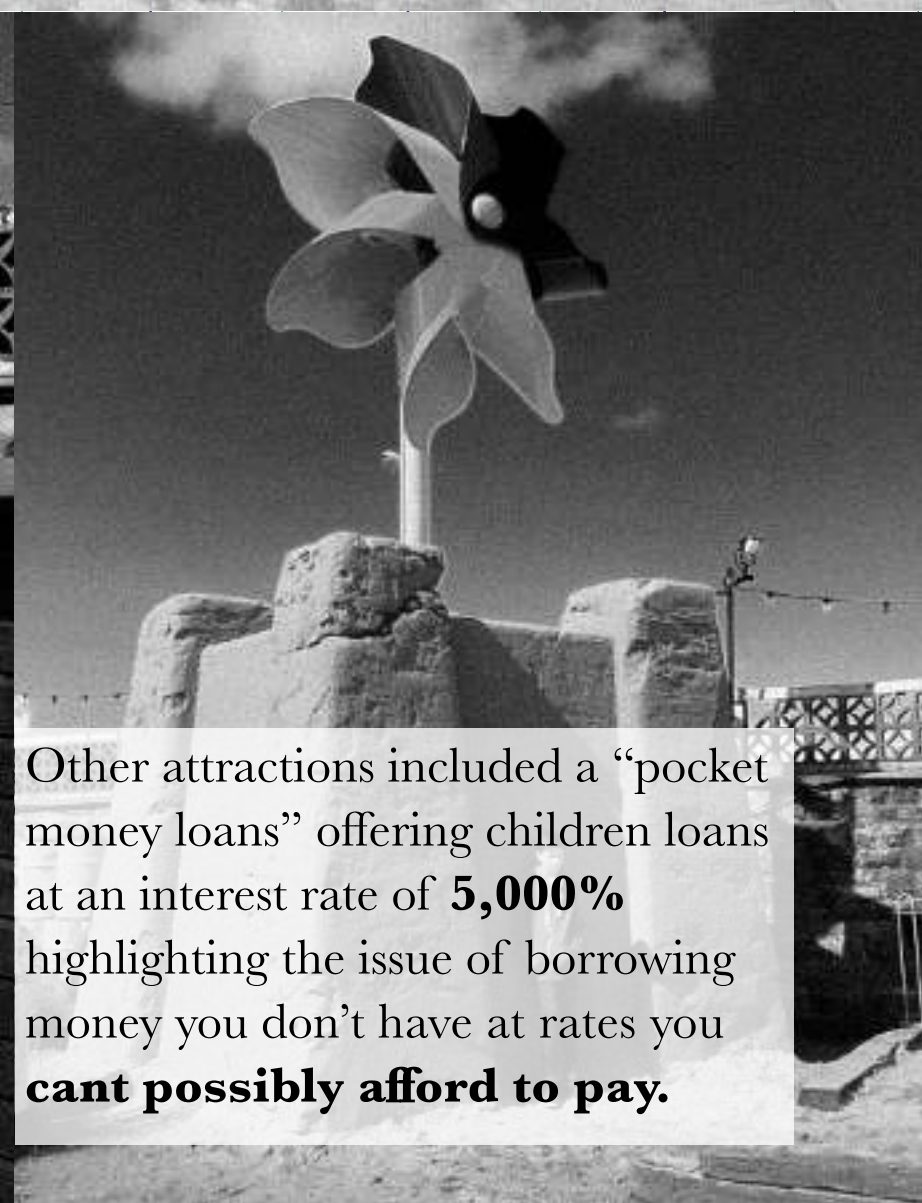



"The following are strictly prohibited in the Park – spray paint, marker pens, knives and legal representatives of the Walt Disney Corporation."

