



GET REAL

ISSUE 14

reza



*Eddie on the Common* by Georgia Jones

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GET REAL

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# EDITORS' NOTE

AUTUMN 2021

In the last few months, we have slowly returned to a tangible reality. Interactions have once again become real, less mediated by laptop screens. 'Get Real' stood out to us, as a phrase that nods to this reentry into the outward, material world. Yet it also speaks to something larger. It has a critical edge; it prompts the reader to take its subject seriously, to review a condition or statement that may be idealistic, outdated, or false. It asks us to reveal deceptions, to question that which seems usual, but may not be natural. It is, in the end, about explicating our reality.

In our contemporary moment, reality is mediated through social media. The intervention of technology in our lives, while commonplace, can have an unsettling quality; while we accept it, there is an uncertainty about its long term impact on our ways of living. In this issue, Kimi Zarate Smith considers the effect that algorithms have on music criticism, noting the irony of 'all-time' lists that detail the best albums ever made, when critics and listeners alike are served up the same artists. Maya Sall defends the art of letter-writing, lamenting how instant, fractured, digital interactions have replaced a medium that inspires contemplation and care.

Considering personal reality can result in critiques of the past, and the enduring effect that it has on our present. Richard Hardy mounts his critique at the Western art-historical canon, calling for an increased recognition of Lucia Muholy's work; her photographs shape our understanding of life at the Bauhaus, yet have been largely overshadowed and undercredited. Turning to theatre, Isobel Knight considers artistic license in relation to historical accuracy; she asks whether representations of the past on stage are useful as educational tools, or if they only ever serve to reveal something about the present. Eshka Chuck and Faun Rothery turn closer to home, considering our own institution's failures to get real - protesting attempts at gender inclusivity and anti-ableism at UCL which, to them, still feel inauthentic. Drawing on their own experience, both writers call for change.

Inevitably, arts and culture respond to the reality its makers exist within; the creative output of a generation often reflects the collective disillusionment felt in particular social contexts. Adam Stanley considers the contemporary resurgence of post-punk, a genre that has frequently re-emerged at times

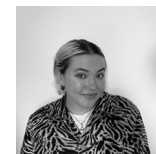
of political tumult in Britain, in opposition to the realities of Conservative leadership. Romilly Schulte reviews Mark Jenkin's treatment of this Britain through filmmaking; his traditional methods lend authenticity to the tense, unmasked class disparities in his works.

Directly and indirectly, we delve into the realities of UCL creatives in this edition. Architecture student Kai McKim discusses interrupting his studies and undertaking an architectural project outside of the Bartlett, constructing a sculptural studio in Oxfordshire; he recounts leaving the university bubble, and entering the real world of architectural practice, planning, designing, and constructing this space. We also hear from Alex Bain, an ambient noise musician who creates sound by using his guitar in untraditional ways. Baine prioritises live performances over recordings, keeping his music real, embodied, and transient. Through poetry and prose, George Dennis, Sadie Mutton, Sam Brownstone and Robbie Campbell express what, in literature, reality often is: fleeting, personal, evocative and sublime.

Reality can be, at once, highly subjective, and something we all share. It is inexorable, inevitable, yet elusive; both internal and objective; constant, and constantly redefined. Throughout this issue, nonetheless, we try to capture reality, whatever that may mean. We consider what it means to get real, in all its forms. We do so as individuals, as a society, and as a journal - having come to terms with our own origins, this year, and rebranding as a result. We are still learning what reality means. We hope this issue helps you do the same.

*.With love,*

*Jean, Ruby and Georgia*





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Summer Pink Portrait by Yun-Ju Tsai

# ALEX BAIN

## AN INTERVIEW

ALEX BAIN, originally from Dublin but currently based in London for a year, creates abstract noise through working with his guitar in unexpected and untraditional ways. Locating value in sound's transience, Alex prioritises live performance over recordings - even if this means he might never hear the exact noises created again.

MATILDA SYKES chats to Alex about how he came to work in this way.

There are loads of ways to generate affecting noise; are you mainly acoustic or electronic? Are field recordings important to your work?

I got into it because I'd gotten unbelievably frustrated with guitar playing, just started to hate it. Guitar was the first instrument I picked up, my first foray into music - self-taught, at fifteen learning Minor Threat songs. There was a point where I was loving it, the point where you can play the song, you're bashing away and it's great. But then I got into professional music and just met more and more people who were really bogged down in 'How to Play'. Guitar's bad for that. You meet so many guitar players who worship the altar of Eddie Van Halen or Kurt Cobain who insist 'This is how you play'. I couldn't do it anymore and didn't touch my guitar for months on end. Months and months and months. Then I thought, 'Well, how can I play the guitar like I've never played it before?'

My idea was to not touch the strings at any point: 'I'm going to pick up the guitar, crank up the volume, run it through pedals, not touch the strings. See what else there is.' I feel guitar has been restricted by the people who play it: same chords, same tapping, same solos. I thought, 'There's more to it than that.' The thing with guitar is - excuse me for getting nerdy - you have the pick-

AN INTERVIEW WITH SOUND ARTIST ALEX BAIN



ups, which act like microphones. If you're hitting the neck of the guitar off a wall those vibrations are picked up, creating entirely new, weird sounds. That pushed me towards making the sort of music I do - the question of whether I could reignite the excitement I used to have for this instrument.

**So it's an environmental, spatial thing? Does it change from room to room, from space to space?**

Absolutely. Different materials create different sounds. Glass will make a different sound than wood. I try not to prepare too much, not bring in too many props, otherwise I'd end up repeating myself. If I'm playing somewhere that has tables, it's 'What can I do with tables?' If there are no tables 'What can I do with the floor?' I'm not claiming that I've revolutionised the guitar but I think it's nice to get people into a different space.

**Can you reach a point of mastering abstract noise?**

That's what's nice about it - it's a very anti-mastery kind of style. I don't see the process as just me, but me, the guitar, and the pedals. The guitar will do what it does, the pedals will do what they do, and I'm just pushing it in certain directions. I like that I can't control it - especially with pedals, I really enjoy the sound-sculpting you can do. You take a delay pedal and turn the knob knowing vaguely what it's going to do, but it might do something completely different, so it

can't be perfected. The whole idea of mastery is a bit egotistical. What's the joy of being the best? Where do you go from there? I like that you can't reach that point.

**I suppose the physical aspect is important too, as people might not even know where the noises are coming from.**

Yeah, it creates tension. When you're just listening you don't really think about it. It's just sound, you don't necessarily think about how the sound is being created. That's one of the most interesting parts, when you watch and see how rubbing the headstock of the guitar on the floor creates a sound almost like church bells. People question how the sound is happening. I like the immediacy, the impermanence. Recording these sounds gets you too into songwriting. I like that it's just an expression that happens there and then. Sometimes I'll get an amazing sound and never be able to recreate it. I'm very into punk and hip-hop. A lot of the early artists of those genres never recorded. Parties, DIY shows, they never recorded, didn't want to, didn't care. A part of me wishes I could hear them but another part of me thinks it's cool that you had to be there, that you and a hundred other people got to hear it and no one else will.

*If you're interested in hearing more from Alex, find an extended interview on our website.*

—  
**ARTICLE by  
MATILDA SYKES**



women going out for a walk at night by Noorain Inam

# The Existential Tenderness of Sarah Kane

British playwright and director Sarah Kane rocked the world of theatre in the 1990s. Kane produced five plays in her career, all deemed to be scandalous in how they performed excesses of violence. Her work was classified as part of 'In-Yer-Face' theatre, a confrontational yet sensitive style of theatre, as delineated by the British critic Aleks Sierz. Key topics of human identity, and indeed the limitations of this concept, are explored in all five of Kane's plays, which lend themselves to a psychoanalytic approach.

Kane's scripts contain a destructive power that serves to tear up and complicate any assertions of identity. Her characters enact violence by mutilating, destroying, and amputating each other's bodies. However, in Kane's later plays, violence does not only manifest itself physically but also through language. The boundaries between characters blur, the text becomes fragmented, and redundant passages reveal the materiality of words, which begin to lose power to signify. The speaker in *Psychosis 4.48* (2000), for example, repeats the question 'How do I stop?' eight times, the words becoming mere sounds in an empty space, or simply just printed marks.

LEO STAATSMANN considers the work of Sarah Kane from a Lacanian perspective, Kane's scripts revealing the futility of language and selfhood.

According to the psychoanalyst Jacques Lacan, new-born infants live in a holistic world of the Real. The two most important moments in the process of subject formation are: the mirror stage, and the introduction into the Symbolic Order (that is, language). In the first instance, the coherent image of the self, recognised in a mirror as a coherent yet separate whole, cannot be unified with the infant's experience of its fragmented and uncontrollable body. In the second instance, the human subject is forced to compose its identity by means of the linguistic source of the Other. They are burdened with a rupture between unconscious feelings and the somehow strange system of language, which is unable to express one's unconscious desires in totality. From now on this individual can distinguish between subject and object, I and the Other, but it has irreversibly lost the universal Real. It is split and burdened with a lack, creating a desire for completeness.

Sarah Kane's characters cannot handle the idea that the self cannot be found within oneself. Identity, in a Lacanian sense, is not essentialist or lidentitarian, but dependent on the Other. Besides that, her characters suffer from the overpowering compulsion to satisfy the existential lack and replace what has been irrevocably lost. The search for a self, which feels complete and undivided, leads Kane to her presentation of a polymorphic world that has not been corrupted by the Symbolic Order. Physical pain through violence paves the way into this world, because it partly resists objectification in language and the symbolic. Kane seeks to accomplish a reunification of the split subject by running her plays into a world of nothingness, in which everything is torn up and blasted until the nothingness takes over.

Returning again to *Psychosis 4.48*, we see the protagonist suffering from this split, an alienation between the imagined and the experienced self. This condition is described in the phrase 'Here I am and here is my body'. Only at 4.48 in the morning does the protagonist experience moments of clarity, able to see her 'essential self' (which is namely: nothingness). The speaker proclaims: 'Nothing can fill this void in my heart', as there is 'Nothing [that] matters more'. She decides to stop the process of signification once and for all by ending her life.

Kane's work both affirms identity and acknowledges the impossibility of reaching a truly sovereign consciousness. The cruelty in her plays, manifested through violence, serves a dual purpose. Although it presents the wish to break through the wall of language into a holistic world, in which might lie a redemptive glorification of nothingness and death, it prevents this transgression by producing new signifiers on the edge of the unnameable. Kane wants to tear down the walls of the Symbolic Order to attain the Real, but the violence remains as a rudimentary kind of language.

Sarah Kane broke her audience's everyday mirrors, reflecting back to them their idealistic selves. Writing about *Blasted* (1995), Kane may speak here for all of her work: 'I think it is a shocking play, but only in the sense that falling down the stairs is shocking – it's painful and it makes you aware of your own fragility'.

ARTICLE by  
LEO STAATSMANN



## WHAT GENDER INCLUSIVITY ?



Untitled by Johara Meyer

ESHKA CHUCK reflects on her experiences of gender inclusivity and exclusivity at UCL, and argues for change.

These days, every institution seems to think it's the most inclusive thing since rainbow zebra-crossings. Yet somehow, since I transitioned, every single time I've dealt with a public-facing institution, I've encountered exclusion, ignorance, or outright discrimination - sometimes all at once. It's not good enough to not be gender exclusionary. You need to be actively anti-gender exclusion.

At UCL, we like to think that we're among the most progressive UK universities – but really, we aren't. Let's start with the elephant in the room: gender-neutral toilets. UCL has a map of all its gender-neutral toilets – and there are loads of

them! There's just one problem: none of them are actually gender-neutral. They're unisex. This might seem like semantics, but it's not. Unisex toilets have a male and female symbol on the door - it's still operating within the gender binary. What if you're non-binary, or gender queer, or just aren't comfortable using gender at all? Tough. And why are tampons only available in the female toilets? Maybe Kathleen Stock is in charge of putting them out, since resigning her post at the University of Sussex. I've heard someone say, 'yeah, but at least people aren't hostile about toilets'. You're not gender-inclusive just because you're not actively discriminating— nor does it mean you're not causing distress. Discrimination isn't just an active process: it's a passive one too.

The same applies to pronoun declaration. In only one seminar at UCL have I been invited to declare my pronouns - which isn't a 'pointless woke-ism', as a third-year Philosophy student put it - it's about creating a safe space in which it's understood that gender won't just be assumed and, crucially, showing that you're an LGBTQ+ ally. I don't want to fulfil the stereotype of being the only person to declare my pronouns because I'm trans: it's not my responsibility to create a space in which I can feel safe.

