

You believe women exist.

...

How did you come to be in the vicinity of these sunken pools and chandeliers?

...

You carried the great discovery of poetry as freedom, not form.

What emerges is not repetition but a rhythm (which may be inhabited but never possessed, the reader hosted by poetry) and a dialogue between possible subjects, persons and non-persons. The pronouns of this poem cause us to question the conventional hospitality of language. If a different condition of living is achievable it is not a particular relationship of persons in the verb or a kind of spatial representation but a disposition of bodies. *Come closer, stay there, closer, closer, stay there*—this ambivalence now appears as a protective gesture, its indifference a strange kind of hospitality. The entrance may also be an exit.

Notes

I am indebted to Matt Rickard for the question of the link between ambivalence and dialectic, and for his comments on this text.

“A Party in Seville” (2014) is used courtesy of the artist.

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BABAK GOLKAR / Notes on Erdem Taşdelen’s

A Petition of the Left Hand

The research-based and conceptually engaged art practice of Erdem Taşdelen spans a wide range of media, and is grounded in examining and reflecting on notions of subjectivity. Central to a large number of Taşdelen’s previous works has been critiquing ideas of the self as a discrete entity and investigating the ways in which it is socio-culturally prescribed and those prescriptions internalized. In his most recent works, presented in this issue of *TCR*, there seems to be a slight shift in methodology.

In 2014, Taşdelen produced and debuted a new body of work entitled *A Petition of the Left Hand* at Galeri NON in Istanbul. With this multi-platform project, he took on the task of examining socio-historical problematics surrounding left-handedness. The overarching title of the project is taken from a short, humorous letter from 1779 by Benjamin Franklin, written from the point of view of the left hand and asking that it be treated with the respect it deserves. Franklin’s letter is presented by Taşdelen as a ready-made alongside seventeen instructional drawings based on tasks that are highlighted in Jan W. Van Strien’s 1988 *Dutch Handedness Questionnaire*, all of which are drawn in the series as performed by the artist’s left hand. It is worth noting here that Taşdelen is right-handed.

In the sculpture *My Father’s Left Hand* the artist internalizes and channels the struggles of left-handedness projected by society through his father’s experience of it. Taşdelen’s father, who was born left-handed, was forced by his family to learn to write with his “right” hand, an act of correction that parallels many other socially-imposed discriminative practices. He cast his father’s left hand in bronze, capturing it in the act of writing and, by extension, permanently fixing it in time.

There is a quality in all of Taşdelen’s artworks that could be described as ethnographic realism. His research and un-archiving of historical treatments of subjects have an obsessive quality of “digging” in order to get to the bottom of a contemporary struggle. Inevitably, ready-mades get a special treatment in his works, especially in this most recent project. One such object is a 1950s miniature porcelain jug with a poem inscribed on it, a work of Delft pottery produced

specifically for left-handed individuals. The object in its regular form is one of many everyday items that are difficult to use with the left hand, as the pouring lip would normally be to the left of the handle. While objects that are either versatile or geared for left-handers are made more commonly today, this jug is noteworthy as an early example that shows concern for the left hand. Another piece uses ready-made text as its material; titled *All The Decisive Blows*, it is an artist book constructed by Taşdelen that features a quote by a well-known person on each page. The book is designed in reverse so that the pages turn from left to right.

It is no longer unusual to witness artists in our time practicing beyond medium. However, Taşdelen's methodologies are unique in ways in which the outcome and unfolding of his subjects form indexical traces of the social reality of the time and place in which we live. Systems that were once consciously human-made just exist in constative modes, now as conditions of our time. Taşdelen's art hits these conditions at their roots, wittingly and humorously subverting them.