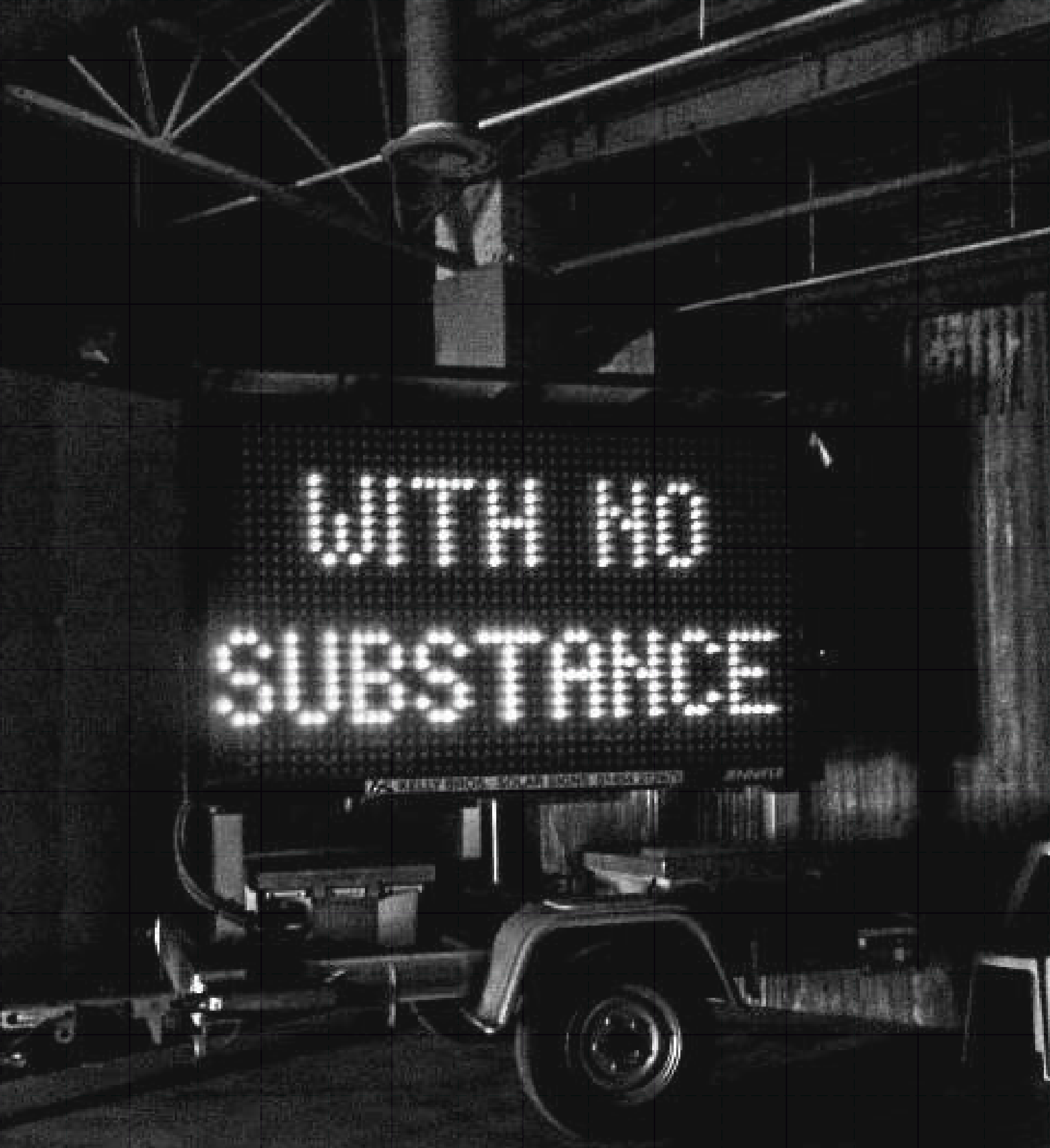
After that I went passed a killer whale coming out of a toilet and trying to go threw a tiny hoop above a paddling pool on the other side (a parody of sea world I think). Then into a tent with lots of pictures and fabrics printed with text expressing philosophical views. Followed by an impossible mini golf course and on to a giant sand castle.



