

Posters from Paddington Printshop

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ABSTRACT

'Slogans in nice typefaces won't save the human races' reads a 2017 poster by Odly Head aka Tim Fishlock. Posters from Paddington Printshop by John Phillips cuts through the urbane nicety which, as Fishlock laments, dampens so much of today's communication design.

Founded in 1974 by John Philips, Paddington Printshop opened its doors to community groups wanting to bring about social change. With help from the Arts Council the Printshop provided equipment and expertise as well as technical training to activists, artists and musicians.

The power of these posters resides in their direct, raw and often crude appearance. There's no unifying style here, although solid screen printed colour provides the perfect medium to convey the urgency of these messages. There's an assertiveness to John Phillips' posters that's impossible to ignore. 'We are a little worried about our landlord' in particular stands out as an especially powerful piece of proto-OBEY protest art.

Could these posters exist today? Many of the causes championed by users of the Printshop, such as tenants' rights and the need for affordable housing, are now more pressing than ever. How are we to be heard in the saturated, ironic, over-sophisticated visual culture in which we find ourselves? Arguably, print is less susceptible to the political misuse currently infecting social media. Placing print production in the hands of the community provides an authenticity which is hard to emulate. Recently Extinction Rebellion has been using this approach to great effect, empowering the public by setting up mobile DIY garment printing at rallies. The spirit of Paddington Printshop is alive and well.

Posters from Paddington Printshop, by John Phillips
Foreword by Andrzej Klimowski.

Paperback, 144 pages. 32 × 21.6 cm.
ISBN 978-1-909829-15-2
Published: 12 September 2019 <https://www.fourcornersbooks.co.uk>

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Figure 1



Figure 2

Figure 1: Cover of 'Posters from Paddington Printshop', John Phillips (2019) 32 X 21.6 cm
Figure 2: 'We are a little worried about our landlord', poster by John Phillips for Paddington Printshop; London (1986) 78.5 x 53.2 cm



We are a little worried
about our landlord.

POSTERS FROM PADDINGTON PRINTSHOP



John Phillips