It is remarkable to me that although I have my pronouns on Zoom, none of my lecturers or fellow Philosophy

students have bothered to do the same. If you're thinking, 'I don't really care about pronouns, so I don't put them up' - this isn't about you, the already-included person. This is about making those who aren't included (those ceaselessly worrying that someone will misgender them) feel safe, and showing them that you care. Speaking of Zoom, here are some things I've heard unchallenged by seminar leaders:

'Women evolved to be raped.'

'Second-wave feminism created pornography.'

'Trans people don't exist.'

Why does this happen? As a former PGTA and numerous current staff members have told me, Philosophy Department staff don't receive proactive inclusivity training. Creating safe spaces is about being proactive: shutting down the potential for offensive, irrelevant, and factually incorrect statements to be made. Worse still, without this training (not only on gender), ignorance inevitably manifests in deeply uncomfortable and distressing ways. A staff member once asked me, for example: 'what name did you used to go by?'. I'm not saying that you can't ask dumb questions. I'm saying that it's unacceptable for academic staff to be asking ignorant questions, because they haven't been educated on how not to be ignorant.



Untitled by Johara Meyer

All this embarrassment could so easily be avoided. I work as a mentor for Debate Mate, and my first training session included a five-minute long presentation from Stonewall on how to be LGBTQ+ inclusive — things like declaring your pronouns, asking about pronouns, and not using needlessly gendered terminology. Why doesn't UCL do this? It seems to think that not discriminating is the same as being inclusive. So, when I've been asked, 'do you think UCL is gender-inclusive?', my honest answer has been 'no'. That's not me being the woke-trans-girl with an axe to grind. The university isn't actively creating safe spaces for gender-nonconforming students. It feels like

UCL, like many other institutions, is lounging around, not being actively anti-discriminatory.

The great irony of inclusivity is that it's created by those already included. Gay people were given rights. Trans people were given legitimacy. Nowhere along the way did any LGBTQ+ person give this kind of freedom, equality, or power to a cis-gendered straight person. There is a category of normal in the world: those who don't need to do anything to feel like they belong. Inclusivity is, in fact, a misleading word - it is an attribute of normal, an opening in the walls. What the normal needs to do, now, is actively include - to welcome people in.

ARTICLE by  
ESHKA CHUCK

# MARK AUTHENTICITY THROUGH TRADITIONAL FILMMAKING JENKIN

ROMILLY SCHULTE explores how Mark Jenkin's use of traditional techniques and poignant subjects enhance his filmic realism.

Twenty-first century kitchen sink realism, documented in 16mm, hand-developed black and white film: this is the creative realm of Cornish filmmaker Mark Jenkin. Beginning with short films, then progressing onto longer endeavours such as *Bronco's House* (2015) and his appraised feature length *Bait* (2018), Jenkin developed his own wave of filmmaking, in emphasising the glorious tangibility of physical film itself. This is by no means a reactionary cry for an analogue, expressionist cinema that has passed, nor is it riddled with snobbery towards his contemporaries. Jenkin roots his narratives in working-class Cornwall, and the issues that they raise are utterly modern. Perhaps unexpectedly, his traditional mode of production elevates his realistic mise-en-scène, to create something palpable and current.

In *Bait*, Jenkin addresses tensions between the out-of-town tourists and working-class locals of a small Cornish fishing village - a disparity deepened by the ignorance of the wealthy Leigh family and their painful miscommunications with

various locals, particularly our protagonist, fisherman Martin Ward. The narrative is propelled by this sentiment of outsiders versus locals, fake versus authentic, new versus old. The Leighs purchase the property of Martin's late father and constantly interfere with his struggling livelihood, while Martin's brother uses his inherited fishing boat for tourist excursions. Jenkin's use of irony is stinging. The actual fishing industry of the village becomes a mere simulacrum, a performance, to the tourists who seek its twee, surface-level appeal: close shots of rope against weathered stone, in weathered hands, jar with shots of rope draped over the Leigh's kitchen in a frilly attempt to evoke the nautical. The livelihoods of the men they exploit become mere decorative miscellanea in the family's romantic fantasies of the coast. Fishermen are shunned for fishing; it disturbs the out-of-towners from their pantomiming of Cornish culture.

Jenkin's short film *The Essential Cornishman* (2016) is also adorned with his traditional filmic style, yet its brevity seems to allow a greater



*Lambzan Still* by Tarzan Kingofthejungle



call to reality, despite its lack of real-world narrative. He frames shots of labour, of more rope and a hardened nature devoid of any whimsy, all against a Beat-esque stream of consciousness dialogue that stresses and rushes through tales of Cornish village life. It is stylised, yet emphatic and raw.

Jenkin's physical production process evokes a respect of tradition, of true authenticity, yet it also aids the narrative. He predominantly uses vintage Bolex 16mm cameras for his films, which don't correspond to sound. Entire films are shot silently, and dubbed voice-overs are added later in production. This feels like an uncomfortable divergence from natural dialogue: the visuals and sound are eerily incongruent, and speech is often disjointed and monosyllabic. Jenkin's realism is deeply embedded in his strange audio - through it, we can truly differentiate between the colloquial 'wassons' and the 'plummy' enunciation of the outsiders. While the two parties always featured in a Jenkin film, outsiders and locals, speak the same language, their communication is sputtering and unsuccessful, widening the gaps between them. Sound is almost always diegetic: what we hear is what is real. The dubbed non-dialogue sounds are invasive; when local young girl Wenna sets off the alarm of Martin Leigh's Land Rover in the middle of Bait, the sound is excruciating, signalling a key disturbance that traverses out of the narrative and into the observer: this is the point where both audience and characters are semiotically woken up - to the rivalry, the

poverty, the wealth.

Jenkin's cinematic narratives are so accessible through his laborious production style. The grain, flickers and scratches on the surfaces of his films are all authentic by-products of their development: they are not edited in for visual effect. He manually winds and develops his own film by hand, which allows for variation in the film's appearance. Fibres from the jumper he wore during development, changes in the room's light exposure, and pollen from leaving his window open, all differentiate the visual texture of his film. Jenkin's editorial hand grasps every shot; every frame is entrenched with the tactile, the real.

Before experiencing a Jenkin film, one might presume that his unerring commitment to 16mm film, low budget production and a labour-heavy post-production would create cinema that feels archaic, an overly nostalgic tribute to the likes of Truffaut or Bergman. Yet this creative process accompanies a compelling realist narrative, allowing for something utterly new, and distinct from other cinema. Whether Jenkin's mode of filmmaking is more authentic than his digital-using contemporaries, just because of its adherence to tradition, is up for debate. Yet by mingling such a visually and instrumentally hands-on production with realist subject matter, he creates a transportive cinema that feels barely fictitious, and wholly embedded in the palpable real.

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ARTICLE by  
ROMILLY SCHULTE

# 17:03

Thank you for cutting my hair while the light lasted,

Your back was to the window and I'm sorry you missed the view.

Perhaps next time you'll see that fox mother limp from the hedges,

And, like me, quietly wish her luck as the grey light loses precision.

Later, I'll pick hair from my shoulders and watch you

Paint the image that returns to you every morning.

POEM by GEORGE DENNIS



# ACCEPTING DECEPTION

RUBY ANDERSON considers Amalia Ulman's Instagram performance art in relation to the pessimistic outlook of Theodor Adorno.

Theodor Adorno is ever the complainer. His text, 'The Culture Industry' (1947), likens popular culture to factory production, resulting in a 'sameness' infecting the culture of his day, this standardisation creating a docile public. While, of course, the circumstances through which we consume have changed in the 74 years since Adorno published his text, Adorno's theories about mass culture have an undeniable resonance today: it seems as consumers we are acutely aware of how social media feeds us a constant stream of what we want to see. Is this something we are content to leave unacknowledged, unprobed? I don't know about you, but I'm accepting cookies left, right and centre.

There has been much speculation about how Adorno would have viewed our new methods of cultural dissemination. Did Adorno prognosticate social media's coercion in the present? We are all made docile by the shenanigans of the Kardashian cult, but does the way we are active in the production of our own content, able to post ourselves online, differentiate us from Adorno's passive consumer, and therefore undermine the endurance of his theory? Are we passive if we actively participate?

It is precisely these questions that are raised by Amalia Ulman's *Excellences & Perfections* (2014), a four-month-long online performance in which Ulman manipulated social media. Ulman addressed the medium itself, looking the consumer straight in the eye, taunting them to question the validity of her content. Posting images to Instagram, Ulman underwent a semi-fictionalised makeover, by which she evoked a desirable, consumerist, fantasy lifestyle. Crucially, to the debate is that Ulman's performance was precisely that: a performance. Yet it was so believable, as the artist precisely reproduced popular elements of 2010s Instagram culture, embodying three common tropes that swathes of young women in the West were attempting to emulate at the time.



*Heaven* by Daniel Lucey

Ulman's project began with 'the cute girl', an aesthetic close to the artist's personal taste, making the project believable for those who knew Ulman IRL. This character was a 'cute, pink, grunge blonde, à la Tumblr girl, the indie girl who has only read JD Salinger', as Ulman described. Taking inspiration from celebrities like Amanda Bynes, the second part involved the ruination of this individual. Pastel tones were replaced by darker hues, and the images changed in content to portray the artist in increasingly sexually suggestive scenarios, the artist bouncing from one 'It's not

a phase' to another. Her character began working as an escort, acquired a sugar daddy, underwent a breast augmentation, and became addicted to drugs, all communicated through the fragments of an Instagram grid. The final chapter charted the character's recovery: she apologised, went to rehab, and her Instagram became associated with 'health, juice, interior design, simple, family'. She was 'now a brunette whose boob job [was] concealed under a flowery [...] shirt', the yoga-retreating, Gwyneth Paltrow-adoring lifestyle influencer we know too well.

Upon completing these three episodes, Ulman revealed to her followers that the project had been a performance, not a record of real life. This attracted criticism from individuals who had followed her account in good faith. Reading the comments on Ulman's posts, it is clear many of her followers did not distinguish her content from that of other Instagram personalities. The artist received messages of support: 'Well done, Kid. Rest'; messages of a sexual nature: 'tap dat'; messages seeking a genuine response: 'How much did it cost?'.

These comments reveal the inherent coercion that structures our engagement with social media. Kumars Salehi hypothesises that Adorno would have 'doubled-down' on his 'original pessimism' about the mass control of the culture industry and argue that the 'injunction to "express yourself" is no less deceptive than the old conformism'. Of course, this speculation about Adorno's opinions on contemporary media should be regarded sceptically – we will never know Adorno's true perspective about a medium that didn't become widely used until over thirty years after his death. However, the fact that Adorno's ideologies are being speculated on surely demonstrates the endurance of his pessimism – it doesn't seem to be getting any better, folks.

Ulman's performance was interpreted as a 'hoax', as if overcoming the structures of social media control was in itself a form of deception, exposing the vulnerability of those followers who believed her content to be truthful. Even though Ulman outlined her productivity as an artistic performance, its effects on her followers were the same as any other Instagram account (it is interesting to see Ulman now has a personal Instagram account, and the pictures she posts are not visually dissimilar from those posted as part of her performance - a Finsta of the contemporary art world, if you will). By repeating a lie, it seems Ulman played into an unshakeable truth that all social media users must admit to themselves: we reproduce a fictional reality with every new post (and, most sinisterly, we accept this).

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ARTICLE by  
RUBY ANDERSON



# WHY POST PUNK? WHY NOW?

ADAM STANLEY considers the contemporary resurgence of post-punk, a genre that has frequently re-emerged at times of political turbulence in Britain.

The genre most often referred to as 'post-punk revival' is now in full flow, since around 2018, having been one of the most thriving 'underground' sub-genres. Breakthrough albums such as Parquet Courts' *Wide Awake!* (2018) and Idles' *Joy As An Act of Resistance* (2018), as well as releases from Goat Girl, Interpol, Viagra Boys and Ought, have jump-started the genre's mainstream reputation. With the success of Fontaines D.C., Black Country New Road, Black Midi and Shame, post-punk has undoubtedly become better established in today's UK's music scene. But where does it go from here?

