

THE

COLLECTIVE

MAGAZINE



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MEET THE TEAM

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WHO ARE WE?

The Collective Magazine was founded in 2020 as a way for students and young people to publish their work outside of traditional university-led student media.

When it comes to student journalism and creativity, there is very little opportunity for young people to grow their creative portfolios. We wanted to create an inclusive online magazine platform for students and young people to publish their work, share what's important to them and also find helpful and useful information written by fellow students or recent graduates about life.

"I wanted to create a space for students and young people to be able to write about issues and

things important to them and have a space where they could be published. There isn't really a wider space for students to grow their personal portfolio's outside of traditional university publications, enter The Collective Magazine." - Millie Smith, Founder & Editor-in-Chief

Since our launch in July 2020, we have worked with a variety of writers to create regular content for our website, where our focus has been for the last year. Our platform has helped writers to produce articles on topics that interest them and in our first year we have published over 380 articles.

We hope that The Collective Magazine can continue to be a welcoming and inclusive platform for young writers as it continues to grow.



LETTER FROM THE EDITOR

MILLIE SMITH



It feels very surreal to be writing this as we prepare to launch our first ever virtual magazine in celebration of our first birthday, the virtual magazine which you are reading right now!

When I decided to launch a student-run magazine last summer for students to expand their portfolios and gain experience, I never imagined that we would have made so much progress in just one year. From finding our founding team to our website launch, the support has been unreal and blown me away. I knew from my own experience that a platform like The Collective Magazine was one that I so badly wanted but couldn't find, and I'm beyond proud to have been able to create such a platform for other young journalists like myself.

One thing goes without saying, I couldn't have done this without the most amazing team ever. The nature of The Collective Magazine

means that for a lot of our team members the magazine is a stepping stone as part of a much larger journey, it's a stepping stone that allows them to gain experience and network and do something a little different in their free time; because of this our team has changed a lot since our launch in August 2020. I am so grateful to have met such wonderful people through the growth of The Collective Magazine, and we truly couldn't function without them, so thank you to all the team members old and new, past and present!

We're so excited to be sharing our first virtual magazine, it is one of many projects in the pipeline! And who knows, if you love it - maybe we'll do some more? I hope you love it as much as we do.

Millie x



As someone who only joined the team as Deputy Editor at the beginning of summer I have been amazed by how far we have come and our ability to put together our first virtual magazine. I've been welcomed into The Collective Mag Team with open arms and I am incredibly privileged to work along side a wonderful team made up of strong and talented individuals who have all worked so hard putting this together.

We are beyond excited to be sharing with you our first ever virtual magazine with you guys, our lovely readers. The team, led by our wonderful editor Millie, has worked so hard to put this together and we truly hope you have as much fun reading it as we have had putting it together!

ZACH BISHOP



Collective, the act of working together as a group. The very word that encapsulates this magazine perfectly. I am Paige, joint Deputy Editor with Zach here at the Collective Magazine. I am thrilled for you to see what as a collective we have created to celebrate our 1st birthday. I may have not been here from it's very beginning, however I am so immensely proud to be apart of this wonderful creation and talented team right now and to participate in the exciting times ahead.

I believe the Collective Magazine is something I will be forever grateful for in my pursuit of journalism and none of it would be possible without our Founder and Editor in Chief Millie. So thank you, for allowing me to play a part in this marvellous magazine, and thank you to all of you who love the magazine just as much as we do.

PAIGE ROBSON

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KEEP AN EYE OUT FOR OUR SMALL BUSINESS SHOUTOUTS THROUGHOUT!

PLEASE BE AWARE THAT SOME ARTICLES MAY DISCUSS DIFFICULT TOPICS SO READER DISCRETION IS ADVISED.

FEATURES

FEATURES

ONE DISABLED LOVE ISLANDER: IS OUR WORK HERE DONE?

BY MILLIE SMITH

Love Island is arguably one of the UK's largest TV shows with over 2.46 million viewers tuning in for this year's series. It is also, perhaps, one of the most controversial TV shows on air. Love Island has received criticism for their lack of ethnically and body diverse contestants, as well as its absence of disabled or LGBTQ+ contestants, and for its lack of mental health support for contestants and team, especially following the suicides of Sophie Gradon, 32, Mike Thalassitis, 26, and Caroline Flack, 40. The show has come under fire in recent years and has promised to be working with professionals to increase mental health support and diversity on the show, and has been praised for introducing a disabled love islander on this year's series but is this really as praise-worthy as it's being made out to be?



