

# SOCIETY OF DICKS


CONTRIBUTOR/S: MATTHIAS GRÜNDIG

I am ashamed of where I've gone: the latter pages of different Google searches for dick images, that is. In my defence: I wasn't looking for "ordinary" dick pics, especially not unsolicited ones, unasked-for photographs that men take of their own penises and send to women mostly (I guess). These undoubtedly constitute a vile form of sexual harassment as well as they are a criminally understudied phenomenon of their own, as Tracy Jeanne Rosenthal pointed out in her essay *Towards a Theory of the Dick Pic (NSFW)* (2015). [1] I wasn't looking for this kind of pictures and I'm not mad that they mark a blind spot in my personal experience. This text is not about them, but maybe there still is something to be learned from or about them here. For clarity's sake: I'll only refer to them as dick pics, whereas I'll mainly be invested in what I'd like to, somewhat artificially, call dick images — drawings, doodles and scribbles of various sizes and techniques, and, more precisely, viral photographs thereof found on the internet. Having said this, the sources for this text aren't exactly academic. They are mostly clickbait sites and chaotic online memories of all kinds of "stories" that are camouflaged as news and I'm interested in how the baiting-part works, how attention is generated and managed, and how dick drawings tie into that. I think, having read the title, you might want to know that as much as I do, and that's exactly the point. This text is mildly NSFW, but rest assured that I won't confront you with any dick pics or similarly offensive imagery. [2]

8=&gt;

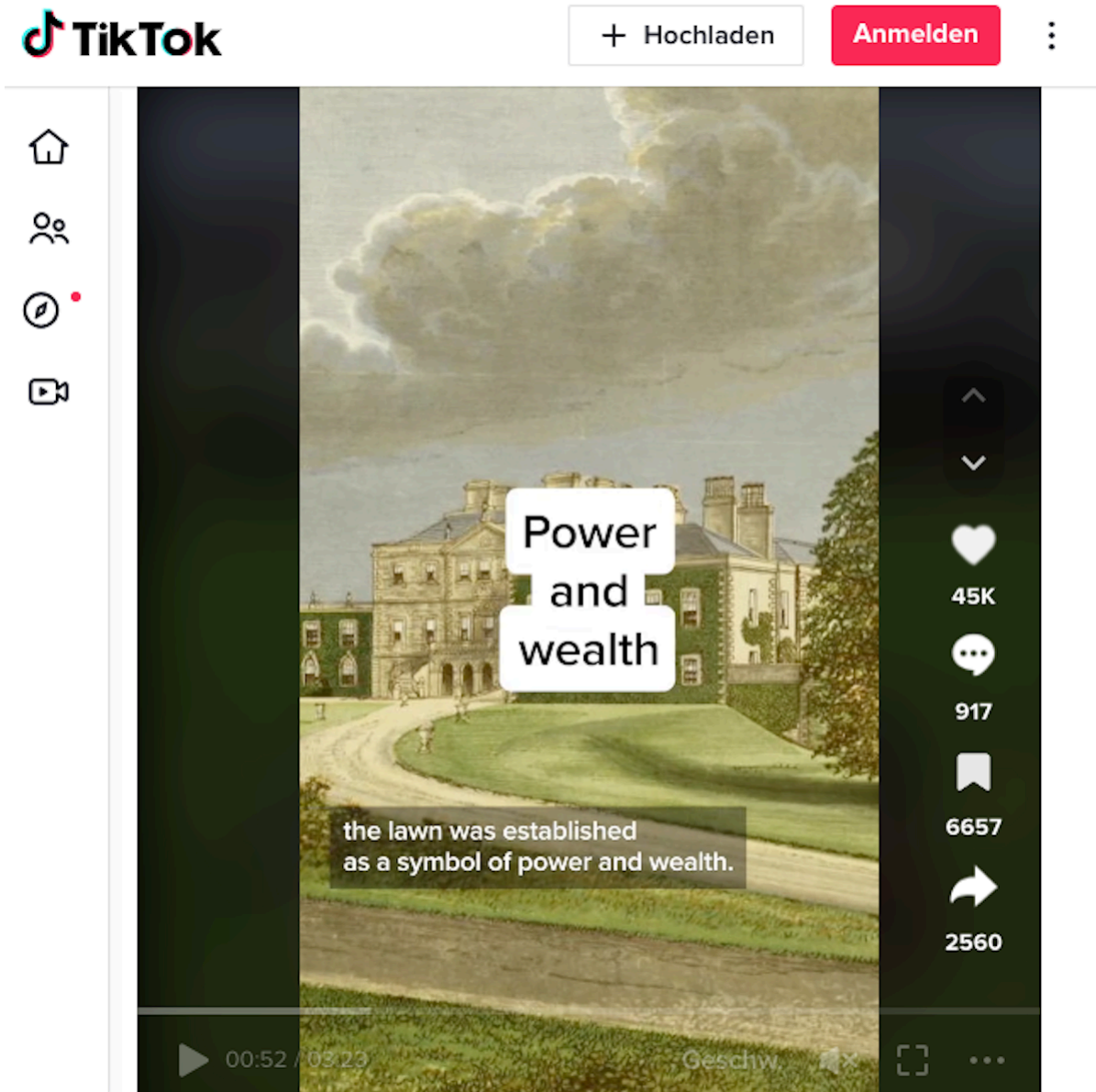
So, while reading online comments about King Charles' coronation portraits earlier this year, I came across a number of curious news items about a 30-foot penis neatly mowed into the lower lawn of the Royal Crescent in the City of Bath that has been discovered in the morning hours of May 4, 2023. While a regional news site stated that the "mystery meat and two veg [...]" is bemusing the residents of Bath, [3] international tabloid media picked up the story and seasoned it with spicy false information and exaggeration. The New York Post, for example, falsely stated that a "Georgian themed 'grand coronation party'" was scheduled to take place at the site supposedly known "worldwide for having a 'perfect lawn'" on the coronation Saturday, May 6. [4] That's how I first encountered the Bath dick, via an Instagram post by the New York Post's channel that the algorithm decided I need to see. [5] However, the city of Bath in fact only asked to "join picnickers on the Royal Crescent lawns for free family fun." [6] There had been a so-called grand coronation party to celebrate the 300th anniversary of the Georgian era, but that already took place in 2014. [7] Additionally, the Post's punchy title is somewhat misleading: One might argue that the headline Giant penis mowed into lawn at King Charles' coronation bash site purposefully presented it to be a main event site central to the course of the coronation, when it was, in fact, anything but. The implied size and importance of the party in combination with the historic building's architectural prestige, the quite random fact that it served as a film location for Netflix's *Bridgerton*, [8] and the symbolic weight of the upcoming coronation thus transformed the dick from a mere act of vandalism to an international news story. Although it's debatable what exactly here constitutes news or a story. We'll come back to that.