Over forty years ago came the emergence of no wave as a reaction against punk's recycling of rock and roll clichés. In New York, groups

such as Swan and Sonic Youth paralleled the rise of post-punk bands in the UK (Joy Division, The Smiths, The Cure), who boasted a more palatable sound, appealing to greater audiences.

After a hiatus (induced by the 90s' meteoric rise of the singable choruses and empty words of Britpop), post-punk returned in a new form in the early 2000s, typified by groups hailing from New York and London and punctuated by a fast, fierce, and driven concoction of guitars, drums and vocals. The genre merged into contemporary pop, before declining towards the end of the 2010s; bands from the era, such as The Strokes and the Arctic Monkeys, have held onto and even built upon their early successes. Other groups, though, such as Franz Ferdinand and The



*Gemini* by Isidore Bishop-Sauve

Libertines, have not been so lucky.

Now, post-punk has been revived again, admittedly in a wildly differing sonic form. Sung, vernacular vocal deliveries have matured into oscillations between monotone spoken-word and out-and-out screams. Lyrics detailing romantic and youthful pursuits (see almost any Arctic Monkeys album before 2018), have shifted towards everyday interactions and emotions, encapsulating the mundane whilst alluding to emotionally potent topics. 'I've come here to make a ceramic shoe and / I've come here to smash what you made', drones Florence Shaw of Dry Cleaning in 'Scratchcard Lanyard' (2021), her words exposing an underlying anger and resentment present in fulfilling the middle-class consumerist role. As the song breaks into the chorus, she chants, 'do everything and / feel nothing', laying bare the sentiment of the track more obtusely.

The timing of the genre's resurgence is no coincidence. Originally, post-punk stemmed from Thatcherite rule, whilst Nixon's presidency in the US spurred no wave. Their revival coincided with the period just prior to 2008's recession, and today's re-revival with long-held Conservative rule and, most importantly, Brexit. The similarities of the current national crisis - a void of identity, a disillusioned view of prototypically British stereotypes, grey skies, dull everyday interactions and duller prospects - to that of the alienation of Thatcher's rule, makes it unsurprising that there should be parallels in artistic response.

Songs such as those by the aforementioned Dry Cleaning, as well as cuts from Shame, BCNR and Porridge Radio, typify the tropes of

post-punk's re-revival: they search for meaning in everyday experiences of socio-political repression and unfulfillment. They are set alongside an often nervous, dark and harsh sonic texture, reflecting further the uncertainty and gloominess that pervades contemporary British life. Take, for example, Porridge Radio's ironically interchanging chants of 'I always get what I want' and 'how do I say no?' in the song 'Give/Take' (2010). An inability to say 'no', reflecting British reservedness, is contrasted with the self-assuredness of the (presumably male) suitor, described in the lyrics as always getting what he wants, reflective of the patriarchal formation of British society. 'You do what you're told' then erupts Dana Margolin.

The juxtaposing musical landscape prior to the genre's re-revival only serves to solidify post-punk's position as a reaction towards cultural and political decline. In the mid-2010s, soft indie-rock reigned supreme in Britain as well as the rest of the western world, spearheaded by the laid-back psychedelic influences of Tame Impala and Mac Demarco. Post-punk's abrasive and ironic character exemplifies a widespread feeling that was absent - or at least under-represented - until the political turmoil of the past few years.

Since the genre seems to perpetually reflect the state of life in Britain, post-punk's future lies in the hands of parliament. A declining standard of living should at least bring about some good music to which we can suffer along.

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*ARTICLE by*  
**ADAM STANLEY**

RICHARD HARDY considers the ways in which the photographer Lucia Moholy's practice was undermined during her lifetime.

During its relatively short lifespan, the Bauhaus produced some of the most internationally famous names in art, design, and architecture. However, history has not always recognised the contributions of some of its most significant practitioners. One individual, whose work has long been overshadowed, and for whom credit is lacking even today, is the Czech photographer Lucia Moholy. Moholy was married to the artist László Moholy-Nagy in 1921. During his professorship at the Bauhaus in the early 1920s, she documented the people and spaces of the school, in turn shaping the vision of the institution that endures to this day.

Moholy's approach to photography was 'neither pictorial [as in, objective] nor overcome with emotional expressiveness' - reflecting her then husband's approach, termed the 'New Vision'. The image of the

LUCIA  
PHOTOGRAPHS THAT  
SHAPED THE BAUHAUS  
MOHOLY

Kandinsky-Klee house substantiates this idea: the buildings are not presented plainly, simply as they are, nor does Moholy resort to excessive storytelling through overly dramatic camera angles or editing. Moholy took the clean lines, stark contrasts, and simplicity for which these buildings are best known and presented them in a way that was simultaneously honest, whilst at the same time almost spectacular.

Following the rise of National Socialism in Germany, Lucia Moholy was forced to emigrate suddenly, eventually settling in London. Due to the haste of her departure, Moholy was forced to leave behind nearly 600 glass negative plates in the care of Walter Gropius, the original Bauhaus

founder. After Gropius re-settled in America, he had the plates sent over to himself and began using them, initially in the 1938 MOMA catalogue of the Bauhaus' work, and then in a series of other publications. All of this was undertaken without either Moholy's permission or any accreditation of her work.

Legally, the designer or architect of a building is not able to claim any form of copyright over any photographs taken of their building. The fact that Gropius had no legal right to reproduce the photographs of Moholy without her knowledge nor her consent is evidenced by the fact that in the 1950s, after she was made aware of his use of her work, and after an extended back

and forth communication in which Moholy sought legal advice, Gropius ultimately returned around 300 of the glass plate negatives, not before a number were damaged in the process.

One might wonder why Walter Gropius thought he could get away with appropriating Moholy's work without obtaining permission, or even crediting the artist. As Gropius designed the Bauhaus building itself, along with the nearby Masters Houses, he may have believed that he had rights to these photographs, or perhaps thought he simply wouldn't be challenged. Indeed, photographs of the interior and exterior of these buildings comprised the bulk of Moholy's work during this period.

matic of the wider inequality of the respective roles of men and women. However, in the case of Moholy, the scale of her contribution to the photographic record of the Bauhaus, shaping how we perceive the Bauhaus today, underpins the extent of this injustice.

Through her work tirelessly recording day-to-day life around the school, we are able to get an idea of what it would have been like to study at this famous institution eighty years ago. Her images move beyond the brick, glass and steel of the structures themselves, to create a new narrative of what this school was; a narrative that is arguably today far more significant and relevant than the collection of buildings still standing outside Dessau.

The other explanation of Gropius' conduct is the relative rights afforded to men and women at the time, both inside and outside the academic community. Throughout her time at the Bauhaus, the creative practice of Moholy was consistently undermined, by that of her then husband László Moholy-Nagy. It was not uncommon for Moholy to go wholly uncredited in many of her collaborative works with Nagy, and her name was absent in almost all of his publications. This airbrushing out of Moholy from the creative output of the Bauhaus is sympto-

In more recent years, the work of Lucia Moholy has begun to gain an increasingly wide international recognition, including an exhibition at the Museum Ludwig in Cologne, Germany, which chronicled much of her work during the Bauhaus period.

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ARTICLE by  
RICHARD HARDY



Lucia Moholy, Masters' Houses In Dessau, *Semi-Detached House*  
*Kandinsky-Klee From North West*, Photograph, 1926







# KAI MCKIM

## AN INTERVIEW



Second-year Architecture student KAI MCKIM decided to interrupt his studies this academic year and work on a project planning, designing, and constructing a sculptural studio in Oxfordshire. WILL FERREIRA DYKE speaks to him about the realities of working on a commissioned project, in comparison to a Bartlett brief.

All artwork by Kai McKim

**Kai! I miss seeing you lurking outside of the Bartlett. How do you feel interrupting your studies, do you think it was a much-needed break?**

Partly yes, but I think I am missing it. The main reason I interrupted was because I thought that phasing back to face-to-face teaching would be a shambles. There was a lot of unpredictability and what I thought was hot air optimism for this year's prospectus. But it seems like they're doing a better job than expected.

I miss having that vigorous routine, working together, seeing lots of people, and even commuting! That being said, I'm blessed to have this project, it's keeping me very busy.

**Can you discuss this project further?**

I'm working on a commission for a client who wanted to build a sculpture studio-cum-office-cum-furniture storage space. Ultimately, it is a glorified shed and shipping container, but we've designed a courtyard and compost toilet to go with it. It's a very chaotic process, and I'm fully entrenched in the reality of constructing this building every step of the way. I started with initial site surveys and then progressed into drawing up sketches. These were then followed by accurate plans, producing various iterations to reach a point where the client is happy to go forward. Then comes the practical, physical dimension of the project, clearing all the brambles, prepping the ground with compacted gravel and weed membranes. We will then need to excavate, hire a digger, hydraulic jack and all that sort of stuff, lay a lot of concrete foundation and then start building up from there.

**How do the realities of building a structure compare to your expansively creative Bartlett projects?**

It's just so real! Granted this project is only small, but nonetheless extremely intricate. It is exactly this reality, using our hands to physically engage with a structure that will endure, that makes the project so exciting. This type of work comes with many constraints, however: fitting everything in the budget, the annoyance of a certain touchy neighbour, and keeping the client happy (which, in a way, can be compared to the approval of Bartlett tutors, but they're not paying me!).

Going forward with this project, will you be doing all the construction - plastering, assembling - and all the other architectural verbs I have no clue about?

Yes, myself and my boyfriend, Nic, are taking on all the jobs: designers, project managers, fabricators and now employers. Even down to the minutiae of paperwork; I'm having to

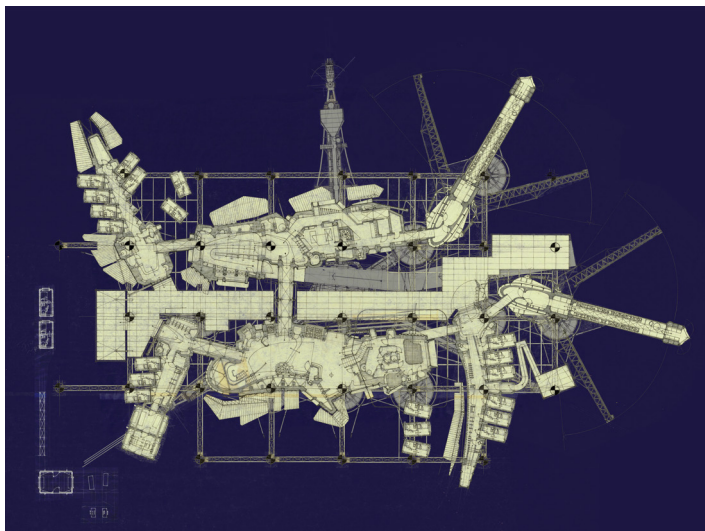
send off invoices and pay suppliers. The project is estimated to be finished around late February/March. I want it done quickly to allow time to do other things this year. Though this will mean that we are going to have to work through winter.

Heat warmers, hot water bottles and brandy at the ready.

Oh yes brandy, of course the brandy.

Post-completion, post-brand, what sort of things are you interested in seeing? Your second year project focused on sustainable technique, is that where your interests lie?

Yeah, I suppose so. I can remember in first year, there was a period where I nearly dropped out of university, partly because of the modules supposedly to do with sustainability. I remember being disheartened back then by the lack



of initiative or even interest in seriously applying any degree of climate awareness to university projects by tutors or students. The construction industry contributes to approximately 40% of all CO<sub>2</sub> emissions, mainly from concrete as well as embedded carbon. But this was almost seen as a given, at least in my opinion. Recently, there has been a push for more sustainable building globally with the changing zeitgeist of climate change awareness, which is getting me quite excited and making me think that my future in architecture will likely be in that field. There is so much innovation needed, which is at once both daunting and exhilarating.

What are your plans for third year, do you think this year will be useful for your next university project?

Yes, for sure. Working on the cur-

rent sculptural studio project, even at its diddy little scale, is helping to conceptualise the reality of a future project, and will be so useful in understanding the feasibility of whatever I decide to create. Maybe this sculpture studio will head me down a more practical route. Who knows.

Who knows, only time will tell!

Indeed, early days.

*If you're interested in hearing more from Kai, find an extended interview on our website.*

ARTICLE by  
WILL FERREIRA DYKE



# ON THE WORLD COMING TOO CLOSE

And none of it mattered and none of it ended. He couldn't see the hills, because it was too misty, and she never cared for them in the first place. They were who they were and they could have been ordinary. They bought groceries and were in love, if you can believe it. Since the divorce of her parents, though, she never really believed in love like he did. Rather than seeing it as some kind of robust force that brought people together and pushed them apart, she saw it like she saw a houseplant - one with big leaves, that would provide good shade for a cat or a small dog. And plants die because people don't take care of them. And love dies because people change and are often already broken.