Sea world?



Other attractions included a “pocket money loans” offering children loans at an interest rate of **5,000%** highlighting the issue of borrowing money you don’t have at rates you **cant possibly afford to pay.**



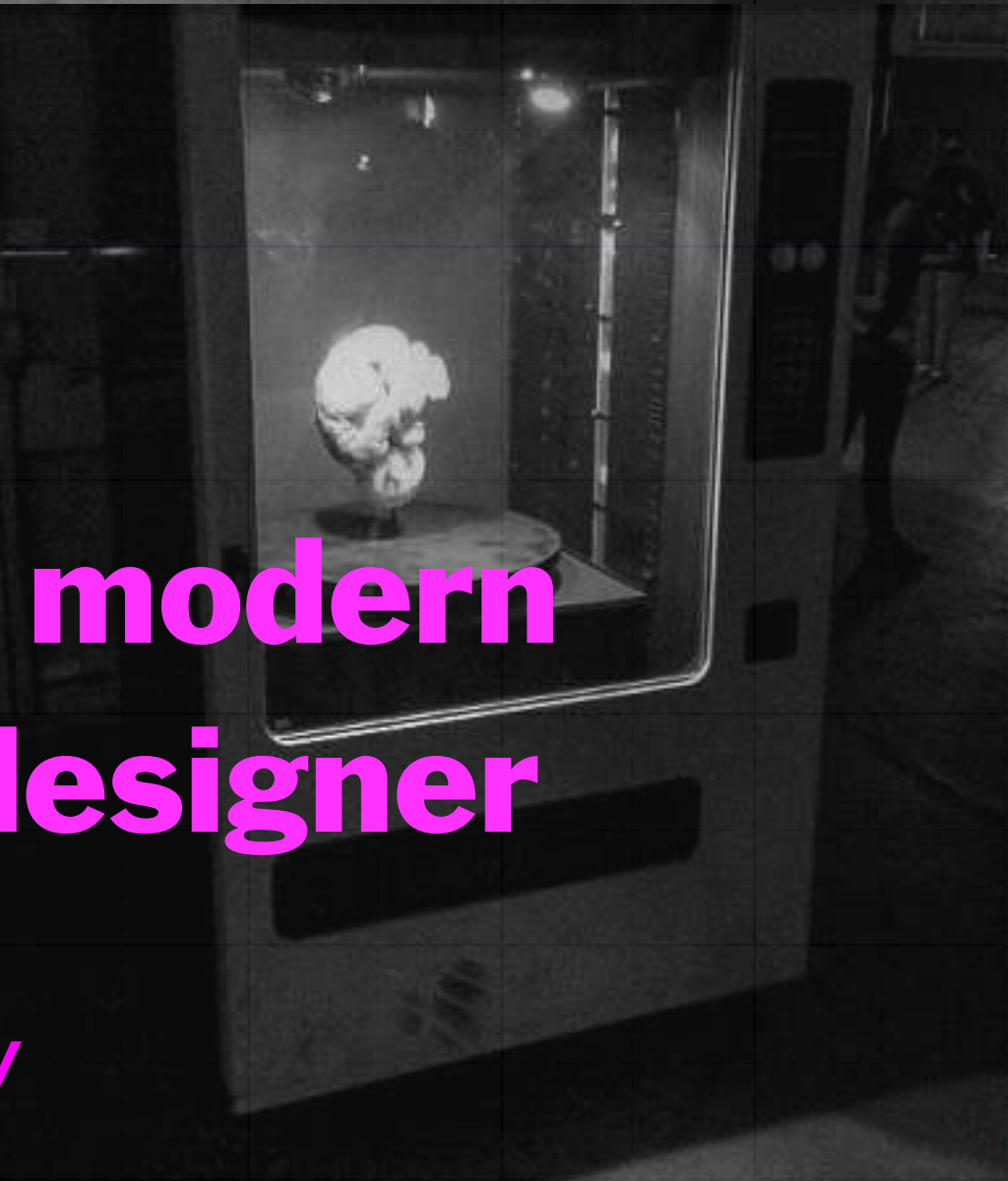
Moving on into the main exhibition area one encounters an array of big lit up digital road signs, with ever changing messages, highlighting contemporary issues.