 **A birds-eye view of the mystery meat and two veg that is bemusing residents of Bath this morning (May 4)** (Image: © SWNS)

Clearly, the possibility of putting as many cheap puns about Charles's crown jewels (I am sorry) into online articles as humanly possible, lubed the ever-same protest dick image's way to media attention (I am sorry again). And how could it be any different: I imagine most people have, at some point, had a good laugh about some poorly delineated penis — the most childish of subjects produced in the most impotent artistic form. It requires no effort, no talent, no style. The cruder, the better. One might argue that it is a pictorial joke in itself that gives rise to more jokes in its wake. This is the first realization I have while writing: It is almost impossible to not make puns writing about dick images. You basically have to circumvent a part of your vocabulary to avoid them. Think of the undying wordplay montage from Austin Powers: The Spy Who Shagged Me and how long it's able to swap signifiers. [9] It's impressive. The dick image is a priori entangled with its own incessant innuendo, it is a crude magnet that attracts a cloud of wordplay. Its immature humour generates a stale sense of satisfaction, of having one's own already low expectations barely met or successfully undermined: You get the ever-same jokes, you know you would get, you smirk a little. 'Say the line, Bart.' In effect, the wordplay encircling dick images can hardly fail, it only does so when being absent for a minute. In lusting for words, for a verbal reaction, the dick image is closely related to the dick pic, even though the first asks for being made fun of, while the latter seeks words of affirmation instead, avoiding being made fun of altogether. For the first, humour is viral, for the latter, it's an antidote. [10]

However, taking one step back, it is far from clear if the mysterious lawn dick — landscape designers quickly discussed if it was actually mown by hand or via a programmable robot, or if it was achieved chemically, which seems most likely [11] — was indeed meant as a form of protest. Sure, it is perfectly possible: anti-royalist activists defacing the lawn to voice their protest not only against Charles and his coronation, but also against the uncritical continuation of the kingdom and the British Empire's colonial legacy, or some such. Perhaps unrelated to the lawn dick, I recently saw a TikTok video/Instagram reel originally posted by Al Jazeera's channel AJ+ on lawns as a tool in British colonialism: [12] It comprehensibly explains how, in the 17th century, for British aristocrats, lawns constituted a means of showing off the luxury of having land without having the need to cultivate anything on it. They symbolized the wealth and power of having others maintain a piece of land and rendering it essentially useless — the pleasure of disinterest and unnecessary. While conquering the world, the British exported this very idea to their colonies also as a way to enact control over the foreign landscapes and bring 'civility' to them. Against this historical background, the lawn had increasingly become a middle-class status symbol only in the 20th century. Today, the video argues, the expenditures and resources for keeping nice and tidy lawns stand in stark contrast to landscapes heavily afflicted by the consequences of the ever-worsening climate. [13]



So, what better place is there to protest kingdom, colonialism, and climate change than a world-renowned “perfect lawn” chosen as a coronation bash site? But then again: The dick could also just be a dick, made by some mischievous 18-year-olds after a night of drinking. Its appearance on Bath’s lower Royal Crescent lawn, just beneath the so-called Ha-ha, a construction that divides it from the upper lawn, [14] has, in fact, had people debating if they witnessed a “Cheeky Prank or Bizarre Art.” [15] Protest, prank, or experimental landscaping — if Bath’s mystery dick is a symbol, it is an ambivalent one.

I know what you’re thinking: That’s much ado about some infantile turf vandalism. “It’s just a stupid dick”, I imagine you saying. This, of course, wouldn’t be wrong at all: Drawing dicks with whatever means possible is an infantile and a mostly, but not exclusively, male preoccupation. [16] It’s absurd as much as it is banal; it is all fun and jest, but it’s simultaneously intrusive and aggressive. Dick drawings surely are received differently by different genders and groups of people, but above that, I’d argue that their individual reception is often already split by conflicting emotions: They sometimes make me smile, but they also make me angry at myself for having smiled; I get their offensiveness, but I find them ridiculous at the same time. I’m getting ahead of myself.

In the end, I’m not really interested too much in this one lawn dick in the British city of Bath. But if we widen the perspective, it might become clear that, as an image that is shared on the internet, it is just one in a circulation, in a whole society of dicks. And that the infantility of scribbled dicks plays an important role therein. Let’s look at some dick drawings that made the news in the last years in no particular order and see what can be said about them.

8==>

Let’s start with one 2017 sky penis that was to be seen over western Washington, US, after two junior Navy officers — let’s call them Vladimir and Estragon — in a Boeing EA-18G Growler airplane “had sky time to kill and noticed that the white contrails their jet produced were particularly robust that afternoon,”



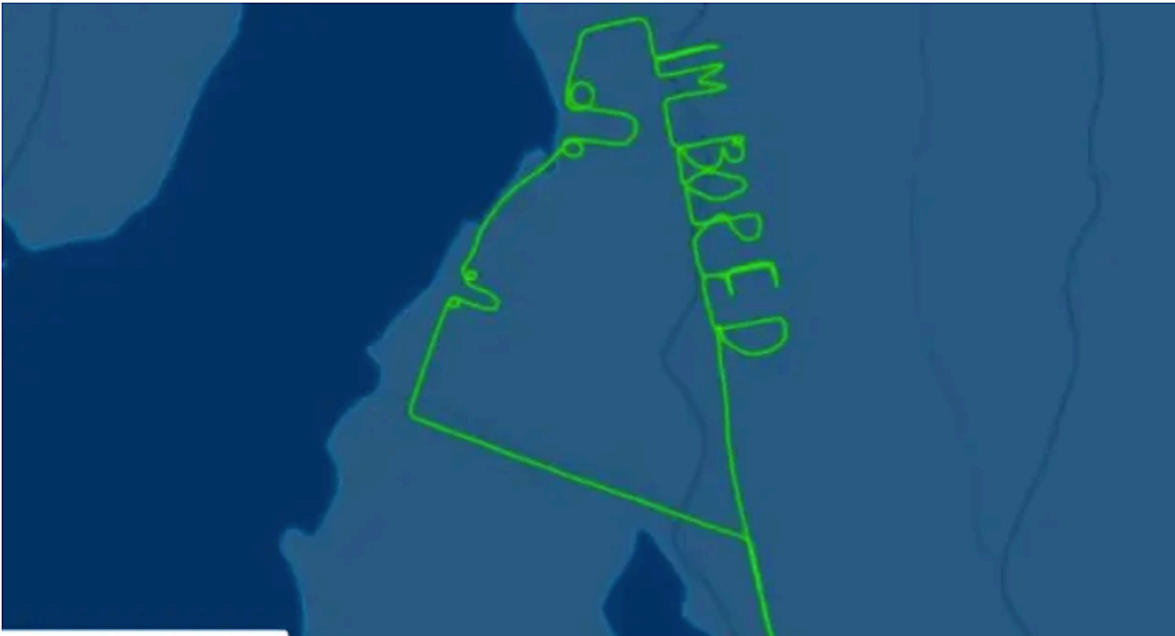
as a 2019 NavyTimes article tells us. It also quotes the officers' playfully dumb dialog: "Draw a giant penis,' the EWO [electronic warfare officer] said. 'That would be awesome.' [...] 'Dude, that would be so funny,' the pilot said. 'Airliner's coming back on their way into Seattle, just this big (expletive)ing, giant penis. We could almost draw a vein in the middle of it too.'" [17] Top Gun-grade humor. Of course, the jet-engineered sky dick of celestial proportions didn't go unnoticed, and only hours later official information reached the Chief of Naval Operations that the officers had maneuvered the "aircraft in a pattern that resulted in contrails depicting an obscene symbol when viewed from the ground." The information made clear that: "Media attention is expected." And the media was attentive indeed, after a concerned mother took photos of it and complained about the sky dick to a local TV station. Sure enough, through this channel and social media, it became a more widely received news story and/or meme. The pilots were disciplined because the Navy found the sky dick "absolutely unacceptable," and also "of zero training value." [18]