ERDEM TAŞDELEN / from *A Petition of the Left Hand*

Philadelphia, 1779
by Benjamin Franklin

A Petition of the Left Hand TO THOSE WHO HAVE THE SUPERINTENDENCY OF EDUCATION

I address myself to all the friends of youth, and conjure them to direct their compassionate regards to my unhappy fate, in order to remove the prejudices of which I am the victim. There are twin sisters of us; and the two eyes of man do not more resemble, nor are capable of being upon better terms with each other, than my sister and myself, were it not for the partiality of our parents, who make the most injurious distinctions between us. From my infancy, I have been led to consider my sister as a being of a more elevated rank. I was suffered to grow up without the least instruction, while nothing was spared in her education. She had masters to teach her writing, drawing, music, and other accomplishments; but if by chance I touched a pencil, a pen, or a needle, I was bitterly rebuked; and more than once I have been beaten for being awkward, and wanting a graceful manner. It is true, my sister associated me with her upon some occasions; but she always made a point of taking the lead, calling upon me only from necessity, or to figure by her side.

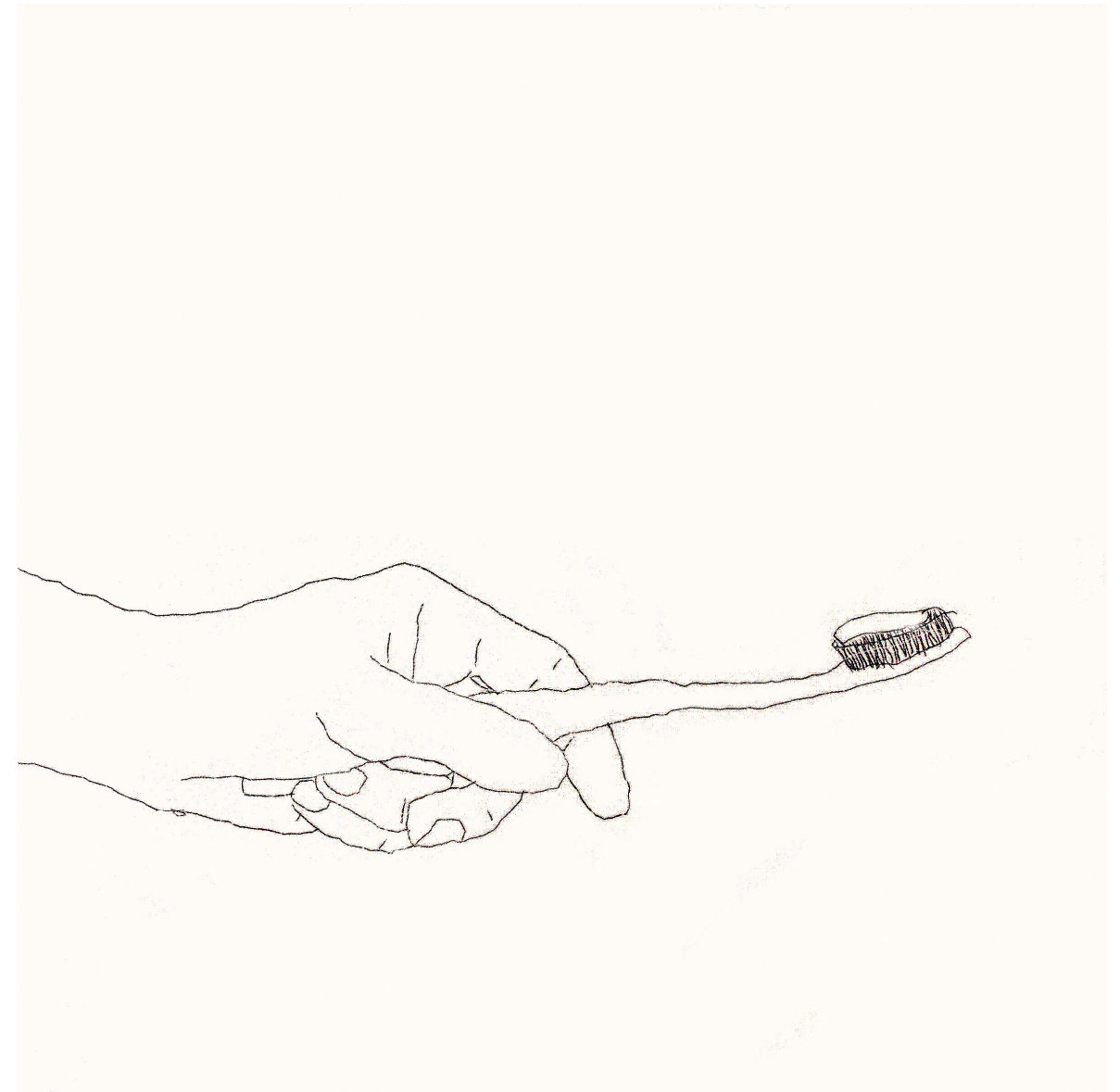
But conceive not, Sirs, that my complaints are instigated merely by vanity. No; my uneasiness is occasioned by an object much more serious. It is the practice in our family that the whole business of providing for its subsistence falls upon my sister and myself. If any indisposition should attack my sister, -- and I mention it in confidence upon this occasion, that she is subject to the gout, the rheumatism, and cramp, without making mention of other accidents, -- what would be the fate of our poor family? Must not the regret of our parents be excessive, at having placed so great a difference between sisters who are so perfectly equal? Alas! we must perish from distress; for it would not be in my power even to scrawl a suppliant petition for relief, having been obliged to employ the hand of another in transcribing the request which I have now the honour to prefer to you