To the right of the signs, this otherwise dark room, was lit up by a white table and desk with a continuous stream of cartoon characters projected onto paper on the desk, churning out thoughtless ideas - maybe. All of a sudden the Beegees “staying alive” starts playing and the grim reaper on a dodgem comes out and starts dancing about. This room also contains two other pieces; to the left an art display made from cardboard packaging with plants and herbs and plant pots. Opposite was a tattooed baby in a vending machine,



**Questioning
the ethics of modern
adoption or designer
babies?**

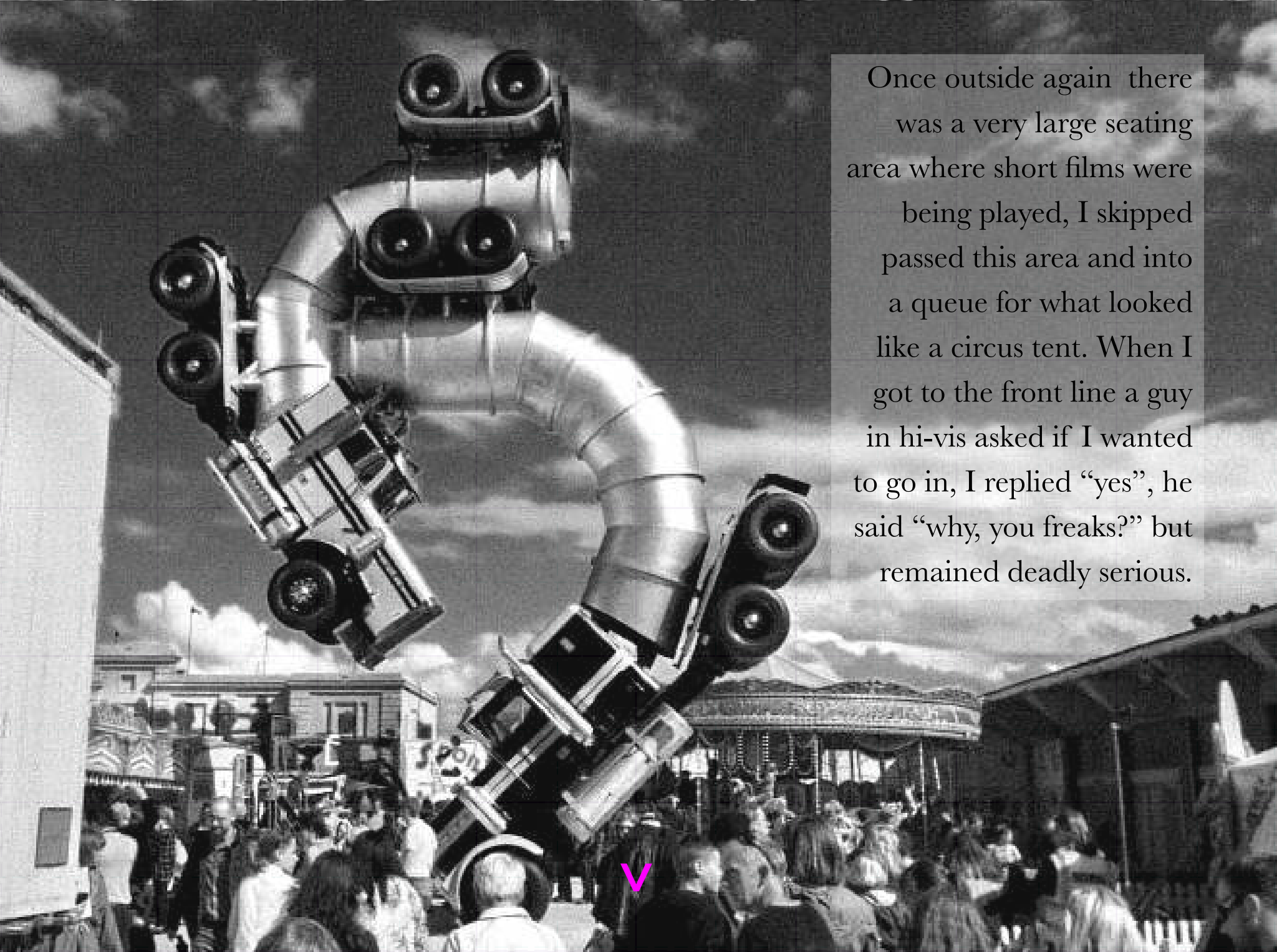






The next area was through dark curtains and into the light, here I found the art, photography and sculpture. Amazing pieces by well known and not so well known artists at the end of this room is a massive mini city with thousands of policemen at various incidents, slight over kill with the police.