Social media reaction to the Navy's sky penis.

As one might expect, sky dicks beget more sky dicks: In 2018, Air Force pilots on the German Airbase Rammstein drew their own to rival the Navy's. [19] In 2019, an Australian pilot wrote the announcement "I[']M BORED" and drew penises with his propeller plane that would only become visible in flight tracking software. [20] In 2020, a Lufthansa pilot on a short-haul flight between the German cities Frankfurt and Bremen flew a dick while waiting for permission to land. [21] Of course, all these viral dick incidents are interconnected and they get referenced whenever a new penis is scribbled into the firmament. Virility and virality seem closely connected in these cases.





The message was only visible to those following his progress using flight tracking software. Credit: Flightaware

There are different takeaways from these stories. First, there is the boredom of “having time to kill,” that is positioned exactly where one might expect a more sensible reason, or at least some kind of motivation at all. Among other modernist thinkers, Walter Benjamin was heavily invested in the topic of boredom, so much in fact that I can’t give you an overview of his ideas in this regard. [22] But I’ll give you some of his thoughts from the material for the Arcades Project, at least. For example, he writes: “Boredom is a warm grey fabric lined on the inside with the most lustrous and colourful of silks. In this fabric we wrap ourselves when we dream. We are at home then in the arabesques of its lining.” [23] Also: “Boredom is always the external surface of unconscious events. For this reason, it has appeared to the great dandies as a mark of distinction. Ornament and boredom.” [24] And lastly: “We are bored when we don’t know what we are waiting for. That we do know, or think we know, is nearly always the expression of our superficiality or inattention. Boredom is the threshold to great deeds. — Now, it would be important to know: What is the dialectical antithesis to boredom?” [25] While I have no easy answer to that, it still is possible to think of boredom, as Benjamin did, as not just a dull absence of involvement, but also as a liminal state that can suddenly change into what he dialectically pictures as colourful and ornamental, a blooming. Boredom here bears the opportunity to lead to something great — but certainly not in sky dick’s sense of size-does-matter-greatness, we’ll come to that later. With Benjamin, I do read the sky dick as an externalization of the unconscious — an unsettling wait for the unknown. But, maybe contrary to him, I think that the sky dick is not the aesthetic negation of boredom, but boredom’s genuine ornamental expression. [26] Not ornament and boredom, but the ornament of boredom. Imagine the dick image as the loading animation of the mind — not the 0–100% loading bar kind, but the circular, ever-recurring wheel-of-death kind.

In *Waiting for Godot*, Estragon scolds Vladimir, “You stink of garlic!”. To which he answers:

VLADIMIR: It’s for the kidneys. (Silence. Estragon looks attentively at the tree.) What do we do now?

ESTRAGON: Wait.

VLADIMIR: Yes, but while waiting.

ESTRAGON: What about hanging ourselves?

VLADIMIR: Hmm. It’d give us an erection.

ESTRAGON: (highly excited). An erection! [27]

How then are bored, sky-dick-drawing jet pilots different from Beckett’s dramatis personae? It’s not “sky time” that they have to kill, but time itself. Their contrail dick compacts Beckett’s tree and his figures’ excitement about the end of their waiting into an ornamental form — a vorpal sword that kills the Jabberwocky called time. [28] But that killing takes place in an absurd realm and the waiting goes on, as it does for Vladimir and Estragon. Taking into account that you could easily read the fighter plane that enabled the 2017 Navy sky dick image as basically a jet fuel-powered death-drive engine, I feel tempted to argue that the sky dick is not so much just a story about the unconscious of two pilots expressing itself in robust contrails but about a much wider collective military and/or aviatory unconsciousness. While writing, the site Flighttracker24 registered “the busiest day for commercial aviation that we’ve ever tracked. We tracked 134,386 commercial flights on 6 July [2023] and today is shaping up to be another busy day. More than 20,000 flights are in the air right now.” [29] So, let’s not stop here, let’s make it big! Why not think of the dick image as the ornament of the mobility-military-industrial complex’s unconscious?



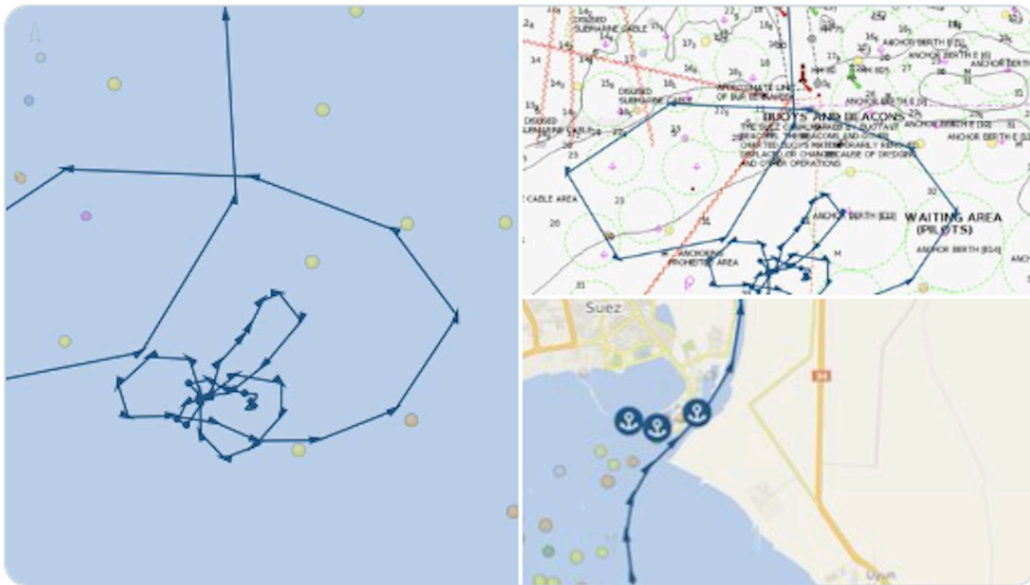
**John Scott-Railton**

@jsrailton · [Follow](#)

OH NO: misfortune's unerring aim touched [#EVERGIVEN](#)'s track as it departed the designated anchorage and steamed into the Canal.

