



Past
Exhibition

Utopia in Our Time

The Posters of Molly Crabapple

November 13, 2025–April 12, 2026

American poster design has traditionally been the work of illustrators rather than graphic designers, who typically dominated the field in Europe. Many of these illustrators also contributed to satirical journals and government propaganda, and were therefore well positioned to provide a visual critique of society and politics, creating sophisticated designs that exposed human folly and enticed the public. The posters of Molly Crabapple (née Jennifer Caban) demonstrate the natural progression of this lineage. In them, she introduces detailed, eccentric, and winsome images to express her observations on the resilience of community, the power in solidarity, and the spirit of celebration. Molly engages viewers in these three pillars of her practice in political and social discourse while enhancing the beauty of public spaces.

Molly's designs often combine dreamlike and satirical motifs accented by pretty figures and symbolic animals that comment on some of the complexities of national and international establishment. Although influenced by a range of historic sources, including the nightlife illustrations of Henri de Toulouse-Lautrec, the dark surrealism of Francisco Goya, and the hatching technique defined in the classic guide *Rendering in Pen and Ink* by Arthur L. Guptill, Molly's approach and messaging are entirely contemporary. She divorces her work from the rigid conventions of traditional art, rejecting the labels of "activist" or "social-practice artist" as she embraces both the functional and the fanciful.

As both keen observer and engaged participant, Molly presents the world in stories told through a series of fantastic, sensual, and humorous illustrations. This exhibition emphasizes the diversity of her work, encompassing a range of topics and global cultures. Molly Crabapple not only believes that posters should be out in the streets and in the homes of ordinary people but also puts these ideas into practice by addressing audiences outside of formal gallery spaces. Much like her life experiences, her posters are far-reaching and ambitious, and, most importantly, they are centered on recognizing every person's capacity for creativity, joy, and rebellion.

Unless otherwise noted, all posters in this exhibition are part of the Poster House Permanent Collection.

Whenever feasible, Poster House reuses materials from previous shows to drive sustainable practice.

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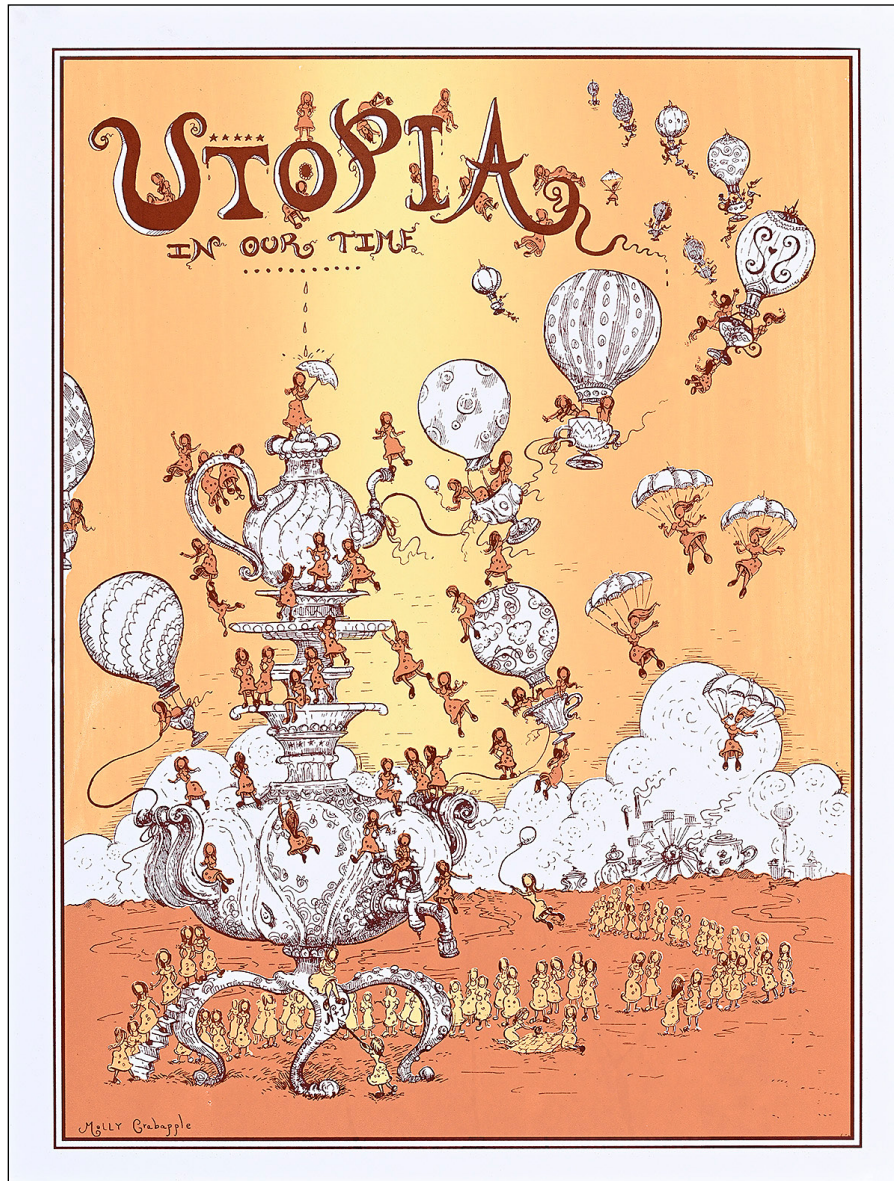
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Utopia in Our Time, 2012

Molly Crabapple (b. 1983)