Neither of them could see the hills. It wasn't that their house was particularly far from them; it was just the mist. It's misty in that part of Wales. Still, they knew the hills were there. They bought the place on a whim. Neither had much money, and they only knew a lot about things that never really mattered to anyone. So they settled on the north coast of Wales, and lived between the ocean and the hills. He thought he'd live there until he didn't live anymore (at which point he was to be buried in West Derby Cemetery in Liverpool). She wanted to be dust in the wind rather than a body in the mud, and was sure she'd die elsewhere. Not that she had any plans to leave him: this was merely a consequence of her perspective on love.

His view on love was entirely the opposite. He came from a family of no divorcees. For his entire life, he was taught that he would certainly one day find someone who left him with no lack of satisfaction, forevermore. And when he met her, he thought that was it. They met on the beach and threw stones that skipped across the water. It was sunny and cold that morning in Margate. They had travelled there unbeknownst to each other, for a wedding of people to whom neither were particularly close. She was an early bird and he stayed up all night singing out-of-tune ballads with people he didn't know. So they met on the beach in the morning and the sun made them squint and he looked like hell and smelled like stale whiskey but she was easy on the eyes. They threw stones and laughed and had breakfast and ditched the wedding because people are selfish when they're in love.

After they met in Margate, they lived at her flat in London, which didn't have rats like his. He moved in almost immediately, and cancelled his own lease as quickly as he could. Have you ever been so in love that your fear of consequence vanishes? They had no fear of separation, as they traded their belongings and independence for bed sheets and severe mutual obsession. But her flat on Holloway Road was too close to the rest of the world. It was too easy for friends and family to expect things of them, to intrude on what they had. So together they left and they fell in love with the place between the hills and the coast. And they ended up there without much money or many prospects, except for loving each other, and knowing that they were safe from all the people who just wanted the best for them.

But where they moved had willow trees, and the trees wept, and they couldn't ignore the tears. As the trees grew taller, she loved him harder than he loved her. He loved her so much, but not so much that his knuckles turned white and his heart bled. Leaving never crossed his mind, because they were in love, and people in love stay together. Yet it seemed that she would have fought for it harder if the hills had begun to move and the water had begun to rise. And believe it or not, when it rained and the mud came rolling and the waves came knocking and their windows were smashed with used wine glasses and skipping stones, she held onto the floorboards until her heart gave out, while he buried his face in his hands, and wondered where it all went wrong.

*PROSE PIECE by SAM BROWNSTONE*



*I'll save my friend cos you're like a monk seal by Yeon Ju Y*

## THE COMPELLING VOICE OF THE UNRELIABLE NARRATOR

EVIE ROBINSON considers the draw of unreliable narrators, focusing on the voices of three iconic novels.

Literature is rife with unreliable narrators and unruly voices. First-person narratives are enticing. We are given a glimpse into the speaker's world - their thoughts, feelings, and intentions. Yet they are also inherently polarising, as we're continuously faced with their high subjectivity, and the knowledge that we shouldn't trust them. My own literary journey has been punctuated by their voices. Emerging in the last few decades, three novels come to mind, which give these characters space, in particularly fascinating ways.

### THE HANDMAID'S TALE

Margaret Atwood's novel *The Handmaid's Tale* (1984) is famous in the literary world for its captivating central character, Offred, who narrates the novel in first person, and entirely through her own eyes. Every event that unfolds and every character who appears is carefully observed and critiqued by Offred, who herself is constantly under surveillance in the dystopian realm of Gilead.

Throughout the novel, Offred speaks of the power of the written word, with diary-writing as a mechanism for her to maintain hope and sanity, in the belief that she will one day escape from the horrors of her current life. The novel's form and highly personal structure work to challenge ideas about storytelling and keeping records. Though we naturally want to trust Offred in light of the ordeals she faces, we must always interrogate our own awareness of her narrative as highly subjective.

Atwood's sequel *The Testaments*, published in 2019 and co-winner of the 2020 Booker Prize (alongside Bernadine Evaristo's *Girl, Woman, Other* (2019) - another fascinating novel that plays with form and persona), follows a similar pattern of first-person narration, this time depicting the perspectives of three central characters. Both works tackle the anxieties that afflict women under the oppressively patriarchal Gileadean regime (echoing, perhaps, our own world).

### ROOM

Narrated by five-year-old Jack, Emma Donoghue's *Room* (2010) is a heartbreakingly raw first-person narrative. A story of abduction and imprisonment, the novel is narrated solely through the eyes of Jack. Having grown up in captivity, 'room' is the only world that he knows. He believes that the room and things it contains (himself and his mother) are 'real', and that the rest of the world exists only on television.

Everything is stripped back to its most basic, through the eyes of a child lacking life experience and exposure to the world. We become torn between our knowledge of the reality of events - that Jack's mother was kidnapped aged nineteen and gave birth to Jack in captivity - and our desire to see the world through Jack's innocent eyes. The story becomes a mediation of narratives, and prompts us to reflect on the point at which our childhood innocence turns to experience.



*Self-portrait in Preparation of Death* by Oliver Martyn



## ATONEMENT

Ian McEwan's best selling *Atonement* (2001) is all about the boundaries of subjectivity. When young teenager Briony makes a decision based on a particular observation, her life and the lives of those around her are drastically altered. Perspectives change and knowledge deepens - after her choice, there is no hope of a return to the summer state of innocence that she basked in, before the unthinkable happened. The novel is largely narrated by Briony, though it also flickers between the voices of her sister Cecilia, and Robbie, another central character. McEwan's clever prose means that in the novel, nothing is ever as it seems, and we're taught to approach every development with a degree of hesitancy, unsure of what is truth and what is fiction.

*Atonement* relates the danger of interpretation - the unfolding of events depends wholly upon whose

voice we choose to trust: *'It wasn't only wickedness and scheming that made people unhappy, it was confusion and misunderstanding; above all, it was the failure to grasp the simple truth that other people are as real as you.'*

Even in the restrictive Gileadian regime of Atwood's novel, *Offred* still succeeds in finding a way to tell her story, through the power and permanence of the written word. Her narrative certainly had a profound impact on my own perspective. *Room* and *Atonement* had this same effect, as the central characters drew me into their worlds through their intricate, personal acts of storytelling. Although first-person narratives often depict the most raw and personal aspects of humanity, they simultaneously play with notions of truth. They challenge our perceptions of what literature should present - the harshness of reality, or the height of fiction?

ARTICLE by  
EVIE ROBINSON

# LIVING OBJECTS FOR THE LIVING

JACK KINSMAN shares his views on the importance of craft in architecture, and how industrialisation took the object's heartbeat.

For me, an 'object for living' is something that accompanies habitable space, to enable living within it. While architecture seeks to create comfortable enclosures, objects for living seek to create comfortable utilisation. I will refer to them as 'enablers': they are companions and mirrors of our habitation. They are inorganic bodies, warm within cold walls.

These objects fall within what Sōetsu Yanagi, Japanese philosopher and folk-craft pioneer, describes as 'Mingei'. 'Deriving from the words 'min', meaning 'the masses', and 'gei', meaning 'craft', together, the words literally translate to 'crafts of the people'. They encompass objects used by the masses, as opposed to aristocratic fine art. These are objects such as eating utensils, clothing, and furniture. They are 'getemono', as Yanagi defines them in his essay 'What is Folk Craft?' (1933): 'ordinary things', being produced in masses by the unknown artisan, they are embedded in most spaces we inhabit.

The beauty that Yanagi describes refers to how an artisan's imprint is left on these simple objects, to

give them a heartbeat passed onto the habitable spaces we occupy alongside them. These objects belong in our spaces as permanent inhabitants, not to be thrown away when a fresher cast is ejected from the conveyor belt. The philosophy behind 'Mingei' should be applied to architectural enablers - the meeting-point between our body and architecture. The importance of enablers is most visible when they're removed. Imagine if the doorstep wasn't invented. When we don't design an enabling object to hold doors, our bodies act in their place, and we ourselves become the most over-designed doorstops. With that imagery in mind, the memory of our body's relation to a door should be preserved, when we design the enabling object to take our place.

While these objects are essential to habitable space, they often fall to the periphery. They should be designed as an acupuncture in the skin: gentle but unmissable. These objects should be imbued with the heartbeat of the human creating them - yet often, industrial production has erased that. Without enablers, we would be designing humans into the walls of





View from a Restaurant in Greece by Victor Saint Bris

our buildings. Banisters would be replaced by rows of outstretched arms; every doorway would be designed with a standing space for a person to catch and hold it, until you wanted the door closed. With the absence of door handles, every door would be a push door. Without the door lock, someone would need to stand clasp the door to its frame. At the inception of industrialisation, we gained a dangerous attitude towards quick consumerism and mass production. By removing the artisan, we lost the heartbeat of these enablers.

By removing the pulse from objects-for-living, we create two distinct outcomes, which are destroying our built and natural environments: the loss of memory, and a polluting, single-use culture. The lifeless nature of industrial production has left our built environments cold, and without memory of our bodies' relation to urban space. By turning enablers

(our meeting-points) into industrial casts, the details of the city become as monotonous and forgettable as the act of opening a door.

Our desire for rapid imagery and entertainment has resulted in a framing of architecture through social media. Buildings are designed to look good on Instagram, creating fast imagery in the same way that factories churn out single-use objects. As quickly as we produce these cold casts, we produce a throwaway image culture, which fuels the neglect of enabler design. Imagery scrolled past on our screens is thrown away, and its memory is lost. If we continue to create this way, we will simultaneously fail to record the memory of our life onto our cities, and add evermore pollutant, mass-produced objects to our environment. Ultimately, we'll remove the mirror of our bodies from the objects that we use. We must reconsider: the craft of creating beautiful enablers needs to be remembered.

ARTICLE by  
JACK KINSMAN

# THE HUMANS

## FAITH VERSUS FEAR

NG SHENG YING contemplates the film adaptation of *The Humans*, its account of adversity, and how we wrestle with hardship.

The imperative 'Get Real' seems to fit like a glove with Stephen Karam's recent film adaption of his play *The Humans* (2021), a very real story about our common struggle with adversity. Adversity brings to mind difficulties, disappointments and hiccups, which we have all experienced. In Karam's story, characters feel as if their emotional anchor is slipping away, their grip on life coming undone. Placed under punishing circumstances and pure anguish, Karam examines how they - and we - go about dealing with it.

*The Humans* focuses on a three-generation family gathering in a crumbling, two-story New York City apartment. Erik Blake, the protagonist, arrives at the barren,

newly moved-in apartment of his daughter Brigid and her boyfriend, Richard, with his mother, Momo, and his wife, Deirdre, to have Thanksgiving dinner, with them and his other daughter, Aimee.

In the intimate space of the home, on a day dedicated to gratitude and the counting of blessings, Karam cosies the audience up to the individual struggles of each family member. In the opening shot, Erik clumsily turns, reverses, opens multiple doors along the corridor, to steer his wheelchair-bound mother into the apartment: the sheer inconvenience of this simple feat forebodes the worldly set-backs that these characters lay bare into the night.

Momo suffers from dementia and is plagued with occasional talking fits. Aimee loses her girlfriend and her job due to her ulcerative colitis, a stigmatised bowel condition which causes her frequent trips to the bathroom. Deirdre, in her sixties, feels underpaid, and bears the brunt of working under people in their twenties who earn five times as much as she has in forty years. Brigid works multiple jobs to support her passion for composing music, but through offhand remarks in referral letters, her professor hinders her from gaining grants to fund her career. Richard, in his late thirties, is still in the midst of completing his psychology degree, after his battle with depression halted his studies. Finally, Erik, the stoic father figure, reveals, at the end of the film, that he now works at Walmart, after getting laid off from his teaching job for having an affair with another teacher.

Despite these lamentable circumstances, the audience is

enlivened to the self-deprecating humour and wit which endearingly underscores the family's dialogue. Amid the jokes they crack, charmingly laughing at their own expense, their mounting financial pressures and ailing physical health don't seem to dampen their spirits, as an emotional vacuum grows. Yet little quibbles and non-verbal gestures betray their festering anxieties. Several times, Karam shows Erik staring absently out the window, woefully contemplating, as if burdened by something. Heated conversations cause tension to build, as the family's frustrations find their way into dialogue, unravelling the troubling circumstances they each find themselves in.