(innocent, but terrible luck)

Source: [vesselfinder.com/?imo=9811000](https://vesselfinder.com/?imo=9811000)



1:17 AM · Mar 24, 2021



4.5K



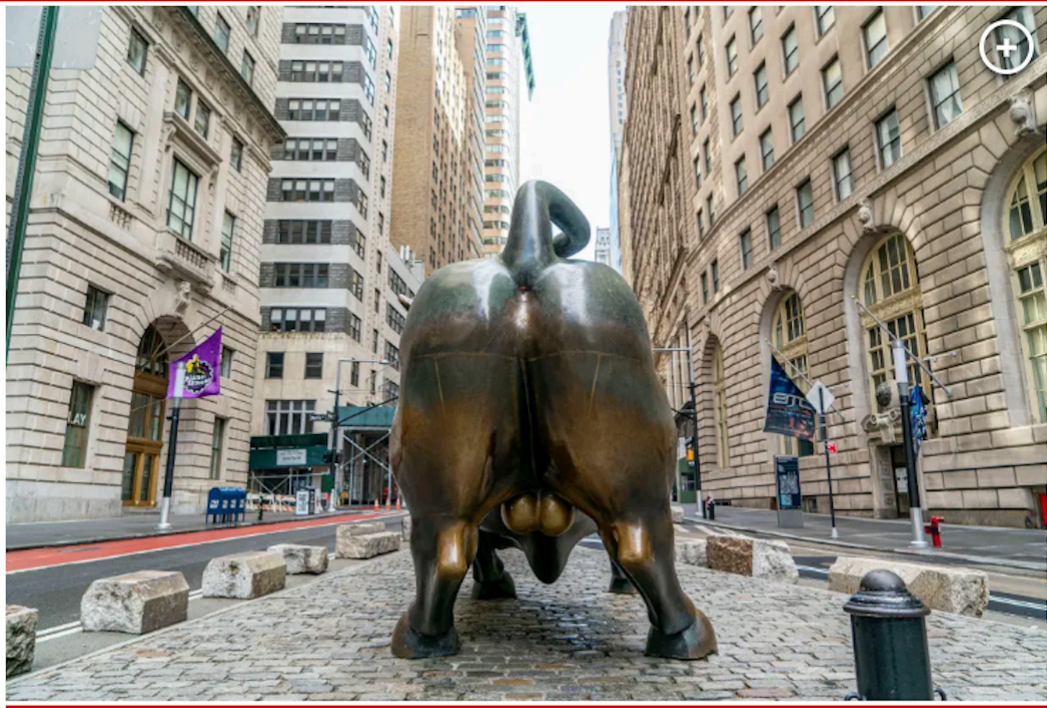
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You might remember this one: In March 2021, the Ever Given, one of the largest container ships in the world and with its length of 400 meters of phallic proportions, got stuck in the Suez Canal. Not long after that, among others, Vice reported that the ship had drawn an immense dick shortly before getting stuck — this time leaving no visible image but on the GPS map. [30] To be clear, the Ever Given's GPS dick didn't rupture global supply chains, but it still was the same ship that drew a dick image while obviously killing time and that then went on to block one of the world's most important trade routes, at the time normally handling about 12% of the world trade, for six solid days. The economic damage, of course, was astronomically high, unthinkable. Quite interestingly, the incident's Wikipedia page is immensely detailed while at the same time making no reference to the dick drawing whatsoever. [31] The ornament of the economical unconscious here seems repressed in favour of the more clearly phallic symbolism of, say, Wall Street's misunderstood Charging Bull sculpture, whose testicles have been polished shiny by countless hands of tourists and businessmen alike for good fortune and economic potency. [32]



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People believe that rubbing or kissing the bull's genitals brings good fortune.

RICHARD HARBUS

8==>

Coming back to a second takeaway from these stories that also neatly connects to the economic sphere: Thinking about civil and military sky as well as GPS world trade dicks, it is undeniable that size does matter. While the average-sized dick graffiti on a wall or a power box in your neighbourhood with all probability will not go viral, the newsworthiness of a dick image seems to be a) tied to the degree of misappropriation of tools used in creating it, from tax-funded fighter jets to container ships, GPS tracking satellites and so on, and b) directly proportional to its scale. Take the fake/satire news story about the World's biggest penis drawing discovered on Devon beach in 2017, [33] which seems but puny in the face of the real, so-called Aussie-Weiner in a dried-up lakebed that could once be seen on Google Maps. It seems to have surfaced first on Reddit under the wonderful title Big penis on Google maps [34] and to have been picked up by 'news sites' such as LadBible afterward, [35] from where it was shared again in social media — describing what seems to be a standard viral dick image media trajectory. Today, unfortunately, the Aussie-Weiner is gone from current satellite imagery, [36] leaving me with an eerie feeling of nothing, where there should be something, or at the least a dick image. [37]





Credit: Google Maps

Even though it's easy to think that it's enough for a dick image to just be big to go viral, I want to suggest that the question of scale is actually more intricate as it is about (im)probability and information. In his books *Towards a Philosophy of Photography* and *Into the Universe of Technical Images*, Vilém Flusser proposed to think of images as bits of information and their societal traffic as based on their specific informativity. From today's super-networked-viral-meme-digitality standpoint, Flusser's proposal seems simple, but he already understood the post-factual implications of the upcoming digital world perfectly well back in the 80s: "From now on, concepts such as 'true' and 'false' refer only to unattainable horizons, bringing a revolution not only in the field of epistemology but also in those of ontology, ethics, and aesthetics. 'Probable' and 'improbable' are concepts from informatics, in which information can be defined as an improbable situation: the more improbable, the more informative. The second law of thermodynamics suggests that the emerging particle universe tends toward an increasingly probable situation, toward disinformation, that is, to a steadily more even distribution of particles, until form is finally lost altogether. The last stage, heat death, is a probability bordering on the inevitable, and this stage can be calculated in advance with a probability bordering on certainty." [38]

For Flusser, our universe's entropic tendency serves as the ultimate backdrop for the way in which images inform us, or not. Maybe surprisingly, it is exactly this Flusserian — he clearly took his theory of information from Shannon and Weaver [39] — understanding of information that the online 'news sites,' from which I present all these dick images, seem to share. Good or bad, right or wrong — these dichotomies here are wholly suspended in favour of improbable and, less so, probable situations. Randomness, unpredictability, and improbability are exactly the key values of the 'news' presented on these sites, which is often reflected in their keywords and categories: #weird #wtf. For Flusser, culture is all about synthesizing improbable situations, about information, which therefore has little to do with news information in an ordinary sense. Nature, too, can generate improbable situations, but much slower. Think of the brain as a super-duper improbable object that has been synthesized in a quite chaotic and really long process called evolution, in contrast to what human and computational brains can now synthesize together in much shorter time, a Fully functional Minecraft dick, for example. [40] So, when someone discovers, say, a naturally dick-shaped island, [41] it is not only 'great news,' but also basically more informative than a tech-billionaire creating a rocket in his own image, for example. [42] It is only a question of time before a newly discovered dick-shaped galaxy goes viral because it's improbable but not impossible.

