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# THE RACKET | 71



**THE  
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# THE RACKET

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Hey.

I'm writing this on Election Day. I voted by mail two weeks ago and aside from the lingering churn of anxiety about how today is possibly (probably?) going to go, I actually feel pretty detached from the whole thing. And not just the election, but the whole system of politics we still cling to in this country.

We—and by we I mean progressives for the most part—keep slapping our foreheads as our country spins further and further down the drain. We watch what amounts to a powerful sliver of the population—conservatives and more and more ultra-conservatives—keep a stranglehold on meaningful change and all we can do is pound our collective tables and ask "Why?"

The answer is simple: the system is broken.

Everyone knows it. Everyone looks at the way our government works—the voting process, the layers of bureaucracy, the gerrymandering, everything about The Supreme Court, etc.—takes a deep breath and raises their eyebrows. Our precious democracy is floundering because the system we built 250 years ago doesn't function in what amounts to a completely different country.

Politicians know this. They know how little sense it makes that 9 people in black robes can change the lives of 51% of the population of the United States. They know how ineffective it is that a four year presidential term is really two years of governance and two years of running for office. They know this, and they don't care. Because even if it's a broken system, it's the system—on both sides of the aisle—they know how to game best.

An increasingly negative part of me wants to just rant and rave about how in the long run, voting is throwing an SOS in a glass bottle into a pool of acid. It true though. Voting—in this moment especially—has never been more important.

If things are going to get better in the United States we need to make simple, practical changes to the rotting political architecture. We need to look at term limits for The Supreme Court. We need to look—again—at campaign finance reform. We need to make foundational repairs to our government that limit bald-faced corruption. And we need to do so as the world overheats and fascists take power globally and the old guard of government does whatever it can to keep a toxic status quo. We've dug ourselves a deep hole and getting out is going to be hard, complicated work. And that's why voting matters.

# THE RACKET

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If we're going to change the system, we need to elect people within the system who want to do just that. We need young, hungry politically minded people who are tired of the bullshit and understand that change isn't going to come in fits, spurts and Hail Marys. Change will come in getting into the nitty gritty of governance, shining a light on the already glaringly apparent pain points and then addressing them.

Your vote, I hope, puts those people in office. Your vote gives this ailing, broke down country a chance. Your vote, as much as the cynics amongst us want argue otherwise, means something.

And I know, the election is over and we're now all living in the after, but if you voted, good work. You fought, even if incrementally, to shore up our eroding country.

'Till next time,  
N



The Racket stands against  
police brutality, racism and violence  
perpetuated towards BIPOC  
communities in all forms.

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*It's just a chunk of brain here.*





# WE HAVE A PATREON

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We aren't in this for the money.

But there are costs in doing what we do.

Any help with those costs (and with the costs of future endeavors) would be greatly appreciated.

If not, we get it and we still appreciate you.

