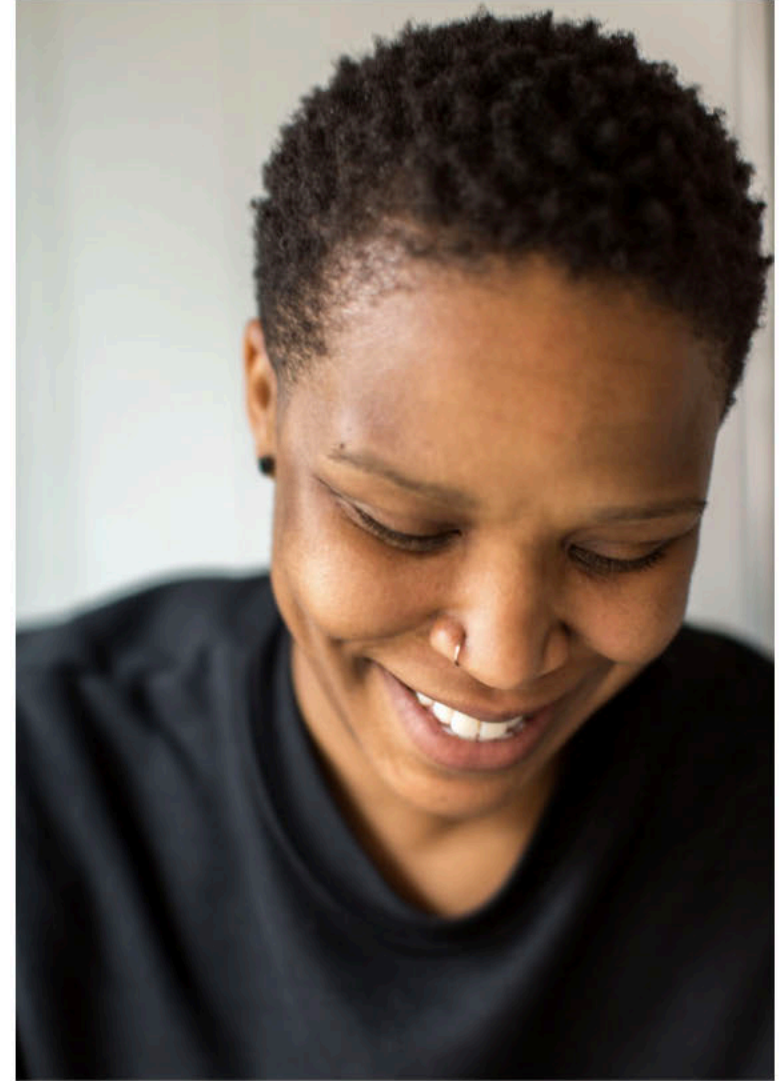


< ALEXANDRA
BELL



SHINING A LIGHT ON RACISM IN THE NEWSROOM

Over the past two years, many of us have changed the way we consume the news. We have learned how to vet the accuracy of articles we see on social media – and we’re learning the importance of doing so (preferably before we hit the share button). But what we haven’t been as aware of – at least not collectively – is news that is factually accurate but presented in a linguistic or stylistic manner that is racist or sexist. Brooklyn-based artist Alexandra Bell (Alex for short) creates art that exposes this bias and installs the pieces in public spaces around New York.

On August 25, 2014, *The New York Times* published an article about the shooting of Michael Brown. The headline read: “Two Lives at Crossroads in Ferguson.” In symmetrical articles sitting side by side, the paper told the stories of Michael Brown, the unarmed black teenager who had been shot, and Darren Wilson, the white police officer who killed him.