While On Google Earth, A Woman Apparently Noticed A 'Penis-Shaped' Island In ...



Google Maps

Dick drawings in themselves are not very informative, their basic combination of two balls and a simple shaft is easy to put together and leaves a lot of wiggle room when it comes to proportions. They are redundant forms, but they are therefore also highly repeatable. They often only become informative in a mathematical sense once their size reaches a level where they do not easily relate to a human scale anymore. With the scale comes a change of perspective: from the human horizontality to a vertical God's-eye-view that oversees the land and finds latent dicks even in abstract GPS information and renders them visible. Their anonymity is therefore programmatic: In being without an author, they imply to be highly improbable, bigger-than-human, wondrous natural forms — absurd acheiropoieta and geoglyphs of the digital age.



# Big Dick Energy / BDE

☆ 12

Part of a series on Internet Slang. [\[View Related Entries\]](#)

339,852

Updated 10 months ago by Zach.

31

Added 5 years ago by Adam.

20

6

Share

Save

Tweet

Like us on Facebook!

Like 1.8M

**PROTIP:** Press 'i' to view the [image gallery](#), 'v' to view the [video gallery](#), or 'r' to view a random entry.

## About

**Big Dick Energy** or **BDE** is an [internet slang](#) term which generally means an understated state of confidence. The term was popularized after it was used to describe [Ariana Grande's](#) fiancé [Pete Davidson](#) after the singer appeared to confirm the comedian had a large penis.

## Origin

On June 8th, 2018, [Twitter](#) user [@imbobswaget](#) used it to describe [Anthony Bourdain](#) after his suicide, gaining over 660 retweets and 6,800 likes (shown below).



vampire workday  
@imbobswaget

Follow

we're talking about how anthony bourdain had big dick energy which is what he would have wanted

### Meme

#### Status

Confirmed

#### Type:

Slang

#### Year

2018

#### Origin

Twitter

#### Tags

ariana grande, pete davidson, penis, dick, slang, bde, horse girl energy, imbobswaget, babyvietcong, priya\_ebooks, rey\_z, zoeinwonderland, kaiteashley, bde slang, what is bde slang, big dick energy slang, bde meme

#### Additional References

It is, on this note, almost redundant to add that dick images have occupied the entirety of the digital sphere: from its Big Dick Energy language [43] to the omnipresent as well as omnipotent eggplant emoji, [44] and video game fads, such as one in Sonic Frontiers. [45] The digital dick started on adolescent calculator displays as the o==8 emoticon — 58008's equally beloved cousin — and now there even is an ASCII dick permanently saved on the Ethereum blockchain. [46]





# Eggplant Emoji

Part of a series on [Emoji](#). [\[View Related Entries\]](#)

Updated [3 years ago](#) by Y F.

Added [7 years ago](#) by Ari Spool.

★ 14

👁 551,575

▶ 0

📄 6

💬 76

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## About

**Eggplant Emoji** () , also referred to as the **aubergine**, is an ideogram depicting a narrow, oblong species of Japanese eggplant, often used in [online](#) and text message conversations to represent male genitalia or as a sexual innuendo. While the [emoji](#) set is standard worldwide, this association is generally confined to the United States.

## Origin

The eggplant emoji was added to the official [Unicode](#) emoji set in 2011, and was adopted to the standard keyboard of all [iPhones](#) that year. According to a history written by First We Feast, the sexual association began almost immediately, although it is unclear why. First We Feast writes:<sup>[1]</sup>

There's still the question of why the eggplant made the jump to the dark side. Even if we rule out the banana for its grade-school awkwardness, why not the corn cob, the snake, even the Easter Island head? It's precisely because Americans had no cultural association with eggplants prior to the emoji revolution that it was the perfect euphemism.