© Love Island UK



Now, I am a self-confessed Love Island fan. I look forward to 9pm and being able to sit back, relax and let my mind go a little numb to the daily stresses. It's obvious that millions of people across the country adore this show despite its diversity issues, but many are not blind to these issues. It is clear that there is crucial work needed by Love Island producers to make the show more inclusive. It would also be in the producers best interests to up their inclusivity on the show, it would likely increase their viewer numbers further as well as the amount of positive responses the show receives.

So they've taken a step in the right direction with Hugo Hammond, Love

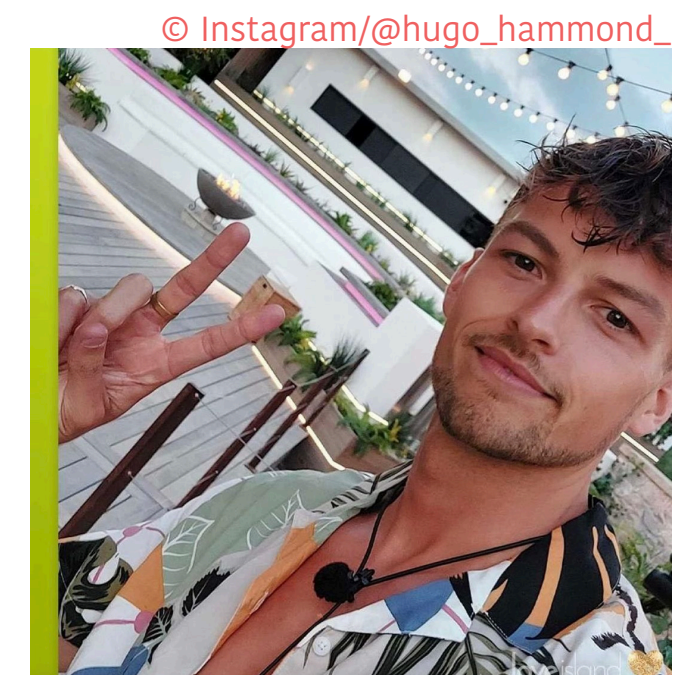
Island's first disabled contestant. Better late than never, right?

Hugo is a 24 year old PE teacher from Hampshire, and was born with a club foot, making him the first physically disabled Islander. Hugo, however, says he considers himself "not a disabled person, but just a person who has a disability." The label 'disabled' can often feel limiting and is attached to stereotypes of people who are capable of less, which is just not true.

We are now over halfway through the current series and Hugo has been one of the most popular islanders this year. And whilst he has so far been unlucky in love (I'd love for him to find someone special

before the end of the series!), he has been a friend to all and audiences have seen him go above and beyond as an islander this year. Hugo seems to have proven to audiences this year that having a physical disability does not mean that someone is unable to do things, but instead that they are able to interact and socialise like everyone else. Many people have highlighted that Hugo's disability has taken a backseat on the show, it's not been discussed at length, which is quite right - a person's disability is a part of who they are, it does not solely define them.

Many young people across the country are grateful to finally be seeing people in the media that represent them. Whilst every disability is different and will impact a person differently, seeing a diverse range of able bodied and disabled people on our screens is a step towards inclusivity, a step towards diversity. As someone with an invisible disability, seeing people like myself on screen is unusual - unless they explicitly disclose their invisible condition, they may just look like the 'average' person, just like I do. But seeing someone with a disability on one



of the largest shows on TV restores hope to anyone with a disability, invisible or not, physical or mental, that their condition does not define them or restrict their capabilities in life.

Without a doubt Love Island still has a long way to go to make the show inclusive of everyone, whether that's ethnicity or body type, sexuality or disability, but they have begun to take a step in the right direction. Their work here is not done, more must be done to make Love Island seem accessible and representative of its audience - after all, who wants to watch a reality show where everything and everyone feels entirely unattainable.

© Instagram/@hugo_hammond_

'IT'S COMING HOME!'

LET'S TALK ABOUT EVERYONE'S EXCITEMENT

BY LAUREN WHITEHEAD

Euro 2020 truly got the world in motion – we cheered, we cried, and, most importantly of all, we came together as a nation.

The last 16 months saw football crowds, gig-goers, and many of the other small pleasures in life become a distant memory. However, it was Gareth Southgate's England squad who were to bring us the positivity that we all – very desperately – needed.