In this seething, hardly-expressed emotionality, Karam guides the viewer through each character's tightening psychological knots. The apartment's dimly lit, hallowed corridors make visual parallels to the sequestered, unexplored nooks and crannies of the psyche. Into the night, on the conversation of dreams, Erik confesses that a woman with blurred facial features haunts him in his sleep. In the lead-up to Erik's admission of his affair, this ghostly figure lingers. Soon, pots and pans clang as they fall to the floor, and Momo wanders into the darkness, uttering indecipherable words resembling a mad spiel. The apartment, established as a palpable character in the film through its creaking doors, peeling walls, leaky pipes and power outages, seems to finally crumble under the emotional tension: in creaks, shattering glass, clanging pots, blown-out bulbs, the taut emotional line is revealed beneath the pleasure-filled Thanksgiving Day. Soon, the apartment is enveloped in darkness.





By the end of the film, each character retreats to different parts of the space, the weight of their circumstances too much to bear, receding into themselves for some respite away from the commune of the dinner table. Finally, the camera pans across the apartment block, against the melancholic textures of the blue evening sky - almost suggesting an airing of woes, a cry of despair.

Searingly, *The Humans* is a film about the fragility and vacillating emotionality of the human condition. If there is something to honour in each character, it is the sense of hope that lingers throughout the film, despite the mounting worries in each of their lives. With this, Karam asks, importantly: how do we contain the violence of our emotions during harsh, trying times? Is it best that we suppress, or laugh at them? Do we look for a scapegoat, live in Sartrean bad faith, or look for some other-worldly explanation? Does fear ever, truly leave us - or do we drive it underground, only for it resurface, traumatically, elsewhere in our lives?

ARTICLE by  
NG SHENG YING







# DO WE REALLY LOVE RADIO THAT MUCH? HEAD

KIMI ZARATE SMITH considers the state of music criticism at a time when the use of algorithmic streaming services means even the critics are being told what to listen to.

Music criticism has blissfully brushed over the shortcomings of online culture: the organic situations through which we are meant to discover new music are overrun by the cast of the digital landscape. The music industry relies on online trends and a cyclical algorithmic structure. What is published is overtly sensational, no longer cutting edge, and, ultimately, redundant, solidifying biases that continue to push a music industry bureaucracy.

Perhaps this all comes across a bit too reductionist - but here's the question: where did you get your music taste from? I might say that mine has come from family, and from going to gigs, but I have no doubt that what I've seen on social media has influenced what I listen to today. Though we might have our own personal music tastes, these are commodities in the all-seeing-eyes of algorithms and machine learning.

The commonplace of data-storing algorithms is not just a side effect of the internet but rather a vessel on which the transition towards the digitalisation of the arts takes place. We are sorted into hyper-categorisations (which are based hugely on class, race and gender) and are suggested to enjoy the same music as someone 'like' us. These algorithmic structures and social media have consequently informed music journalism more than music has.

A few months ago, *Pitchfork Magazine* announced their list, 'The 200 Best Albums of the Last 25 Years, According to *Pitchfork* Readers'. I found this concept strange, and actually quite terrifying. Although the list is simply a fun, trivial anecdote written with a brazen self-awareness, the processes through which the results came about expose how exclusionary

the conversation around 'objectively good' music can be. *Pitchfork* recommended music to a certain demographic, then asked the same demographic to recommend the same music back, yet they still claim trustworthiness as a non-biased publication. It doesn't get more tunnel vision than this, and only continues to validate superficial iterations of criticism and reviews. The bullet-pointing and ranking that music journalism has been reduced to cannot do justice to the 200 albums mentioned, nor to the musical history of the past quarter-century.

Lucille Riso Print by Leo Fox



The results themselves are testament to this: Radiohead took up coveted spots 1st, 2nd and 4th, with *Kid A* (2000), *OK Computer* (1997), and *In Rainbows* (2007) respectively, and all their other albums settled further down the list. *Pitchfork's* Instagram post invited a dissonant flood of comments: 'Predictable, but disappointed', commented one user; '[C]lassic str8 boi picks', 'white people', 'only Radiohead fans would vote on Pitchfork'. The comments make sense. There is a reason why artists such as Radiohead, Kanye West, Frank Ocean, Lana Del Rey and Sufjan Stevens have dominated this chart: *Pitchfork* engagers and listeners of these artists fall into the same online category, not by coincidence, but through the way they have been popularised. The internet has the ability to sustain massive cult followings; listening to these artists is not only another stream to up the numbers but also a performance of their popularity, and thus means they are, in some aspects, always trending. Each interaction with online content is just another pixel-sized point in an ever-expanding database that tracks and diverts our listening habits based on what is most profitable. It's all a Charlie Brooker dystopian field-day.

The golden idea that an album should hit the popularity and profitability mark is not new. Online culture can be beneficial and even revolutionary for the discovery of

new artists. However, it also brings about a rupture that the arts have faced since transitioning online. The trend cycle is unyielding. Capitalism teaches us to consume on a temporary and fleeting basis, yet the timelessness of an album is another indicator of its quality. Should we continue to expect albums and music to withstand the test of time? Perhaps, as an album's durability says something about its enduring relevance, and its ability to relate to the human condition as a whole.

It might be that there is no place for 'all-time' lists such as *Pitchfork's*, particularly if our present music history has made publications like *Pitchfork* culturally redundant, as they reflect what a particular demographic has picked up from trends-based algorithms. How true are these rankings, when the list might look completely different in a year's time based on what has re-emerged online? Music journalism cannot attempt to mediate this tension anymore if it is to continue functioning and profiting from the trend cycle. One thing will always ring true, however, that *Pitchfork* readers are Radiohead listeners, and even if the Spotify algorithm knows you listened to 'How to Disappear Completely' on repeat for three days, no one else has to. Just be wary of what you might spiral into if you decide to click on that Elliott-Smith-themed Daily Mix 3.

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ARTICLE by  
KIMI ZARATE SMITH

# FOR GOING PRO PRO SHOTS

REGINA CO advocates for the normalisation of streamed theatre, discussing the importance of theatre transcending geographical borders in debates surrounding accessibility.

Since moving to the UK, I have shared many conversations with friends about the landscape of British theatre. What shocked my friends the most is the strong presence of proshots (filmed versions of plays and musicals), as well as their cinematic distribution; it seems this process is uniquely British. Elsewhere, budding artists and young theatre enthusiasts are forced into the morally dubious world of bootlegs.

A conversation surrounding increasing accessibility to the theatre and the performing arts is occurring. Speaking broadly, the more progressive view on this topic advocates for reduced ticket prices for younger age groups, or holding adjusted performances for more sensitive audiences (such as relaxed shows for audiences on the autism spectrum, to give one example). This, however, still exists in opposition to the conservative 'gatekeeping' of the live theatrical

experience, where theatre exists solely for the audiences it's designed for, who tend to come from upper-middle-class backgrounds.

Within these debates the presence of proshots seems to be left out. This strikes me as odd, as I believe that proshots are integral to the dismantling of the structures that restrict access to the performing arts. I don't just mean access across socioeconomic groups, but also access across national boundaries. In addition, a mainstream distribution of filmed productions allows people to legally consume art, which in turn benefits the creatives who made them.

I grew up in the Philippines, which is one of the largest commercial theatrical markets in the continent - many musicals launch their international tours in Manila, for example. I also had the privilege of going to an international school, this being where I was exposed to the widespread distribution of proshots in the United Kingdom. I was able to watch productions that were staged at the Olivier from my room in Manila, thousands of miles away.

I preface my argument with this





Epoch Still by Tarzan Kingofthejungle

because, as a member of the theatre community, I care deeply about global access to the theatre. I understand the otherworldly feeling of watching an incredible actor deliver a powerful monologue, or that unique sense of satisfaction that comes from hearing different layers of harmony and melody merge into one singular sound. However, I'm also aware that not everyone can afford to fly out to New York or London to see a specific show, let alone even go to the theatres in their home countries.

Nowadays, there exist many legal theatre streaming sites, such as BroadwayHD and the National

Theatre At Home Collection. However, many countries from the global majority are geoblocked, paying audiences being shut out. We have no plans of pirating the video file. We simply want to watch a show.

Of course, proshots are not cheap to film; their production largely depends on a country's IP laws, rights, and union contracts. More crucially, many producers are hesitant to film live productions, concerned this would lead to less revenue for the staged productions themselves. However, what sets the UK as the global leader of filmed

productions is the fact that many productions are already staged with widespread distribution in mind. Ergo, it's a mindset thing.

But look at what happens when you release proshots to the global public: when the National Theatre released their proshots on YouTube during the first weeks of the pandemic, the theatre raised more than £100,000. Although this revenue was significantly less than the typical sales profits achieved by a live National Theatre production, the National used this income to pay actors and creatives who were part of these plays, and who

were surely struggling during the pandemic. Similar actions were made by the Royal Shakespeare Company, Shakespeare's Globe and Andrew Lloyd Webber's The Shows Must Go On.

Inspired by this trend, Filipino theatre companies began to do the same. *Ang Huling El Bimbo*, a rock musical inspired by the events of the recent drug war, was made available on YouTube by a major broadcasting company for 48 hours, becoming the highest trending video for that weekend, garnering seven million views. More significantly, the release of this proshot raised twelve million pesos for families who were affected by the pandemic, the equivalent of over £175,000.

For British and Filipino creatives, these streams of income were lifelines amidst the shutdown of performance spaces during the pandemic. Despite lacking government support, the artists from these two different countries shared art in the same manner, and indeed with each other.

With theatres around the world reopening, I'm optimistic that the pandemic has given us the ability to reflect on the state of the arts. And, in the very near future, I hope that the reason why one would be able to consume theatre more often wouldn't be because of financial privilege. I hope it would be because the systemic barriers such privilege upholds have been brought down.

ARTICLE by  
REGINA CO

A SHORT

# MANIFESTO

FOR LETTER-WRITING

MAYA SALL defends the art of writing letters, and considers why it should be saved.

My letterbox rarely produces anything of interest. It spawns letters stamped 'PRIVATE AND CONFIDENTIAL', addressed to previous tenants. Sometimes a flatmate receives a taunting slip of paper exclaiming 'sorry we missed you!', beckoning them to the post office. Occasionally, it coughs up a pizza voucher that no one will ever redeem. It is almost always of little consequence, and thinking nothing of the letters' contents, my flatmates and I scuff them to the side with our feet.

When rifling through this pile, I found a note from a neighbour, angry about the damage done to their car. I marvelled over the piece of paper in my hand. The letter wasn't long or addressed to our flat, but the image of an angry neighbour arming themselves with pen and paper both amused and bemused me. What made this note so different from every other bit of paper that came through the front door? And why did I care so much for its contents, and its author?

Needless to say, the popularity of letter-writing is diminishing. The

Royal Mail delivered approximately 950 million letters in 2020, down by 17% from 2019. A swooping decrease, showing that letters are being displaced by more 'efficient' methods of communication.

Social media followings have replaced letters of correspondence. Digital communication is immediate, replicating face-to-face conversation, rendering time-consuming letter writing redundant. An Instagram picture is said to speak a thousand words. Yet it is widely known that social media does not, in fact, reflect reality. Posting on social media is a self-serving act, to cultivate and perform a persona. Public-facing lives are polished – but this is not a new phenomenon. In Mary Wollstonecraft's travel writings *A Short Residence in Norway and Sweden*, she professes to having nothing more to write 'at this time', refraining from over-emotional language to separate herself from female stereotypes. However, Wollstonecraft's letters to her lover, Richard Imley, portray a more emotional picture. She confesses that writing the intense language of love is novel to her: 'You have, by

your tenderness and worth, twisted yourself more artfully round my heart, than I supposed possible.— Let me indulge the thought, that I have thrown out some tendrils to cling to the elm by which I wish to be supported.—This is talking a new language for me!—'. Although only one example, Wollstonecraft's letters offer a glimpse into an intimate authenticity, which the self-conscious public persona cannot express.