Gift of Molly Crabapple, Poster House Permanent Collection

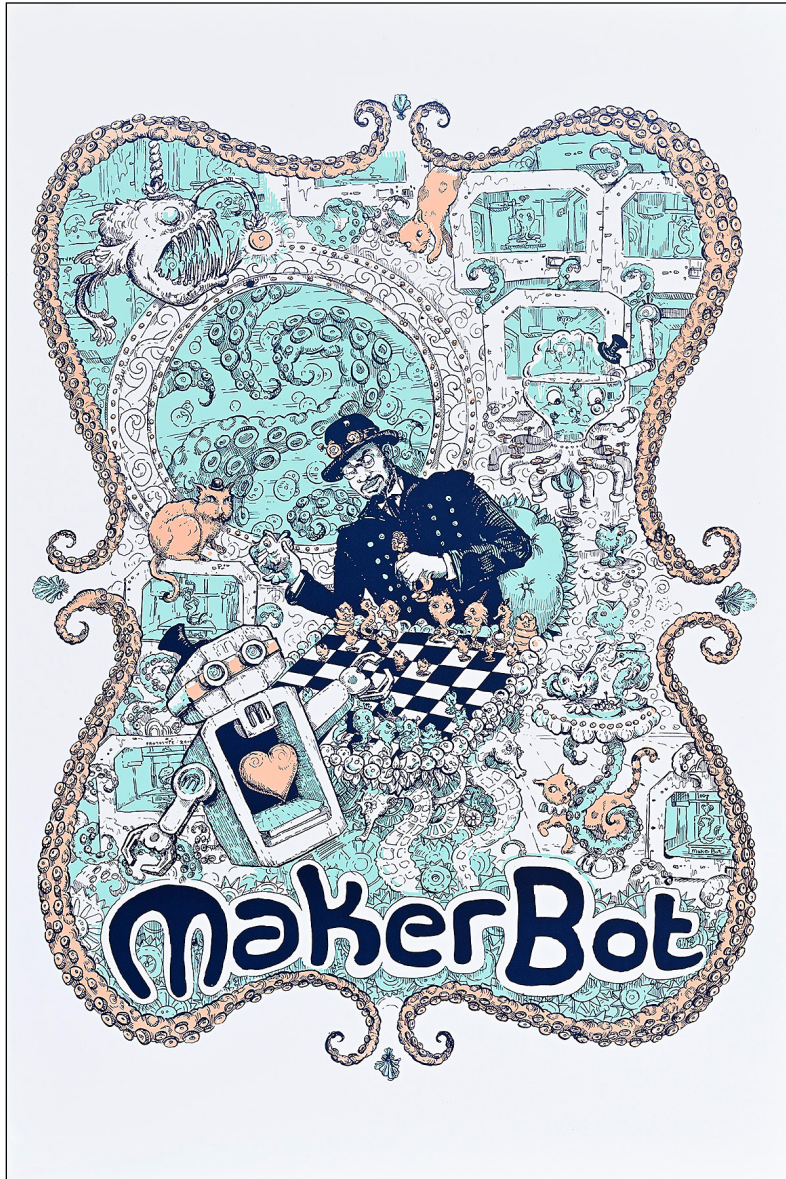
- Founded in 2004, *n+1* magazine is a New York City-based publication that centers literature, culture, and politics. The magazine encourages a new generation of intellectuals to contribute to popular culture through essays, books, and art. In the lower register of this design, a figure scrawls the name of the publication on the base of a fabulous multitiered teapot.
- Molly was commissioned to create this poster as part of a fundraising series. She was given full artistic freedom and was guided only by *n+1*'s concept of a "utopia in our time," hinting at an unrealized dream of perfection. The design reminds the viewer that Molly's analysis of an imperfect society does not always require rigidity and extreme seriousness.
- This poster is both an imaginative and ironic take on a vision of a future society, teeming with figures riding in ornamental hot-air balloons apparently fueled by liquid from a tentacled teapot. This community is dominated by women, seen enjoying the recreations offered in this picturesque "utopia" against the backdrop of a tea-party themed carnival in the distance. The design combines Molly's elegant illustrations with her wry commentary on human foibles.

The Resilience of Community

The daughter of a Puerto Rican Marxist professor and a Jewish illustrator, Molly Crabapple grew up in the multicultural neighborhoods of Queens and Long Island. Over time, her artistic curiosity motivated her to travel, and she began spending time with fellow young artists at Shakespeare and Company bookstore in Paris and documenting the rebellious neighborhood of Exarchia in Athens. Then as now, Molly's illustrations reflect the challenges and joys of daily life in the diverse communities in which she embeds herself as she calls out the predatory practices of landlords, chronicles the inhumane conditions experienced by incarcerated people in U.S. prisons, paints murals in Williamsburg, and enjoys the salsa music of Puerto Rico. They boldly assert the importance of preserving culture, stories, and the people who nourish them in the ever-changing landscape of the city.

**I want people to think they are looking
at a queen, and no woman so regal,
strong and beautiful should ever be locked
in a cage.**