There was undoubtedly an uneasy feeling from the get-go, as it cannot be said that there were no doubts surrounding Southgate being the 'man for the job'. But how wrong we were. Not only did he build a squad that excelled in every performance, he also ensured that they were a team loved and respected by a nation.

The tournament saw Raheem Sterling and Harry Kane steal the limelight for their mesmerising performances in front of goal, but their success could not be without the infamous Yorkshire Wall. As strong and confident on the pitch as ever, Kyle Walker, Harry Maguire, and John Stones played a vital role in England's journey to the final – not failing to mention Jordan Pickford's sensational record-breaking keeping. For a team so young and still yet to reach their prime, they outshone the rest and represented the joy of England.

The delayed start to Euro 2020 saw us queueing outside pubs from 6am and sinking an estimated 13 million pints on the day of the final. It saw street parties, houses adorned with patriotic symbols, and even name changes to roads and pubs across the country. If one thing was for sure, the pride for our Three Lions was more prevalent than ever.

The long-awaited win over the German team alone meant that this England squad had well and truly earned their place in the history books; but it also meant that fathers, daughters, grandmothers, the young, the old, the die-hard fans, and the casual viewers, could all celebrate something that there had been very little of, if any at all, over the past year – a moment of hope. The excitement and delight whilst watching every game and being together again was perhaps what should be remembered of Euro 2020.

Although the tournament was to have a bittersweet end, there was one important thing to be taken away from it – Gareth Southgate did an unbelievable job in uniting a nation which has been through turmoil over the last year. The entirety of the England squad worked tremendously hard to secure their (very much deserved) place in the final, and for that – alongside the elation that came with each performance – we will always be immensely proud.



3 lions on the shirt

Illustration by Daisy Ward

'WORKING HARD, HARDLY WORKING': LET'S TAKE A LOOK AT THE ISSUE OF PRODUCTIVITY

BY MILLY WOODS

I'd be lying if I said my eyes didn't slightly roll when I heard fitness influencer and entrepreneur Grace Beverley (GraceFi-tUK) was releasing a book. Having followed Grace since her undergrad days at Oxford University, I greatly admire both her academic and professional successes. Although, I was a little apprehensive about what would be on offer in her debut novel. A 3 step guide to build a 6 figure business? The smoothie recipe you just HAVE to try? A 3 hour morning yoga routine?

Well, I am elated to announce that my fears were completely and utterly unfounded; *Working Hard, Hardly Working* is 217 pages of pure gold for GenZ-ers and millennials alike. With not a single smoothie recipe insight, Beverley tackles huge topics including finding your purpose, redefining productivity and the problems with hustle-culture, presenting each one with ease and humour; making them accessible to even the most reluctant reader.

I couldn't do the whole book justice in a single article; I have decided to focus on the topic that was most pertinent to me: finding your purpose.

Beverley dedicates part one of her book to analysing (and criticising) the concept of purpose fed to us through modern education, media and culture.



Particularly, the author challenges the idea that humans have only a single purpose and that finding it should be one's entire motivation. This struck a chord with me as, for as long as I can remember, purpose has been sold almost as the holy grail and it didn't occur to me until reading *Working Hard, Hardly Working* that perhaps, it wasn't.

As a second year University student, now more than ever I seem to be asking myself questions about the future. "What do I want to do with my life?", "Who do I want to be?", "Am I doing enough to be 'successful'?". Whilst I know I'm not alone in my quest to have it all 'figured out', I don't think we discuss these topics enough. Carving your path is a daunt-

ing task for any young person, and, in an age of social media, where this journey is also met with a bombardment of messages promoting 'the hustle' whilst simultaneously encouraging us to 'slow down', I would argue that it's only going to become increasingly challenging.

So, what do we do? Continue to attempt to find our place in a world of conflicting ideals? Or begin to shift our perception, against what we've been led to believe about purpose? Both Beverley and I would argue the latter. More specifically, in her blue-print for productivity, the author suggests that, instead of searching for a divine, all encompassing reason for being, we choose to 'litter' our lives with small things; adding meaning to everyday life. Whilst this approach really does go against everything we've been led to believe, it makes perfect sense! With this mindset, purpose becomes less mystifying and more achievable for the average person. Specifically, as (soon-to-be) graduates tasked with finding a job that enriches both our life and bank account in equal measure, framing purpose as something that is omnipresent in every situation, alleviates some of the pressures associated with post-grad life.