Condescend, Sirs, to make my parents sensible of the injustice of an exclusive tenderness, and of the necessity of distributing their care and affection among all their children equally. I am, with a profound respect, Sirs, your obedient servant,

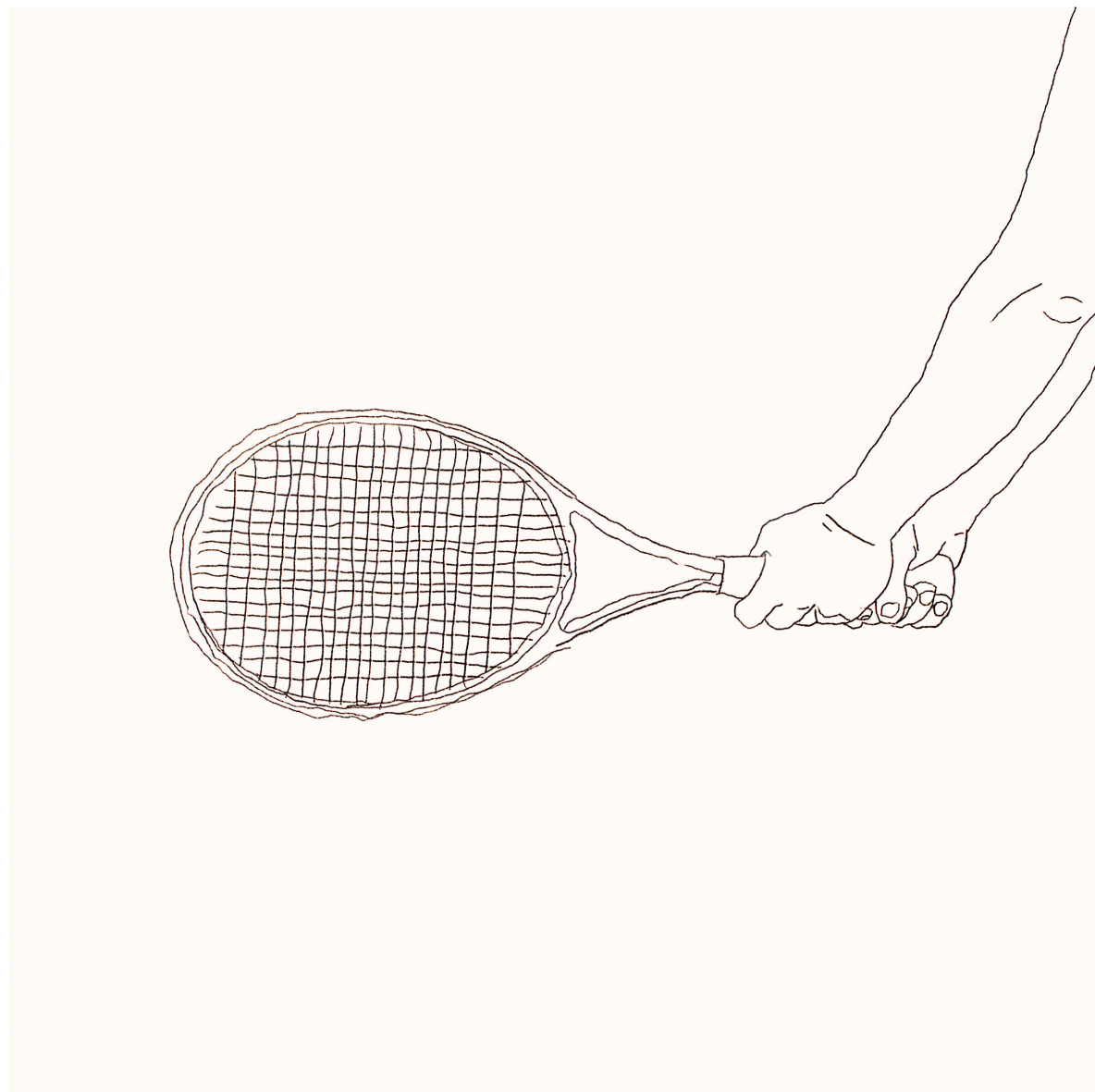
THE LEFT HAND.

