

# THE DILETTANTE

CREATIVE CULTURE AND RIVETING HISTORY FOR THE CURIOUS MINDED



ISSUE ONE TASTER EDITION

FEMALE SURREALISTS | SEAFARING CATS | THE DEATH OF THE LONG PLAY  
PROFESSOR ELEMENTAL | CREATIVE CONFABS | THE ROARING 20S



^  
NIGHTLY CONVERSATIONS (NACHTLICHES GESPRACH) (1907)  
BY MORIZ JUNG.

# GREETINGS & SALUTATIONS

**W**elcome, dear readers,  
to the very first issue  
of *The Dilettante*!

This magazine is dedicated  
to the creative dabblers of the  
world; the artists and outsiders,  
magpies of culture and lovers of  
sensible nonsense.

We believe it is those who  
have lived unique or daring  
lives that encourage to us see  
the world from interesting new  
perspectives. Spotting the  
weird and wonderful corners  
of the world and looking to the  
artists, eccentrics, rebels and  
renegades who have embellished  
history with their compelling  
stories, *The Dilettante* celebrates  
difference, creativity and a spirit  
of curiosity within its pages.

We hope also to provide a  
little escape from the clutches  
of the internet and the stresses  
of the everyday. While this free  
publication is indeed digital, it

is intended as a fleeting taster  
of our future plans: a beautiful  
print edition of the magazine  
will be available to buy from  
our website in November 2021,  
containing lots more creative  
ramblings and inspiring treats.

In this issue we have gathered  
a *mélange* of art and articles  
to tickle your fancy, from  
stories of surrealists and cats,  
to contemporary artists who  
have caught our eye. A big  
thank you goes out to all of our  
contributors and anyone who  
has helped make this happen.  
You know who you are.

For all of you reading this digital  
*Dilettante*, it's a pleasure to have  
you with us for our first issue.  
You are officially exempt from  
doing anything strenuous for  
the next 30 minutes. Now please,  
find yourself a leisurely spot and  
a nice tippie, adjust your seat to  
a relaxed position, and read on.

*Sophie Gargett* - EDITOR

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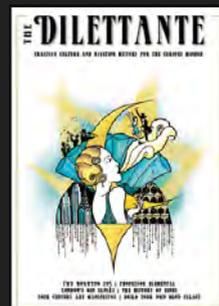
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## ON THE COVER

'Roaring Twenties'  
BY  
ABI.M.WHITTAKER  
(2020)

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# CONTENTS

10/20/31

CREATIVE  
CONFABS: INSIDE  
THE MINDS OF  
OUR FAVOURITE  
ARTISTS



THE  
HAND 13  
OF ITHELL:  
ALCHEMY,  
ART & THE  
FEMINE  
SURREAL

EDITOR'S LETTER	3
DILETTANTE ETYMOLOGY	6
THE DILETTANTE MANIFESTO	7
AGONY! WITH PROFESSOR ELEMENTAL	8

12	CREATIVE MUSINGS: IMPOSTER SYNDROME
34	MISS ONION'S EXQUISITE FINDS
43	CLASSIFIEDS



22  
DILETTANTE  
HISTORY:  
NAIVE PAINTER  
HENRI  
ROUSSEAU

24  
SOUNDBITES,  
SOLITUDE,  
& SCREENS:  
WHAT IS  
DIGITISATION  
DOING TO MUSIC?



29

A WHISTLESTOP  
TOUR OF THE  
ROARING TWENTIES



38

THE FLOOR:  
A SEAFARING  
FELINE ON THE  
INFAMOUS  
SHACKLETON  
EXPEDITION



# DILETTANTE

noun | DIL-et-tant-tee

DERIVED FROM THE ITALIAN PAST PARTICIPLE DILETTARE, meaning 'to delight', Dilettante entered the ENGLISH LANGUAGE IN THE MID-EIGHTEENTH CENTURY TO REFER TO A PERSON WHO DELIGHTS IN THE ARTS.

Have you ever discovered a new word which you never quite realised you needed? A word which unlocks a deeper level of understanding within you, and for a moment allows you to make a little more sense of the world?

Words undoubtedly shape our existence in subtle but potent ways, and through their etymology we can find reflections of the world and its sentiments. Words can be twisted and transformed, spat out or reclaimed, they can be uplifting and liberating when considered, or hurtful and hindering when thrown about carelessly. (Friendly Karens, you have our sympathies.)

While once possessing a carefree sense of joy, the word dilettante suffered an unfortunate shift in meaning in the 19th century. As the Romantic era cultivated the celebrity of the 'artist-genius', attitudes to the arts changed also. No longer was it admirable

to be an interested amateur with a wide range of interests, or to enrich one's life through varied creative pursuits. Instead dilettante became a derogatory slur suggesting superficiality, a pretentious dabbler and someone who shouldn't be taken seriously.

When deciding on our *nom de guerre*, we very much identified with the original meaning of dilettante, the playful and explorative creative who tries new things and isn't striving for perfection or acclaim. Stuff the snobs who sneer at beginners and the critics who snub the unfamiliar - sometimes its just nice to have a go and enjoy the process of creativity.

If you have ever felt like an amateur or a jack of all trades, if you happily try your hand at a range of creative pursuits, if you are endlessly curious about learning new things, then perhaps you too are a dilettante.



## THE DILETTANTE MANIFESTO

PLAY THE MOUTH TRUMPET  
BEGIN YOUR OWN TRADITIONS  
DANCE IN THE ELEVATOR

ABOLISH  
PERFECTION

GO ON THE SWINGS AT THE PARK  
DESIGN YOUR OWN IDEOLOGY  
INCORPORATE NONSENSE INTO YOUR DAY  
CREATE AN ABSURD ALTER EGO  
BEWARE THE MIRAGE OF MUNDANITY

CULTIVATE  
CURIOSITY

MAKE TIME FOR REVELRY  
SAY GOOD MORNING TO STRANGERS  
WEAR YOUR SUNDAY BEST  
HAVE ONE FOR THE ROAD

BEGIN NOW

LAUGH WHEN IT ALL GOES WRONG  
AVOID THE PERPETUAL NAYSAYERS  
PREPARE TO BE MISTAKEN  
SEARCH FOR THE WEIRDO INSIDE YOURSELF  
SAY YES TO FANCY DRESS  
FAVOUR INDEPENDENT BUSINESSES  
DEVELOP A PARTY TRICK  
AND ABOVE ALL DON'T BE A TWAT.

# AGONY! WITH PROFESSOR ELEMENTAL

ARE YOU WADING THROUGH TREACLE? GETTING YOUR  
KNICKERS IN A TWIST? HAS SOMEONE GOT  
YOUR DANDER UP?

*I'm Professor Elemental, The Dilettante's  
Agony Uncle, and I'm here to help.*

*Why don't you take a seat, grab a  
complimentary custard cream and tell  
me all about it.*

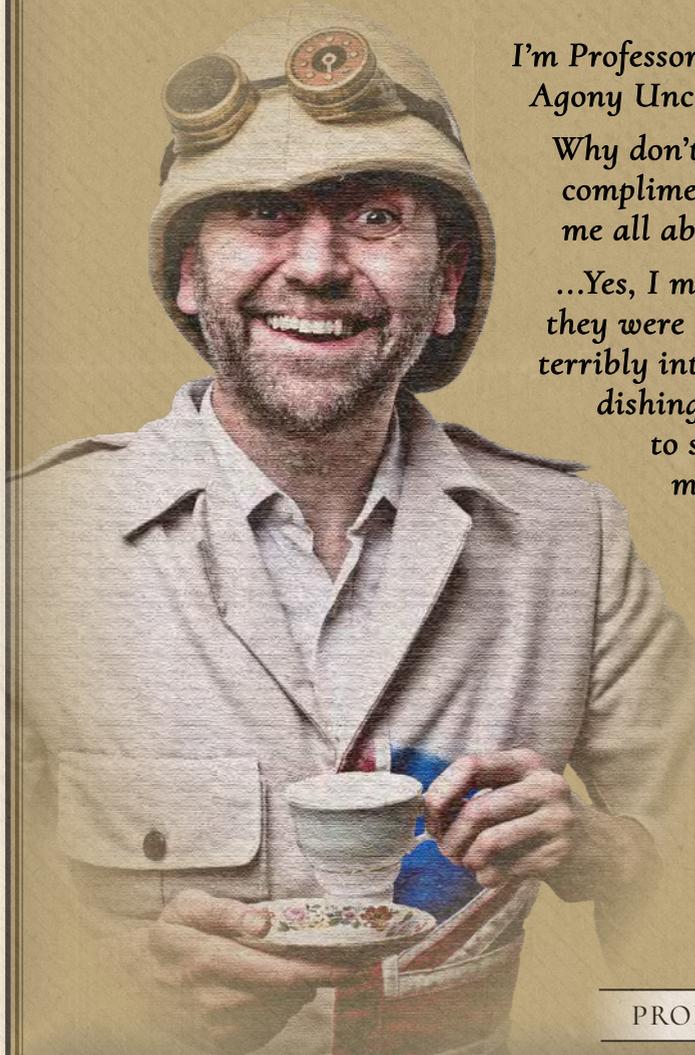
*...Yes, I might leave things worse than  
they were before. And no, I'm not  
terribly interested in the consequences of  
dishing out potentially awful advice  
to strangers, but that's what will  
make it so fun.*