If you're anything like me, by this point you're probably wondering "what does purpose look like in everyday life?". Whilst Beverley didn't give too much away on her own personal purposes, I'm happy to share some of mine (and I'd love to hear yours)! Personally, achievement makes me feel most fulfilled and therefore purposeful, but it's not everyday you hit a personal best in the gym or receive a new job offer. Therefore, in line with the teachings of *Working Hard, Hardly*

Working, I make a conscious effort to set small, daily goals to provide a sense of structure (and purpose) to my day. Ranging from uni work, actual work, self-work, even housework, I can't tell you how much these tiny pieces of self-imposed challenges aided my productivity, particularly in 2020. But, I would like to highlight that purpose isn't always productive and I'd encourage you to find things that aren't, as sometimes there is nothing more fulfilling than binge-watching *The Kardashians* or a splurge in Primark.



© Instagram/gracebeverley

Having said all this, we should not be naive to the fact that *Working Hard, Hardly Working* is written from the point of view of its immensely privileged author who, by her own admission, has faced few of the socioeconomic challenges that plague so many of today's young people. Thus, I'd like every reader to bear in mind that success looks different for everyone and however you deal with the trials and tribulations of this often crazy world, you're doing fantastic!

THE LGBT EXPERIENCE IN 2021: ARE WE MOVING BACKWARDS?

BY ZACH BISHOP



If someone had told me a few years previous, that I'd be sitting here in 2021 writing about the LGBT experience and examining the way in which progress has seemingly ceased and how we're moving backwards, I'm not sure I would have believed them.

Since the introduction of same-sex marriage in the UK eight years ago, it had seemed up until recently that the only way was up for the LGBT community – with reductions in hate crimes, the introduction of LGBT-inclusive sex and relationships education in schools as well as a general increase in positive public perception and tolerance for the community. However, in recent years it's clear to see how that progress and tolerance, which was fought for with such determination and for so many years by groups such as Stonewall, has slowed and ceased. With growing numbers of prominent homophobic hate crimes, the government's recent reluctance to ban conversion therapy, protests from religious groups opposing LGBT-inclusive education and continued casual homophobia and biphobia on social media, it's not difficult to ask the question – are we moving backwards?

As a student studying in Liverpool, I logged onto Instagram and Twitter and was horrified throughout the month of June to witness many people I knew reposting photos of young gay men who had been brutally injured in homophobic attacks across the city I've been proud to call home for almost a year. I struggled to comprehend that these violent hate crimes had been committed on the streets which I walked down myself on a daily basis, in a city renowned for its tolerance and left-wing politics.

Whilst reading the experiences of these individuals who had been brutally attacked on the basis of being themselves, I recalled an experience of my own just a few days previous when I myself had been on a date with another man in Liverpool city centre. I remembered ironically paying attention to all the famous buildings in the city lit up in rainbow colours in support of pride month however, overshadowing this I was reminded of my own instinctive decision to not show any affection or disingenuous display of 'queerness' when the date came to an end.

My decision to do this was not made based on the man I had spent my evening with but instead, an apprehensive feeling I felt from a group of young men who were stood on the other side of the road – it seemed so instinctive to me at the time that I had to be careful not to draw attention to myself in case those men, whose stares were already concerning me, would react negatively to our sexuality. It was the following day when I discovered, on the same evening, that two gay men had been physically hate-crimed on streets not far away from where I went on my own date – it was only then that I realised how flawed and intolerant our society remains and how far we still have to come.

This hostility towards the LGBT community is mirrored in the actions and words of our own government and elected officials. The Prime Minister's supposed allyship is overshadowed by his past blatant homophobic comments referring to gay men as "tanked-top bum boys" and his government's long-standing reluctance to ban conversion therapy which was only ended recently

by an announcement to ban to practice in this year's Queen's speech. The government's Minister for Women and Equalities, Liz Truss, admitted "fundamental differences" between her own position on LGBT issues and that on the government's LGBT panel which was disbanded shortly after, highlighting in itself the lack of interest this government has in tackling issues facing the LGBT community. Liz Truss herself doesn't even hold the Cabinet position full-time, holding also the brief as International Trade Secretary highlighting further just how little the Government and Boris Johnson care about these issues.