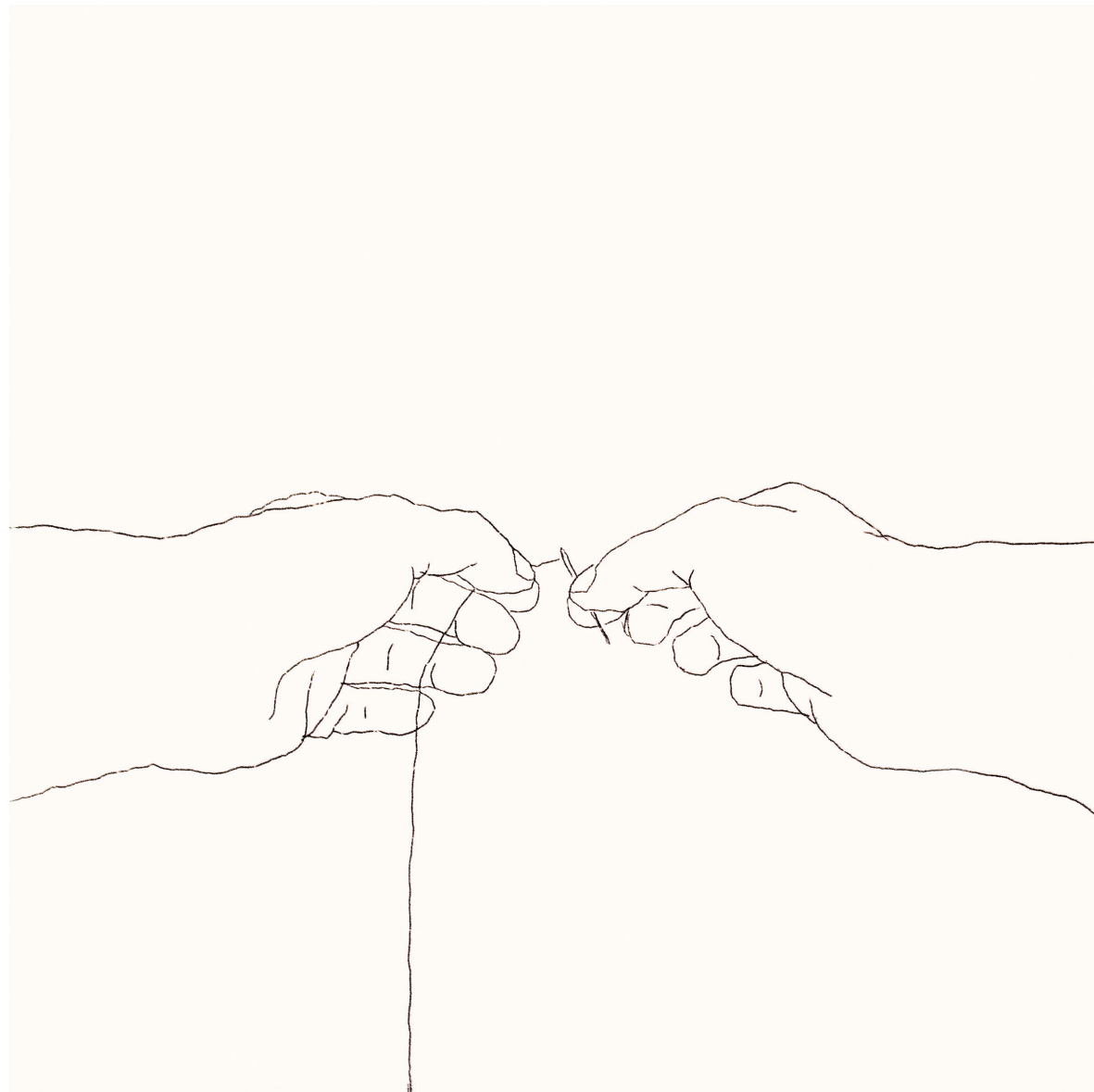
A Petition of the Left Hand, found text by Benjamin Franklin on letter size copy paper.