*I'll do what I can to help.  
And if I can't help, then  
maybe we'll just have a  
jolly good giggle together.*

*Yours sincerely etc, etc  
and so forth,*

*Professor  
Elemental*

PROFESSORELEMENTAL.COM



Dear Professor,

We have all changed after the plights of the past year, but personally, and to my horror I seem to have re-emerged in the form of a grown up. I spend much of my free time making encouraging comments to my potato plants, I've started entering competitions in the Puzzler, and I even accidentally bought a pair of crocs one wild evening in the middle aisle of Aldi. I know my Bright Young Thing is still in there somewhere, but I fear it is too late. How can I remedy this? Is there any hope for me?

Yours,

An unwilling potato  
twitcher.

Dear Twitcher,

Never fear! Old age comes to us all. Well except me of course, thanks to that painting I keep in the attic. If you are without a mystical painting however, you might find yourself rather upset at the onset of wrinkles and foreheadlines that make the top of your head look like a badly ploughed field.

I bring good news from the front however, you are now old enough to stop caring what other people think of you! Even better, you are practically invisible to all but other elderlies, meaning you can do WHATEVER YOU WANT.

Why not take up a new

hobby like starting food fights with strangers in motorway services, swearing at teenagers or shoplifting. You'll be amazed at what you can get away with if you really put your mind to it. Free yourself from self doubt and lean into being old, just be careful not to put your back out while you do it.

There's no excuse for crocs though. Burn them by fire immediately.

Dear Professor,

Having recently left a long-term relationship and quit my job, I've decided it's time to reinvent myself. I began by burning my personal effects in the garden, which, to the disgruntlement of my neighbours, inevitably led to a night of naked dancing around the bonfire of my previous life.

Now I can start from scratch, I have been toying with becoming a full time surrealist. I've invested in several pet lobsters and am now proudly sporting a tremendous moustache, but the world is still appearing quite normal and I am struggling to find my tribe.

Do you have any advice on how to meet like-minded folk with a passion for the strange side of life?

Yours,

A wannabe escapist.

Dear Escapist,

After some considerable exploration, I have cornered the 5 best subcultures to aid your new life:

- Steampunk: Friendly nerds who dress in Science fiction and Victorian outfits and drink a lot.

- Fleapunk: Friendly entomophiles who dress as insects and drink a lot. Surprisingly erotic, but I appreciate my tastes are quite niche.

- Treepunk: Friendly dendrophiles who dress as trees and go to parks to blend in. Can be a little on the quiet side

- Cheesejunk: Friendly cheesemongers and their fans who gather for Cheesecon each year. Very delicious but quite smelly.

- Sneezepunk: Just people with really bad allergies. Actually I'd avoid this one. Awful.

Please do get in touch if you need details of such local meetings. Good Luck!

Dear Professor.

During lockdown I commissioned an artist to paint a life-size portrait of myself, which I have now placed over my mantelpiece. I think

it's absolutely gorgeous and would like to collect more portraits, but my housemate says it makes them uncomfortable and has accused me of delusions of grandeur. Am I misguided and edging towards narcissism or should I continue to celebrate my beautiful face with more work?

Yours,

A (fabulously modest)  
patron of the arts.

Dear Fabulous,

What is wrong with people these days? If a person can't hang a life sized portrait of ones own naked face and body in ones own living room, then what is the point of even having a living room. The problem is you havent gone far enough: try sculpting a life sized model of yourself in butter to place in the kitchen, paint yourself with angel wings on every ceiling and tattoo a picture of your own face on the face of your housemate while they sleep.

Surely when they are faced with endless inescapable images of you, your housemate will come around. Or not. Worth a bash anyway.

DO YOU HAVE A PROBLEM FOR THE PROF?  
PERHAPS YOU'RE WORRY FREE AND ARE  
ALREADY CONSIDERING PROBLEMS YOU MAY  
HAVE IN THE FUTURE?

WHY NOT DROP THE PROFESSOR A LINE AND  
SEE HOW HE CAN HELP SOLVE LIFE'S WOES.

Email: [thedilettantesociety@gmail.com](mailto:thedilettantesociety@gmail.com)

DESCRIBE YOUR STYLE IN THREE WORDS.

*Symbolist. Costumbrist. Naturalist.*

WHAT THEMES ARE CENTRAL TO YOUR WORK?

*The forest and the night.*

WHICH ARTISTS (ALIVE OR DEAD) WOULD YOU INVITE TO DINNER?

*A candlelight dinner with Goya's ghost would be fabulous.*

WHAT IS YOUR FAVOURITE ART MOVEMENT?

*Expressionism, because it admirably focus the emotions of a society tormented by the times.*

WHY DO YOU THINK ART IS IMPORTANT?

*There is art everywhere, even in the baking of a cake. So there is a chance for everyone to express themselves through art.*

WHAT IS YOUR FAVOURITE ARTWORK?

*The mountains I can see through my window.*

# Nunilo Miravalles

@LACUEVADECARRACURA



# CREATIVE MUSINGS

How to stay confident when the imposter police come knocking.

For anyone who has bravely endeavoured to try their hand at something new, there is often an irksome goblin lurking in the shadows, ready to thwart your most earnest efforts.

Just as you get into that lovely flow of creativity and start feeling good about your work, in come barging the imposter police, ranting about qualifications and experience, calling you a phony, and holding up to your face all the great work that came before.

Imposter syndrome is real, and it can be crippling, but it affects almost everyone. Its power lies in our fear of criticism and of not being good enough, and it gets stronger the more we let it run rampant in our thoughts.

But never fear! There are many ways to stamp out this gruesome creative malady.

In his excellent book *Steal Like An Artist*, writer and artist

Austin Kleon suggests faking it until you make it. If all the world's a stage, says Kleon, why not embrace the art of pretending to be whatever it is you are hoping to become? Indeed, there are many people going about their lives in positions of power who clearly have no idea what they are doing, so unless you are trying to run a country no harm can really be done.

Next time the fraud police come knocking, we suggest you try reframing the thought - perhaps imposter syndrome is the real sham here. What right does such a bothersome notion have to come in and ruin your best efforts and accomplishments with its judgements and jibes? Defend your passions and tell those contemptuous cretins where to go. You have things to create. There will always be someone more skilled and room for improvement, but don't let that stop you from enjoying your own creative journey.



## THE HAND OF ITHELL

COLQUHOUN, CARRINGTON, VARO: EVOKING THE  
FEMININE SURREAL

*Alchemical explorer and art-scientist Dr. Richard Brown shines a light on the often overlooked work of female surrealist artists of the 20th century.*



▲ DOWN BELOW BY LEONORA CARRINGTON, 1940.

In 2018 a series of fortunate events resulted in my moving from Nottingham to Cornwall. Just before my relocation, I visited *The House of Fame* at Nottingham Contemporary, an exhibition curated by the artist Linder Sterling. It was here that I first came across the artist Ithell Colquhoun (pronounced *eythell col-hoon*) and became mesmerised by her deeply evocative and surreal work.