The government's introduction of LGBT-inclusive sex and relationships education which was met with opposition and continuing protests by religious groups, most prominently those of Islamic faith, acts as additional evidence as to how we are moving backwards. With protests beginning in the summer of 2019, they recent reared their ugly head again in the Batley and Spen by-election campaign which saw openly LGBT Labour candidate and sister of murdered MP Jo Cox, Kim Leadbeater, targeted by protests and homophobic confrontations of a similar nature.

The recent uprising of the so-called 'trans debate' and 'gender critical feminism' has led to a torrent of abuse targeting at transgender women online. Although it is a relatively small group of outspoken individuals holding these strong opinions, it is an outspoken group with prominent supporters such as Harry Potter author, J.K. Rowling and Labour MP, Rosie Duffield. This 'debate' has spiralled from an initial discussion regarding the difference between sex

and gender and women-only spaces to hateful transphobic exchanges online. The Labour party leadership's reluctance to address issues of transphobia within its own ranks is further reason for concern amongst the LGBT community, the party which has largely been at the forefront of championing LGBT rights and issues to date.

Casual homophobia and biphobia is also still a prominent part of social media popularity, especially with the rise of TikTok over the course of the COVID-19 pandemic. Viral trends and sounds such as "Don't act straight when you're gay" and "But I just can't date a dude with a V*g" can be harmless but have simultaneously been used to casually belittle the existence of bisexual individuals and prejudice men with feminine characteristics.

According to a briefing paper produced by the House of Commons Library, 40% of those who identify as LGBT have faced a negative incident based on their sexuality or gender identity in the past twelve months, with the figure rising to 43% amongst 18-24 year olds. 44% of those who reported hate crimes to the police based on sexual orientation or transgender identity expressed dissatisfaction with the way in which their cases were handled.

When these heart-breaking facts and figures exist, it's easy to beg the question yet again – are we moving backwards? This is not to disregard how far the LGBT community has come in recent decades and the advancement of LGBT rights but one thing is crystal clear – we have a long way to go before tolerance transitions to outright acceptance and all-embracing.

CONSENT IN THE 21ST CENTURY

BY CHLOE BAYLISS

Have you ever watched 'The Tea Video'?

If you went to a British secondary school then the answer is most likely yes. The 'tea' video is perhaps one of the most British things to ever exist and though it has been mocked and memed over the years it does leave a significant impact on the pubescent minds of British children.

For those who have yet to witness this gem of Britishness, the video concept is simple. This simple cartoon advises viewers about Consent - in a metaphor of making a cup of tea. For example, if a person is unconscious, do not make them drink tea. If a person wants tea, but later does not want tea - do not force them to drink the tea. For most people this is obvious, but there are people in this world who abuse their power, wealth and influence over others to commit horrific actions, and no, this is no longer about tea.

Consent is the permission for something to happen or an agreement to do something. In the UK and many other European and Western countries, a

person must explicitly consent to any sexual activities before they take place - if there is no consent and sexual activities continue then this is rape.

A simple concept, dumbed down to the people of Britain in a cartoon and simple phrases such as 'no means no'. However, rape and sexual abuse is still rife in this country, even in the 21st century when society is meant to be 'sophisticated' and 'well-developed'.

Section 74 of the Sexual Offences Act 2003 describes consent as a choice, given freely in regards to proposed sexual activity. Consent can be withdrawn at any time. However, there are times when a person cannot give consent and this comes under two categories.

Capacity to Consent and Freedom to Consent.

Capacity to Consent is whether the victim of sexual abuse was in a stable capacity to consent, depending on whether they were under the influence of drugs or alcohol. People who are drunk or under the influence cannot consent as they are not in a stable mindset. Those who suffer from medical conditions which limit



their abilities to communicate, or those who have mental health or learning disabilities can also not consent to sexual activities. An obvious one is also people who are asleep or unconscious - they cannot consent.

There was an article in the BBC recently about a young man called Alex Feis-Bryce who told his story about being raped at a party when he was 18 and living away from home for university. Alex believes he was drugged and pinned to a bed and raped. Alex was not within the capacity to consent to any sexual activity. Because he is a man Alex did not think the police would believe him, but this was not the case and he got the help he needed. Alex, as an openly gay man fits into recent research which shows male members of the LGBTQ+ community are more at risk

to sexual abuse than heterosexual men.