Authenticity demands vulnerability. Letters of personal correspondence are private, usually intended only for the eyes of the recipient. The handwriting and phrasing will be unique to the writer. In turn, reading a letter is an exercise in the senses. The language of the writers evokes their presence. The appearance of their writing on the page allows a level of intimacy lost in online interaction, where one font fits all. History evidences this intense intimacy. Letter censoring in the World Wars occurred not only to remove confidential information, but to mediate traumatic effects on morale - the distance between loved ones exaggerated by their letters' personal intimacy. Yet conveying anguish is not the only power that the intimacy of the letter holds. In acts of seductive flirtation, ladies sprayed letters with their perfume, teasing their lovers' senses and driving them crazy with desire.

The multisensory physicality of letters lends them to being re-read and treasured, thus, rendering them an artefact with a historical afterlife. Preserving moments of fleeting reality, the letter is historicised the

minute it is written. Not constrained by word limits, or phone screen size, a letter is a stylised work: think Wilde's wit, Joyce's experimental musings, or Woolf's exacerbation. Personal experiences embed themselves into reality as they are penned onto paper. A letter captures a moment in a tactile object, even if circumstances change before it reaches its recipient. While the letter cannot convey tangible reality, it can convey intangible authenticity.

Writing is rarely a quick task. It is a conscious act of prolonged and (sometimes) well-articulated thought - drastically different to instant messaging. Contemporary speeds of communication trivialise long-distance correspondence. We take virtual contact for granted because there is no real investment attached to it. Modern life is one big, messy blur, and sitting down to write a long letter is not only impractical, but indulgent. Time is money, so gifts that hold a recognised value of monetary currency are now the common indicator of feeling. But the material can only show, not tell. When penning and posting a letter, we are giving the most valuable thing that we have – our time.

Next time you have something to say, think of my angry neighbour, distributing letters throughout the street. Take part in the ultimate display of authenticity, and say it with letters, not flowers or an Instagram post.

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ARTICLE by  
MAYA SALL





Birch Trees by Ben Raz

# LIFE IN A DAY

## ARCHIVED REALITY

CLAIRE SCANDELLA considers the complexities and parallels of life around the globe, filmed in *Life in a Day*.

In *Life in a Day* (2010), subjects from over 192 countries, film everything they do for a day. Those featured are people from all around the world, who got behind the camera on the 24th of July 2010. Thousands of people with different habits and lifestyles did so, with different cameras and devices. How could it be more real?

Just by the way that it's filmed, we feel as though we're in the same room as these people. Maybe due to social media, we're used to following our friends' lives through a screen, so seeing videos shot with a phone feels authentic. Cameras were given to those who didn't use smartphones. The use of these cameras and smartphones to film a documentary, on that scale, hadn't previously been observed. It resulted in unprofessional shots, since those shooting are, literally, not professional filmmakers, but people with different occupations. It makes them all the more realistic. Even if they're sometimes shaky or blurry, some of them are beautiful.

Ridley Scott and Kevin Macdonald aimed to create a documentary showing how, across the world, people's lives differ and relate. To do so, they asked questions like: 'what



do you love?' or 'what do you have in your pockets?'. This allows us an understanding of global inequalities, and how these impact people's views on fundamental questions. When asked 'what do you love?', for example, a man in South Asia explains passionately how he loves his new refrigerator, while a North American guy gives a speech on his love of God and his family. Though there are obvious disparities between the film's subjects, in terms of their beliefs, their hobbies, or their jobs, it's interesting to see how general patterns are displayed. It starts in the morning, and one of the first shots is breakfast. People from Asia, Europe and South America are all cooking eggs. We realise that no matter the origin, humans often, ultimately, have the same habits and needs.

The documentary is real in many ways - by the subjects, by the way it's filmed, and by its content. There's a series of shots of both women and animals giving birth, for example, and we can see a surgeon fainting. Elsewhere, we're introduced to an immigrant gardener in Dubai, who lives in a small, confined room and eats on the floor, while working in big mansions; he is grateful for this job, nonetheless, which means he can send money to his family. Some shots were shocking: when it comes to lunchtime scenes, the killing of animals was filmed without censorship, heightening the realism to an unnerving degree.

We must keep in mind, however, that *Life in a Day* does not show everything. It would be simplistic to see it as a fair representation of the world in 2010. It was shot by non-professionals from every continent, but was directed by two American producers, and the shots were selected and sorted. Of course, it would be impossible to give a fair representation of everyone's lives from every country - but the film is presented as such. Still, knowing that it was a big American production, created for Youtube, I was expecting to watch a documentary that aimed to evoke sympathy, and present people from non-Western countries as poor or in need, in a way that might have been reductive, or divisive. Instead, it showed the realities and complexities of people's lives, with a focus on similarities between communities, rather than separations. All in all, then, *Life in a Day* remains real; it might even provide an archival view of what life in 2010 was like, for future generations.

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ARTICLE by  
CLAIRE SCANDELLA



Fur-Coat Couple, Mid-Town Manhattan by Victor Saint Bris





Mobile Library by Oliver Martyn

## THAT SILENT SEA

Suspend me in those languid swells of sleep,  
And,  
Hanging,  
Leave me there,

So, drifting under vast benighted skies,  
In sinusoidal drifting seas,  
Embracing tidal arms  
Can cradle me.

Inscribed somewhere in dark oneiric sounds  
A single voice bears rippling trills,  
As slippery sleep turns  
Stone to flesh,  
And flesh to milk,

And I sink down  
And  
Down.

POEM by SADIE MUTTON





*Hide and Seek* by Yun-lu Tsai



# DESIGNING THE POLITICS OF INTERIOR DESIGN DOMESTICITY

ISOBEL BINNIE discusses the relative relegation of interior design in academic circles, contextualising this reality historically and assessing potential interventions that could produce a more deserving future for the discipline.

Academic research has always been a tool for designers. Yet the body of academic research focused on domestic interiors is slim. Although it is the profession's lack of historic recognition that has created the ambiguous place of interior design, it is difficult to understand why a practice so fundamental to living has such a marginal academic status in the present.

The profession of designing interiors has always been based on designing for the wealthy. In the Western context, interior design was viewed as mere craft when it emerged in the seventeenth century, this association persisting right through to the nineteenth century. However, with the rise of an affluent middle-class in the 1900s, it evolved into its own profession.

When the Institute of British Decorators launched in 1899, it represented 200 professionals, only ten of whom were women. Despite this apparent disparity, a large number of informal female practitioners had emerged, despite the exclusion from academic circles - the confinement of women in the domestic sphere had given women a competitive advantage in their

expertise of female culture and clients. In fact, the sexist notion of interior design as a women's profession only became established in the 1980s, when women formally entered the industry: the field was boosted to new levels of demand by a cultural transition towards decoration, popularised by specialised magazines that targeted a very specific affluent female demographic.

Enrollment numbers for interior design degrees skyrocketed. Schools were relieved to benefit from the trend as less subscribed programmes, such as fine art and ceramics, weren't making ends meet. Without a need for licensing, practice-act legislation or even a consensus on what qualifies an interior designer, the standards for training were so broad that professors of other design forms were reassigned to teach it. Not requiring workshops or technicians, courses were cheap to run, making interior design an art institute's cash cow.

The first interior design television series, *Changing Rooms*, premiered in 1996. Although the rise of interior design in the media was



Marseille Building by Victor Saint Bris



benefiting the development of the discipline, the show was scorned by practitioners for its unfamiliarity with the current affluent style. The dependence of interior design on the high street also distanced it from the main academic body of architecture. The status of the starchitect is elusive for interior designers, whose relative anonymity excludes them from the high budget projects their education is based on. Later, the concept of Interior Architecture was created, repackaging the interior design curriculum through a rejection of soft furnishings and fine detail. This rejection underpins the negative connotations of these elements as a 'feminised' interior design, in opposition to, as David Reeves describes it: 'masculine design[s], [which] appear to be neutral' in limiting colour and ornament. This is also demonstrative of the subjugation of interior design to architecture in academic settings.

The ambiguity of the interior designer and nuanced relation between interiors and exteriors suggests the field could benefit from a regulated certifying body, something that would serve to define an academic standard for interior design education. This could follow the regulated body of the RIBA that interconnects and formalises British architecture, for example. As these professional organisations evolved in the 19th century, operating like gentlemen's clubs, this seems like a conservative suggestion for a modern field.

The creation of a professional body may, however, legitimise practitioners to those doing the commissioning. On the other hand,

this could also create barriers to enter into an industry that already favours expensive taste. After all, the profession would have never come to fruition if there had been such regulation in the past. Indeed, with membership to institutions such as RIBA decreasing and the salary of the interior designer rising swiftly above that of the architect, opinions about the relative status of the professions may change.

As interior design becomes stuck in artistic disregard, a result of its ties to customer tastes and priorities, the profession seems to compensate by attempting to emulate architectural systems. Although the ambiguity of the field allowed academic institutions to take advantage of it, the freedom of this lack of definition is what seemed to best propel it. Losing the current structure of higher education for interior design may be the first step to reposition the field as an uncharted, developing creative practice. Inspired by the culture of upper-class consumption, practitioners see interior design as influenced directly by the marketplace and its profit-generating capacity. It is ironic that unregulated development of the profession, as seen in the cases of legends such as Elsie Wolfe and Dorothy Draper, may produce more genuine and effective research and production than that available in academia. Has the marketplace itself then become a better regulator for the field, the most accurate reflection of those practicing?

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ARTICLE by  
ISOBEL BINNIE

## THE CORRECT WAY TO EXPERIENCE SPACE

FAUN ROTHERY considers accessibility at UCL's Bartlett School of Architecture, and in education more widely, based on her own experiences.

The tables in the Bartlett workshop come up roughly to my hip, and for safety reasons, there are no chairs. For the first half hour of working, this poses no problem - but after that, the muscles in my shoulders start to strain from hunching forward, and my hips risk subluxation from standing still on the solid floor. This limits the time I can spend not only in the workshop, but working at all that day, creating an undeniable difference in the way I experience both the space and my schooling compared to my peers. Even something as seemingly simple as the doors create an interactive difference. The doors of the Bartlett are heavy enough that I've found myself bracing my wrists, to prevent pain or injury that would likely prevent me from completing whatever work I'd set out to do that day.

Disabled students face barriers to access in every facet of their education, in a variety of forms. This isn't limited to the Bartlett, or even to architectural education as a whole. A 2011 study, from the University of West England, found that physical access problems were not the most common, nor the most damaging hurdles, that Disabled students faced while studying. Instead, there was a

strong indication that the most harmful obstacles relate to the culture created within these schools. Studios are inaccessible or uncomfortable due to a combination of light, noise and layout. Design reviews are structured in a way that disadvantages both Deaf students and those with processing issues. Instructions are often vague and don't set out clear guidelines for what work needs to be produced. Disabled students are slowly and systemically isolated throughout their education, through a combination of access issues and a culture that prioritises and necessitates high workloads and long hours.

We are all taught that there's a correct way to experience physical space, even at the expense of our actual lived experiences within them. There is a disjunct between a Disabled and an abled person's interaction with the built environment. In theory, architecture is reflective of all needs, but in practice, it seems it is not. The way we are taught to think

of and experience space, especially within the architectural institution, is through the experience of someone who is abled, white and male. Thus, to experience the space as it was designed is a privilege only given to a scant few.

Our education is entrenched within ableist power structures, with no way to change or reconcile it with our own experiences. Instead, we are expected to mould ourselves to better fit within them. This reinforces the divide between abled and Disabled students. In every interaction with their education, Disabled students must also consider inaccessible space, the cost of disclosure and ableist

microaggressions. A Disabled student is never fully included in the 'privilege' of their education: they are far enough from normal that their complete inclusion would challenge what and how they are taught.

Despite changes to the ways in which society conceives of disability, it seems that architectural study has not yet moved forward from the medical model. Nowhere is this clearer than in the high-pressure environment of the Bartlett. Disabled students are thrown in just the same as any other student, but without the natural support of ability to temper their experience. Disability is a collection of attributes within the architectural canon, something that can be thought about after the fact of design, which strips away thinking about experiences of identity. Allowing disability to exist as a personal identity and a neutral experience disrupts the architectural canon in an irreconcilable way, as it creates an array of possible experiences in any given physical space. For the principles of architectural education to remain unchallenged, Disabled experiences must always be excluded, or we risk admitting that there is never a singular experience of space.

For many, myself included, being a Bartlett student is a strong part of personal identity. Yet as it is right now, reconciling this with a Disabled identity is a struggle. To resolve this, there must be structural change within our education, to move away from canonised physical experience - towards one that prioritises the personal ways that each student interacts with the world.