Serendipitously, in the bookstore I later discovered *The Living Stones*, written by Colquhoun in 1957. This inspiring personal account of her search for an artist studio in Cornwall mirrored my own recent hunt, the narrative sweeping the reader along on explorations of the mystical landscapes, ancient monuments and folklore of Cornwall.

The strange sense of connection and enchantment I had towards Colquhoun's work wasn't something only I had experienced. Linder, too, describes how she felt what folklorist and writer Steve

Patterson called 'The Hand of Colquhoun' upon her own discovery of Ithell, which inspired to create new (albeit aesthetically very different) works.

My subsequent investigations into Ithell revealed many shared interests between my own creative journey and hers, but it is not unsurprising that I had not heard of this enigmatic artist before - art history has a knack for reducing women's work to footnotes, and despite the revival that women artists such as Colquhoun have had in recent decades, their names are still often overlooked. (Indeed, if you look up surrealist artists online, still today nine out of ten mentioned are the male 'movement leaders' we are more familiar with.)

The presence of Ithell's Hand guiding me, I was soon led to the works of her contemporaries, Leonora Carrington and Remedios Varo, and entered a world of theosophical transformation, rich symbolism, and the feminine surreal.

Ithell Colquhoun was born in 1906 to a middle-class military family stationed in India. After a childhood spent under the care of an elderly aunt in the UK, she enjoyed a robust education, eventually studying at the prestigious Slade School of Art in London.

Her desire to pursue art professionally was ignited during this time, but it was after visiting the 1936 International Exhibition of Surrealism in London that her own distinctive style would actualise.

For a few years Ithell mingled in high-brow European art circles and briefly joined the British Surrealist Group in 1939, until her eventual relocation to the West Country in the 1950s.



▲ ITHELL COLQUHOUN PHOTOGRAPHED BY MAN RAY IN 1932

## CARRINGTON DECLARED, TO HER PARENTS HORROR, THAT SHE WANTED TO BECOME AN ARTIST

Leonora Carrington too would be changed by her visit to the International Exhibition of Surrealism, so much so that she 'ran away' to France with artist Max Ernst shortly afterwards at just 19 years old.

As an adolescent, she had fiercely rebelled against the stuffiness of her aristocratic roots, exemplified in her early short story *The Debutante*, in which a young girl befriends a hyena at the zoo and, after teaching it French, decides to send it in her place to her coming out ball. After being expelled from numerous boarding schools and sent away to be 'finished' in Florence and Paris, Carrington finally declared, to her parent's horror, that she wanted to become an artist.

In France, the tremors of World War Two were beginning to rumble and Leonora's time with Ernst and other avant garde artists in Paris was cut



LEONORA CARRINGTON PHOTOGRAPHED BY HERMANN LANDSOFF IN 1942 © MÜNCHNER STADTMUSEUM >



short by Ernst's repeated arrests as an alien (German) enemy. Leonora fled to southern France and then Spain.

Deeply grieved by the loss of her partner, her personal displacement, and the wider political situation, she was forcibly placed in an asylum in Spain where she was given harrowing pharmaceutical treatments, which would later inspire works such as *Down Below* (1940). Several months later, while en route with a family 'minder' to another facility in South Africa, Leonora escaped and eventually found herself in Mexico, where she settled for the rest of her life.

#### Women in the Boys Club

Both Colquhoun and Carrington contributed to exhibitions and publications to the British Surrealist movement, but their labelling as surrealists is somewhat problematic. They were each distinctly independent and objected to the predominant male idealism of women within the surrealist community as *femme-enfant*, or childlike women.

Despite many women creating provocative work during the mid 20th century, within the movement they were still largely seen as the muse and, through the male surrealist eye, as physical forms to be reconstructed and fantasized about. --"I warn you, I refuse to be an object", Carrington once declared. Whether this was in response to her family's attempt to streamline her into a 'lady', or to her position as Ernst's subject and ideal *femme-enfant* is a matter to be debated.

Although close members of the British Surrealist Group for a brief period, both women had been introduced to the movement over a decade after it was established, and there was little space for female expression. Carrington's departure, due to the effects of the war, was more of a chaotic separation, whereas Colquhoun left just a year after joining, having refused to denounce her occult interests or follow the prescribed political causes of the

group. Either way, for both artists, their withdrawal from the boys club and exodus to new places, which encouraged belief in magic and folklore spurred on their own deeper artistic expression.

Carrington's move to Mexico in 1942 inspired what would become her distinctive oeuvre incorporating folklore, alchemy, magic and feminine power into her art. Here she became close friends with Spanish-Mexican artist Remedios Varo, who had also fled from the turbulent political events happening in Europe. The two shared an outlandish sense of humour and together collaborated on a variety of fairy tales, potions and plays.

“ I WARN  
YOU, I  
REFUSE  
TO BE AN  
OBJECT.

Born in Catalonia in 1908, the differing personalities of Varo's parents would influence her work greatly; her father, who worked as an engineer, encouraged her to draw with a technical precision, while her mother's devout Catholicism inspired more spiritual themes.

For Varo, making art was a way to exercise intuition and reveal the unseen. Inspired by science and Jungian theory, her subject matter often centred around a lone woman. Sometimes seated and engaged in strange alchemical work, sometimes travelling through labyrinthine streets with checkered

< *The Star Maker* by Remedios Varo (1958).

floors and torrid skies, the scenes Varo imagined onto canvas evoke themes of isolation, androgyny and dutiful work.

### THE ABSTRACT AND THE ACCESSIBLE

While chiefly considered to be painters, Colquhoun, Carrington and Varo all wrote voraciously. Both Carrington's novella *The Hearing Trumpet* (1976) and *The Goose of Hermogenes* published by Colquhoun

in 1961 serve as examples of the modern Female Gothic through their portrayal of a heroine character overcoming trials of isolation and resignation, but the different styles of writing serve to highlight the artists differing approaches to art making.

Colquhoun's *The Goose of Hermogenes* is an esoteric tale set on an enchanting island and features a disjointed and dream-like construction. The title itself refers to a lesser used term for the philosopher's stone (the ultimate holy grail for alchemists) and each chapter is named after the 12 stages of the alchemical process required to create such a substance.

In comparison, *The Hearing Trumpet* is a humorous and playful tale about an eccentric 92 year old lady who acquires a hearing trumpet shortly before being packed off by her family to a rather peculiar old people's home named Lightsome Hall. Populated by other forthright, eccentric and amusing women (the two main characters were modelled on older versions of herself

## THE FAMILIAR WAS TINGED WITH THE STRANGE AND THE STRANGE WITH THE FAMILIAR

▼ ITHELL COLQUHOUN, *ALCOVE 1* (1948).



and Varo), the home provides a fanciful setting for a series of cataclysmic events. Somewhat sinister but deeply telling, wit and mischief keep the book light and whimsical.

When it came to painting, Colquhoun, Carrington and Varo all had the typical surrealist knack for provoking curiosity in the viewer. The familiar was tinged with the strange and the strange with the familiar. Carrington's work is again more representational, depicting human bodies with animal heads, figures performing strange rituals in ethereal spaces, and emitting a feeling of having tapped into a disquieting fairytale or perplexing dream. In contrast, Colquhoun's style is far more abstract, presenting exotic and organic shapes, coloured with rich hues and placed in desolate, barren lands.

### ALCHEMY AND MAGICAL PRACTICE

Both Colquhoun and Carrington incorporated ideas of folklore, symbolism and transcending the physical world within their artwork and writings, while away from the canvas they performed private and ritualistic magical explorations, often related to the Kabbalah. Each created their own artistic interpretations of the tarot, which further the case of their differing aesthetics.

## OVERCOMING THE MALE-FEMALE GENDER DIVIDE COULD TRANSFORM SOCIETY.

Colquhoun's *Taro as Colour* (published in 2018) are meditative and suggestive abstract forms created in vibrantly painted

enamels. In comparison Carrington's Tarot (created in 1955, but only discovered in 2017) bears strong visual similarities to the figurative illustrations in classic Rider-Waite Tarot cards.

Underlying and informing their work, both artists celebrated the woman as goddess, a source of power and magic. Along with subverting gender norms of male surrealism, their interests in alchemy and the occult, expressed in their art, writing and magical practices, also purported the belief that overcoming the male-female gender divide could transform society.