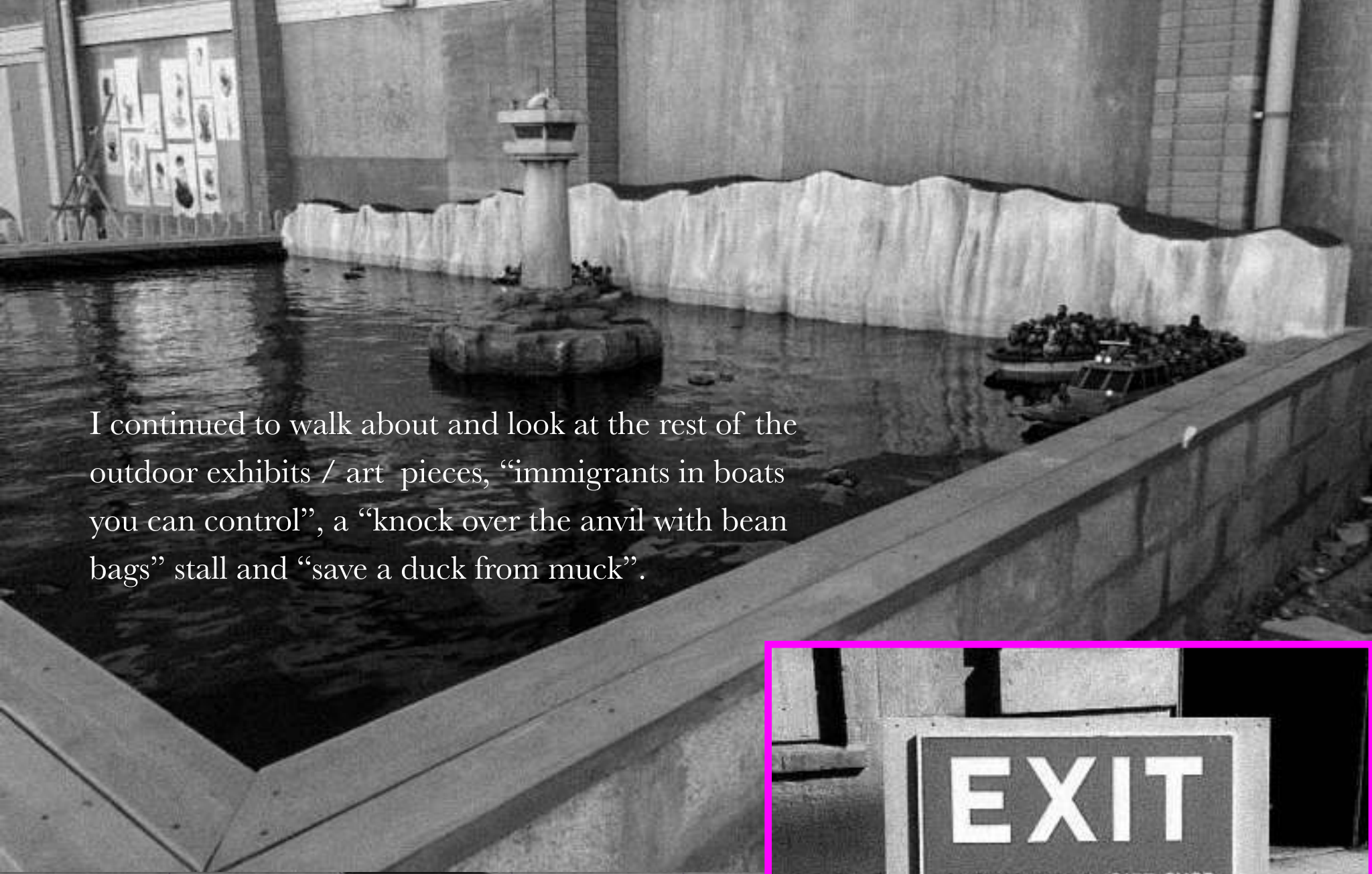




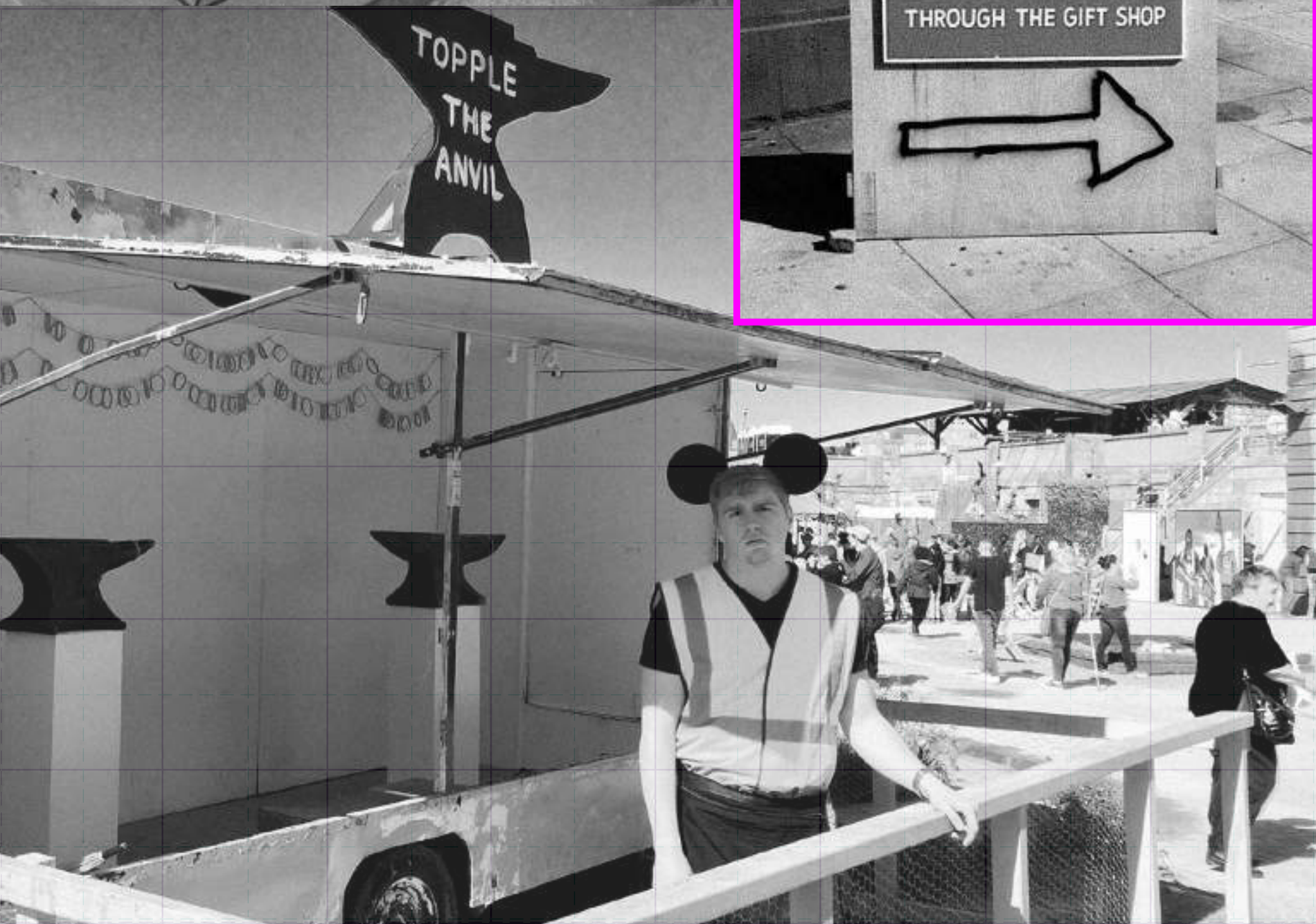
Once outside again there was a very large seating area where short films were being played, I skipped passed this area and into a queue for what looked like a circus tent. When I got to the front line a guy in hi-vis asked if I wanted to go in, I replied “yes”, he said “why, you freaks?” but remained deadly serious.