Freedom to Consent is slightly different. This version considers whether the victim of sexual abuse had the freedom to consent. If the victim suffered domestic abuse then they could not consent. If the offender abused their power or trust as a role model figure - such as teachers, club leaders, medical professionals, parents or security figures, and seduced/abused the victim - this is also rape. Same for victims who are underage or considerably younger than the offender.

Consent must be given for all sexual acts.

I shall take this moment to apologise for all the legal jargon - it makes this topic seem detached from humanity,

downplaying the severity of consent cases and the trauma most victims suffer through. This is not a light topic, it makes people uncomfortable, which is why sex education in schools is so poor.

Physical Sex Education (PSE) is a mandatory class in upper Junior school and the lower two years of High school in the UK. Teachers were always embarrassed, vague and provided little to no information. This is not just the teachers fault, children are immature, they are going through puberty, experiencing new feelings and growing hair, getting acne and their bodies change. However, trying to get the essential pieces of information across and barely teaching anything are very different.

Learning about periods in Junior school made the topic feel like something girls should be ashamed of - something we needed to hide, even from other girls. At my school we were given a code word to tell our teachers in case we got our period (oranges if you're wondering). Reaching secondary school, the 1 hour a week PSE class was majoritively covered by a supply teacher - who just handed out worksheets or told us to make a poster - which most people didn't do either. The case may be different in other schools, but those were the snippets of information the UK education system bestowed upon us.

Many young people do not know what constitutes as rape. Students at UK universities have called for the government to introduce a mandatory sexual consent test at the start of the term. This would hopefully reduce sexual harassment on campus. Students

think they were not prepared enough in secondary school sex education classes.

Personally I think this sounds like a good idea, but it could be implemented differently. At my university you have to complete a mandatory fire safety course before confirming your application for accommodation on campus. There should be a sexual consent course in this format - if you can't or won't complete it, or score badly, then you will not be allowed on campus.

Unfair? More like justifiable.

There have been some breakthroughs in other countries regarding laws about consent - such as a recent bill in Spain and rising calls for change in Australia.

There are many stereotypes and assumptions made about the victims of sexual assault, which is worsened by the influence of pop culture and the media. What a person is wearing does not mean they are asking for sex. Being drunk makes the victim vulnerable, not desperate or asking for sex. Victims who do not fight against their abusers were not consenting - they were frozen with fear, dissociating, trying to befriend their abuser so they would stop. Most rape cases are between people who know each other - being friends or in a relationship with someone is not consent.

Sex is meant to be fun, when the fun stops - **STOP**.

Consent must be given for all sexual acts.

BEAUTY IS THE BITCH

BY EMMA DOYLE

I have never – at least, not latterly – had any strong objections to being called a bitch. To be specific, I have never had any strong objections to being called a bitch by anyone else who identifies as female. The offending word could be shrieked furiously into my face in a wave of hot breath, or expelled as a malignant whisper from the corner of a pursed mouth. In either case, my positive reaction would be more than likely to extend far past a simple resignation.

Before I continue, I should elucidate the fact that I would never under usual circumstances over-exert myself in being perceived as an unpleasant person. I'm friendly to the point of annoyance, and am surprisingly averse to confrontation. It's just that there's something so impalpably pointed and measured in being branded a bitch by another woman. The simplicity of the statement holds a strange beauty for me which I struggle to explain. Why, then, is such vulgarity only palatable for me under this pretence? Surely the actuality of the word's baseness isn't so easily affected when it's spoken by one person rather than another? The actuality of my situation, however, is that I become

positively incensed when a man takes it upon themselves to attempt to use the word against me as a slur. I am of a mind to discover why this is the case, and how all women deserve a share in rightful ownership of the terminology.

The origins of the word, 'bitch', are rooted in misogyny. Historically employed by men in order to exercise an assumed dominance over their female counterparts and stemming from the old English 'bicce' in reference to a she-dog, it was a brazen demonstration of aggression intended to constrain the potential of any woman in the seen vicinity. 'Bitch' carries with it such casual dismissal as to postulate that all female-identifying individuals are naturally inferior. With sincerity, what I would like to know is what has led men to believe they are in any suitable position to dictate what is considered to be within the bounds of a woman's nature? It seems to me, therefore, that it is high time the bitch should be given the opportunity to claw the balance of power back.