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ARTICLE by  
FAUN ROTHERY

Dog by Tarzan Kingofthejungle



# WARM NOTHING



777 by Tarzan Kingofthejungle

Slow gulps

Of warm nothing

Biting the air,

Barberries and barbiturate bile leaking out.

Catatonic in a lay-by amongst nettles and forget-me-nots

Wincing and gawping at

The outline of the manor house,

Like an unwelcome slap or a tweed mirage

Refracting in your throbbing head.

And the woods are barb-wired off,

Green belt tightened,

Aspirational asphyxiation.

And they lean on you

Smother you in goose fat.

You're just part of the trimmings.

The spectre of dull numbness is haunting,

Frozen water over the flooded mining town

Fading underground.

Waiting rooms everywhere

Runic symbols carved into rotting fruit

Tired whistles and breaking bones and tasteless pulp

Trying to rouse something.

Penance and pesticides

Course through your veins,

Discombobulated.

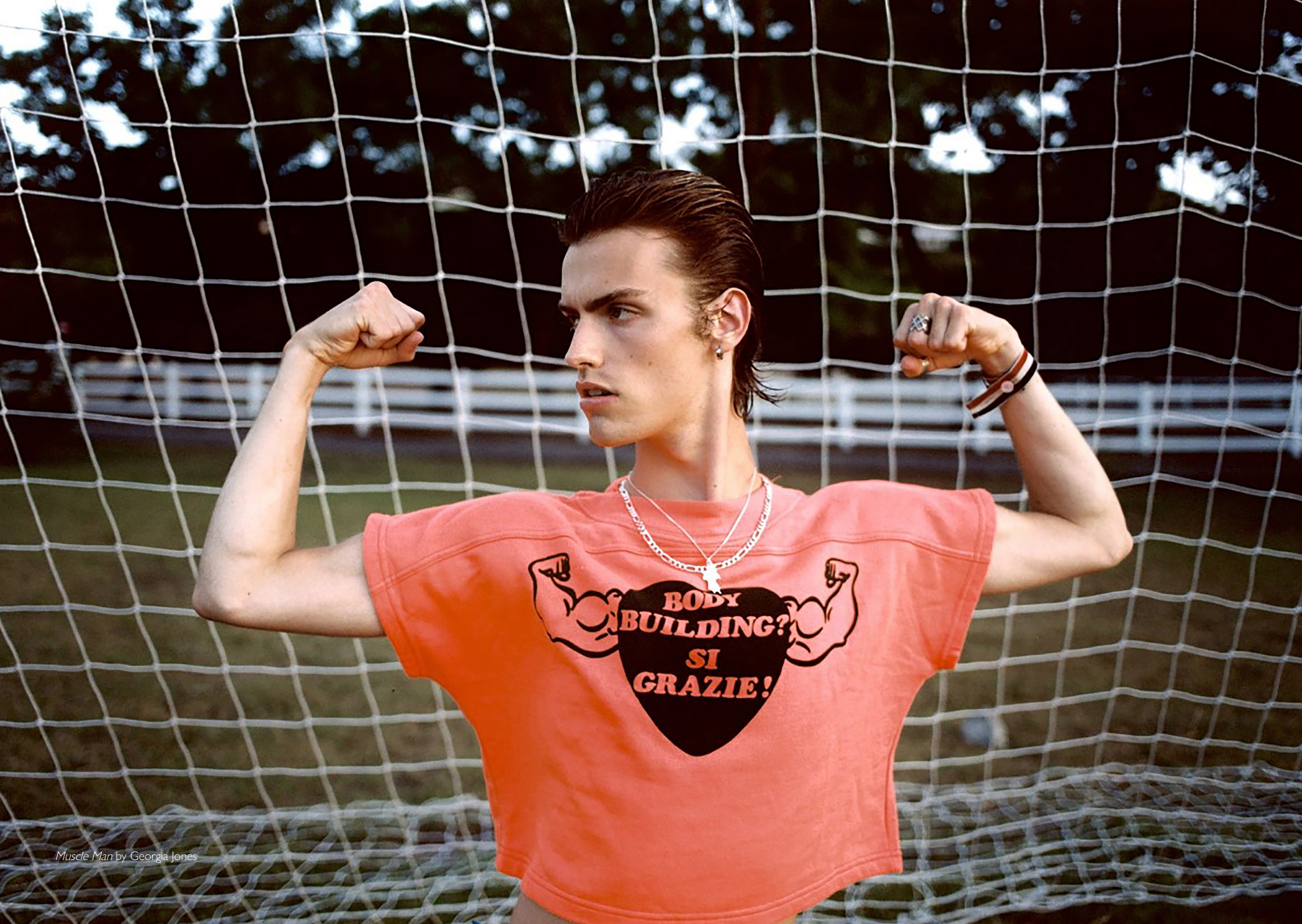
Nowt feels quite right.

Cows' blood whirling in a milk frother,

Disquieting.

*POEM by ROBBIE CAMPBELL*







THE DEBATE SURROUNDING

# REWRITING

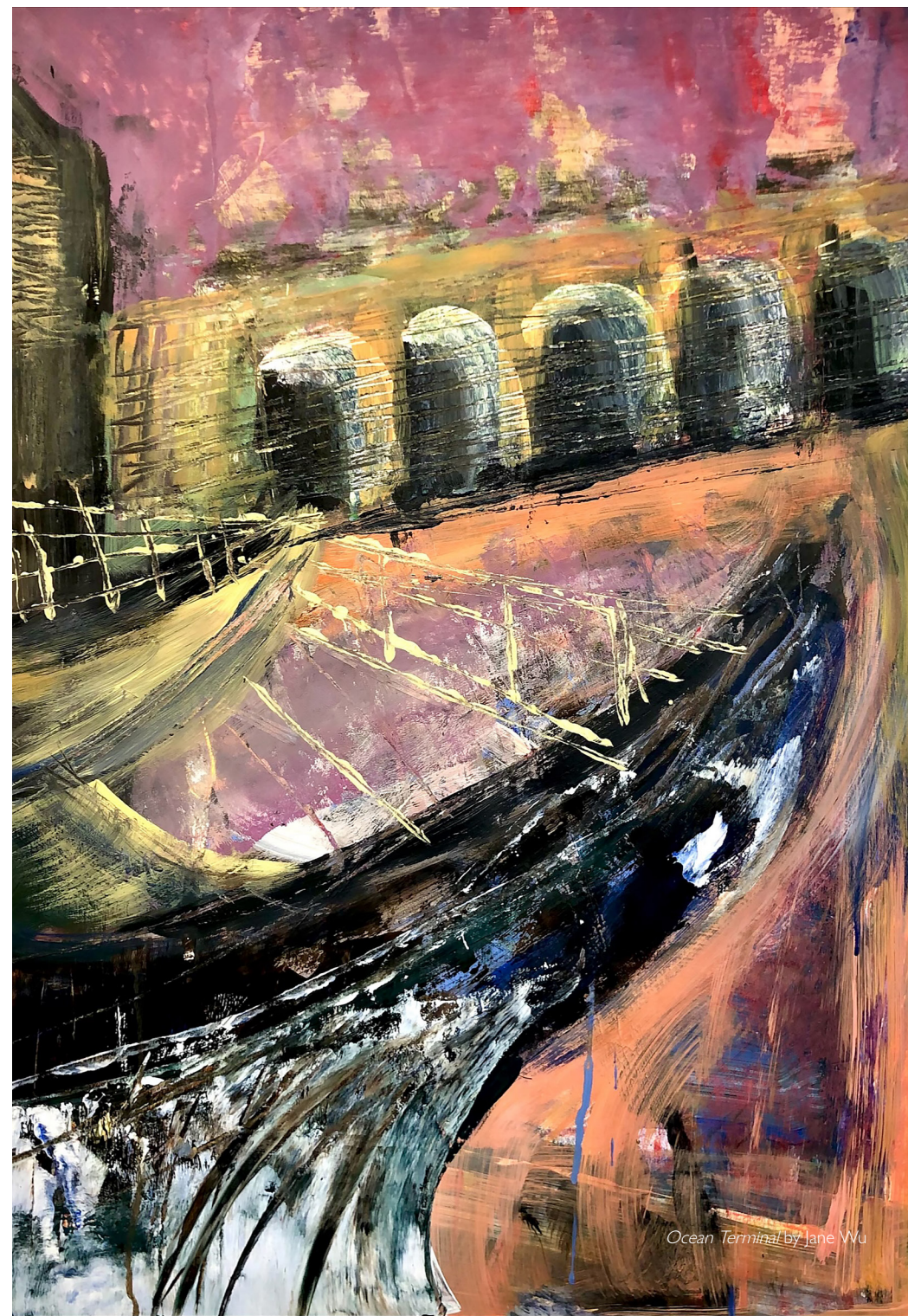
ARTISTIC LICENSE

# HISTORY

ISOBEL KNIGHT assesses the need for historical accuracy in contemporary theatre, and whether this measure is, in fact, redundant.

Twenty-first century culture is characterised by nostalgia. Fashion trends are recycled, biopics dominate the cinemas, and nearly every historical event of note has been adapted for the stage. Perhaps this is because looking back provides a sense of certainty in a time when the future appears increasingly precarious. Whatever the reason may be, one thing is undeniable: the past is ever-present, and it is being retold by people who were often not there the first time around.

Theatre is a completely fabricated medium; perhaps that is its main appeal. It is a place of pure escapism – when the lights go down, it is possible to be transported to a new place, time, or even world. But what happens when we explore the past through the lens of theatre? Is there a danger of rewriting history, causing



*Ocean Terminal* by Jane Wu

confusion and ignorance, or can historical accuracy be relegated for the sake of entertainment?

*Hamilton* (2015) is undeniably one of the most popular musicals of this century, and is responsible for introducing the story of the Founding Fathers of the US to a new generation. A topic once confined to American classrooms was brought into global popular culture through the unlikely medium of hip-hop. One of the most controversial elements of the production is the decision to cast people of colour in the retelling of a story dominated by white men. It is described by creator Lin-Manuel Miranda as 'America then, as told by America now'. However, arguably, it is important to acknowledge the fact that people of colour were actively oppressed in 'America then', with many of the founding fathers themselves owning slaves.

Does theatre have a duty to tell history as it really happened? Is there a danger of young people seeing a glorified version of the past as the truth, leading to misconceptions about the origins of the society they live in? Lin-Manuel Miranda's decision to retell this part of history using a diverse cast was seen as controversial by many; although groundbreaking with regards to diversity, it is undeniable

that it is factually misleading.

Similarly, *Six* (2017) revisits the infamous tale of Henry VIII's six wives, putting an easily digestible, and perhaps, at times, simplistic, feminist spin on a historical event centred on misogyny. It is hard not to like; the songs are inspired by modern pop music, the costumes are glamorous, and its message - that Henry's wives were individuals in their own right, grossly mistreated by Tudor men - is difficult to dispute. It is harder to confuse *Six* with a history lesson; it often feels like a sketch, with quotable one-liners which can now be heard all over TikTok. But the question still stands: do playwrights and directors maintain the creative license to portray important historical figures as sparkly-corset-wearing pop divas, or is there a moral obligation to stick to the truth?

This debate is not new by any means - Shakespeare himself set many of his plays in different eras, yet his historical accuracy (or lack thereof) is almost irrelevant. His ability to depict timeless stories, emotions, and dilemmas is the real reason for his fixed position in our culture. It seems we learn far more about the era a play was written in than the era it attempts to portray: we discover more about Elizabethan

dialects, gender roles and politics through Shakespearean plays than about any of the times and places his plays were set in. In the same way, we learn more about twenty-first century views on political correctness, diversity, and musical style from today's productions (take *Hamilton*, for example), than anything else.

Bertolt Brecht, one of the most significant playwrights of the twentieth century, was known for his unique approach to theatre and the portrayal of the radical left-wing politics present in Weimar Germany. His plays span many countries and eras, and are rarely accurate to a specific time or place. His most famous play, *The Threepenny Opera* (1928), is set in Victorian London, yet provides a damning criticism of German capitalist society during the build-up to the Second World War. This choice was made to alienate the audience from the emotional elements of the story, so that they approached it from a purely objective political perspective. Since German audiences could not relate to the day-to-day lives of any of the characters, they were able to see the injustices of their own cultural context clearly. This could not have been done without setting the play in a different period and geographical context; this seems to

evidence, therefore, that historical manipulation is a valid technique that directors should have full access to.