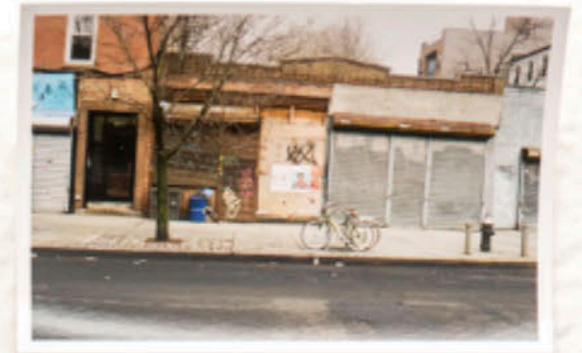
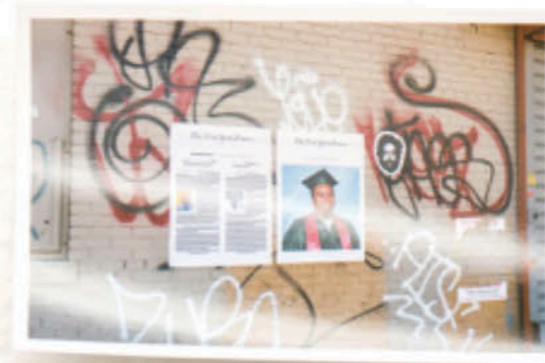
When Alex saw the article, she felt unsettled. Michael Brown and Darren Wilson were “two people who shouldn’t have been compared – at least not side by side in that way. They aren’t equals,” she told us. She went on to say, “Even though [the article] followed the rules of journalism, it violated something else.”

Alex decided to act. She redacted the articles, leaving just the words: “Officer Darren Wilson fatally shot an unarmed black teenager named Michael Brown” and “Michael Brown Jr...his shooting death by Darren Wilson, a white police officer.” She coupled the amended article with Michael Brown’s graduation photograph, stating on Twitter she included it not to show that he was good or accomplished, but to “remind folks he was just a kid.” Then she printed dozens of copies of her work and installed them around New York City.

Titled *A Teenager With Promise*, this was Alex’s first piece in *Counternarratives*, an ongoing series in which she challenges frameworks in the media she finds to be systemically oppressive. Since mid-2016, Alex has saved almost every issue of *The New York Times*. The papers are stacked high in her studio, and she has just as many back home. When she finds an article that she wants to engage with more deeply, she uses margin notes, redaction, highlighting, and layout manipulation to call attention to the problematic components of the piece.

“I’m trying to get people to slow down a bit when they read the news and think critically about how things are framed, why they are framed that way, and what it would mean for them to be framed differently.”

words: CHELSEA SONKSEN | photography: MARISA VITALE



"All the News
That's Fit to Print"

The New York Times

Late Edition
Today, mostly sunny, warmer and more seasonable, high 84. Tonight, mostly clear, low 67. Tomorrow, sunshine and patchy clouds, high 86. Weather map is on Page C8.

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NEW YORK, MONDAY, AUGUST 25, 2014

\$2.50

Two Lives at Crossroads in Ferguson

A Low-Profile Officer With Unsettled Early Days

By MONICA DAVEY and FRANCES ROBLES
FERGUSON, Mo. —

Officer Darren Wilson



Officer Darren Wilson

fatally shot an unarmed black teenager named Michael Brown,

Officer Darren Wilson

A Teenager Grappling With Problems and Promise

By JOHN ELIGON

FERGUSON, Mo. — Michael Brown Jr.



his shooting death by Darren Wilson, a white police officer,

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A Teenager With Promise



WHAT IS ONE OF THE HARDEST THINGS YOU ENCOUNTERED AS YOU BROUGHT YOUR IDEA TO FRUITION?

Self-doubt was probably the hardest thing I had to overcome. Early on, I spent a lot of time running ideas by my friends until one of them pointed out that I seemed pretty clear on what I wanted to do. Turns out, I had a lot of strong opinions about how to approach the work and when people suggested things that didn't make sense, I pushed back. I definitely drove a few people crazy, but somewhere during it all, I realized I trusted myself and my ideas. At the very least, I learned I wasn't comfortable looking to other people for conclusions.

WAS THERE A TURNING POINT IN YOUR CAREER?

There was a moment in October when I decided to make my desire to be an artist more important than anything else. I rented some studio space; I bought some supplies, and I made a point of going directly to the studio after I finished my shift at my full-time job. In a lot of ways, this one decision made a lot of other things fall into place. I left work earlier rather than lingering to do additional work, and I became more organized.

WHO ARE THREE WOMEN YOU ADMIRE AND WHY?