Shifting the focus from origins to contextual use, Bitch (I am now affording it its deserved capitalised status) has



adopted a great number of forms which all serve unique purposes. When wielded among the arsenal of a woman, Bitch can be exclamative or descriptive. It can also be accusatory, questioning, or even sympathetic. The versatility of Bitch is a divine gift, as are the women who are wilfully rising to reclaim it. The epoch of slapping the Bitch label on any female-presenting person who dared to be loud, controversial, or the mistress of her own destiny – unable to be restrained by a society's patriarchal muzzle – has spanned centuries. However, during the dissemination of second, third and fourth-wave feminism, parallel with the ever-increasing female influence within the Rap and Hip hop scenes, Bitch experienced a reclamation which allows it to honour all these supposedly 'undesirable' qualities. In an existence when to be a bitch was purportedly to weaponise vulnerability as a tactic of manipulation, to appropriate a term which should never have been guarded by male gatekeepers in the first instance was to disrupt the grinding, accepted order.

As well as being the noun of choice

for every committed egalitarian, Bitch slowly crept into mainstream vernacular as both an adjective and a verb. Thanks to semiotics, the meaning of Bitch was diversified and was no longer bound to pure derogation. It was now possible to have a bitching bitch with all of our bitchiest bitches, bitch! The best part of it is that a translation was neither necessary or desired, so widespread became the use of the word. The significance of Bitch in queer circles and the LGBT+ community more generally has also been profound. As well as offering empowerment to those who align themselves with the female gender, the propagation of Bitch to encompass queer men and non-binary individuals has been instrumental in restoring the balance of power within a pre-assumed sexual hierarchy. A person has a right to be submissive as much as they have personal jurisdiction over when to assert control. A self-directed label of Bitch maintains proprietary rights for those who wish to establish and preserve their pride for being assuredly vulnerable within sexual orientations outside of overpowering straightness. Being a bitch has once again proved that the middle finger can be given to toxic, heteronormative machismo.

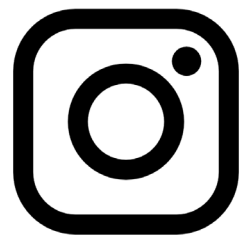
This brings me on a circular path back to the disparities between the use of Bitch within feminine and masculine spheres. When using the above investigation as a reference, we can of course confirm that when Bitch is propelled from the mouth of a cis-het man, it acts as an incarnation of violent patriarchal rhetoric. However, in a contemporary setting it is transformed into something more problematic than simply

perpetuating outdated ideals. Bitch is such an ingrained part of the English tongue that men and women alike are actually born without the knowledge of why Bitch is a term which should receive differentiation from what is considered acceptable speech. As a woman ages, she gains this knowledge through the learned experience of those who have encountered the joys of complacent misogyny before her. In turn, she acquires eligibility to name herself and her female peers as bitches. And this is what sets her apart; she has grafted her way to an understanding of the word, its historical entanglements and all of its implications. Even if a woman were to place this label on another out of feelings of frustration or vengeance, it is a simultaneous recognition of a refusal

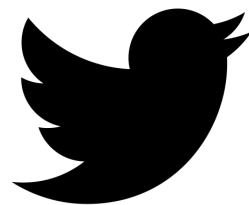
to remain silent, and a tenacity in the struggle to be heard.

The Bitch has been pushed through an accelerated evolution. From societal subordinate to relentless campaigner, she has battled steadfastly for the right to be noticed. Her primary aim, rather than to be adored, has been to gain recognition for her efforts in not giving a shit about fitting the mould into which the patriarchy expected her to pour herself. She did it, and continues to do it for the sisters who are not yet living in a state of liberation – and to call her my predecessor, and be referred to by association, is an honour. One day, I hope we can all be proud to call ourselves a bitch.

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CURRENT
AFFAIRS

TAKE A LOOK AROUND... ARE WE NOT LIVING IN 'THE HANDMAID'S TALE'S' GILEAD?

BY KELLY WILLIAMS

“ATWOOD FAMOUSLY WROTE THAT SHE PUT NOTHING IN THE NOVEL THAT WAS NOT IN SOME WAY ROOTED IN SOMETHING THAT HAD ALREADY HAPPENED IN THE WORLD; BUT SADLY, OVER THIRTY FIVE YEARS LATER, SUCH INJUSTICES ARE STILL HAPPENING.”

If you have not yet read *The Handmaid's Tale*, it is an absolute must. Written in 1985, *The Handmaid's Tale* is a 'dystopic nightmare', yet it is ironically applicable to today's society. There are evident connections between the concerns, events and ideologies of the novel and those of our contemporary society or recent history.