The climax of Carrington's book *The Hearing Trumpet* makes explicit the connection between religion, androgyny, and utopian revolution and claims that, whether this is actually possible or not, the ideal world will be ushered in when we explode the gender binary.

For Colquhoun, alchemical conjunction and the notion of 'The Divine Androgyny' supported her belief that the union of the male and female, on a physical and energetic level, was an essential precondition of returning to the divine state, and that transcending gender entirely would create the conditions for enlightenment, genuine liberty and freedom.

It is commonly said that artists have a 'cultural moment', when their work is exhibited, analysed and firmly placed into the official oeuvre of art history. Luckily, the work of Carrington and Colquhoun is gradually starting to be counted. Perhaps the 'Hand of Colquhoun' is getting stronger, bringing the significance of their symbolic art and rich personal stories to a wider audience.

But there is still much to discover about the art that women have contributed to the world throughout the past few centuries. Let's make sure they now become part of our natural dialogue when we talk about surrealism, and we incite and invite the divine feminine to be seen and heard. — R.B.

# Oleg Mindiak



WHICH ARTISTS (ALIVE OR DEAD) WOULD YOU INVITE TO DINNER?

Cindy Sherman, Hannah Höch, Otto Dix, and Claude Cahun.

WHAT THEMES ARE CENTRAL TO YOUR WORK?

As both an art historian and practicing artist, I am interested in how gender is constructed, represented, and policed in works of art. I use myself as a subject because my own gender is constantly in flux (my “female” alter-ego is Lola Lola Youssoupova).

Additionally, I am always informed by art history, both in my collages (where I take mostly canonical works and queer them) and my self portraits (inspired or direct quotations of artworks, often works of the Neue Sachlichkeit or New Objectivity).

WHAT INSPIRED YOUR LATEST PIECE OF WORK?

I am reading a book on the Weimar artist Hannah Höch who created artworks, photomontages specifically, to decode as well as deconstruct the image of the neue Frau (New Woman) just at the moment that images of the the modern woman proliferated in mass media. Höch’s work has inspired me to make ‘self portrait’ collages.

TELL US A LITTLE ABOUT THIS PIECE OF WORK?

This is a recreation of Otto Dix’s Portrait of the Journalist Sylvia Von Harden (1926), one of the greatest examples of the neue Sachlichkeit (the art movement I specialize in). I made this dress using upscale silk satin.

When I remake works of art, I am less interested in creating a one-to-one image. Rather, I attempt to become the subject and express our merged subjectivity. I identify with these individuals and construct my own identity through them. I do not believe that identity is a fixed entity and want to express that (much like Cindy Sherman) in my work.

[@OLEGMINDIAK](#)

# HENRI ROUSSEAU

FROM CUSTOMS OFFICER TO BELLE EPOCH BOHEMIAN,  
HENRI ROUSSEAU PROVED THAT THE COURSE OF ONE'S  
LIFE IS NEVER FIXED.

A society governed by capitalism will always try to instill in us that our careers define who we are. And that always makes it a pleasure to find stories about people who broke their mould and diverted their lives towards new directions.

For anyone who came across Henri Rousseau before 1893, they would have met an unassuming, moustachioed gentleman in his late 40s living in a rural town in the province of Maine, France.

At age 49, upon the death of his father, Rousseau moved to Paris to look after his widowed mother. He worked as a government employee (leading to his later nickname 'Le Douanier', meaning The Customs Officer) and spent his spare time teaching himself how to paint and play violin.

In 1893, a few years after his wife's death, Rousseau went full bohemian. He ditched his day job, sent his daughter to live with relatives (a morally questionable but natural decision for his time)

and moved into a crumbling studio in the creative melting pot of Montparnasse. He worked diligently on his painting and earned money busking in the street with his violin.

Despite his penchant for painting dreamy jungle scenes, Rousseau in fact never left France. Instead, he spent much time studying the flora and fauna of the Botanical Gardens in Paris, combining what he found with his rich imagination. "When I step into the hothouses and see the plants from exotic lands, it seems to me that I am in a dream," he said.

Rousseau was regularly dismissed as an amateur, but through his quiet dedication and dalliances into the Parisian art scene, he has come to be considered a leading example of the naïve painter, a genre that lovingly welcomes the dilettante.

For anyone making art and working a job to pay the bills, let Rousseau be your patron saint. Believe and your time may just come around. Keep it up.



^  
MYSELF: PORTRAIT BY HENRI ROUSSEAU (1890)

SOLITUDE, STREAMING AND ART BEHIND SCREENS:  
Neale MIGHALL CONSIDERS THE INCREASING EFFECT  
OF DIGITISATION ON MUSIC

Here's a question for you.... When does an act of creativity become a piece of art?

Consider the Mona Lisa. Would she have the same impact if Da Vinci had just drawn her eyes? Would Munch have managed to portray the same visceral and desperate horror of *The Scream* with just a mouth? Does the Time Warp have the same effect when performed solo? And could Damien Hirst have displayed that shark so perfectly, had he had to catch and preserve it himself? Probably not. Deconstruct any work of art and it's clear to see that the individual elements are often less than the sum of their parts.

When it comes to the way music is made and consumed, a lot has changed in the past 20 years, probably more so than any other field of art. Until the age of digital downloads, there were clear structures in place, with R&D men acting as kingmakers in an empire of sorts, wielding the power to anoint the chosen ones as they saw fit. Producing music was a social act, requiring a collective of people to bring a variety of skills to the table. Albums were held up as masterpieces, consumed from start to finish, gatefolds and all. And going to a record store at the weekend, then excitedly waiting to return

home and explore some new sonic worlds, was a game of slow drip satisfaction.

Today, making music is much more democratic. With the right tools available, anyone, anywhere, can produce a song or an album via a computer and share it to the whole world via the touch of a button. But with TikTok soundbites ruling the charts, playlists commonly favoured over albums, and less and less money reaching artists and independent record stores, we have to ask - what are we losing out on as music becomes increasingly digitised? Is the fragmentation of music production and consumption spoiling the fun, or should we just accept that the times they are a changin'?

**STORYTELLING THROUGH ALBUMS: A STUDY**

When albums first came about in the 1940s, they were originally known as long-play records, and were intended to be absorbed as a composite. There are numerous examples of albums that have a particular potency when played from start to finish, the collective result transcending its individual tracks.

A personal favourite is PJ Harvey's brooding and forlorn 2010 album *Let*

*England Shake*, which is as ambitious in its subject matter as it is challenging to the listener. Tonally, it is the love-child between *Miss Havisham* and the First World War, conjuring a thought-provoking melange of images in the mind as you listen.

It's a SUBJECT THAT  
NEEDS TIME TO  
EXPRESS ITSELF,  
CALLING FOR  
PATIENCE AND  
ATTENTIVENESS FROM  
THE LISTENER.

Someone once said that if *Apocalypse Now*, through its narrative focus, could be considered the definitive war movie, then *Let England Shake* should be considered the definitive war album. It portrays the futility of large scale conflict and the fragility of the individual, ground up like meat inside a mechanised machine of war. Harvey beautifully expresses the tragedy of war and the cognitive dissonance of having pride in her homeland and equal shame for its history. It's certainly a subject that needs time to express itself, calling for patience and attentiveness from the listener.

Another example of an album with a story is *The*





▲ The album cover: an alluring portent of the sounds within

Kinks Are The Village Green Preservation Society released by The Kinks in 1968. Affectionately referred to as 'the most successful ever flop', it's subject matter actually came out of necessity.

Supercharged by the catchy, heavy riffery of 'You Really Got Me', The Kinks were riding high on the crest of the wave of British invasion. But while the world was their oyster, infighting and raucous behaviour on tour prompted the American Federation of Musicians to prohibit the band from touring the USA for four years.

Unable to further tap into the lucrative North American market, Ray Davies turned back to the more familiar shores of his native England to find inspiration for their next record, and the result was *The Village Green*

*Preservation Society*. Whimsical, wistful nostalgia permeates every track on the album. As masterful as any Constable or Turner, Davies paints his aural English landscape with greenery, running streams, local characters and little shops. With each track building upon each other, *The Kinks Are The Village Green Preservation Society* is an introspective amble through personal memories, long lost ideals, antiques and nostalgia for a world long passed by.