## Meme

### Status

Confirmed

### Type:

Emoticon

### Year

2011

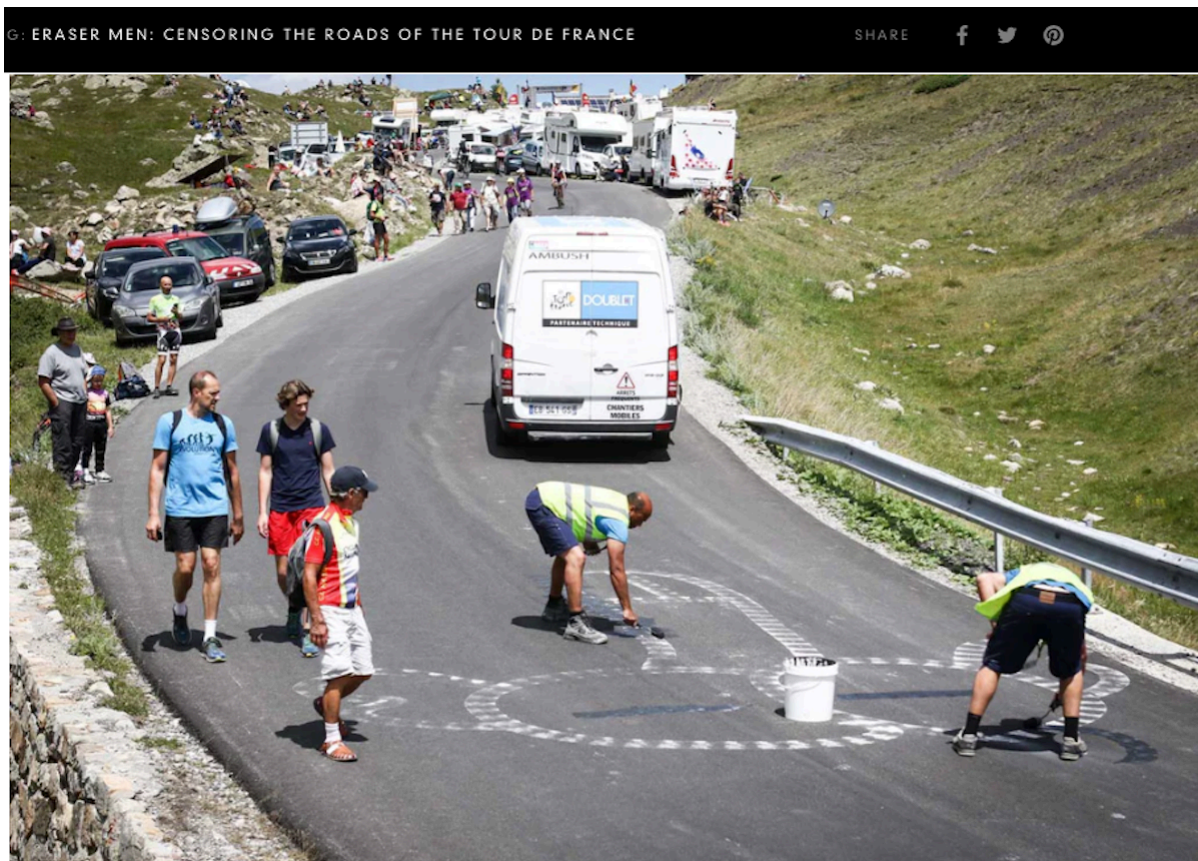
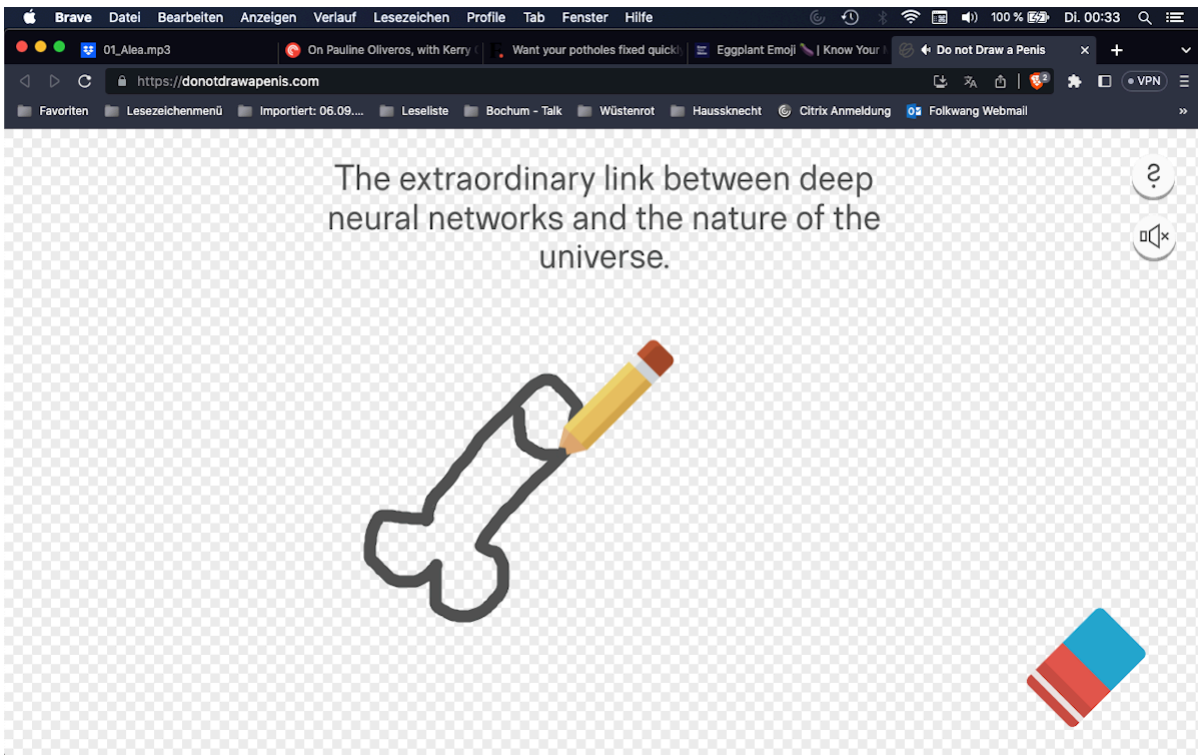
### Origin

Unicode

### Tags

emoji, phallus, unicode, aubergine, purple, innuendo, penis, dick, that looks like a dick, first we feast, swiftkey

Have a look at the site DoNotDrawAPenis.com, which was funded by the Mozilla Corporation. [47] Of course, the first thing you draw in your browser window is a dick — You are a dick rebel, too! — and by doing so, you might have just contributed towards a safer online ecology of images. With the online abundance of not just comical dick images but also more offensive dick pics and other pornographic material comes the necessity of training AIs and other systems on how to recognize all kinds of digital penises and filter them according to some rules. [48] While Google sourced a general training dataset of 15 million images via its Quick, Draw! project, the company has not released a penis set, which makes it harder for other companies and developers to program effective dick detection software. By drawing all varieties of dicks on DoNotDrawAPenis.com you, at least until 2020, helped grow a public dataset of 25,000 dicks that fills this gap. As the developers note, the project is concerned with “the moral reality big tech companies are imposing on our global community.” [49] Who decides who can draw dick images where online? And who has the computational capital to scrub dick images from the internet, like the so-called Eraser Men, who eradicate dicks from the Tour de France’s roads? [50] Ordinary as they may seem, dick images here become a contested symbol of the preconditions and power relations of online discourse. [51]



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Dick image activism, however, is not confined to an online realm only. It is deeply entrenched in local and wider political discourses and protest practices. Here, the authors tend to not stay anonymous, and their dick images' meanings are less ambivalent. For example, the 2020 case of a crude Canadian crop circle demonstrates how an already mowed dick image can actively be instrumented to voice political protest. [52] As the ca. 250-meter-long image gained media attention after it was discovered via Google Maps, the Canadian farmer who authored it proclaimed that it was a piece to protest against politicians and the government: "The government doesn't seem to have much of a plan beyond four years and the next election," he said. "That's my feeling anyway. They'll say or do anything to get re-elected." [53] You might question the eloquence of the critique thus formulated, but it's hard to imagine that this "feeling" could have gotten the attention it got without the dick image — regardless of the fact that, originally, a



friend simply had dared the farmer to mow “a giant Johnson” for no apparent reason, not unlike the sky dick from before.



Born Eco // Twitter

News & Politics

## Someone mowed a giant penis into a field near where President Trump's plane landed

In 2019, while flying in for a state visit to the UK, then US president Donald Trump was welcomed by a mowed lawn dick, as well as by the greeting “OI[,] TRUMP” and the statement “CLIMATE CHANGE IS REAL” in a field near Stansted Airport, where he landed. [54] The 18-year-old lawn mower artist Ollie Nancarrow used the stunt to not only protest Trump, but to promote his business at the same time. Instead of waiting for Trump, or someone else, to discover the dick, he took photographs of it himself and even watermarked them with his company’s logo. Here, promotion and protest are merged into one stale amalgam. A virally successful one, nevertheless: It even prompted the Guardian to publish a Short history of penis protests. [55] A longer history of this kind would have to include cases of citizens drawing dicks on their ballot papers and thereby voting for the candidate they want to protest against [56] as well as governments pleading citizens to please not draw dicks on ballot papers. [57] Furthermore, there are a number of GPS dick images that are not just ornaments of boredom but also means of protest. Context and placement matter if you take the example of a US air force tanker plane pilot who, in 2022, drew a dick on the GPS map between Cyprus and a Russian naval base in Syria, that is easily perceivable as protesting against Putin’s imperialistic war in Ukraine. [58] It’s not hard to imagine a dick image of this ambivalent kind fuelling a transnational conflict.