—Molly Crabapple, 2018

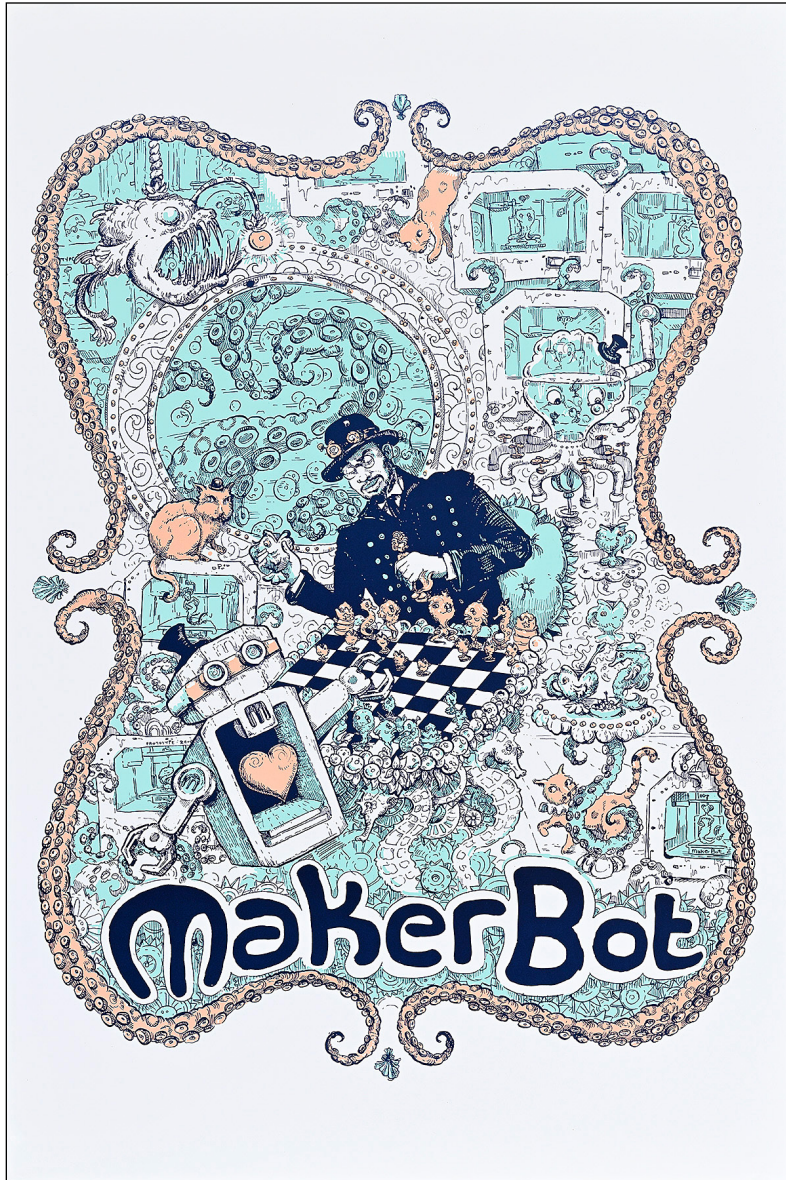


MakerBot, 2012

Molly Crabapple (b. 1983)

Poster House Permanent Collection

- While today MakerBot is geared to educators and students, at the time Molly created this poster in 2012, it was a 3D-printing brand used primarily by hackers, hobbyists, and the maker subculture, broadening access to this technology. The company has manufactured several generations of 3D desktop printers, including the Replicator and the Replicator 2 in 2012. These machines featured two important innovations: a dual extruder feature that could produce two colors simultaneously (a rarity within 3D printing technology at the time) and an increased build volume from the company's previous model, allowing for larger plastic prints.
- Before Stratasys Ltd. acquired the company in June 2013, MakerBot was an independent entity distinguished by its extreme creativity. In 2012, one of the company's founders, Bre Pettis, asked Molly to design a promotional poster for its newest technology. Inspired by Captain Nemo, a mysterious character in Jules Verne's novel *Twenty Thousand Leagues Under the Sea* (1870) who roams the depths of the ocean in his homemade *Nautilus* submarine, Molly's design reflects the original visionary ethos of the company. Instead of scanning the sea floor, however, Molly's captain uses MakerBots to churn out an assortment of whimsical objects, including teacups, aquatic chess pieces, and miniature sea creatures. Molly stopped working with MakerBot in 2012, before the company was acquired by Stratasys.



- This Captain Nemo is partly inspired by the Black musician Giovanni James whom Molly saw perform during her time as a resident artist at The Box, an avant-garde nightclub in Manhattan. The illustration here incorporates James's sexy steampunk aesthetic and his dapper and daring stage presence.
- Incidentally, the poster was designed in three colors (turquoise, coral, and black) perhaps reflecting the fact that the 3D printer could produce more than one color at a time. Meanwhile, the captain's explosive volume of MakerBot-produced objects alludes to the MakerBot's increased printing speed. Molly's signature octopus tentacles and cunning cats—two motifs that appeared in many of her early posters—complement these brand-related elements.



*¡Con determinación inquebrantable, paz y amor a la patria,
puertorriqueños estamos escribiendo una nueva historia!*

*With unwavering determination, peace and love of country,
Puerto Ricans are writing a new history!*

2019
Puerto Rican Heritage Month



COMITÉ NOVIEMBRE
mes de la herencia puertorriqueña

ASPIRA of New York • Casita Maria Center for Arts and Education
Centro de Estudios Puertorriqueños Hunter College/CUNY • El Museo del Barrio
Eugenio María de Hostos Community College/CUNY • La Casa de la Herencia Cultural Puertorriqueña, Inc.
Fundación Nacional para la Cultura Popular • Justice Committee: NCPRR
Puerto Rican Institute for the Development of the Arts (PRIDA), Inc.

www.comitenoviembre.org

Comité Noviembre 2019, 2019

Molly Crabapple (b. 1983)

Gift of Molly Crabapple, Poster House Permanent Collection

- Established in 1987, Comité Noviembre is a nonprofit organization dedicated to celebrating the contributions of Puerto Ricans in the United States. During Puerto Rican Heritage Month each November, it promotes its ongoing efforts to raise awareness of health education, civic engagement, and youth leadership initiatives within the community. It also collaborates on programs and events with other groups throughout the city, bringing together Puerto Rican New Yorkers from all five boroughs.
- In the summer of 2019, protests and demonstrations erupted throughout Puerto Rico as a result of Governor Ricardo Rosselló's mismanagement of the devastation caused by Hurricane Maria in September 2017, and the revelation of a series of unsavory private chat messages. Molly traveled to the island to document the "Ricky Renuncia" (Ricky Resign) protests that led to his resignation on August 2. This image reflects a distinctive tradition of political art in America, and can be linked, for example, to Ralph Steadman's illustrations for journalist Hunter S. Thompson's Freak Power campaign of 1969–70 in Aspen, Colorado.



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- Unlike photography, documentary illustration like Molly's provides a safety net of sorts, allowing protesters to remain relatively anonymous while providing evidence of a given event or moment in time. Here, the university students defying the police and the woman banging a pot to express general disgust at the government's behavior are documented without being explicitly identified. Molly's original composition for the poster in watercolor crayon and black marker on orange paper was published in the *New York Review of Books* before it caught the attention of Comité Noviembre, which then incorporated it into this poster.
- Each year, Comité Noviembre typically commissions a Puerto Rican artist to design a themed poster promoting Puerto Rican Heritage Month. For its 2019 edition, however, it asked Molly, who is of Puerto Rican heritage, if it could reuse her vibrant depiction of the protests in the poster for that year. As with each annual poster, the limited-edition design was distributed free to attendees at Comité Noviembre events throughout New York, New Jersey, and Connecticut.



Cancel Rent Now, 2020

Molly Crabapple (b. 1983)

Poster House Permanent Collection

- During the economic instability of the Covid-19 pandemic in 2020, tenants' rights movements sprang up across major cities in the United States demanding that landlords "cancel rent." While the idea of affordable housing as a basic human right long predates this period, the pandemic exacerbated the issue as millions of people lost their primary sources of income and landlords neglected essential maintenance to their rental buildings.
- Molly became especially invested in tenants' rights during the pandemic, creating posters and banners for numerous "cancel rent" protests. Cea Weaver, policy organizer and member of the Democratic Socialists of America (DSA), asked Molly to create a poster in support of the protestors. In her design, Molly juxtaposes a New York City apartment building with a classic Brooklyn brownstone, highlighting in exquisite detail the physicality of old New York. The uppercase "C" in the title is surmounted by a stylized version of the Statue of Liberty's crown, suggesting that this movement has been created by and for the people of New York. Meanwhile, the phrase "Housing = Healthcare" directly establishes the connection between housing instability and the health crisis.