Arguably, on both *Let England Shake* and *The Village Green Preservation Society*, there's no stand out single. Sure, some tracks are stronger than others, however none of them would shine quite as brightly isolated from each other. They work together to create

a wider narrative, to reveal the bigger picture. It is a shame to imagine a future where such albums are not absorbed and cherished in their entirety.

#### VITURALLY GONE

The very nature of digital music sales has further splintered our experience of music as a multi-faceted artform. Gone are the days of browsing through a friend's record collection, and we are increasingly less likely to pick up, gaze at and paw over a physical album.

Peter Blake's iconic design for *Sgt Pepper's Lonely Hearts Club Band*, with its playful cover, gatefold sleeve of lyrics and Pepper cut-outs is just as much a part of the album as the music. Similarly, Peter Saville's cover for Joy Division's *Unknown*

*Pleasures* accentuates the dark and other-worldly tone of the album, forewarning the listener of the music held within.

For anyone who has experienced those moments of magic that came from absorbing the gatefold art, studying the lyrics, or carefully recording mix tapes and cds for friends, it is natural to be left wondering if music will continue to be as cherished without its physical keepsakes and visual art.

Of course, vinyl records have had a healthy resurgence in recent years, but predominantly we access music through a screen, removing the tactile joy of touch and sitting amongst other distractions which fight for our attention. At the end of the day, it's just hard to rouse that old sense of excitement when a lyrics sheet is sent as a PDF or a lovingly-made mixtape is reduced to a Spotify playlist. [ - No, dear readers, the irony of this statement being in a digital magazine is not lost on us - ED].

#### COLLABORATIVE PAY OFFS

The democratisation of music production that digital publishing has brought about certainly has it's benefits. Musicians today can cut out the middle man, and have all the tools they need to make and share music at the point of a cursor - not to mention a readily available

back catalogue of nearly 80 years of popular music to draw inspiration from. But as it becomes more and more achievable for artists to work alone, the process of making music becomes fragmented too.

**THE COLLECTIVE RESULTS ARE OFTEN MUCH MORE IMPROVED UPON THAN WHAT ONE MEMBER OF THE GROUP COULD HAVE CREATED THEMSELVES**

While *Dark Side of the Moon* took four members of Pink Floyd, eight session musicians and three producers, eight months to make, today one musician in their bedroom can make a multi-instrumental album, replicating soundscapes that would previously have been a huge group effort.

Being in a band is tough, but collaboration is another precious facet of art we need to hang onto in the face of digitisation - particularly after the isolation of lockdowns, which have spurred more people to create alone. There will be conflict and compromises within a musical group; but the results of a collective are often much more profound than what one member of the group could have created. Not only is there a unique combination of imagination, ideas, skills and knowledge at play in every collaboration, but through its more gradual

process of creation, the music has chance to gestate and grow.

#### BEST OFS AND QUICK FIXES

Paul Weller, while promoting his 16th solo album *Fat Pop Volume 1*, suggested that this could be his last album. "The music business has changed so much in the last few years, I don't really recognise it," he told NME earlier this year. "There's still great music being made, I'm sure that will always stay that way, but generally I don't think people invest in music like we did before streaming/downloads."

And he's right, of course we don't. More often than not we subscribe to a streaming service where everything appears free, and we reach for a homemade 'best of' playlist rather than invest the time to sit and absorb an album, it's easier, it's a quick fix to firing up our endorphins. A dirty little pudding we can't get enough of. It's not good for us though, and it's certainly not good for the artists. It's made us bloated and impatient and ungrateful.

Perhaps I'm getting on, but more and more, I feel like I'm in my own kind of Village Green Preservation Society. Nostalgic for an idyllic time, long gone by, when music was consumed at a slower pace. And in this era, when there was more struggle and less opportunity; once, just once in a while a true long-play masterpiece was created, and we'd all sit round to listen.

Maybe we should find the time to listen again.

N.M.

# DILETTANTE

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PAUW MET KIPPEN (1878-1910) BY THEO VAN HOYTEMA

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## THE ROARING TWENTIES

WITH THE PREVIOUS DECADE DOMINATED BY THE FIRST WORLD WAR AND TOPPED OFF BY A DEADLY PANDEMIC, IT WAS NOT UNTIL THE 1920S THAT SOCIETY WAS FINALLY ABLE TO UNBUCKLE THE SHACKLES OF THE STUFFY VICTORIAN ERA AND BEGIN TO RESHAPE SOCIETY.

AS WE BEGIN TO NAVIGATE OUR OWN TURBULENT TWENTIES, LET US TAKE YOU ON A WHISTLESTOP TOUR OF AN ERA THAT BROUGHT GREAT CHANGE AND REMARKABLE INNOVATION.

## INDUSTRIAL BOOM

In 1920 just 6% of British homes were powered by electricity, but by the end of the decade pylons dotted the landscape.

Life-changing technological advancements such as motor cars granted new freedoms, while the first transatlantic flight in 1927, the birth of radio and the formation of the BBC in 1922 signalled an ever more connected world.

## SILVER SCREEN

New forms of media such as film began to take hold on the public imagination, introducing the stars of the big screen and the influence of advertising.

In cinema, focus was put on extravagant feature length artworks rather than short reels, and 1927 saw the release of the first 'talkie', *The Jazz Singer*. While studios created their empires in Hollywood, the influence of German Expressionism and Soviet cinema held sway stylistically with films such as *The Cabinet of Dr Caligari* (1920), *Nosferatu* (1922), *Battleship Potemkin* (1926) and *Metropolis* (1927).

## THE MODERN METROPOLIS

A similar innovative rampancy was taking place in cities, as high rates of employment drew young people into urban areas. Here, where the impressionable could

mingle, the desire to embrace modernity was increasingly visible and widespread in architecture, fashion, and entertainment. In 1930, New York's Chrysler Building became the world's tallest structure, symbolising the aspirations of the chic and modern city. Jazz made its way from America to Europe. Nightclubs, cocktail bars and jazz joints flourished, and new dance crazes such as foxtrot, charleston and lindy hop gave expression to the more liberal youth.

## ART EXPLORATION

With its linear, geometric glamour, Art Deco became the dominant commercial style, influencing everything from architecture and furniture to fashion and jewellery. In painting, more avant-garde artistic movements such as Cubism and Surrealism emerged, providing layered commentary on the cultural zeitgeist, while the Dada and Bauhaus movements blurred the boundaries between art and life.

## FASHION DAHLING

Fashion became looser and more comfortable, mirroring the desires of the younger, more liberal generation. Corsets were discarded and women bobbed their hair, began wearing make-up and adopted 'scandalous' behaviour such as drinking, smoking and swearing in public. The fun-loving, free-living flapper became the style icon of the decade, and a boyish 'garconne' silhouette was coveted.

## BRIGHT YOUNG THINGS

After a childhood of disruption and turmoil, a new generation emerged armed with a desire for hedonism and a fierce intent to discard the stifling hangover of Victorian England. Many were too young to have fought in the Great War, but grew up acutely aware of their own mortality, having lost loved ones in the battlefield and to the Spanish Flu pandemic.

The Bright Young Things, an exuberant assortment of wealthy aristocrats, avant-garde artists and

bon vivants dominated the tabloids. The term 'The

Lost Generation' was coined by influential salon hostess and art collector Gertrude Stein and referred to expatriate writers such as Hemingway and Fitzgerald, but was broadened to describe the restlessness and decadence of the 1920s youth.

## WOMEN'S RIGHTS

Women over 30 had won the right to vote in 1918, yet still a third of women in the UK were prohibited from voting, and it was only after continued activism through the 1920s that men and women finally achieved the same voting rights in 1928.

In Britain, the first birth control clinic was opened in 1921, and by 1930 several clinics together formed the National Birth Control Council. Due to the industrial upheaval of WWI, support grew for women to gain employment in certain fields, ultimately providing the opportunity for greater independence outside of marriage.