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Voina, *A Dick Captured by the FSB*, 2010, Liteiny Bridge, St. Petersburg. Photo courtesy of Voina, Moscow and St. Petersburg

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In contrast, there is absolutely no room for interpretation at all when it comes to *A Dick Captured by the FSB* by the Russian activist group Voina (engl.: War). On June 15, 2010, five of the group's members, after weeks of training, used 55 litres of white paint to render a gigantic dick on the Liteiny bridge in St. Petersburg in only 23 seconds — directly in front of the local FSB (the Russian Federal Security Service) building. When the drawbridge arose, and the messy graffiti with it, it sent a clear "Fuck you!" towards the FSB and the Russian state apparatus for its continued lack and undermining of civil rights. I think one gets the message even without knowing the intricacies of Russian curses. [59] Voina's agitational dick image practice was immediately well received in the art world, and paradoxically *A Dick Captured by the FSB* won the Innovation Art Prize that was endowed with 14,000 \$ and funded by the Ministry of Culture, in the following year. [60] Of course, it wasn't so well received by the FSB. The Voina members had immediately been captured but were released when Banksy posted their bail. [61] Banksy, of course, has a heart for dicks, too. [62] In November of 2022, he made a series of graffiti in Ukraine that features a rocket/dick launcher vehicle. [63] You can also buy the "Banksy Missile" as a poster to "bring some life to your dorm, bedroom, office, studio, wherever" and to show how much of a dicktivist you are. [64]



URBAN ART

# Banksy „Dick Pic“ Based on your browser history the following graffiti has been



€24.24 incl. VAT

Style

Poster  
Heavy poster paper

+ Explore more styles

Size

Medium (74.6 x 59.5 cm)

View size guide

Finish

Semi Gloss



Germany Delivery  
Express by 7 July

Features

- Blank walls suck, so bring some life to your dorm, bedroom, office, studio, wherever
- Printed on 185gsm semi gloss poster paper

Reviews



Voina’s FSB dick always reminded me of Gian Lorenzo Bernini’s elephant at Piazza della Minerva in Rome. The enigmatic 17th-century statue carries an obelisk on its back but, more importantly, its voluptuous rear is aimed at a building that, in Bernini’s times, supposedly hosted the Inquisition trials. I’ll be honest: I never checked if this is actually true, but I won’t rob myself of a beautiful anecdote about an artist speaking truth to power by way of ass. [65] The point is, dick images (and the elephant’s ass) as a means of protest are all about invading a place of power and contaminating it with some, sometimes important, aesthetic disrespect. They can mark processes of deterritorialization and constitute acts of civil disobedience.

# Elephant and Obelisk

Rome, Italy

A detailed pachyderm supports Rome's smallest Egyptian obelisk.



Obelisk at the Piazza della Minerva. MMYOSO (ATLAS OBSCURA USER)

In this vein (I'm so sorry), one last example before I come to an end with this already much too long meandering. The story is always the same: A local man is fed up with the quality of the roads in his community and the local politician's/administration's/community leader's inaction in this regard. He decides to draw dicks around the potholes. The politicians/administrations/community leaders are more ashamed of the dicks on pavement display than they are of the potholes. They fix the potholes and the dick activists get to be portrayed as small community heroes. [66] These stories of disobedience, however much I may like them, are almost too perfect, too smooth — one Manchester resident following this strategy even put the icing on the cake by calling himself Wanksy. [67] I have the feeling that their and their strategy's viral spread takes something away from the unpredictability of other wacky dick images, even though I support safe roads. Thinking back to Flusser, one can really trace here how information becomes redundant by repetition, how pavement dicks become probable, boring situations that even out (quite informative) potholes.





## WORLD.

# Want your potholes fixed quickly? Try the penis graffiti method

Wanksy, an anonymous England based graffiti artist, has been going around Manchester drawing penis around potholes. The result: they are getting fixed.

FP Staff | April 28, 2015 17:17:31 IST



Local Dicks cartoon said no one knows who the culprit is.

Auckland Transport said it was clearly the work of someone who has "too much time on their hands".



TORIKA TOKALAU/STUFF

The unusual road markings are believed to protest Piha's deteriorating road.

Reviewing all the protest dicks we looked at, there is an important takeaway, however: Dick images are never just images of dicks, but always images of dicks aimed at or placed for someone — they, at least, imply an antagonist, and only then an author with a certain set of motivations. Don't let their stillness fool you: They are moving parts that represent, but also produce conflict, they're no strangers to aggression. That's how they constitute narratives, elementary stories that at the same time serve as vehicles in digital media circulation. It's only their abstract aesthetic quality that sets them apart from photographed penises. In the dick image, the penis is only seemingly rendered harmless, comic, even ridiculous. That's why it's so easily reproduced, why it's so pervasive, because, unlike the dick pic, it doesn't openly break a deictic taboo, it doesn't attack the viewer with the promiscuous details of individual body parts. By being ambivalent — ridiculous as well as aggressive, witty as well as redundant, but none of these exclusively — it easily escapes fixed meaning and, with it, prohibition. Think of it as the court jester that is allowed to speak truth to power while at the same time transgressing all kinds of borders, being wildly eccentric, and telling crude jokes.

8=====>

An attempt at a summary: When speaking about all these examples, I decidedly speak of dick images and not of the phallus. It seems that the phallus, in our common understanding, has a different, more clearly delineated meaning: it signifies potency and power. Dick images, however, cover a much wider range of oftentimes contradictory meanings, connotations, practices, and uses in our (digital) culture. They oscillate between activism, boredom, idiocy, protest, harassment, and play. Only rarely, maybe never, do they actually symbolize or hold power in an ordinary sense; they're not potent.

When W.J.T. Mitchell asked the question What do Pictures Really Want?, he proposed a subaltern model of the image that shifts attention from what pictures simply show and do to what they're unable to achieve even if they want to. According to him, there are a number of immediate answers to the question: "Pictures would want to be worth a lot of money; they would want to be admired and praised as beautiful; they would want to be adored by many lovers. But above all they would want a kind of mastery over the beholder. [...] The painting's desire, in short, is to change places with the beholder, to transfix or paralyze the beholder, turning him into an image for the gaze of the picture in what might be called 'the Medusa effect.'" [68] Referring to Freudian gender stereotypes, pictures — that would include dick pics and dick images, too — are positioned as feminine as opposed to a male beholder in this model. In the Medusa effect, Mitchell finds "the clearest demonstration we have that the power of pictures and of women are modelled on one another and that this is a model of both pictures and

women that is abject, mutilated, and castrated. The power they want is manifested as lack, not as possession.” [69]