- In homage to the DSA, Molly incorporates roses throughout the poster, symbols of better life under a socialist government. This iconography was first used in 1969 by the French graphic artist Marc Bonnet, who was asked to design a new emblem for the Socialist Party in France. Wanting to attract new members (especially women), Bonnet presented a rose clutched in a fist, a symbol that became the party's official logo in 1971 and would be gradually modified by socialist parties around the world.
- This poster was initially wheatpasted throughout New York City and posted on storefronts as a gesture of solidarity with the protestors. In Queens, Bangladeshi organizers proudly carried the poster during protests against sky-high rent increases. Eventually, a number of organizers in American cities, including Chicago and Philadelphia, requested the digital file that would allow them to print and distribute the poster locally.



HONK The Vote, 2024

Molly Crabapple (b. 1983)

Gift of Molly Crabapple, Poster House Permanent Collection

- HONK NYC! is a community-based organization focused on education, music-making, and audience involvement. Each year in October, the organization holds a festival of live music with performances from around the world. In 2024, it hosted HONK The Vote to encourage civic engagement in the presidential election.
- This is one of the few commissions for which Molly was given specific art direction rather than retaining complete artistic freedom. Her illustration highlights the riotous street performances put on by HONK NYC! that often include brass and percussion instruments. The central female figure is a punk-infused reference to Eugène Delacroix's famous painting *Liberty Leading the People* (1830) that has since come to symbolize solidarity in resistance to oppressive leadership.
- Molly's use of watercolor in the original design for the poster imbues the image with a delicate fluidity that emulates the raucous ebb and flow of sound during a street performance. The central figure's colorful, swirling hair is also a reference to Milton Glaser's famous 1966 poster of Bob Dylan, while the "cool cat" banging a drum emblazoned with the date of the upcoming election evokes prints of the Revolutionary War and the Civil War showing drummer boys galvanizing their fellow soldiers.

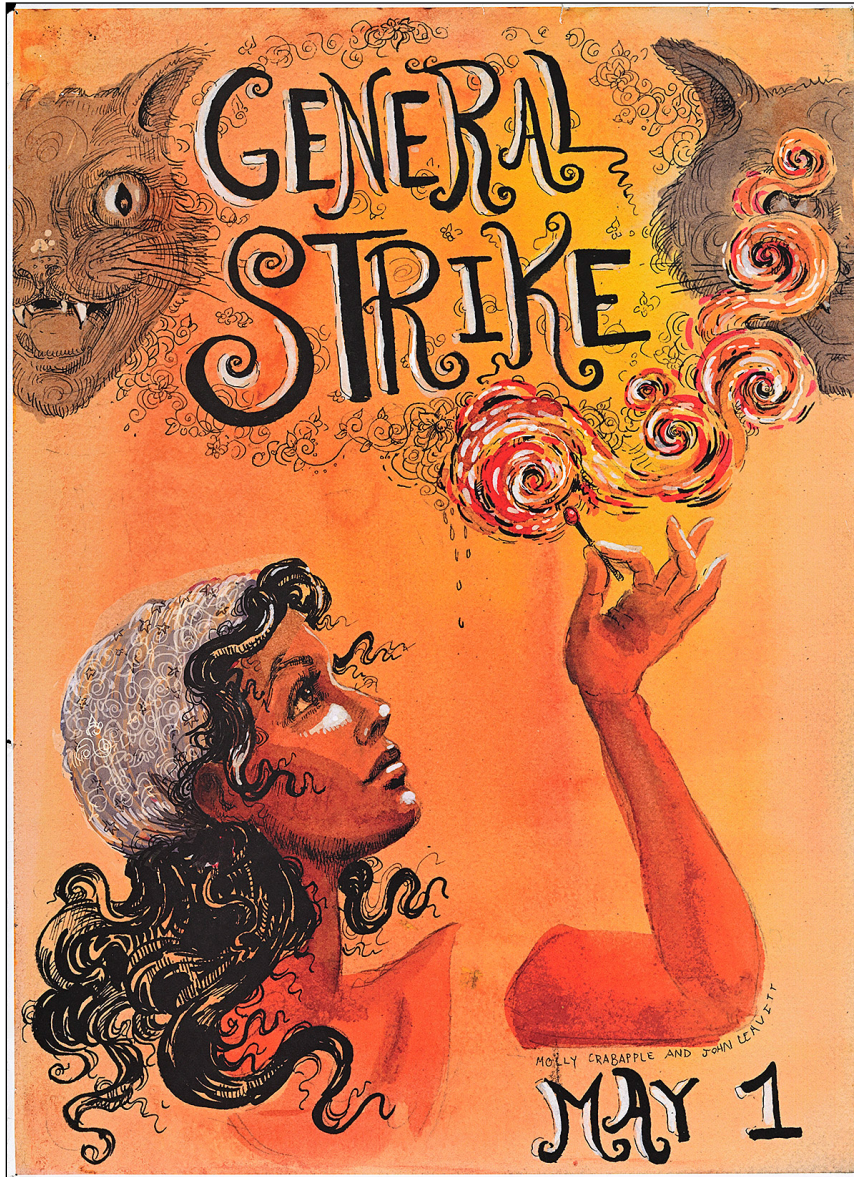
The Power in Solidarity

On September 17, 2011, a group of left-wing activists came together in New York City to protest against corporate greed, economic inequality, and financial influence in politics. The movement became known as Occupy Wall Street. Over the course of 59 days, protesters gathered and camped out in Zuccotti Park in Lower Manhattan. At the time, Molly lived nearby and wanted to participate in the movement through her art. Eventually, her home became a salon of sorts for journalists and artists. She created numerous posters, combining her charming motifs with the language of protest in works that she encouraged people to wheatpaste throughout the country.