The question of creative license is one often debated and is by no means limited to the theatre. The crux of the debate is the purpose of art itself. Is art meant to be an accurate reflection of the world we live in, with serious political repercussions and social responsibilities, or pure escapism, something the artist should have complete control over? Perhaps the answer lies somewhere in the middle.

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ARTICLE by  
ISOBEL KNIGHT





## HOW SPIRITUAL JAZZ RENDERS THE COSMIC REAL

CATRINA DENTON considers how music has the power to elevate individuals to a spiritual realm beyond everyday consciousness.

*He's Reaching Up* by Stela Kostomaj

The mid-sixties were a revolutionary time for religion in Europe. Eastern influences shaped religious practice, with individuals curating their own spirituality, drawing from Hinduism, Sufism, Buddhism and ancient Egyptian religions. Psychedelia also shaped how people wanted to experience the divine; a detached Protestant father figure would no longer suffice. Individuals coveted visceral spiritual experiences, seeking the otherworldly through personal, charismatic and bodily means. The diverse and disparate traditions that comprised these new spiritual movements needed to be tied together to be experienced as real, rather than a discombobulated amalgamation of spiritual signs. Music was the ideal medium of weaving together these otherworldly threads: its profound emotional agency evoked unspeakably specific feelings, and deepened understandings of the sublime in contemporary thought.

Spiritual jazz draws together several global musical traditions, combining the religious influences present in their respective histories and timbres into one distinct sound, providing feeling and depth to a new cosmology and experience of reality. This transcendental timbre is perfectly exemplified in the 1971

album *Journey in Satchidananda* by Alice Turiya Coltrane and Pharoah Sanders. The album explores the nature of ultimate reality ('Satchidananda' in Sanskrit), the perception of which can only be achieved through intense spiritual practice and transcendence from mundane consciousness.

Too often overshadowed by the work of her husband, John Coltrane, Alice Turiya Coltrane offered essential contributions to spiritual jazz. Her spirituality was an esoteric tapestry predominantly composed of Hinduism and ancient Egyptian religion, a synthesis of transcendental journeys towards an ultimate reality and celebration of African civilisation, which has particular cultural meanings in the context of the Civil Rights Movement and Black pride. Coltrane dedicated herself to this spiritual reality, renouncing the secular and becoming a Swamini in 1976. Her followers called her *Swamini Turiyasangitananda*, meaning 'the Transcendental Lord's highest song of bliss' in Hindi. Her exploration of ultimate reality in *Journey in Satchidananda* (1971) entails a sound that transcends borders of culture, lifting the listener closer to an experience of the divine.

The album opens with the drone of the tanpura, characteristic of the classical Indian Raga, which oozes energy into the piece. The Raga (the improvisational framework of the Indian classical tradition) has etymological roots in colour, meaning 'red' or 'to dye'. This is reflected in the synesthetic quality of classical Indian music. Incorporating these synesthetic timbres into spiritual jazz brings it closer to the senses, forming a reality that transcends boundaries of sound and sight, rendering the spiritual a visceral and potent experience. In *Journey in Satchidananda*, the tanpura is coupled with an upright bass, a combination symbolic of the fusion of jazz, a genre with Pan-African roots, with Indian musical and religious traditions.

Enter Alice Turiya Coltrane on harp, effortlessly dancing across multi-octave scales and arpeggios, her celestial glissandi conjuring images of stars darting through the night sky, cultivating understandings of the ethereal, powerful and divine. The harp has many associations within Euro-American culture. It is stereotypically a heavenly instrument, used to call the past to the mind's eye, evoking dreams and imagination. In other words, the harp is synonymous with meditation on the otherworldly and altered states of consciousness. Coltrane utilises these associations to elevate the listener closer to *Satchidananda*. Enter Pharoah Sanders, an artist who bridges spiritual and free jazz; his ecstatic

and repetitive improvisation strikes me as the saxophonic equivalent to speaking in tongues. These musical dynamics synthesise disparate religious traditions into one interconnected spiritual mass, a pluralistic representation of the reality Coltrane understands, one of ultimacy and interconnectivity.

Oneness and connectedness are at the core of the beliefs of spiritual jazz artists. This is exemplified in their discographies, such as Pharoah Sanders' 1974 album, *Love Is In Us All*, and Albert Ayler's album from 1969, *Music Is The Healing Force of the Universe*. Indeed, jazz holds a specific power to communicate messages of psychic unity due to the absence of linguistic barriers. Earthly symbols experienced by all humans permeate how Alice Turiya Coltrane thought of her instruments, comparing her piano to the sunrise and the sunset to the harp, with its quiet introspection. The ultimate reality we are encouraged to experience through spiritual jazz is an interconnected one. It transcends the boundaries of musical tradition, history, language, culture, sensory categories, and individuals. The sound of spiritual jazz acts as a name to this boundless reality and has the power to move even the least spiritually engaged individuals, including myself.

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ARTICLE by  
CATRINA DENTON

## HOW A LEOPARD FALLS

GEORGIA GOOD reflects on Tomasi di Lampedusa's *The Leopard*, and the place of beauty in the Italian Risorgimento.

In 1860, the world was changing. Sicily was changing. Garibaldi's Redshirts had landed on Sicily's coast, and within a year, its sovereign kingdom would be overthrown. By 1861, the Risorgimento was complete: Italy was unified, recast in the name of the modern, democratic, and real. The future ousted the past.

In 1860, too, an old dynasty went about its day - reciting the rosary, gathering in church. Their voices echoed on its high walls, shading the Palermo sun; frescoes danced upon them, evoking the divine. This is the world that Giuseppe Tomasi di Lampedusa shows us, as his novel opens, as revolution erupts outside those walls. *Il Gattopardo* (1958) - or, *The Leopard* - does not record revolution, but its cost. The novel centres on Fabrizio, prince and patriarch of the dynastic House of Salina (a proxy for the author's own family, himself the last Lampedusa prince). As the novel plays out, Fabrizio is witness to the fall of his world, as feudalistic and ecclesiastical primacies are undone, and the walls of that house start to crumble. The prince, and everything he stands for, are fatalities of history - or, about to be.



Yet *The Leopard* is less about resisting that fall than leaning into it. It feels presupposed: Fabrizio, and old Sicily itself, are almost in love with death. Sicily's beauty, ethos and self-expression depend on it; the prince declares, or laments, 'our sensuality is a hankering for oblivion'. The family's acts of self-preservation (the nephew Tancredi's marriage to the nouveau riche Angelica, the cordiality with her father) always

feel superficial: fundamentally, their being is rooted in a deeply fatalistic, egoistic and stoic intransigence, in which doom and triumph are essentially the same. Already, Fabrizio occupies the past tense: 'we were the Leopards, the Lions...'. The Sicilian paradigm - even self-mythologisation - is absolutely dependent on its own futility. *The Leopard*, indeed, is a century younger than its historical content;

like Fabrizio, we already know how it ends.

*The Leopard* is equally morbid and seductive; the two are essentially, irrevocably intertwined. It has, unmistakably, a fin de siècle sensibility, a bond with European Decadence: fixations on excess and decay, on hedonistic ennui, on sensual beauty and absolute death. This is inscribed in the novel's pages, in the prince's mind, and on his palatial walls. The mortal and immortal intertwine; to love death is to envision the afterlife, creating it on earth; to die is to reach toward self-deification. Even Lampedusa speaks from beyond the grave: the novel was posthumously published, deemed unpublishable during his lifetime. The celestial recurs throughout, thematically and allusively, until the godly and the earthly blur together. *The Leopard's* 'divinities frescoed on the ceiling awoke...', and Fabrizio himself is a giant of a man (crushing ornaments, accidentally, when upset). The palace is christened a 'Palermitan Olympus', its family typed as classical gods - as carnal, philandering, and fallible as Olympians, as self-aggrandising as they're out of touch. Yet each mystic sphere is filtered through the chapel, overseen by God. In the Risorgimento, the declines of Catholic and sovereign power go hand in hand: sharing mythologies, corruptions, arbitrary hierarchies and tenuous justifications, the death of old Sicilian orders is a precursor for the death of God.

*The Leopard's* politics are endlessly ambiguous: does Lampedusa romanticise archaic, exploitative, patriarchal systems, or does he critique them? The novel is condemned and exalted by right- and leftist critics alike (Luchino

Visconti, director of its 1963 film adaptation, is among its Marxist fans). A postwar novel, some read fascism into its accounts of old dynastic rule, and the Allied occupation into Garibaldi's conquest of Italy.

There is no objective answer. What matters, instead, is the beauty that shines through, scorching like Sicilian sunlight. These archaic ruling classes, both human and divine, are fundamentally bonded by a deep aestheticism - a synesthetic, overwhelming, amoral and sensual triumph of the beautiful, implicit in their constructions, and in the prose itself. Historical events occur outside its pages, as inconsequential as they are essential. The beauty of *The Leopard* is a languid, enervated, fatalistic beauty - conscious of its own doom, that it cannot exist in a rational, egalitarian world; it is an absolute refusal to get real, even if (and because) that means death.

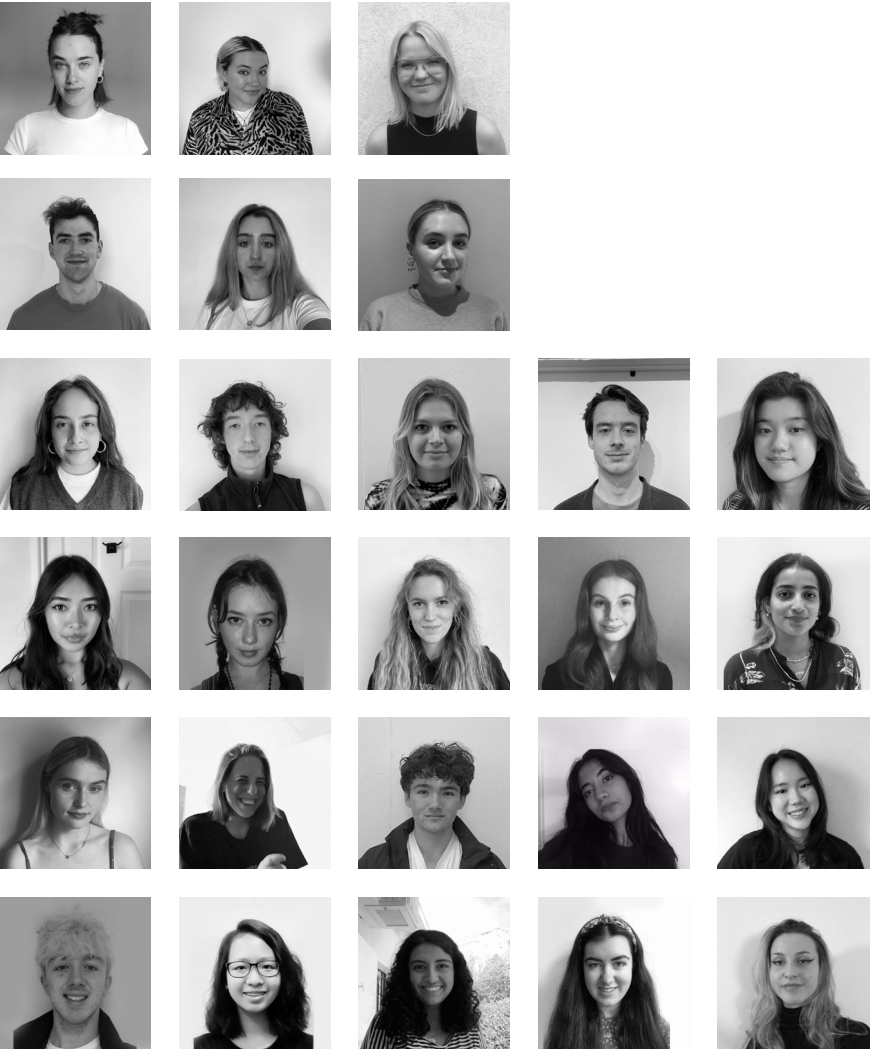
Sixteen years after *The Leopard's* opening scene, when Fabrizio finally dies, the old world is lost altogether. Only its frescoes and portraits, chapels and palaces seem to remain, remnants of another time - radiating, cutting through the dust. Yet as the light leaves his eyes, Fabrizio sees Venus: the embodiment of sensual, classical, cosmic beauty. The Leopard is a testament, or elegy, to the triumph of beauty, even when it constitutes a reverence for its own doom; to the hope that in the end, despite it all, we too might see Venus, when we finally close our eyes.

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