Anna Deavere Smith

I saw her one-woman performance *Let Me Down Easy* about three times. I'm still in awe of the amount of reportage and research she conducts prior to starting the work. I'm inspired by the way she uses journalism to inform her creative work.

Lorna Simpson

Her works "Guarded Conditions" and "Five Day Forecast" are two of my favorites. They were two of the earliest art works I encountered that used language and text to reveal everyday microaggressions, stereotypes, and racism toward black women.

Audre Lorde

Audre Lorde is a queer, black, feminist deity. Period.

HAS CREATING THIS BODY OF WORK CHANGED YOU IN ANY WAY? HOW?

I'm more confident. I have this thing that I created, and it's my own. It has taught me a lot about trusting myself and also about vulnerability.



LIZZIE &
KATHRYN
FORTUNATO



An Ethical Approach to Costume Jewelry

words: CHELSEA SONKSEN

photography: MARISA VITALE



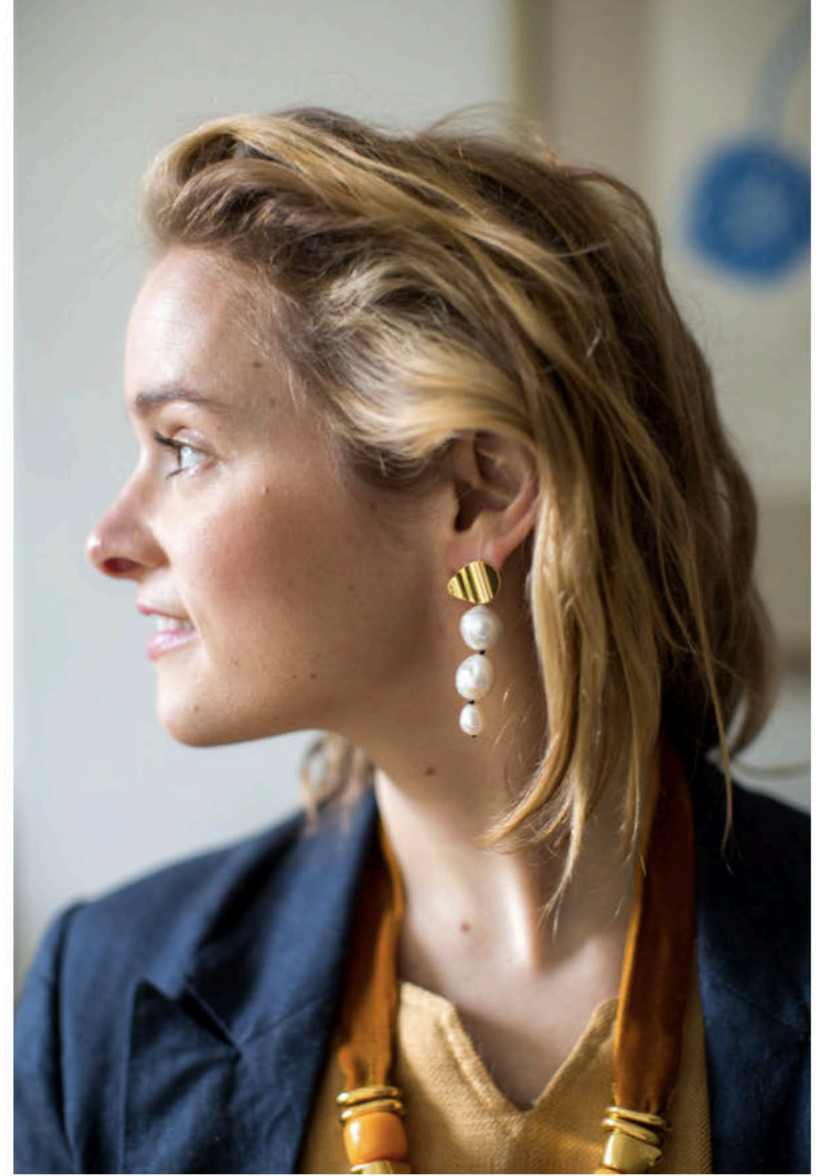
*Walk into a room wearing Lizzie Fortunato earrings
and I guarantee that you'll receive compliments all night.*

The brand is run by Lizzie Fortunato and her twin sister, Kathryn. Lizzie is an artist and maker at heart. She sewed her own prom dress in high school and began designing jewelry in college. Kathryn, on the other hand, is a finance-minded businesswoman.