Occupy Wall Street was just one high point in Molly's personal and artistic involvement with political topics. She diligently continues to create work of this kind to inform and engage the public. Her imagery and related messaging has been influenced by photographs and news pieces covering a range of grim topics, including the abuse of detainees at Guantanamo Bay Naval Base and civilian casualties in Gaza. Molly's posters, their graceful lines and powerful text urging solidarity, give the individual and the cause equal weight, urging viewers to identify closely with specific causes in ways that traditional media cannot always do.

**I don't see a point in drawing something if
it doesn't look beautiful and powerful.**

—Molly Crabapple, 2025

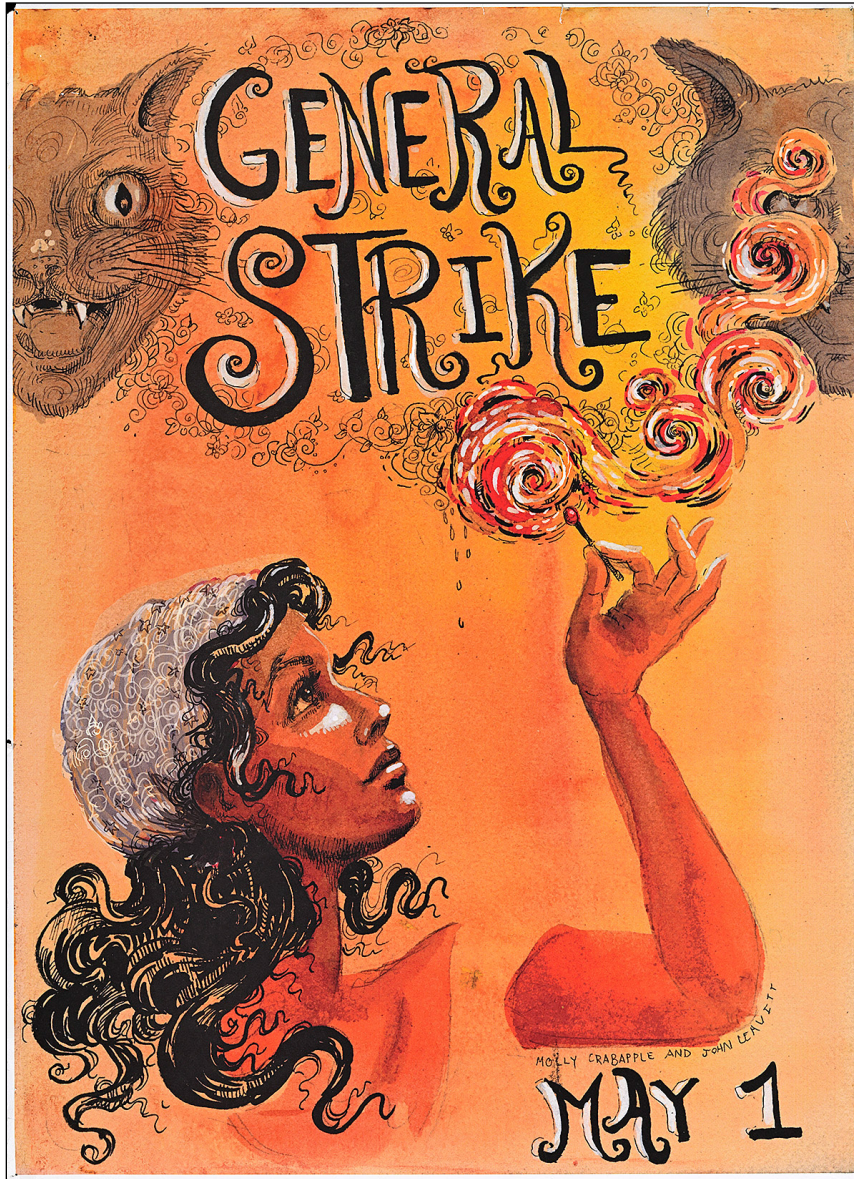


General Strike, 2012

Molly Crabapple (b. 1983)

Poster House Permanent Collection

- On May 1, 2012, mass marches and school walkouts took place across the United States in support of the ongoing Occupy Wall Street protests. Dubbed the “May Day General Strike,” this event coincided with International Workers Day, also known as May Day, which commemorates the historic struggles of men, women, and children and of the labor movement to achieve the eight-hour work day and improved working conditions. The day acknowledges historic and current efforts for fair treatment by the labor movement and working class.
- In the lead-up to this national event, posters like this one were illicitly wheatpasted onto the walls of construction sites and in subway stations to galvanize the public. Activists on social media also played an important role, disseminating digital images of these posters as well as information in support of the cause.
- Molly was one of many artists who created posters for the May Day General Strike. The design was inspired by the Match Girls’ Strike of 1888, a labor strike led by young women and girls who worked for the Bryant & May matchstick factory in London to protest poor working conditions and low wages. They ultimately formed the Matchmakers’ Union, securing certain rights for themselves and inspiring workers in other industries to do the same. The central figure holding the match in the poster is a Latina woman who represents both the match girls who took part in the historic event and the verb “to strike,” the action promoted on May Day.



- Although Molly often uses cats as one of the many symbolic animals in her work, the grinning black felines in this poster directly reference the concept of a “wildcat strike,” a strike action by unionized workers without the approval of union leadership. The unpredictability of such strikes has been criticized for hindering negotiation and the leveraging power of the union; however, their abruptness can also allow workers to more forcefully demonstrate their own value.