A number of activities, in which you can use either your left or your right hand, are specified below. Indicate which hand you usually use for these activities. Visualize the activity in question, if you are not immediately sure of an answer. If you don't have a clear preference, indicate that you use both hands.



The Dutch Handedness Questionnaire, 2014, series of 17 drawings with graphite on archival paper, 14" × 14" each. Private collection.



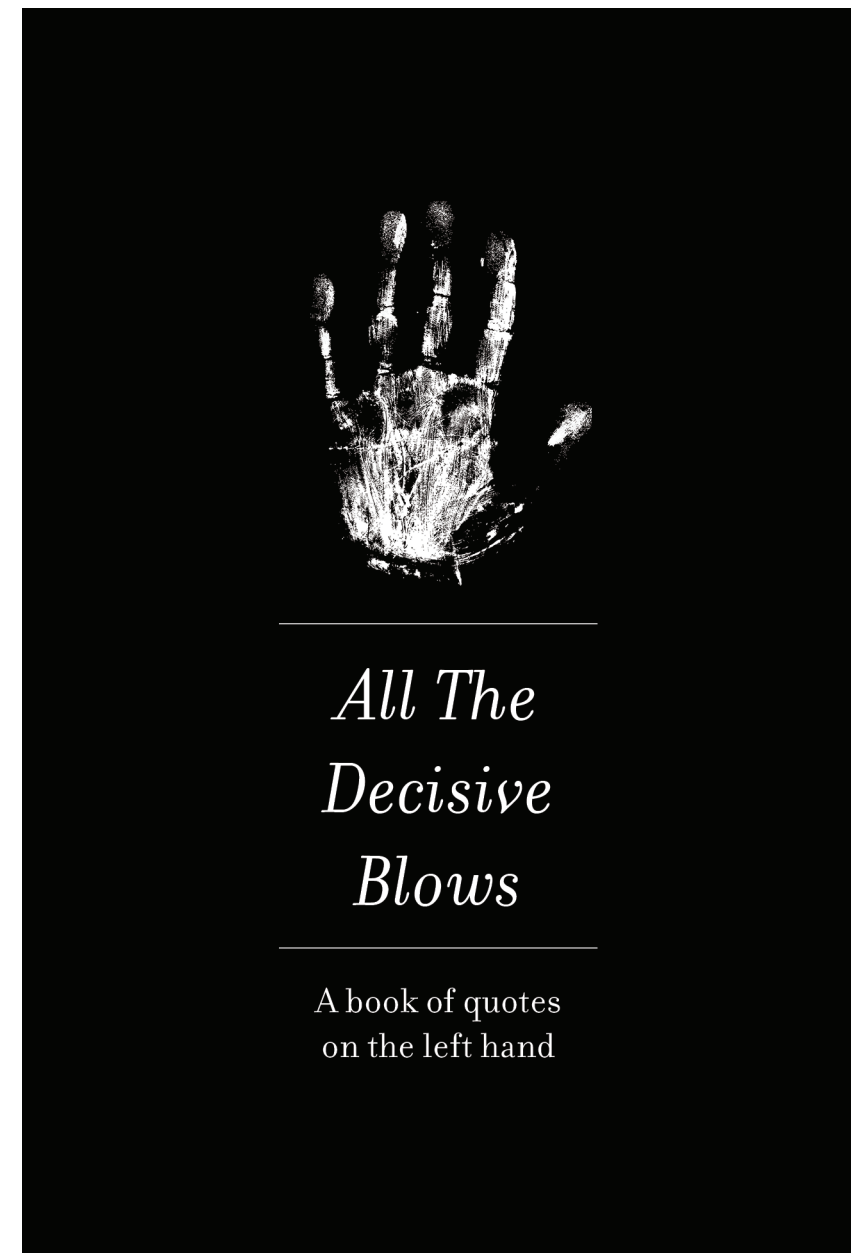


OPPOSITE: A 'Southpaw' Pitcher, found miniature ceramic jug, 4.75" × 4.50" × 4".





My Father's Left Hand, 2014, cast bronze, 9" × 4.25" × 3.50".



THIS PAGE AND FOLLOWING PAGE: *All the Decisive Blows*, 2014, artist book (289 pages, edition of 500), 6.25" x 4.25".

These are the days when no one should rely unduly on his competence. Strength lies in improvisation. All the decisive blows are struck left-handed.

Walter Benjamin

After urination, one must first wash the anus if it has been soiled by the urine; then one must press three times with the middle finger of his left hand on the part between the anus and the base of the penis; then one must put his thumb on top of the penis and his index finger on the bottom and pull the skin forward three times as far as the circumcision ring; and after that three times squeeze the tip of the penis.

Ayatollah Khomeini

Everybody remembers the first time they were taught that part of the human race was Other. That's a trauma. It's as though I told you that your left hand is not part of your body.

Toni Morrison

The left-handed are precious; they take places which are inconvenient for the rest.

Victor Hugo

MONROE LAWRENCE / Downstream

The day’s augmenting. Think of it as a shove
Which the day’s augmenting. Think of it as a shove
Eyes recollect unseen. Seen,
The incident grays onto its endorsement

Which the day’s augmenting. Think of it as a shove
You can’t file, no explanation
The incident grays on. To its endorsement,
The one state the one surmises

You can’t file, no explanation
Made me too uptight.
The one state the one surmises
For a little while, a fluctuation

Made me too uptight—
Regretting amid a midnight wine.
For a little while, a fluctuation
I spurned became components to who I was,

Regretting amid a midnight. Wine
Meant worsened artefacts he preserved and which
I spurned became components. To who I was—
I stumble. Stumbling, the day’s augmenting

Meant worsened art: facts he preserved and which
The day’s augmenting. Think of it as a shove—
I stumble—stumbling, the day’s augmenting
Seen eyes recollect unseen.