It seems almost too perfect to be true – a twin with a complementary skillset. It's as though they were destined to be business partners. The sisters attribute their compatibility to their parents. "I think we're really lucky because we always excelled at different things." Kathryn told us. "We've got our parents to thank for that because they never made us do the same things growing up. God bless my mom who would take Lizzie to piano and me to gymnastics class and didn't just sign us up for the same things. In undergrad, Lizzie was an English and Art History major, and I was an Economics major. I think that we've always been able to work well together because we didn't compete."

Back when they were both students at Duke University, Lizzie would make jewelry in her dorm room, and Kathryn would help her sell the pieces. Kathryn was the ultimate hype woman; when people would compliment Lizzie's jewelry on the quad, Kathryn would excitedly tell them that they could buy a piece, too, if they'd like.

After school, the sisters moved to New York, where Lizzie took a job in Fashion PR and Kathryn headed to Wall Street. Only nine months into her new job, Lizzie realized she wanted to pursue her jewelry line. Many of their friends from Duke, who were Lizzie's earliest customers, had also moved to NYC after graduation, and now, with salaries of their own, they were eager to buy more of her pieces. Five years later, Kathryn took the leap to join Lizzie, abandoning her financially secure job at Goldman Sachs.



Lizzie seeks to tell a narrative within each collection. This season's Fall 17 Collection is inspired by a trip to Africa last year. The sisters spent time in Kenya and Tanzania with their mom and significant others, and they were enamored with the quality of the light. "Everyone always talks about how the light in Africa is different, and it's so true. You see hues of gold everywhere you look." The collection captures the color palette of the plains in the Serengeti.

In addition to their retail and wholesale channels, Lizzie and Kathryn have collaborated with a number of fashion designers to create unique pieces for the runway. Some of Lizzie's favorite collaborations have been with Victoria Bartlett, the former designer at VPL. "One season she wanted jewelry that resembled the human body and vertebrae. I remember we went and got a rotisserie chicken and took all the bones out and casted them...and made all this anatomical, bone-inspired jewelry... There was another collection that she wanted all origami. So I found someone on Craigslist who made me a thousand paper cranes, and we strung them into necklaces. I can remember meeting this person at the West 4th Subway stop and handing them a hundred dollars for a thousand cranes and being like, "THANKS! See you later!"

As the business has grown, it has been important to Lizzie and Kathryn that they stay true to their values and build a sustainable, ethical business. To that end, they've resisted the temptation to move their production abroad and, instead, found creative ways to build a strong team right in their city. "We employ a lot of women, many of them single moms, who work from our office *and* their homes. They come in twice a week, learn projects, and then take materials home [to construct the pieces]."

The sisters attribute a great deal of their continued success to the city they call home. "People often ask us if we would live elsewhere – because we're our own bosses, so we could live anywhere. As much as that seems tempting, I do think this city has provided such an amazing platform for the business. To be a 15-minute subway ride from our vendors [in the Garment District], or, say, a stone's throw away from Anna Wintour's office – it's all pretty remarkable."

LIZZIEFORTUNATO.COM | @LFJEWELS



NATALIE

EGAN



A Beacon For Positive Change in Corporate America

words: LYDIA MACK
photography: MARISA VITALE



“The more myself I become, the more creative and driven I am in my work to build a world where everyone can be their authentic selves.”

Natalie Egan is walking tall these days – and it’s not just the new heels. Natalie is the CEO of Translator, a Diversity & Inclusion technology company that works (usually confidentially) with Fortune 500 companies and large corporations to recruit diverse talent and implement the necessary empathy and equality-focused programs to keep them on board. Prior to founding this company, Natalie was the CEO of a multimillion dollar tech company – only then she wasn’t Natalie, she was Nathan.