I'm a Queen, Not a Prisoner, 2018

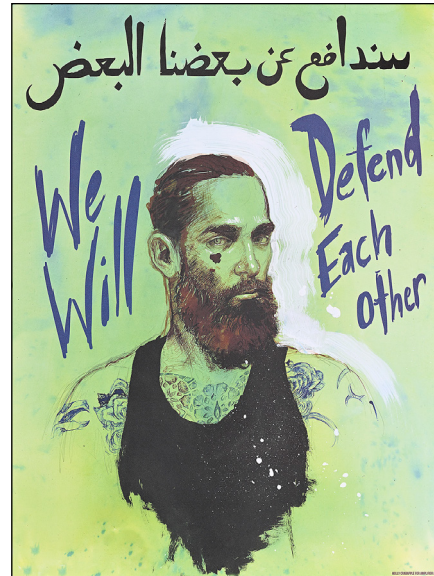
Molly Crabapple (b. 1983)

Poster House Permanent Collection

- The People's Paper Co-op (PPC) was an art and advocacy project based in North Philadelphia that connected formerly incarcerated women with civil rights lawyers, artists, and activists in a series of art-based programs and initiatives. The PPC aimed to amplify the stories of Black women and empower them as members of an imagined liberated community.
- Before drafting the official poster, Molly was given poetry and photographs of formerly incarcerated women to gather a diversity of perspectives on the project. She then presented her concept to a group of women in the PPC to ensure that she was properly representing their actual stories. Her final design suggests the regality of women who have survived the prison system, one that often strips them of their femininity, motherhood, beauty, and humanity.
- This poster was meant to create awareness and raise funds for mothers and caregivers who are or have been incarcerated in the United States. The message, in which the woman in the illustration refers to herself as a "queen" rather than a "prisoner," is a direct quote from one of the many poems Molly received, and invites the viewer to rethink the ways in which incarcerated women are portrayed in the media and within society. The central figure is based on a photograph of an incarcerated woman and Molly has adorned her with a stylized crown in the manner of Basquiat to complement her majestic updo.



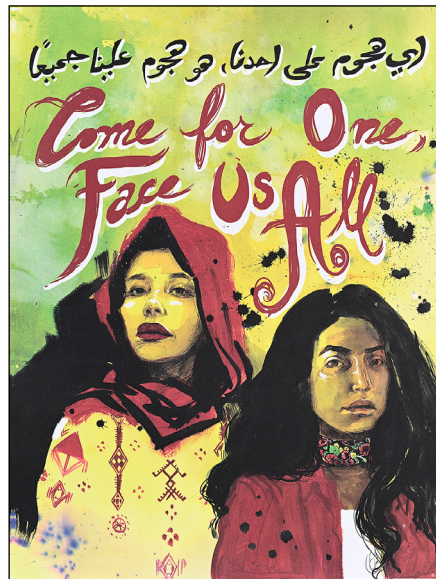
- The design was also used on a flyer and other promotional material for Women in Reentry Day, a program committed to helping free mothers on Mother's Day and creating art that vocalizes the residual impact of incarceration. The messaging also includes hashtags alluding to related causes, including #EndCashBail, a movement that began in the Bronx to end pretrial detention for those who cannot afford to pay bail money to secure their freedom. The cash-bail system disproportionately penalizes people of color and has since become a major issue in discussions about prison justice and reform.



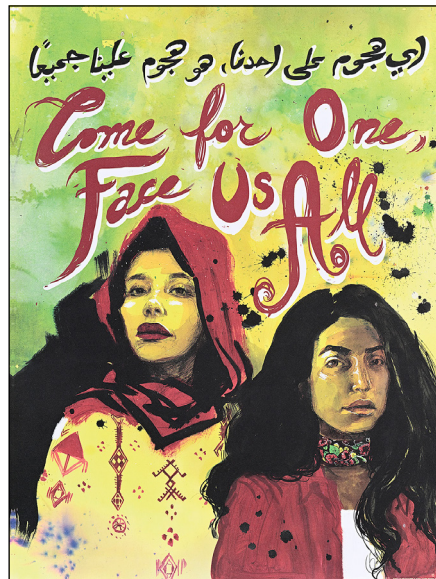
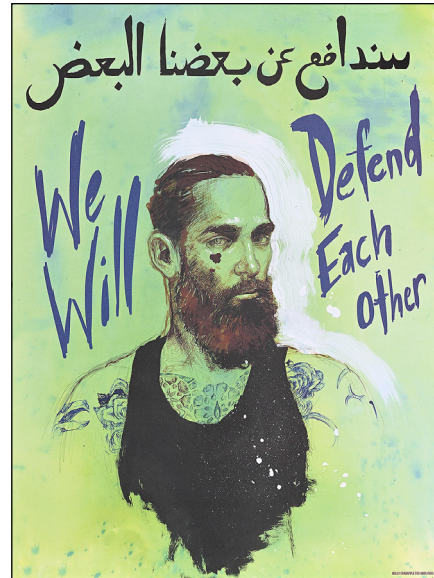
We Will Stand Together, 2018
We Will Defend Each Other, 2018
Come For One, Face Us All, 2018

Molly Crabapple (b. 1983)

Poster House Permanent Collection



- Amplifier is a nonprofit organization that promotes the free and open use of art to reflect important contemporary social-justice movements. In addition to printing posters, it builds digital campaigns around specific issues to amplify the diverse work of its artist-activist collaborators. A subdivision, Education Amplifiers, was created in 2017 as a compassion-centered approach to thinking critically about the impact of design and has been used by millions of students and educators.
- President Donald Trump's executive order in January 2017 prohibiting entry to the United States from seven Muslim-majority countries sparked protests around the nation. When, in June 2018, the Supreme Court ultimately upheld the expanded version of this order, Education Amplifiers called for artists to address anti-Muslim sentiment and this so-called Muslim Ban. It also partnered with a number of organizations to uplift the narratives and assert the leadership of those affected by such xenophobic rhetoric.



- As part of this call to action, Molly created a series of three posters addressing Islamophobia. Each design celebrates the individuality and diversity of Muslim people, including Somali-American journalist Najma Sharif, British-Lebanese journalist and filmmaker Oz Katerji, Yemeni-Egyptian American photographer Yumna al-Arashi, and Algerian-British journalist Lina Serene. While Katerji and al-Arashi were already friends with Molly, Sharif and Serene responded to a call for models that Molly put out on Twitter (now X). Molly based the designs on recent photographs of each person.
- Molly's use of watercolor in the preliminary compositions for the posters enhances the humanity and delicacy of the individual figures, an approach that is at odds with the brutal inhumanity of the executive orders against Muslims. The posters were omnipresent throughout New York City and the entire country, wheatpasted and raised during protest marches that year. The posters were also used within the Amplifier educational network for curriculum development to promote classroom engagement and cultural understanding.