## THANK YOU TO THESE FOLKS

MATTHEW CARNEY  
CATHY & JOHN SANDERS  
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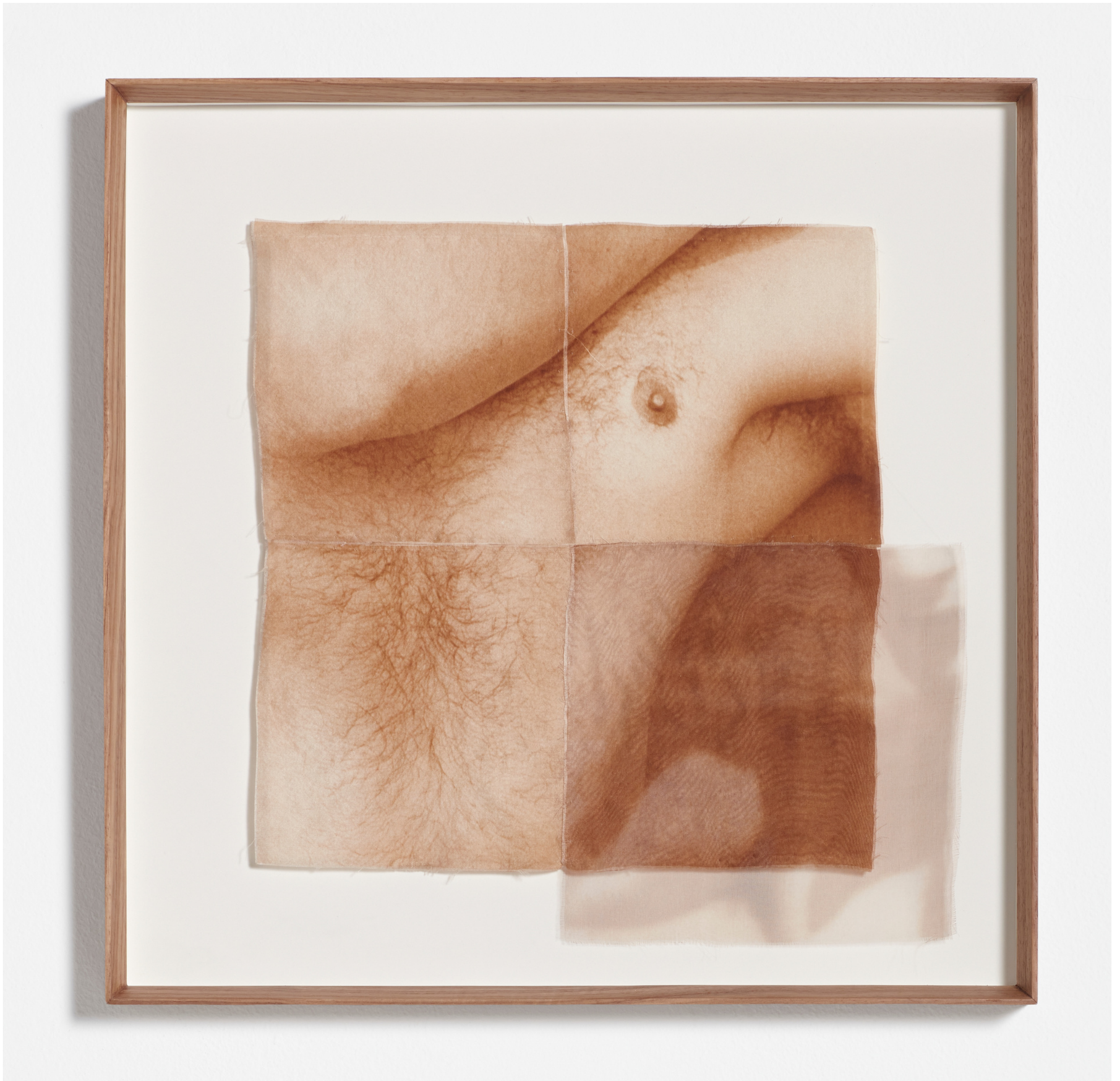
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# **THE RACKET**

**71**





FAMILIAR PARTS  
STRAUSS LOUW  
COURTESY OF WHATIFTHEWORLD  
2022



# You cured me, no, you cured yourself

MAW SHEIN WIN

---

I can see neighbors partying across the complex  
felled shadows                      tawny blur

can't make a decision  
chimney swifts                      percussive airs

I blow a goose horn, my bleeding gums  
how do we ask for what we need

our bells are rattled now  
time for self-interrogation

triplets or singles  
flawed tender selves

my hands tremble quiet now





FLOAT  
STRAUSS LOUW  
COURTESY OF WHATIFTHEWORLD  
2022





TOP  
STRAUSS LOUW  
COURTESY OF WHATIFTHEWORLD  
2022



# thanks harry for making it a little more normal

PAOLO BICCHIERI

---

i wore a coat made of plastic silver since i thought it made me look like elvis and both grandma and i were shocked when the cashier it was a coat meant for girls and i was six years old so i wasn't clear what the cashier meant and grandma scoffed with every ounce of disdain in her pendleton-wrapped body and she bought me the costume jacket because i had just got done testifying to the sheriff about where / exactly / the damage had been done and the school counselor was on the stand who pops says was always out to get him anyways and i just wanted to wear a jacket that made me feel like a king and it didn't matter to me if it was sewn for a queen because there was a terrible freedom to just dream of royalty at that point at all





