

Shortcuts

Homelessness 1

Hunger King: fast food for thought

Situated behind Budapest's magnificent Opera House and along the road from Louis Vuitton, on first sight Hunger King is just another of the city's many burger joints. However, closer inspection reveals that this is no ordinary fast food outlet, but an art installation designed to highlight Hungary's twin crises of social inequality and homelessness.

A signpost directs customers who consider themselves "rich" up a red carpet to the entrance, while the queue of "poor" - many, in fact, homeless - people winds around the side of the building. And that familiar crown and burger logo is given a subtle twist, and a new name, in reference to the 3.7 million Hungarians living below the breadline.

For the next three weeks, people in need can queue for six hours to receive 3,400 forints (around £9) in a burger box for their trouble, the same amount they would have made by working for the minimum wage. Meanwhile the self-proclaimed rich can skip the

Inside Budapest's Hunger King, you can have a drink of Greed. Or perhaps you'd rather Lust?



queue and proceed up the red carpet to buy cardboard burgers for 600,000 forints (£1,560).

The pop-up gallery show is a response to a recent law that allows Hungarian councils to ban homeless people from sleeping in public areas. Jani Leinonen, the Finnish artist behind the project, explains that Hungary's homeless

population can now "be fined for being out on the streets, and sent to jail for not paying three fines: it's basically the criminalisation of homelessness."

He adds: "This is a global problem, as we recently saw with the spikes on the streets in London. The idea came from seeing two queues in Helsinki,

where Burger King are currently re-entering the market, opening about 20 new stores.

For two weeks there were queues outside, with people proudly tweeting their friends. However, nearby there is an even longer queue: one distributing food to the poor. So we have given Hungarian homeless people an 'acceptable, capitalist' context in which to be on the street, and tried to combine the 'queue of pride' and the 'queue of shame' in one event."

The exhibition's accompanying website Hungerking.net similarly divides visitors into rich and poor on arrival, and then encourages them to tweet politicians from Hungary's ruling party Fidesz and lend their voice to the campaign. "The aim is to make it as easy as possible to send a message to the government," Leinonen says.

"Politicians scapegoat to distract attention away from the failure of their own policies, which cause widespread homelessness," he says. Hunger King's "rich" menu ends with a quote from Fidesz's Máté Kocsis, the mayor of Budapest's troubled Eighth District, which Leinonen says speaks volumes about the government's current outlook: "If we don't push homeless people out, we will end up being pushed out by them."

Daniel Nolan

Homelessness 2

Who are the radical London Black Revs?

They are, they say, "a modest organisation, but highly effective for our size. We're not going anywhere, and we'll keep going. Most of us have nothing anyway, so what have we got to lose? We're prepared to do anything it takes."

What it took this week - to wild acclaim on social media - was a night-time raid on Tesco in Regent Street, London, to cover two rows of steel studs on the storefront windowledge with a messy, but highly effective, layer of concrete.

For the supermarket (which has since removed them), the

"studs aimed at curbing anti-social behaviour"; for the underground group behind the operation - and for many others - they were "anti-homeless spikes".

The London Black Revs (short for "revolutionaries") told Vice reporter Simon Childs that it would consider acting against "every organisation planning to put homeless spikes up", recommending instead they "give the money to a local shelter

London Black Revs concrete over Tesco's anti-homeless spikes



organisation or food bank".

Describing itself as a "closed black and Asian revolutionary socialist group", LBR says its members are "young, black, very political" and fed up with the "lack of militancy" displayed by most political organisations.

The group, which numbers around 20, but says it is "growing fast", has recently used leaked details of a UK Border Agency campaign against illegal immigrants to warn as many as it can that they risk deportation. It also told Vice that its other targets include police brutality, institutional racism and unfair evictions.

Asked why LBR made a point of calling itself a black and Asian organisation, the spokesman said it "values its political allies", but has to start from "the basis of the makeup of our group. We can't aim to speak for people outside of our race or social experience."

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