The Spirit of Celebration

Molly Crabapple began her career as an artist's model and burlesque dancer. These pursuits allowed her to support her art; burlesque also formed her appreciation of the sensual figure in her own images, work that was further influenced by the sartorial elegance of the Victorian era and Gilded Age America. In 2005, Molly cofounded Dr. Sketchy's Anti-Art School in New York City, a life-drawing event with cabaret performances and nontraditional models that brought together a community of artists and burlesque enthusiasts. She also became the in-house artist for The Box, an intimate New York City burlesque nightclub, where she produced illustrations that celebrated the self-creation of its diverse performers while remaining critical of the club's affluent audience. These posters celebrate the joy and vibrancy of individuals and events, showing off the distinctive motifs that entice the public to look closer and appreciate the details, much as they might in the underground world of burlesque.

Bubble-made goddess of the market.

—Molly Crabapple, 2013

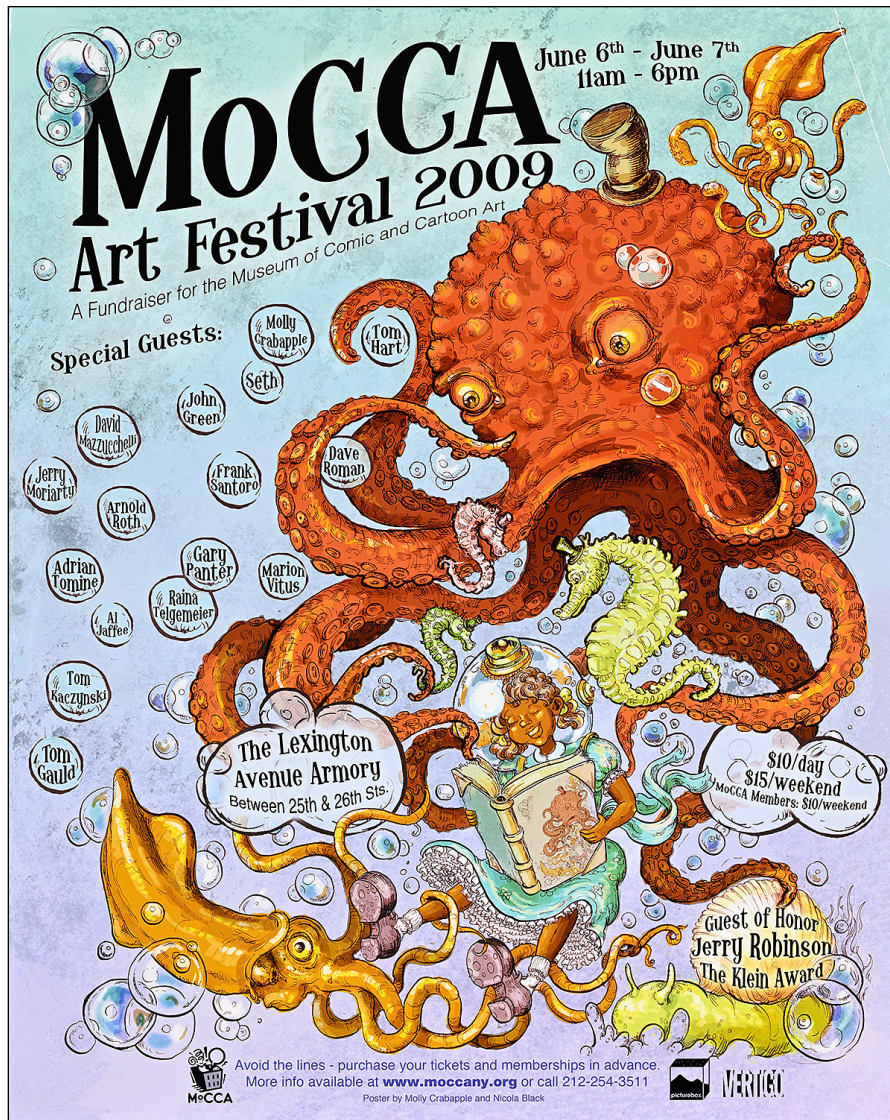


UR Chicago/Sex, 2008

Molly Crabapple (b. 1983)

Poster House Permanent Collection

- Published between 1997 and 2008, *UR Chicago* was a free culture and entertainment magazine that highlighted Chicago's nightlife, art, theater, and dining scene. This poster advertises the publication's shift to an online-only platform.
- While still with Dr. Sketchy's, Molly was commissioned to produce a poster for *UR Chicago*'s "February Sex Issue." The resulting poster combines her passion for 19th- and 20th-century burlesque with an amorous octopus, one of her signature motifs. The design was loosely based on *The Dream of the Fisherman's Wife* (1814), a Japanese woodblock print by Katsushika Hokusai showing an erotic image of a woman and two octopuses.
- The composition was run as both the cover of the magazine and as an advertising poster that was displayed throughout Chicago. *UR Chicago* is no longer published.



MoCCA Art Festival 2009, 2009

Illustration: Molly Crabapple (b. 1983)

Design: Nicola Black (b. 1978)

Poster House Permanent Collection

- First held in 2002, the MoCCA Art Festival is a comic and cartoon convention held annually in New York City. Its name is derived from that of its original founder, the Museum of Comic and Cartoon Art (MoCCA) that was absorbed by the Society of Illustrators in 2012. The festival has expanded and continues today, showcasing independent artists, panel discussions, and special guests who exemplify the diversity of those working in these fields.
- From 2002 to 2008, the festival was held in the historic Puck Building, the longtime home of the 19th-century satirical magazine *Puck*. In 2009, the year this poster was issued, the festival moved to the 69th Regiment Armory (also known as the Lexington Avenue Armory).
- In this collaborative composition, Molly created the illustration featuring playful aquatic motifs while Nicola Black structured the design, adding more bubbles to list the festival's participants and highlights. The typography was intentionally distorted to reflect the theme of floating underwater. Meanwhile, the cover of the book being read by the young girl is a direct copy of the poster design, providing a cute easter egg for viewers who take the time to study the image in detail.
- While the poster was widely circulated as the main advertisement for the festival, the design was adapted to a variety of promotional formats, including double-sided postcards and newspaper layouts.