L: MESSAGE WINDS / R: A WINDOW THAT DIDN'T CLOSE  
JEANNE HOFFMAN  
2022





DISTANCE SANCTUARY  
JEANNE HOFFMAN  
2022



# Collared Blues

TAMAS DOBOZY

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I didn't grow up in a blue collar part of town, but there were blue collar parts to it, and when I went into them as a kid I knew there was a difference, only not exactly what that difference was. Now, these days, I'm well aware, and never go down there. Funny how that works. Truth be told, though, I don't really go anywhere. Instead, I send out my agents, and get them to report back. They take photographs, many of them first rate in composition, lighting, color saturation. But I'm not so interested in that—the ontology of the aesthetic—than in the information. Yes, you guessed it, full disclosure, I'm a content over form kind of guy. If one of them, for instance, shoots from the bottom of a hill, below the social, which is also the geographical, strata of the subject, is he implying that he's better off than they are? Or worse? And does the fact that they—the subjects—pass him by, on their way down even lower on the hill, meaning that theirs is an act of will, tracing a beeline to their own personal doom? Does the photograph imply that being down and out is, as a bleeding man once said to me in a city park, a lifestyle choice? That living in a bombed out city is a carefully considered decision? Could they, in other words, choose to stand still rather than continue the descent? Or even turn around? To face uphill, to envision a better future, that's something, if only it was up to the individual mind. Is the photograph, in this case, not only documenting personal failings but also offering a corrective? I know, I have lots of questions. Still, it seems very Protestant to me, I tell my agent, whose name, in this instance, happens to be Karl. By this point in our conversation I'm yelling. The whole work ethic thing! I shout. The whole pull yourself up by your bootstraps thing! The whole fortune favors those who put themselves in the position to be favored by God thing! I swivel back and forth angrily in my boss's chair. On the other side of the room Karl grips his camera, thoughtful for a moment. He's got a whole sheaf of photographs in his hand, but there's no way he's going to show them to me now, no sir. Not that I want to see them, not after this. I wouldn't look at them for all the fame in Hollywood. Instead, he lifts his camera and takes a photo, I think it's of me, but in fact it becomes me, as if his camera is spewing images rather than taking them, and suddenly I'm a street seen from above, the ruined houses ranged along it, plus I'm the air that presses down on it, and there's a stillness there that lacks all agency, and that includes the people wandering to and fro, gazing up waiting for grace, unable to do a single thing to help themselves, so what's the point in even trying to help them except with occasional acts of charity, and these people are also me. Karl, before leaving, whispers, And you sound very Catholic. Except down below a mother opens her mouth and pulls from it a bit of sandwich she feeds to her kid.





*THE LAST ANGEL OF HISTORY (STUDY 1)*  
CHRISTOPHER BURCH  
2020





*THE LAST ANGEL OF HISTORY (STUDY 2)*  
CHRISTOPHER BURCH  
2020



# Fugue I: THE FARADAY CAGE STOPS WORKING AFTER SUNDOWN

A. MARTINE

---

it's best conveyed with an analogy

shore a to shore b and there's an unforgiving gouge at the bed of your raft

stay, sink, risk the day halfway: an impasse to put morton, fredkin, buridan to shame

you bargain

with the sun

*its leaving won't*

*undo me today*

you grandstand

with moon friend

*i'll thrill her*

*into tenderness*

no is a muscle

braveness a reflex

it gets easier

after a few flexes

but there's a door push, pushing up against your mind

paranoia, complications, shirley manson says it best

a veering, and the thought cannibalizes

you spiderwalk across the room, joints clicking like fretful nails on a steel table; covering, again, the mirrors in the house; but if there is a specter, it's only you; spindly-legged, many-dysmorphic, possessed creature; the coinslot wrinkle warning between your eyes, not yet phalange-deep like your father's, but on the way; the mouse who slipped in 8 months into your salem stay, and stayed; the ants who slithered up out your outlets and hammer-shocked your sleep; the rusty whining of a wind-bullied door's swing; the distressed bird cry you read in it until you elucidated its origin; the neighbor who kicked holes into walls and made you hold your head and heart;



at night you think *i should get help*

at night you start to make plans

at night you want to save yourself the way you yearn for others

at ni —

but the minute you wake, you pinball scatter the panic — *was it so bad...*

a falling knife has no handle

the blessing with imagination is that it swallows you whole. the trouble with imagination is that it swallows you whole.

do not engage with ghosts

or let them take your trembling

thumbs out of your ears.

