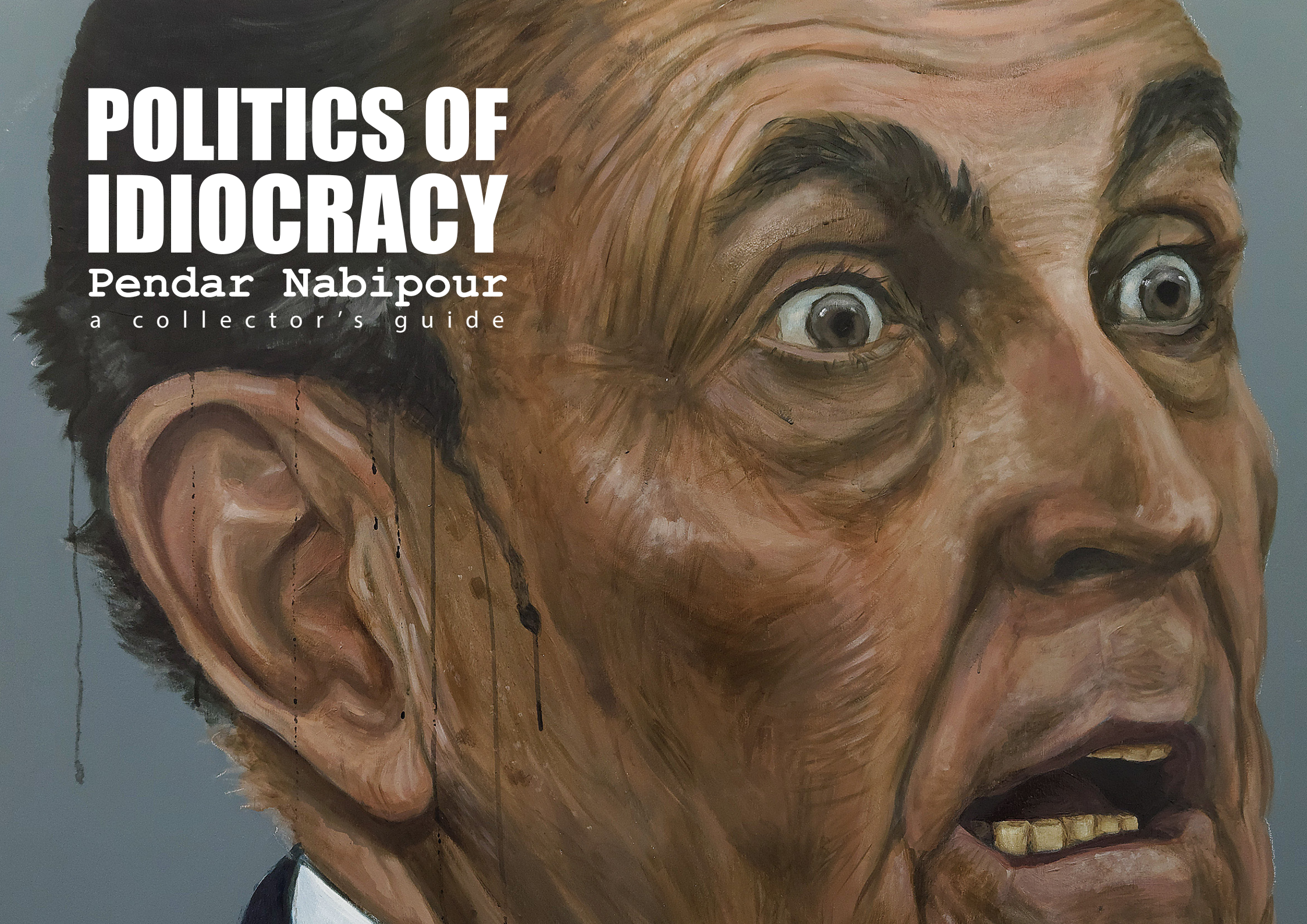


POLITICS OF IDIOCRACY

Pendar Nabipour
a collector's guide



Politics of Idiocracy is a series of large-scale oil paintings based on widely circulated journalistic images of politicians captured in moments of failure, awkwardness, or unintended absurdity.