The Shell Game, 2013

Illustration: Molly Crabapple (b. 1983)

Design: Shauna Haider (b. 1982)

Poster House Permanent Collection

- In April 2013, Molly Crabapple curated and hosted *The Shell Game*, an art show exhibiting a series of her large-scale allegorical paintings, some satirizing the impact of the financial crisis that began in 2007 and others commemorating people's movements, including the anti-austerity uprisings in Greece, England, and Spain. The exhibition was named after the popular sleight-of-hand trick in which a con artist asks a person in the crowd to find the ball under a set of three cups or shells.
- As Molly was keen on the event appealing to all art lovers and not just the art-market elites (who, she believed, had contributed to the financial crisis), she chose a venue as different as possible from the conventional white-box gallery. It was hosted in the now-closed Smart Clothes Gallery, a storefront on the Lower East Side that once housed a men's haberdashery.
- *The Shell Game* presented nine paintings by Molly, each representing an aspect of the global recession and the housing crisis. To publicize the show in advance, Molly posted photo updates of the painting process; each painting took approximately one month to complete. Molly started each piece with a rough thumbnail illustration, then created a black-and-white sketch followed by an ink-and-watercolor print, finally completing the six-by-four-foot painting in acrylic on wood panel. Each composition featured burlesque women symbolizing creation or destruction, together evoking the chaos of world systems. Molly also positioned small, allegorical animals in top hats in each design to build up or tear down the central female figure.



- The image on this poster is drawn from *The Great American Bubble Machine*, the first painting Molly completed for the art show. The title comes from a 2010 article by Matt Taibbi in *Rolling Stone* magazine about market manipulation by the investment bank Goldman Sachs. To create the finished composition, designer Shauna Haider was inspired by Molly's references to classic Gilded Age Americana, framing the image with a bald eagle as well as motifs and typefaces in the style of 19th-century woodblock prints.



Patton Oswalt/Tragedy Plus Comedy Equals Time, 2013

Molly Crabapple (b. 1983)

Poster House Permanent Collection

- In 2014, American comedian Patton Oswalt performed his stand-up show *Tragedy Plus Comedy Equals Time* at the Spreckels Theater in San Diego, California, where it was recorded for Comedy Central. The title derives from the range of topics covered during the set, including the state of the union and parenting, all reflecting Oswalt's dry wit as he muses on the human condition.
- Molly was commissioned by Oswalt via Twitter (now X) to create this poster for the show. It was displayed throughout San Diego and also used as a digital graphic for the streaming version of the show across multiple platforms.
- Molly wanted to feature Oswalt's face on the poster in an unpredictable way. Her design plays on the dichotomy between Tragedy (Melpomene) and Comedy (Thalia), superimposing Oswalt's head for each of the two Greek Muses on top of individual marottes (sticks typically carried by court jesters and often featuring smaller images of themselves or the opposed faces of Comedy and Tragedy). Behind them is a ruffled collar, frequently associated with court jesters like Rigoletto in the classic Verdi opera of the same name. Finally, the elongated hour glasses on either side of the figures denote the passage of time.



Saints & Sinners of The Knickerbocker, 2015

Molly Crabapple (b. 1983)

Gift of Molly Crabapple, Poster House Permanent Collection

- First opened to the public on October 23, 1906, on the corner of Broadway and 42nd Street in Times Square, the Knickerbocker Hotel was intended to compete with luxury hotels along Fifth Avenue. Its proximity to the developing theater district and its unique position adjacent to the first underground subway line quickly made it an important part of New York City's bustling social scene.
- In 2015, the new owners of the hotel commissioned Molly to create a mural in the entrance of the St. Cloud rooftop bar to commemorate its history between 1906 and 1921, and to celebrate its reopening. Known as *Saints & Sinners of The Knickerbocker*, the composition was also incorporated into a double-sided fold-out poster for guests to take home as well as napkins, bookmarks, and coasters.



- The poster itself features a montage of characters and events from the hotel's fabled history, including distinguished guests like novelist F. Scott Fitzgerald and Russian ballerina Anna Pavlova. The verso shows various vignettes, including the meetings of Tammany Hall officials as they coordinated their corrupt plans for the city's government. It also depicts the invention of the dry martini in 1911, the beloved drink that, as legend has it, was created at the Knickerbocker Hotel.





Three Kings Celebration, 2023

Molly Crabapple (b. 1983)

Poster House Permanent Collection

- Three Kings Day is a Christian celebration that honors the biblical story of the Three Wise Men who brought gifts of gold, frankincense, and myrrh to the infant Jesus. This tradition of generosity continues today through the exchange of gifts and festive family gatherings. Three Kings Day is widely celebrated on January 6 in Latin American and Hispanic communities, although the Puerto Rican tradition in which Molly was raised suggests that the three men rode camels rather than horses to the nativity scene.
- Traditional depictions of the Three Kings typically show them in different colored garments, their distinctive complexions or hair color emphasizing their origins in Persia, India, and Arabia. In Puerto Rico, the diversity of these figures is reflected in that of the descendants of white Spaniards, enslaved Africans, and Indigenous Taíno islanders. El Puente requested that Molly include a woman in her image, expanding the existing mythology by placing a female narrative within a male-centered text. The gifts of a parrot, breadfruit, and conch offered by Crabapple's kings are also uniquely Puerto Rican, highlighting the specific flora and fauna of the island.
- In the lower register, Molly juxtaposes a representation of Puerto Rico (labeled "Borinkén," the native Taíno name for the island) with a neighborhood view of Williamsburg, Brooklyn, the home of El Puente, the nonprofit social-justice organization sponsoring this event. Given the event's theme of "we are of this earth," it is fitting that Molly also features Casa Pueblo, a nearly 50-year-old Puerto Rican environmental organization, in her design. The poster was distributed for free to attendees at the celebration.



Ruin Me/Max Fractal, 2025

Molly Crabapple (b. 1983)

Gift of Molly Crabapple, Poster House Permanent Collection

- Musician Max Fractal commissioned Molly to design this poster as cover art for their 2025 single “Ruin Me” and to promote the accompanying concert and celebration in the East Village. Bushwick Print Lab printed the posters.
- Fractal’s pose is inspired by the Christian martyr Saint Sebastian who miraculously survived being shot at with arrows. During the AIDS crisis of the late 20th century, Sebastian became associated with queer identity as one who suffered greatly and survived. He was also sexualized in art, where he was often represented as a particularly beautiful and submissive male figure.
- In her edgy interpretation of Max Fractal as Saint Sebastian, Molly shows the figure posing defiantly in fishnet tights, platforms, and underwear against the outline of the Brooklyn Bridge. The colors reference the Dark Synthpop and alternative rock genre of the musician’s three-track EP.



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