# CONTRIBUTORS

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PAOLO BICCHIERI  
CHRISTOPHER BURCH  
TAMAS DOBOZY  
JEANNE HOFFMAN  
STRAUSS LOUW  
RAYOS MAGOS  
A. MARTINE  
MAW SHEIN WIN



# THE RACKET

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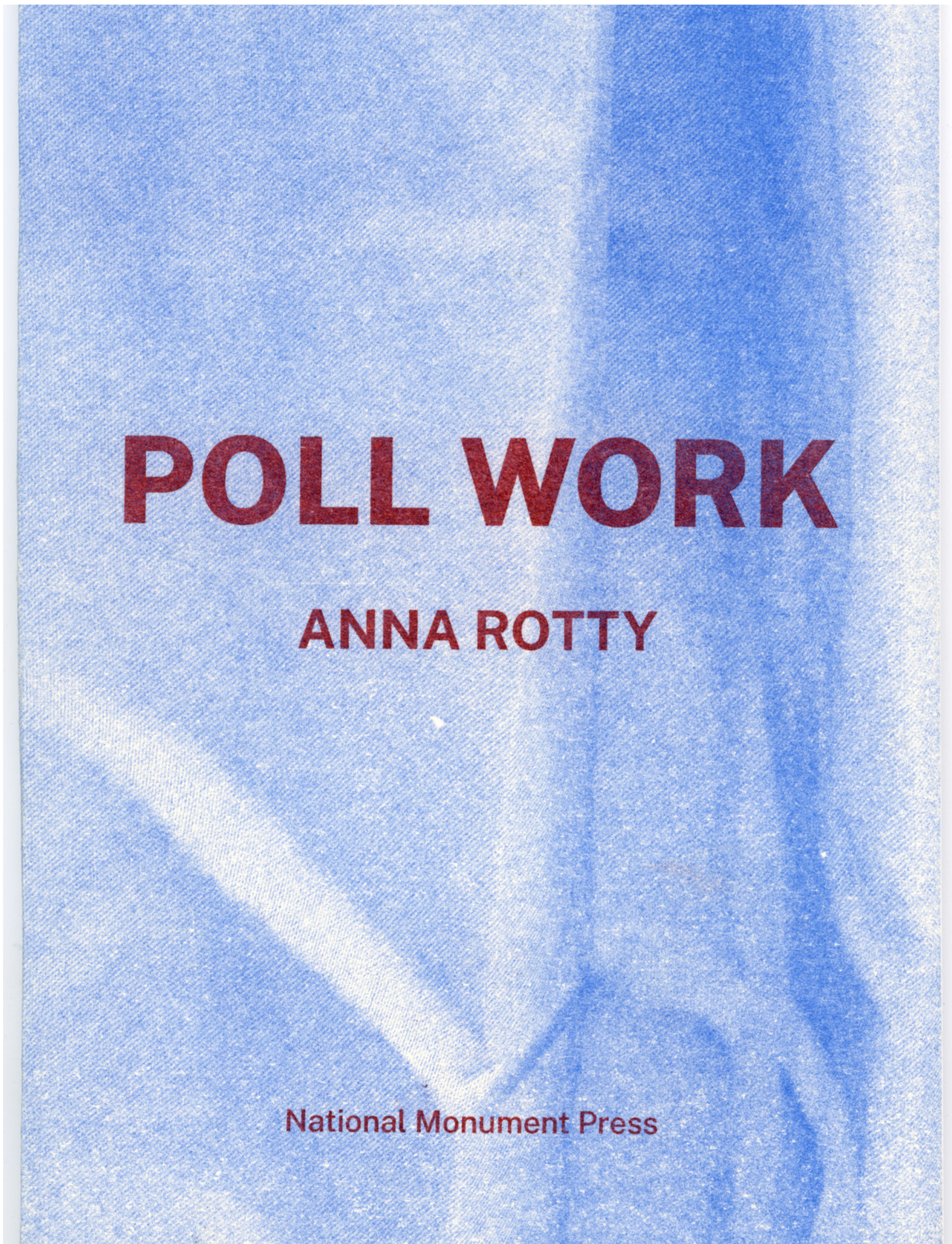
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# POLL WORK

BY ANNA ROTTY & NATIONAL MONUMENTS PRESS



In San Francisco, it takes thousands of individuals working across 588 polling places, coming together from all parts of the community, to operate an election. This book is meant to document as well as honor those who make elections happen.

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**LET'S  
SEE WHAT  
HAPPENS  
NEXT.**