When I got into the tent there was a circular table set up like the mad hatters tea party with a pickled sheep (with a unicorn like horn) in the background and surrounded by sculptures made to look like decorated cakes with horns. Just before the exit there was a white bunny in a hat holding a snapped magic wand with pile of magicians clothes on the floor next to the bunny, guess the bunny had enough.

**Magicians clothes
on the floor next
to the bunny,
guess the
bunny had
enough.**



I continued to walk about and look at the rest of the outdoor exhibits / art pieces, “immigrants in boats you can control”, a “knock over the anvil with bean bags” stall and “save a duck from muck”.





I think that the concept of a “bemusement park” is a brilliant idea and fitted the run down Lido exhibition space very well. This exhibition was able to house controversial and sometimes shocking representations of ideas of contemporary life and attitudes more traditional exhibition venues and museums would find it difficult to accommodate. With this exhibition Banksy raises serious issues in a sarcastic, humorous and sometimes uncomfortable ways, it is a unique combination of exhibition, social comment and art.

Some observations:

“Dismaland was the art phenomena of the year (4,500 people per day) in comparison, around 3,500 people per day went to V&A’s record breaking exhibition of fashion by designer Alexander McQueen in London earlier this year. The most popular exhibition in the history of the Tate - last year’s Henri Matisse show attracted 3,907 people per day. But when David Hockney exhibited at the royal academy in 2012 he attracted 7,512 a day. (BBC news)

**Which raises the question: who is Britain’s most popular artist
- Banksy or Hockney?”**





For me it was not just about the art, Dismaland confronts issues no one else in art wants to touch, we all know they exist but Banksy and his associates force us to see them, from cardboard cutout airport security guards to posters showing big company executives increasing their pay enormously while ordinary workers struggling to make ends meet. Through Banksy's own art and the art of the other artists involved in Dismaland the weaknesses of our "failing" society are exposed. The use of Weston-super-Mare's old and run-down seaside lido has reminded people that what was once a seaside attraction can be a different kind of attraction at least for a short time. I am sure that the people of Weston-super-Mare have welcomed the boost to their economy and the publicity it has attracted for their town. Weston-super-Mare was once an extremely busy summer holiday venue but with the availability of cheap package holidays to foreign seaside destinations with guaranteed warmth and sunshine its popularity is considerably reduced (these days) as people rarely go to the English seaside for their main summer holiday. So what better place to highlight modern social issues and societal decay than setting your exhibition in an area which is not as successful as it once was. 10 million of business to the seaside town is the predicted amount that was brought to the seaside town,

so how can you not love Banksy?