By focusing on failure in positions of power (rather than glorifying moments of victory) the work challenges the conventions of political representation. It questions why authority is traditionally associated with control, dignity, and success, while vulnerability and error are dismissed as insignificant or embarrassing.

Situated between painting and digital culture, the project reflects on how public perception is increasingly shaped by viral circulation and collective reinterpretation. In translating these fleeting images into carefully constructed paintings, *Politics of Idiocracy* creates an alternative visual archive; one that recognizes the absurd, the fragile, and the human as essential to understanding power.

This catalog presents the first 7 final works in the series, each accompanied by title, year, medium, dimensions, and a note on its meme source as well as an explanation of my personal addition to each image.



Read the latest article by Emma Ruiter on [versbeton.nl](https://www.versbeton.nl) about the exhibition.



For more information about the project visit my personal website.



Donald Trump tan line
Oil, acrylic, brewed saffron on panel
120 x 120 cm

€ 10.000



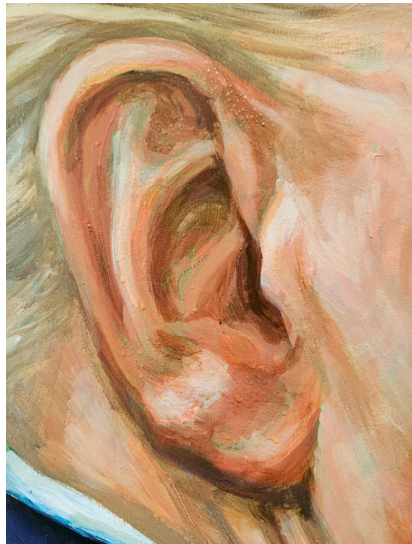
Donald Trump tan line

This photograph, taken by White House photographer William Moon on February 7, 2020, shows President Donald Trump returning to the White House from Marine One on the South Lawn. The image quickly went viral due to its unflattering portrayal of Trump, highlighting his stark tan line and unevenly applied makeup. The strong winds during his walk further exposed his distinctive hair and makeup style, fueling online commentary and ridicule.

The photograph was widely shared and became a hotbed for memes. Social media users compared Trump's orange-tinged face to various pop culture references, including "Wilson," the volleyball from the movie *Cast Away*, and characters from *The Hunger Games*. Others mocked the apparent vanity behind the tanning or makeup routine that resulted in such a stark contrast between his face and neck. The hashtag #OrangeFace trended on Twitter as users rified on his appearance, interpreting it as a reflection of his obsession with public image.

In response, Trump dismissed the photo as "fake news" and claimed it was Photoshopped, although the visible tan line was consistent across other photos from that day. His tweet defending his hair and blaming the wind further fueled the humor, reinforcing the internet's fascination with his reaction to the meme culture surrounding him.

sources: The Daily Dot, Heavy.com



Added personal element:

A layer of brewed saffron oil is brushed onto this painting to emphasize the face-tan of Donald Trump. I purchased a few bags of saffron back in the early 2010s when I moved to the Netherlands in the hope of selling them and making some money as a student. The plan never worked, but I kept on using the saffron for my household during the years.

The process can be seen on Instagram: @pendarnabipour



minder, minder, minder

Oil, acrylic, artist's immigration documents on
panel
120 x 120 cm

€ 7.000



minder, minder, minder

Geert Wilders & Joram van Klaveren in th Tweede Kamer

Geert Wilders a well known controversial right-wing politician in the Netherlands is the leader of PVV (Party for Freedom / Partij voor de Vrijheid). Throughout his career he has raised many provocative moments. From promising a ban on immigration from Muslim-majority countries, to promoting a Brexit-style exit of the Netherlands from the European Union, Nextit. But he is not necessarily a memeable person in a way which fits this collection. He has not been photographed being subjected to a ridiculous moment (except the one with a pen pushing the tip of his nose up). So, I had to look hard to find a good meme photograph of him.