## THE GREAT DEPRESSION

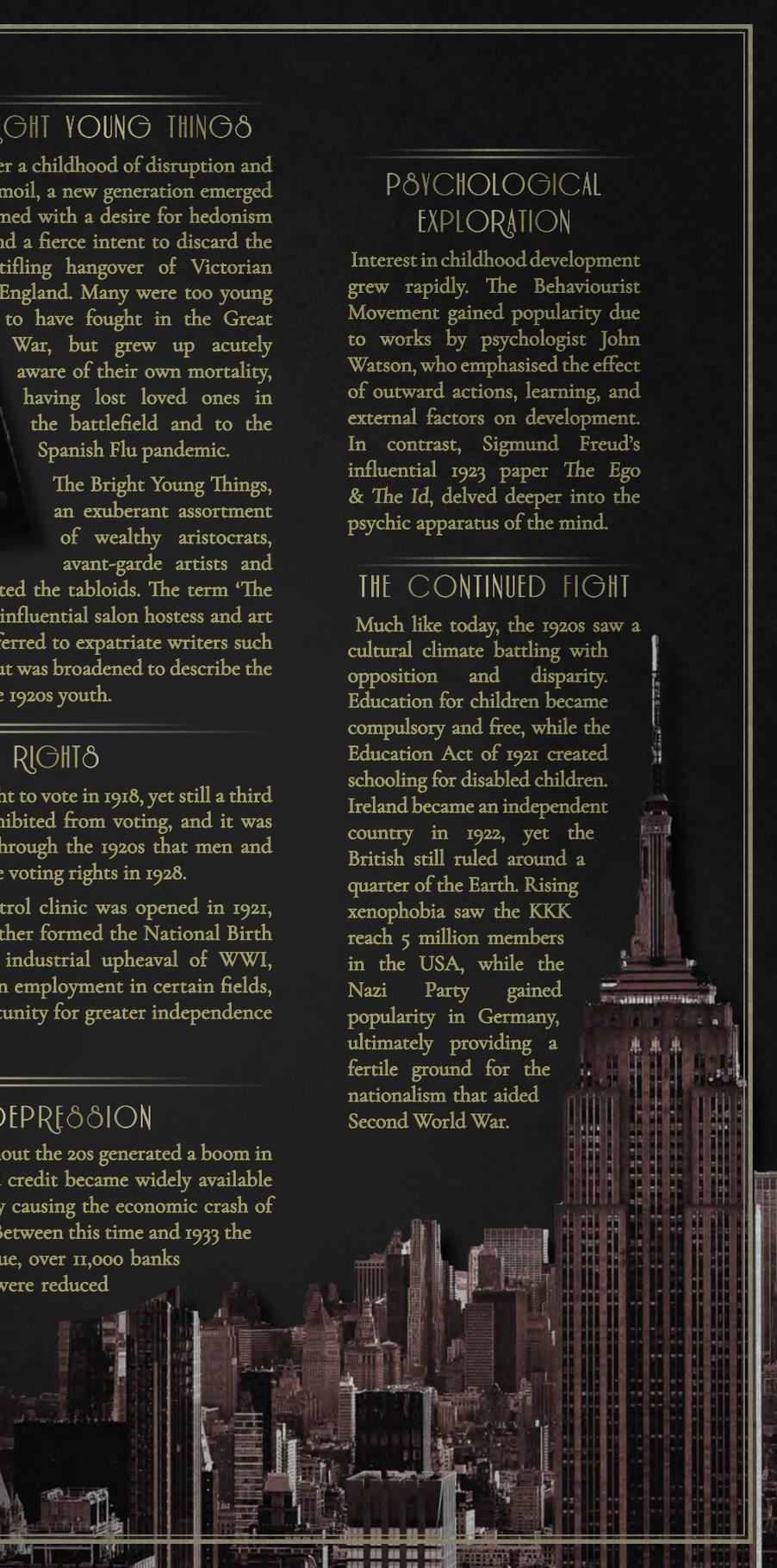
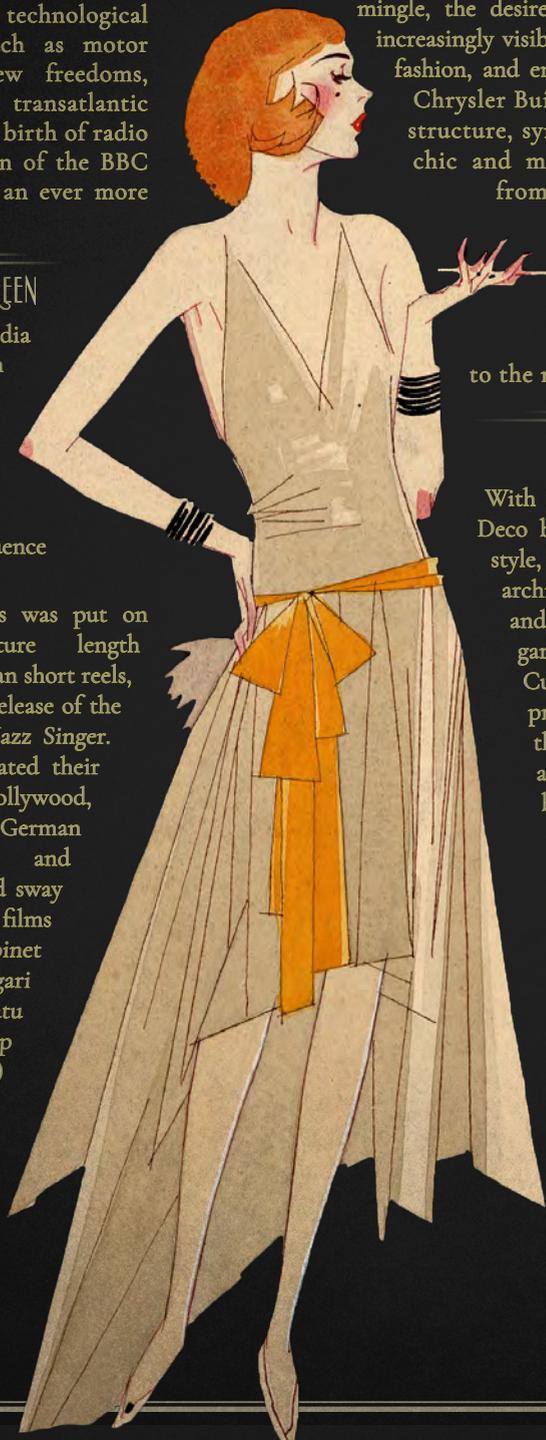
Laissez-faire economics throughout the 20s generated a boom in the number of millionaires, and credit became widely available to the average person, inevitably causing the economic crash of 1929 and the Great Depression. Between this time and 1933 the stock market lost 90% of its value, over 11,000 banks closed and household incomes were reduced by a third.

## PSYCHOLOGICAL EXPLORATION

Interest in childhood development grew rapidly. The Behaviourist Movement gained popularity due to works by psychologist John Watson, who emphasised the effect of outward actions, learning, and external factors on development. In contrast, Sigmund Freud's influential 1923 paper *The Ego & The Id*, delved deeper into the psychic apparatus of the mind.

## THE CONTINUED FIGHT

Much like today, the 1920s saw a cultural climate battling with opposition and disparity. Education for children became compulsory and free, while the Education Act of 1921 created schooling for disabled children. Ireland became an independent country in 1922, yet the British still ruled around a quarter of the Earth. Rising xenophobia saw the KKK reach 5 million members in the USA, while the Nazi Party gained popularity in Germany, ultimately providing a fertile ground for the nationalism that aided Second World War.



WHICH ARTISTS (ALIVE OR DEAD)  
WOULD YOU INVITE TO DINNER?

*Francis Bacon and Paul Gauguin.*

WHAT DOES YOUR CREATIVE PROCESS  
LOOK LIKE?

I'm 70 this year, so how long have I got? For me every day is a gained day. That's why I like to paint fast; I'll paint 3 or 4 pictures at the same time and if I get bored of one I'll shift onto another one. I'm not limited as to when I can do my stuff - a lot of people are. If I get the urge to paint at one in the morning, I get up and just crack on.

WHY DO YOU PAINT?

There are lots of artists these days who are very commercial. They are selling themselves towards being 'something', rather than making art for art's sake.

Maybe if I'd carried on doing it when I was in my 20s, I would have gone that way. I could have been a 'contender' in the business. But a lot of that is luck.

I'm a nobody in art. I have my way of painting, and I enjoy it. My paintings are important to me because they've helped me carry on living. They might not be important to anyone else.

