

Survival of the Fattest and Populism's resurface!



Dear

Jens Galschiøt's sculptures often find new life outside the agendas they were originally made as a comment on. Like in 1998 when the American republican Pat Buchanan included ['The Pillar of Shame'](#) on a postcard encouraging people to mail it to Bill Clinton with their pleas against weapon sales to China. Or the time the Danish Politician Søren Pind was bombarded with American criticism after he had said that sculpture of lady liberty, ['Freedom to Pollute'](#) couldn't stand in Copenhagen for aesthetic reasons. [See News Letter.](#)

A quarter million Brazilians

But that 'Survival of the Fattest' was suddenly shared a quarter million times on a single Brazilian Facebook page snuck up on us. The same sculpture has often popped up on different websites, Facebook and blogs from Vietnam, throughout India and Hong Kong to Mexico and of course Europe.

The sculpture 'Survival of the Fattest'

A destitute African man on his last leg carries an enormous, fat, white lady on his shoulders with a scale in her hands. She is 'Justicia', the west's goddess of justice, she says:

I sit on the back of a man about to break from the burden. I will do everything to help him, except for climbing down from his shoulders.

The sculpture has [263,361 Facebook shares in Brazil](#), the sculpture spread to [Mexican Facebook](#) pages and other lands who shared it further.

Survival of the Fattest and Populism's resurface

That it's precisely Survival of the Fattest that is being talked about these days is no coincidence. It mirrors some significant tendencies in our society. It reflects the foundation for that populism, which is creeping forward through Europe and in the USA, threatening to develop itself into the kind of fascism which Galschiøt ironically enough uses his sculptures to warn against.

Who is the Fat Lady?

Many western people, and not just the poor, see themselves in the man silently breaking, while those in power steer society in an unfamiliar and unwanted direction. The populists see the sorry man as the people, the mainstays of society; they see the Fat lady as the elites who are in every way moving away from the working man's reality.

For the populists the Fat Lady is the NGO's and the jetsetters who enjoy the fruits of globalization without experiencing its pitfalls. The Fat Lady is those who sympathize with the refugees from their perch in the suburbs, while they pay for their kid's private schools to learn about what can be done to help. (See [Phil Ochs's Love Me I'm A Liberal.](#)) The Fat lady is those who say we have to alter our lifestyles because of climate changes that are so complicated that nobody fully understands them (so maybe it's just changes in the atmosphere). The Fat Lady is the academics and the dissonance between the overeducated whose theories make sense on paper, but whose lack of experience with the problems they are trying to fix creates an impossible bureaucracy for those unfamiliar with the system. The Fat Lady is film festivals, snobs, art speak, art exhibitions, and the cultural radicals. She is academia and bureaucracy, complexity, soulless career politicians afraid to champion unpopular causes that could challenge their livelihoods. She is the EU and tax havens. The Fat Lady is a too complicated world which we all have to navigate in. (and the Fat Lady is a word like "navigate in").

Populism and Punching down

One of the answers to a society a big part feels trapped in an increase of populism. People like Danish Pia Kjærsgaard, Dutch Gert Wilders, and (paradoxically) USAs Donald Trump speak to the common man in his own language which is uncomplicated and easy to understand. Populism speaks to those who feel like they are sinking under the weight of the system. It points fingers at freeloaders and people siphoning money from the state. Unfortunately it's usually those struggling at the bottom of society who get pointed out as the villains. The criminals, those on welfare, and immigrants get pointed out probably because they don't have a voice to defend themselves with in the debate. In the meantime the Fat Lady grows, nourishing herself with government pensions and cuts to public programs, networking and 'golden handshakes'.

What do we do?

But what can we do to counter the current wave of populism before society splits further, and we end up being ruled by a bunch of fascist like Trump-types in all of Western Europe. Many people are asking themselves these days, and the answer isn't easily found. But we can start by realizing that we must overlook the traditional class distinctions and socioeconomic divides, and look at how you go about uniting and including all parts of society.

Something must be done, because at Gallery Galschiøt we can't keep up with the production of [My Inner Beast Sculptures](#).



Kind regards and season's greetings from Gallery Galschiøt

Lasse Markus - Newsletter contributor and self-proclaimed overeducated observer

PS. Our intern Ilya Ray Bernstein has written a really good and relevant analysis of populism, and why it's gaining traction. We highly recommend that you [read it](#).

Art and the People

Galschiøt's sculptures often appeal to those who normally don't consider themselves art enthusiasts and there is a good reason for it. The reason can be described as opposite to the critique that the established art world often uses to belittle Galschiøt's works as not 'really' being art. Precisely that you can unequivocally understand the ideas that his works present without needing a doctorate or having an extensive art background to interpret some hidden context that might/might not be there. The messages are direct and unflinching. That's why Galschiøt's works appear anti-authoritarian and popular, because the messages exist in an uncomplicated language that makes them easy for the people to engage with.



Photo: As Galschiøt walked down a narrow street in Kerala, India, he found his own sculptures on a large number of

posters. Turns out the cast-less used them to promote their cause.

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General information about Galschiøt

About Jens Galschiøt [Wikipedia](#):

Portrait of Jens Galschiøt (engelsk) [CV \(PDF\)](#)

Galschiøts Homepage: [Galleri Galschiøt](#)

websites:

[To Gallery Galschiøt](#)

[To Galschiøt website](#)

[to "The Children of Abraham" projekt](#)

Overview over [Galschiøt sculptures](#)

Portrait of a [sculptor Jens Galschiøt \(PDF\)](#)



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