It’s as tempting as it may seem paradoxical to render dick images feminine with Mitchell. But then again, it’s 2023 enough to not stick to these reductive gender stereotypes, too much, even if they serve to construct abstract picture theory. I think Mitchell’s model works fine without them. When images, generally speaking, seek to direct a beholder’s attention to themselves, dick images — telling from their sheer ubiquity in contemporary visual culture — do one hell of a job. At least they get my attention, so much so that I had to write this text. Sure, they do not transfix me for long, but in their inept makeup, they never claim that they had something to offer or to be potent. They do not seek long-term relationships with the viewer as some artworks do. Instead, they seem perfectly attuned to contemporary internet-trained attention spans, mine included. Mitchell disqualifies “the desire to transfix [as] only a transitory and momentary urge. The longer range motive is to move and mobilize the viewer.” [70] Following this thought, it is entertaining to think that the dick image’s ability to mobilize relies on its near-total self-refusal of any aesthetic or semiotic value, the dissatisfaction and frustration of encountering an empty, defunct image that takes my attention and gives nothing in return — it’s embarrassing and maybe it makes me want to fix roads. Unlike dick pics, in which “the penis always fails,” as Rosenthal noted, [71] I’d argue that dick images don’t try being phalluses and fail — they start out by affirming they are not and they want nothing more than to make you look. [72] Their power is a soft one, but it is some sort of power. For Medusa, one look is already enough. Gotcha!

8▷

Mere minutes after I finished writing this article, this Twitter screenshot of the flight path of Aleksandr Lukashenko’s plane was forwarded to me by a friend. After all, in the hands of the wrong people, some dick images are yet just failed phalluses, nothing more than sad dicks.





**DJesus** @DJesusUncr0ssed · 2d



Russland an **Belarus**:


„Wir brauchen Luftunterstützung!!“

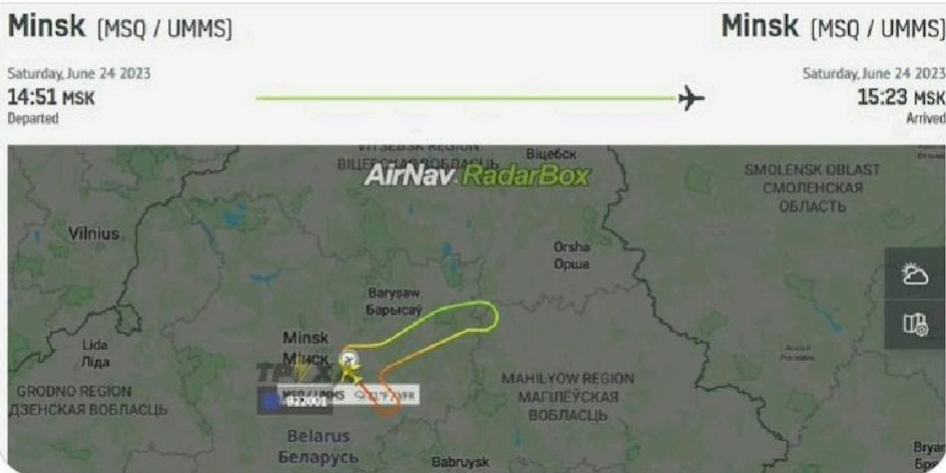
Lukaschenko fliegt einen **Penis** für Putin....



**Jason Jay Smart** @officejj... · 2d

QUO VADIS?

It appears a Belarussian aircraft, rumored to be carrying  dictator Lukashenko, took-off in the directio...



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[2] I want to give my special thanks to Marco De Mutiis and Clara Bolin for their encouragement and the opportunity to publish this text, and to Anto, Andrew, Bastian, David, Francisco, Franya, Hannah, Jan, Lea, Lisa, Lukas, Markus, Mona, Peter, Samuel, Vera and many others for their invaluable ideas, critiques and comments, and for letting me ramble on about dicks and still talking to me. Most of all I thank Oliver Moisch for taking the time to proofread the manuscript, and for tempting me to put even more inappropriate innuendo into this essay.

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Post (4.5.2023), online: <https://nypost.com/2023/05/04/giant-penis-mowed-into-lawn-at-king-charles-coronation-bash-site/>.

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Post: [https://www.instagram.com/reel/Cr3iD0nNgre/?utm\\_source=ig\\_web\\_copy\\_link&igshid=MzRIODBiNWFIZA==](https://www.instagram.com/reel/Cr3iD0nNgre/?utm_source=ig_web_copy_link&igshid=MzRIODBiNWFIZA==).

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[9] Clips of Austin Powers — The Spy Who Shagged Me and Austin Powers — Goldmember, online: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=IYSOmYyNHpU>.

[10] A recent Reddit thread asked for the best replies to unsolicited dick pics: [https://old.reddit.com/r/AskReddit/comments/14cq7l2/what\\_is\\_the\\_best\\_reply\\_to\\_an\\_unsolicited\\_dick\\_pic/](https://old.reddit.com/r/AskReddit/comments/14cq7l2/what_is_the_best_reply_to_an_unsolicited_dick_pic/).

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[12] AJPlus: TikTok video about lawns and colonialism, online: <https://www.tiktok.com/@ajplus/video/7234188699771161899>. The video's claims are underlined by the short text by Rebecca Ellis: Lawns, class, and colonialism. In: The Re-Enchantment (25.10.2017), online: <https://thereenchantment.ca/2017/10/25/lawns-class-and-colonialism-part-one/>. There you'll find further references on the topic.

[13] Compare this recent post about the Las Vegas Paiute Golf Resort seen from the air in Reddit's Golf subreddit: [https://old.reddit.com/r/golf/comments/14dvkdh/las\\_vegas\\_paiute\\_golf\\_resort\\_from\\_my\\_flight/](https://old.reddit.com/r/golf/comments/14dvkdh/las_vegas_paiute_golf_resort_from_my_flight/). Users here are debating the sheer amount of water used to maintain the resort's specific bluegrass species. User floppysausage16 concludes his comment: "TLDR: This grass takes an absolute fuckton of water to keep green." Unsurprisingly, golf courses, with their strong exclusivity and class symbolism as well as their disproportionately large requirement of water, recently have become a target for climate activism — for example in one recent Extinction Rebellion action. See Sam Jones: Extinction Rebellion plugs holes on 10 Spanish golf courses in water protest. In: The Guardian (3.7.2023), online: <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2023/jul/03/extinction-rebellion-plugs-holes-on-10-spanish-golf-courses-in-water-protest>.

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actually coded penis detection into the level creator, it just didn’t detect phallic shapes well enough to

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- [60] "Jury member Ekaterina Degot has written about the deliberations. She describes the winning work as a symbol of developing popular hatred for the ruling party, United Russia, and says that although most of the jury members didn't like the work very much, none of them wanted to vote against it, thereby placing themselves on the wrong side of history. One member, Vienna-based Peter Weibel, who is slated to curate the upcoming Moscow Biennale, excused himself, perhaps feeling he was in a no-win situation." Ibid.
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