WHEN DID YOU BEGIN PAINTING?

I started when I was young but I got more into it after I retired. There's a lot of old people like me coming out with some good stuff - people who didn't start painting until they were in their sixties. And it could be anything, dancing or whatever. I think there's a lot of people with talents they didn't know they had until they get into it.

# Nick Turner



I am Miss Onion, welcome to my CABINET OF CURIOSITIES, a UNIVERSE GOVERNED BY BEAUTY AND LEISURE.

Like any young mother with a full-time job, my very limited spare time is precious to me. So I use it to seek out beautiful and inspiring gems - works of art, educational and cultural things to watch or listen to, ideas for style, decor and DIY, captivating reads, and more.

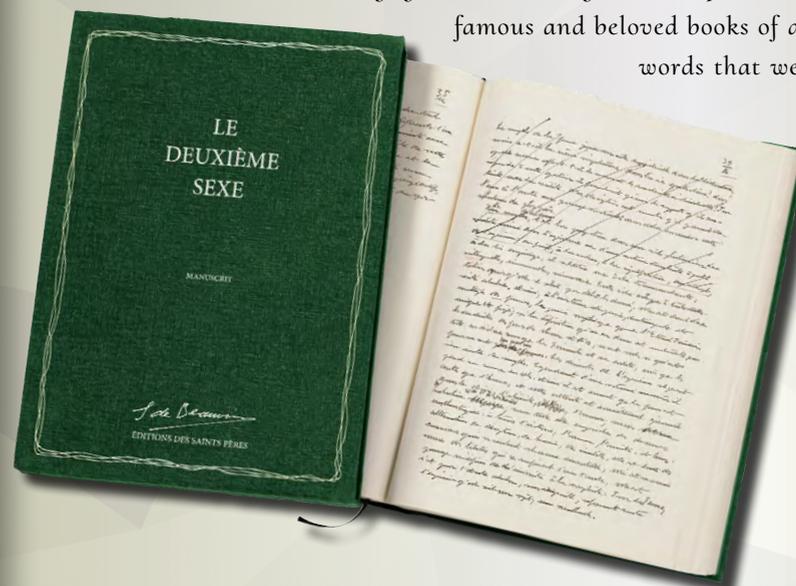
Every week, I unearth seven treasures, old and new. I wrap them with a bow and send them out into the world in The Miss Onion newsletter. Sometimes frivolous, always exquisite, these are delicious treats to help escape the mundane and give a sip of inspiration ...Shall we?

[MISSIONION.RO](http://MISSIONION.RO)

## ...Manuscript Books...

I prefer my writers dead. That may sound odd, but it's true. Of course, I love many books by contemporary authors, but I am much more fascinated by someone in the past writing from a time long gone, old stories and images brought to life before my very eyes through pen and ink ... The trouble is, it is difficult to connect with the dead and get insights into their process.

Luckily, you can now buy brilliant printed manuscripts of some of the most famous and beloved books of all time. Seeing the scribbles, the words that were cut or underlined, the breaks in the flow of writing, is very special and these private moments are superior to any modern interview with an author on a book tour.



[SPBOOKS.COM](http://SPBOOKS.COM)

## ...Bejewelled Turbans...

They say you're always one decision away from a totally different life. I like to think I am always one decision away from a fabulous soirée. I need this turban, just in case that party invite arrives and I get the chance to step into a secret world.

There's nothing I don't love about Julia Clancy's Studio 54 infused creations, from the rich colours to the beaded tassel earrings and the oversized brooches! These are statement pieces and show-stopping outfits for inviting a little ritz into your life.

[JULIACLANCEY.COM](http://JULIACLANCEY.COM)



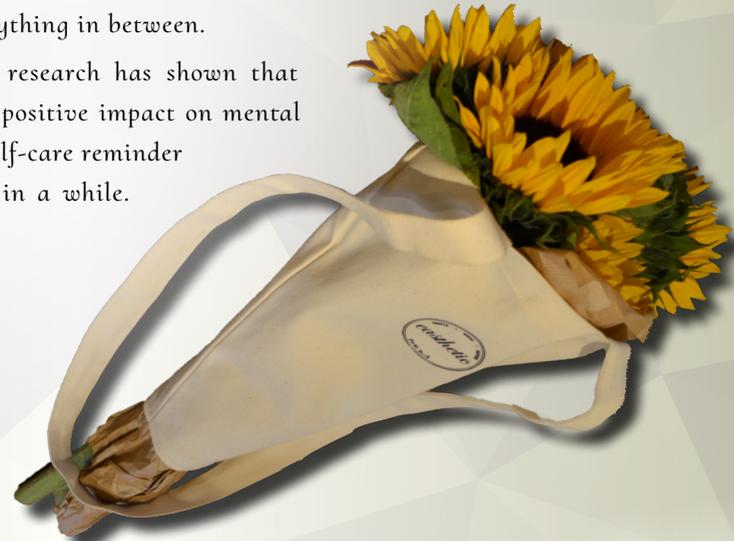
## ... Flower Totes...

Give me an object I can absolutely live without, an object which serves no other purpose than its very specific intended one, and I somehow need it.

A flower tote is similar to a bookmark – you can use pretty much anything instead and you can't use it for anything else really - but I want a dozen to match my outfit, my mood, the position of the stars, the flowers themselves and everything in between.

Whimsicality aside, scientific research has shown that fresh flowers and plants have a positive impact on mental wellness, so this bag really is a self-care reminder to buy yourself a bouquet once in a while. You're welcome!

[@FLOWERPOZZY](#)

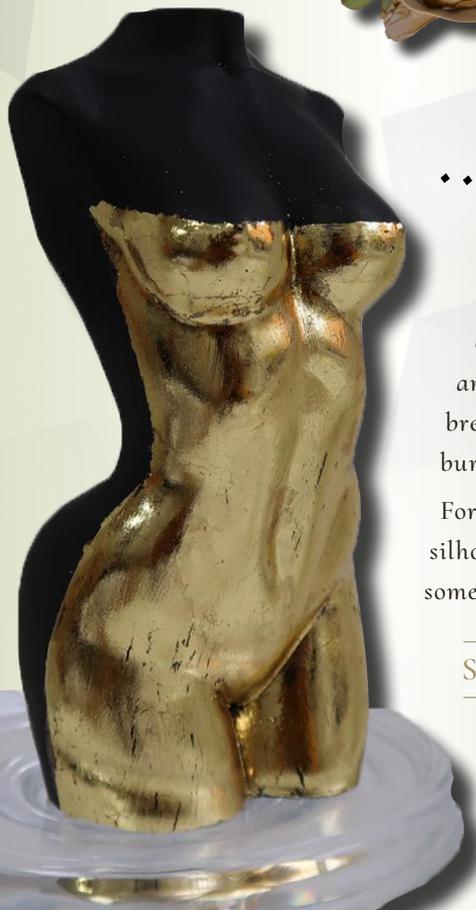


## ... Wax Sculptures...

You could call these candles, or you could call them wax sculptures. I believe they are unintentionally designed for those of the rare breed that likes to buy candles but never really burn them (this is a genuine niche of person!).

For the rest of us, we can sit and watch the beautiful silhouettes transform as they melt, and perhaps find some hidden metaphor in the process.

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## ... Italian Castles...