Natalie first stood on stage as her true self at mindbodygreen’s Revitalize 2016, one of the most-watched, high-profile conferences in the wellness industry. She began describing her journey as a trans woman by painting the picture of Nathan: the successful, happily married, bro/tech CEO. Things hit a low point when Natalie’s marriage to her best friend suddenly began to fall apart. At the same time, she was fired from the successful tech company that she had built from the ground up, by a CEO she had hired.

Natalie’s story is fascinating, but her future is even more so. “That experience of running a business as a male CEO is kind of what feeds a lot of the passion and drive to do this as a female entrepreneur,” she said. And the timing couldn’t be better, given the current political climate. Translator was doing its meaningful work well before the new administration took office, but now, business is booming.

Natalie describes this response in part as backlash to the man in the oval office. “Our customers and clients were doubling down. All of a sudden, they felt they were under a threat or under pressure, to a much greater extent than before,” she said. She attributes this rush to prioritize inclusion and diversity to a change of heart from the corporate decision-makers. “They realize, this is good for my business to have diverse, inclusive, empathetic work environments. So they’re like, I’ll fight hate with corporate dollars.”



Every time there's
a negative reaction,
there's a positive
response that's
even stronger.

Natalie and her team are using this momentum to create long-lasting change. "Every time there's a negative reaction, there's a positive response that's even stronger. It sort of drives this flywheel." That's why much of Translator's greatest impact is yet to be seen. In addition to improving existing corporate environments for global companies, it is also working to reach young people everywhere. Empathy is a cornerstone of its programming, so it's only natural that Translator is working with the New York City Department of Education to develop a tech-enabled empathy training program and developing an app that not only builds users' empathy but also provides real-time support for challenging workplace scenarios. Users start by building self-awareness, the first pillar of Translator's empathy model. Then they move on to learning about others' identities and practicing strategies for communicating across differences of experience.

Since the app is only being used in private beta by Fortune 500 companies, the details are still under wraps. However, keep your eyes peeled in the months to come as Translator unveils new technology that may very well be world changing.

For Natalie, Translator is her life's deepest purpose. Everything before was leading up to this, as life's plates shifted and fell into the right places. "I have this rolling evolution of awakesness and consciousness. I think a huge part of it is the hormone therapy," she said. "The more myself I become, the more creative and driven I am in my work to build a world where everyone can be their authentic selves." Connection truly makes us human, and that is ultimately what Translator is striving toward, one company at a time.

WHAT IS THE INSPIRATION BEHIND YOUR BUSINESS?

My inspiration for Translator is based on my experience coming out as a transgender woman and experiencing discrimination, bias, and hatred for the first time after living my life as a white male with access, privilege, and resources. I became obsessed with inequality and trying to solve for it. To that end, our business is helping companies build open and inclusive cultures. Our mission, or why we come to work each day, is to save lives.

WAS THERE A TURNING POINT IN YOUR CAREER?

I think the real turning point in my career was when I realized I needed to get out of hospitality and into high tech. I was taking a class called "Business Technology Optimization" in an Executive MBA program, and the professor told us if we wanted to make a lot of money we needed to get out of low-margin, commodity businesses and into high-margin SaaS (Software-as-a-Service) tech businesses. The lightbulb went off for me, and I never looked back. Within a few weeks I had quit my job (which meant paying my employer back for the MBA program) and getting an entry-level sales job at a software company. Ten years later I am the CEO of my second tech start-up.

WHAT ADVICE DO YOU HAVE FOR WOMEN WHO WANT TO START THEIR OWN BUSINESSES?

My advice is to build and test your idea as much as possible without disrupting your current situation. You don't need money or even a product to start a business; you just need to start selling, and market feedback will very quickly help you validate whether you should commit full-time. In a perfect world you are able to pre-sell "vaporware" (look that up) and collect real cash or at least get letters of intent from real customers or partners. If it is a consumer product, get people registering to show interest. The point is, most entrepreneurs think they need to raise money to build a product and then they go see if they can sell it. I say do the opposite.

TRANSLATOR.MEDIA

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MAGAZINE



NEW YORK

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