During my research, I found this photo of him and Joram van Klaveren, Wilders' right-hand man in PVV. Joram van Klaveren served as a Member of Parliament for the Party for Freedom (PVV) from June 17, 2010, until March 21, 2014. During this period, he was considered a close ally of Geert Wilders and acted as the party's spokesperson on Islam. He left the PVV in March 2014 following controversial remarks by Wilders regarding the Moroccan community in the Netherlands, in which Wilders famously asked the crowd do you like more or less Moroccans? And the crowd responses "minder, minder, minder... / less, less, less".

This was in odds with van Klaveren's view on public image of the party. So he takes a break from politics to focus on a book he always wanted to write against Islam. And long story short, and with his religious Christian background, he falls in love with Islam during the process. Mr. van Klaveren is a promoter of Islam and runs different Islamic institutions. Wilders still goes strong with his controversial statements.

Added personal element:

Real IND (Dutch Immigration Office) documents that I received during the first 9 years of my immigration were used to complete the seats of the Dutch parliament in the background of this image. The letters are collaged and glued to the background using poster glue, and then painted over.

The process can be seen on Instagram: @pendarnabipour



Netanyahu's cartoon bomb

Oil, acrylic, iodine tablet powder on panel
120 x 120 cm

€ 6.000



Netanyahu's cartoon bomb

Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu during his speech at the United Nations General Assembly on September 27, 2012. Netanyahu held up a cartoon-like diagram of a bomb to illustrate the potential threat posed by Iran's nuclear program. Using the diagram, he highlighted what he claimed were stages of Iran's nuclear enrichment progress, pointing to a red line that he drew near the top to argue that international intervention was critical before Iran reached the "final stage" and achieves producing an atomic bomb.

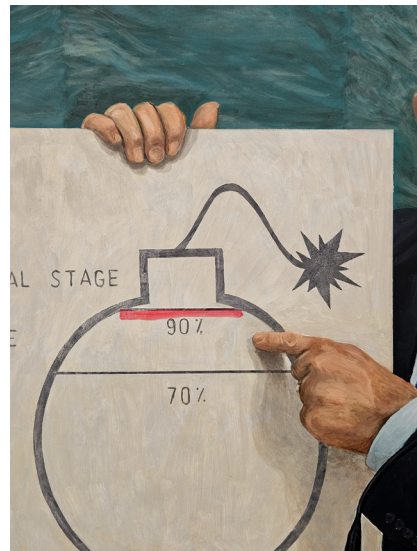
The visual aid was meant to simplify and dramatize a complex issue, but its simplicity led to it becoming an internet sensation. The bomb graphic quickly became the subject of ridicule and memes on social media, with many comparing it to something out of a cartoon like "Looney Tunes". Critics called it an oversimplification of the nuclear issue, while supporters saw it as an effective way to draw attention to a dire international concern.

Hashtags such as #BibiBomb trended globally as internet users photoshopped the diagram into absurd contexts. Some edited the bomb to show pizza toppings or video game progress bars, while others inserted pop culture references. Late-night comedians also capitalized on the image, with Jon Stewart of The Daily Show mockingly calling it "the least subtle graphic ever."

Despite the controversy, the image remains one of the most memorable moments in UN history.

Image source: still image from UNTV

Sources: @Guardian @KnowYourMeme @The.Independent @AlJazeera @Reuters



Added personal element:

Iodine tablets grinded and mixed with water and acrylic paint. After a tip from a friend Rick Driessen I realized that iodine tablets are used after nuclear accidents in order to regulate thyroide. I used this powder to paint a layer of the cartoon diagram, as well as to paint the background with marble stones from the United Nations General Assembly's speaker stage.