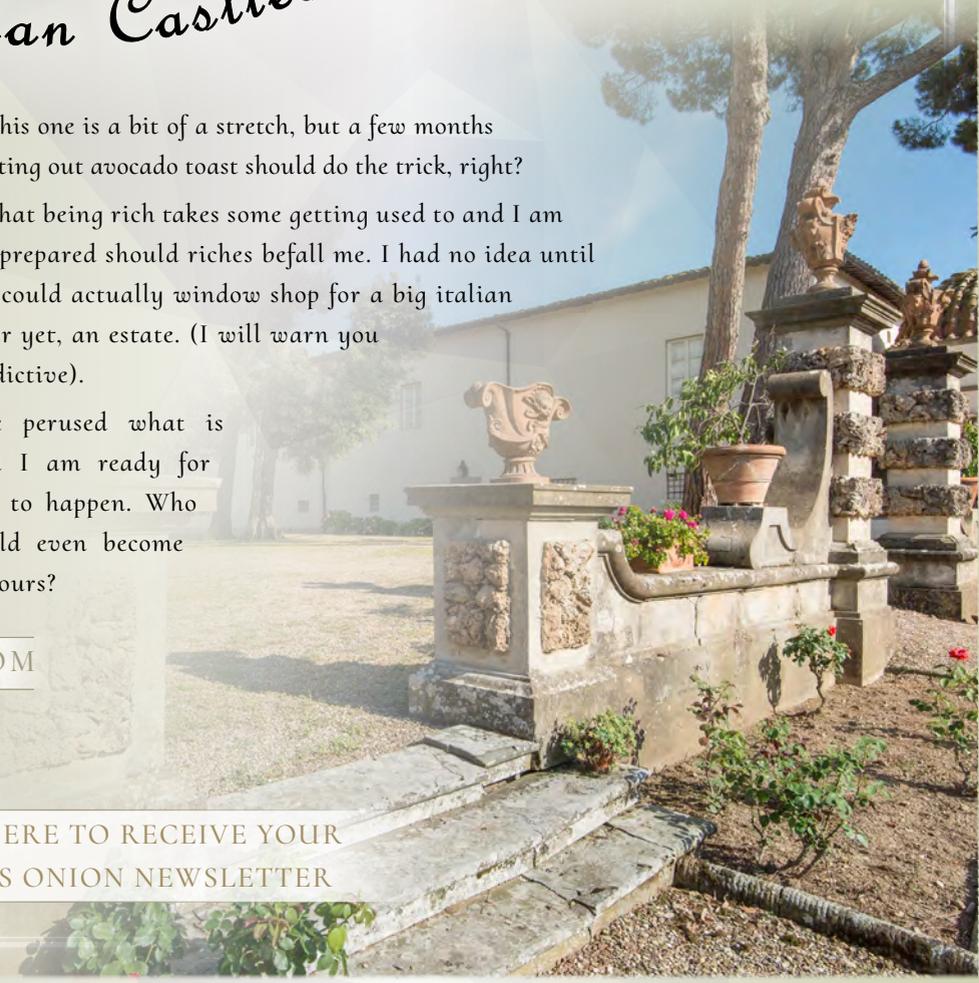
...Now, I know this one is a bit of a stretch, but a few months of budgeting and cutting out avocado toast should do the trick, right?

I read somewhere that being rich takes some getting used to and I am determined to be prepared should riches befall me. I had no idea until recently that I could actually window shop for a big Italian castle or better yet, an estate. (I will warn you - it's quite addictive).

Well, I have perused what is available and I am ready for this daydream to happen. Who knows, we could even become far-flung neighbours?

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# MRS CHIPPY

OUR RESIDENT FELINE FANCIER AND CAT  
CORRESPONDENT Jenny Potton recounts  
THE STORY OF MRS. CHIPPY, CHIEF MOUSER AND CREW  
COMRADE ON THE INFAMOUS SHACKLETON EXPEDITION.

Those of us with cats that venture outdoors often wonder where they go and what adventures they might be getting up to. Of course, some cats are more intrepid than others, and that can certainly be said for feline Trans-Antarctic explorer Mrs Chippy, the ship's cat on the famous Shackleton expedition which attempted to make the first land crossing of the Antarctic continent.

Our story starts in Glasgow in 1914, when Scottish carpenter Harry McNish was preparing to join Ernest Shackleton's Imperial Trans-Antarctic Expedition as the ship's carpenter. He'd been considering whether to bring along his beloved pet cat and upon finding his feline friend curled up in one of his toolboxes, decided this surely meant that the tabby was destined to be part of the crew.

The Endurance set sail on August 8th 1914, with its new mouser comfortably on

board. The cat would hardly leave carpenter Harry's side, leading the rest of the crew to make comparisons to an over-attentive wife, and eventually giving it the moniker 'Mrs Chippy' - chippy, of course, being a common British term for a carpenter. As it turned out, Mrs Chippy was actually a tomcat but by that point the name had stuck and he was a firm favourite amongst the rest of the crew.

Mrs Chippy was known for deftly walking along the ship's railings even on the choppiest of seas, as well as climbing the rigging in a way that crewmembers compared to that of a seasoned seaman. Although, clearly, Mrs Chippy was at home onboard, his adventures on the high seas were not without their drama.

One crewman's diary tells of how the cat had jumped overboard through a cabin porthole one evening. Fortunately Mrs Chippy's cries were heard and the ship



ENDURANCE CREW MEMBER PERCE BLACKBOROW AND MRS CHIPPY,  
PHOTOGRAPHER UNKNOWN (1914).



him to the hounds. Luckily, Mrs Chippy was saved, and a complaint was made against Vincent, leading to his demotion. (Don't mess with the beloved ship's cat!)

**Disaster strikes!**

By October 1915 it was clear the Endurance was not going to escape the ice, its pressure causing the ship to break apart. It's at this point our story takes a sad turn. Shackleton had to decide what to do next in order to continue his expedition, and this didn't bode well for our furry friends.

In order for his crew to survive, Shackleton decided they needed to head on land and only take with them what was essential. Unfortunately, ship's cats were not deemed as vital at this point.

**SUCH PERFECT COURAGE IS,  
ALAS, NOT TO BE FOUND IN  
OUR MODERN AGE**

On the day that Mrs Chippy's fate was sealed, crew members gathered to give him a fuss, a stroke, a tickle under the chin, before saying their goodbyes. It's said that Harry McNish then took his feline friend to his tent for a heartfelt farewell, with the ship's steward managing to rustle up a bowl of sardines as a final meal. The extraordinary life of Mrs Chippy is recorded to have ended at 2:55pm on October 29th 1915.

Harry McNish unfortunately didn't have much time to mourn the loss of his friend, needing to attend to the urgent and crucial work of modifying lifeboats for the crew's journey to continue. That being said, his resentment toward Shackleton from this point would only grow and grow. He became an unruly member of the crew, with Shackleton finding him increasingly harder to control.

There is obviously much more that could be said about the Shackleton expedition, and many resources for you to go and read more

about it for yourself. But it can be noted that after a long, arduous trek, Shackleton did eventually lead his crew to safety, with no loss of human life. Harry McNish however, never forgave his leader for having his cat killed.

**A fitting memorial at last.**

Safely back on land the years passed and by 1925 Harry was living in Wellington, New Zealand. He worked on the docks but ended up destitute before dying in 1930. He was given a naval funeral but buried in an unmarked grave, before finally receiving a headstone in 1959.

It may feel like the story of Mrs Chippy is ending on a sad note; but thankfully Harry McNish would once again be reunited with his beloved cat. In June 2004 the New Zealand Antarctic Society commissioned a lifesize bronze statue of Mrs Chippy to lie at his master's side in Karori cemetery forever more, with visitors often leaving trinkets and cat food in tribute to McNish and his friend.

Though Mrs Chippy's life may have met a sad end, he was truly a treasured member of the crew of the Endurance with a crew member stating years after the expedition "Mrs Chippy's almost total disregard for the diabolical forces at work on the ship was more than remarkable — it was inspirational. Such perfect courage is, alas, not to be found in our modern age." J.P.

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 M, 54, 2 x Take a Break crossword winner, excellent at grouting, great at jokes, etc, WLTM F with own powerwasher. #045  
 -----  
 Purified vegan F, 35, WLTM unpolluted gent for organic relations. Must be free from gluten, GMOs, STDs, KFCs, etc. #023  
 -----  
**EVENTS:**  
 -----  
 Wannabe a wallabee meeting. Radford town hall, 8pm. Serious candidates only. #232  
 -----  
 Cat Walk: A fun event for all feline lovers and their furry friends! B.Y.O.C. Obedient cats only. Leashes required. Please, no scratchers. #243  
 -----  
 Do you miss the 19th Century? Join Nostalgics Anonymous on a carefree romp through the days before the digital overlords took over. #336  
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**NOTICES:**  
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 Lost: Sense of direction. If found please return directly, avoiding shortcuts or well-meaning use of GPS. #434  
 -----  
 Help wanted. Applicant must be willing to help.  
 -----

THE CURE FOR  
BOREDOM IS  
CURIOSITY.  
THERE IS NO  
CURE FOR  
CURIOSITY.

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DOROTHY PARKER