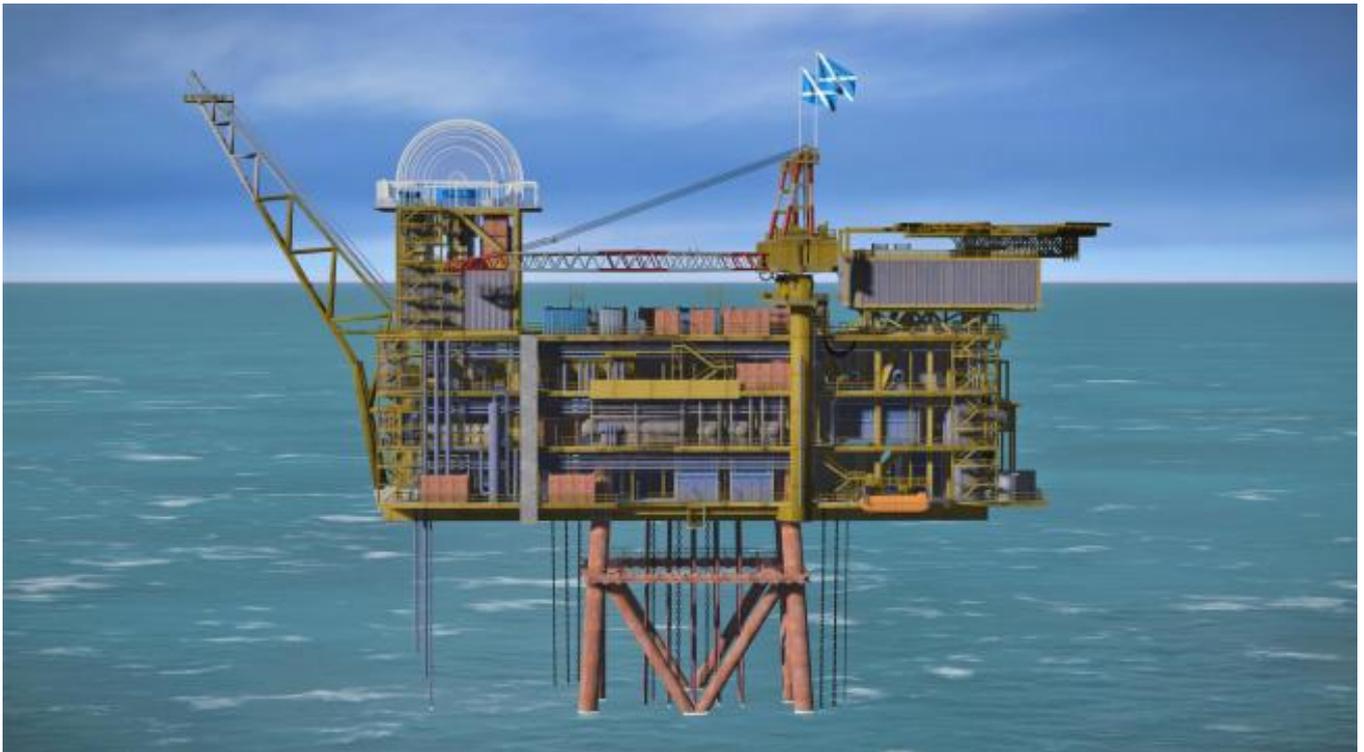


Exhibition harnesses energy of Yes movement to rebuild a brave new Europe

By [Nadine McBay](#) [@nadine_mcbay](#) 9th June 2018



The model sees a decommissioned North Sea oil rig transformed into a new transnational parliament

NEXT weekend, a visual model of a new parliament for [Scotland](#) will go on display in [Glasgow](#) to inspire people to imagine a future European Union from a Scottish point of view.

The model, which sees a decommissioned North Sea oil rig transformed into a new transnational parliament, is the centrepiece of The Scottish-European [Parliament](#), an exhibition at the CCA by Netherlands artist Jonas Staal.

The result of a two-year collaboration with the CCA, academics and Staal's own campaigning group New Unions, and inspired by discussions

with members of the likes of Rise, the Scottish [Green Party](#) and Common Weal, the exhibition asks whether the energy of Yes movement can be harnessed to help shape ideas for an independent Scotland that rejoins the EU.

Staal's New Unions campaign, which aims to explore new alliances between political parties and civic groups through art, was set up in Athens just days before the UK's referendum on EU membership in 2016.

“For us it was clear from the start that the choice between Leave and Remain was a false one,” says Staal. “Leave has been hijacked by ultranationalists and fascists, whereas Remain represents the interests of the Eurocratic austerity elite. These two camps only reinforce each other. We wanted to employ artistic imagination to search, together with transdemocratic organisations, for scenarios for new unions to break out of the [Brexit](#) dichotomy.”

The work of the Rotterdam-based artist and writer often explores the relationship between art, democracy and propaganda and is guided by Staal's idea that artistic imagination precedes political change.

“One needs the imagination of a new world if one wants to create that new world,” he says. “I hope The Scottish-European parliament can be a modest contribution to mobilize the energy and vision to defeat both the Remain and Leave camp to establish the transdemocratic social, feminist and ecological union that is the only realistic option for our long-term survival and collective wellbeing.”

Scots may have voted 62% to stay in the EU, but Staal, who describes himself as a “utopian realist”, is not a propagandist for the establishment Remain campaign.

“The propaganda of the Remain and Leave camp is that they are fundamentally different, but actually they reinforce each other,” says Staal,

who has just completed a four-year PhD on propaganda art at the [University](#) of Leiden.

“Eurocratic management propagates free trade and austerity, which fuels the Leave camp to reclaim a mythical sovereignty that never existed in the first place. And austerity is just a euphemism for economic terrorism. In my second home, Greece, civil society has been decimated; it is war not with tanks but with banks.”

He adds: “If I’m a propagandist, it is not for the union as it is, but as it could be, as we collectively have to act it into being — through a new transdemocratic vision, with its own transdemocratic parliaments from the Scottish sea to the hills of Athens, instead of Brussels and Strasbourg.”

Recently Staal completed a project for a new public parliament developed with the Democratic Federation of North Syria, a de facto autonomous region in Northern Syria, with an alliance of Kurds, Arabs and Assyrians.

“We worked together for three years to conceptualize a public, open-air parliament, a ‘people’s parliament’ for self-representation,” he says. “I consider myself as part of a generation that tries to re-invent propaganda art. Not as a practice of manipulation and misinformation, but as a form of popular mobilisation enabling new imaginaries of our collective future.”

Staal will talk about his ideas at the exhibition’s evening preview on June 15, and accompanying the artworks will be Political Animal, a four-day event exploring “how the contemporary city can be written, curated, performed and (re)built”.

Free and open to all, speakers include the CCA’s Viviana Checchia, who worked with Staal on the exhibition, National contributor and investigative journalist Peter Geoghegan and Mike Small from Bella

Caledonia.

June 16 to July 29, CCA, Glasgow, closed Mondays. Preview: June 15, 7pm to 9pm, free. Tel: 0141 352 4900. www.cca-glasgow.com

Political Animal: June 21 to June 24, CCA and Glasgow [School](#) of Art, free but ticketed. See: bit.ly/PoliticalAnimalCCA