The process can be seen on Instagram: @pendarnabipour



Pope Bars

Oil, acrylic, artist's thoughts & prayers on panel
120 x 120 cm

€ 10.000



Pope Bars

The now-iconic image of late Pope Francis holding a microphone during his 2015 visit to the Central African Republic sparked the viral phenomenon known as #PopeBars. Taken by Gianluigi Guercia for Agence France-Presse (AFP), the photo depicts Pope Francis addressing a crowd with an outstretched hand while delivering a heartfelt message of unity and peace in Bangui amidst ongoing violence. While the event was serious, the Pope's posture and the angle of the photograph unintentionally made him appear as though he was performing a freestyle rap, inspiring an outpouring of creative humor online.

Social media users ran with the image, turning it into a meme with imagined rap lyrics under the hashtag #PopeBars. Many memes reimagined famous rap songs, humorously blending religious themes with pop culture. A particularly notable entry parodied Eminem's "Lose Yourself" with lines such as, "His psalms are sweaty, knees weak, cross is heavy. There's vomit on his robe already, Vatican spaghetti...". Others invented entirely new verses, imagining the Pope as a divine present delivering holy "bars".

This wasn't the first time Pope Francis became a viral sensation. The meme was resurrected by another famous meme-worthy moment which occurred during a press conference aboard the papal plane from Cairo to Rome in 2017, where he addressed serious global issues, such as tensions with North Korea. However, the scene (featuring him speaking into a handheld microphone while surrounded by aides) sparked an entirely different interpretation online. It was reimagined as the Pope dropping bars in a heated rap battle, backed by hype men restraining him mid-flow.

Sources: @knowyourmeme @dailydot @huffpost



Added personal element:

My thoughts and prayers.

The process can be seen on Instagram: @pendarnabipour



Rudy Giuliani's Hair Dye Streaks
Oil, acrylic, artist's sweat on panel
120 x 120 cm

€ 7.000



Rudy Giuliani's Hair Dye Streaks

This image of Rudy Giuliani was taken on November 19, 2020, during a press conference held at the Republican National Committee headquarters in Washington, D.C. Giuliani, acting as Donald Trump's personal attorney, presented unsubstantiated claims of voter fraud in the aftermath of the 2020 U.S. presidential election. The event was meant to reinforce the Trump campaign's efforts to challenge election results, but instead, it became infamous for Giuliani's perspiration causing what appeared to be hair dye (or some other cosmetic product) to streak down his face.

The moment went viral almost instantly. Social media platforms exploded with memes making fun of the situation. Hashtags like #HairGate and #SweatyRudy trended on Twitter, while countless users likened Giuliani to a melting candle or wax figure. His animated facial expressions during the conference further fueled the mockery. Late-night comedians such as Stephen Colbert, Seth Meyers, and Trevor Noah highlighted the absurdity of the scene, with many pointing out the irony of Giuliani sweating profusely while making dubious claims of election fraud.

This press conference was already notorious for bizarre claims, including Giuliani's references to movies like "My Cousin Vinny" as evidence, and it took place days after he made headlines for appearing in a compromising scene in the film "Borat Subsequent Moviefilm". The dripping hair dye became a lasting visual symbol of the disarray and theatrics surrounding the Trump legal team's post-election strategy.

This iconic photograph was taken by Jacquelyn Martin, Associated Press.

Sources: @the.independent @dailydot @uproxx @knowyourmeme HEAVY.COM

Added personal element:

My own sweat was used to paint the dripping dye on Giuliani's face, as well as to darken his hair in the painting. I sweat by exercising in winter clothing in Spring. Then, I washed my clothes in water and boiled the water away to harvest the sweat. The sweat was then mixed with acrylic to paint the sweat streaks.

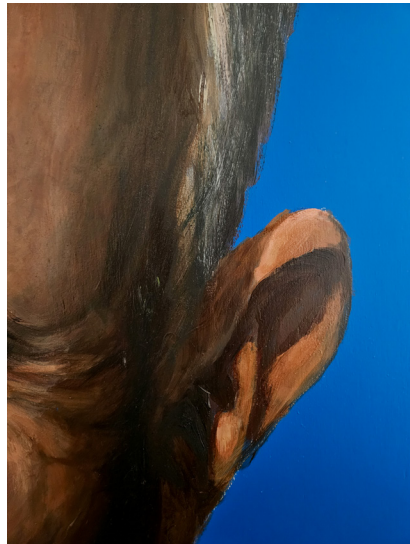
The process can be seen on Instagram: @pendarnabipour





Mike Pence's fly
Oil, acrylic, dead flea's powder on
panel

€ 6.000



Mike Pence's fly

The moment when a fly landed on Mike Pence's head during the 7th of October 2020 vice-presidential debate with Kamala Harris became one of the most talked-about and memed events of the campaign. The fly stayed on Pence's head for approximately two minutes while he was addressing the nation, leading to an explosion of reactions across social media platforms and even mainstream media coverage.

This seemingly trivial event drew enormous attention for its comedic timing and symbolism. Twitter users immediately turned it into a trending topic, with hashtags like #PenceFly and #FlyGate dominating discussions. Memes and jokes speculated on everything from the fly's "political affiliation" to its thoughts on Pence's statements. The fly even inspired a parody Twitter account, "Mike Pence's Fly," which quickly amassed thousands of followers, highlighting how such moments can capture the internet's collective imagination.

Politicians and celebrities joined the humor too. Joe Biden's campaign tweeted a photo of Biden holding a fly swatter, adding the caption, "Pitch in \$5 to help this campaign fly." This clever merchandising move included selling actual fly swatters branded as "Truth Over Flies," which reportedly sold out almost instantly. Late-night comedians also had a field day, incorporating the fly into their routines, while some pointed out the irony of such an unscripted moment overshadowing much of the actual debate.

Photographer: Eric Baradat @ebaradat

Sources: @knowyourmeme @boredpanda @dailydot

Added personal element:

Dead fly corpses grinded and used as powder for pigment, to paint the fly figure on Pence's head. The fly corpses were collected from around the windows of my studio, home, and my friends Claudio and Roxane.

The process can be seen on Instagram: @pendarnabipour



King Charles and the pen tray
Oil, acrylic, ink on panel
120 x 120 cm

€ 9.000



King Charles and the pen tray

King Charles III visibly frustrated during his proclamation ceremony on September 10, 2022, at St. James's Palace in London. The live broadcasted event marked the official declaration of Charles as the new sovereign, following the death of Queen Elizabeth II. However, a moment of unexpected tension overshadowed the solemnity of the occasion: an interaction with a full desk.

As Charles prepared to sign documents formalizing his accession, a tray of pens appeared to obstruct his space. In a brief yet expressive reaction, he gestured for aides to remove the tray, his facial expression reflecting clear irritation. This was not the first time Charles faced an awkward pen-related incident. Just days later, while signing a visitor's book in Northern Ireland, after logging a wrong date and having to correct it, a pen began leaking ink, prompting a similar display of frustration. This time he audibly expresses his frustration by muttering "I can't bear this bloody thing!" The two moments were quickly linked online, feeding a growing meme culture surrounding the King's encounters with office supplies.

Social media exploded with humor. Hashtags such as #PenTrayGate, #KingCharlesMood, and #RoyalInkGate trended on Twitter, as users likened the King's irritation to everyday workplace struggles. Memes flooded platforms like TikTok, comparing Charles' frustrations to relatable moments of modern life, such as malfunctioning tech or uncooperative coworkers.

Reactions to these incidents were mixed. While many found the displays humorous and endearing, pointing out the King's human imperfections, critics viewed his visible irritation as unbecoming of a monarch in moments of high formality.

Still image from live broadcast

Added personal element:

Fountain pen gifted to me by my mother after my graduation with my bachelors degree. I used the pen with fresh ink to paint the script written on the Accession Proclamation document signed by King Charles III, when he became king.

The process can be seen on Instagram: @pendarnabipour



Independent artist representation:

Since 2015, I have been working with themes of representation and rethinking the way we make collective decisions. Part of this focus on representation for me has been to challenge the idea of representation for the visual artists. Through independent representation and working with artist-run spaces, I am trying to push the limits of the art scene and the market apparatus. That is why this project has remained completely independent.

All sales are made directly via the artist and through a contract/certificate.

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