If I existed in Margaret Atwood's Gilead, I would surely be classified as a deviant, immoral woman. With my skin on show, and—God forbid—my ability to think and thus rebel, I would be deemed the worst of the worst. Women are continuously villainized for our clothing, our refusal to remain confined within outdated perceptions of gender, and also deciding that us, and only us, have control over our bodies.

Atwood famously wrote that she put nothing in the novel that was not in some way rooted in something that had already happened in the world; but sadly, over thirty five years later, such injustices are still happening.

Ownership

The Handmaids are initially stripped of agency through the erasure of their names, destroying their ultimate means of identity. This allows for a complete rebranding, portraying the women as objects that are repossessed and labelled, and of course, their new name must be a reflection of their shattered independence. We do not know our narrator's true name, but we understand she has become 'Offred'. The prefix 'of' symbolises her belonging to a specific Commander, meaning the Handmaids' identities signify their restricted existence; they are

merely an extension of their owner.

Being ranked as a Handmaid denies the women control over their sexuality, rather it is handed over to the Commanders who repeatedly enforce ritualistic sex in an attempt to reproduce. The Handmaids do not consent to the act, but knowing their objection would result in punishment, they are tragically coerced into participating in their own rape.

Despite having made progress in terms of female liberation, the extent of our agency remains in the hands of others. This is evidenced through decisions concerning women's bodies being made on our behalf, rather than by ourselves. In May 2019, Alabama became the latest US state to restrict abortion laws, 'outlaw[ing] the procedure in almost all cases' including rape and incest. The bill was conveniently passed by Alabama's Republican governor, Kay Ivey; a man who will never experience the trauma of an unwanted nor unfeasible pregnancy.

Under the bill, doctors face 10 years in prison for attempting to terminate a pregnancy and 99 years for carrying out

the procedure. This is a horrific reflection of the events in Atwood's text, as doctors are killed and labelled 'war criminals': 'They have committed atrocities, and must be made into examples'. These 'criminals' are hung on the Wall to be viewed by others, a warning against the consequences of non-conformity, 'they are meant to scare'. Publicly displaying and eradicating those who oppose the totalitarian regime is a visual representation of Gilead's power and authority, much like the threat of a lengthy prison sentence for Alabama doctors is a caution to remain an obedient, compliant citizen.

Fortunately, Alabama's abortion law was blocked from taking effect in November 2019, as the judge admitted it would diminish 'the capacity of women to act in society, and to make reproductive decisions'. Despite this, countries such as Malta, Philippines, Madagascar, and the much closer to home Northern Ireland, refuse to legalise abortion, many of them having a complete 'blanket ban' on the procedure. Atwood stated that the 'control of women and babies has been a feature of every repressive regime on



the planet', conveying restricted abortions and Gilead's forced pregnancies as a form of conditioning, reducing women's autonomy in an attempt to limit them to a subordinate position.

Walking Wombs

Though we have not been forced into a form of reproductive slavery, women are still valued based on their decision to reproduce; if we decide that we do not want children, we are questioned and told our minds will change with time.

Most discussions around children revolve around 'when' rather than 'if', embedding that reproduction is natural and our main purpose. This reinforces Atwood's emphasis on the significance of fertility, branding the Handmaids 'two-legged wombs' and instilling that they are 'for breeding purposes only'. Their feet and hands 'are not essential', after all, they are only valued for their fertility.

Like those of us who are labelled 'naïve' and 'young' for not striving for motherhood, those who fail to reproduce in Gilead are alienated and categorised amongst the 'Unwomen'. If the Handmaids cannot fulfil their only function, then they are unworthy and shall be shunned. To be a woman, is to reproduce, hence the 'un' removing the women of their female identity.

Today's women are isolated for not wanting children, admitting 'it can seem shameful'; society appears to take the decision personally and disapproves of their refusal to abide by societal expectations. Although we may not be banished to the colonies for failing to conceive, we remain estranged by the often unspoken division of gender norms concerning reproduction.

We Are Scapegoats

This is further demonstrated through clothing, as the text recollects women exhibiting themselves like 'roast meat on a spit', referring to their sparse and 'immodest' clothing. The comparison to meat portrays them as products of consumption, again reducing their autonomy and contributing to the suggestion that women are objects of desire, rather than fully functioning beings. 'To be seen - to be seen - is to be... penetrated', hence the significance of clothing acting as a mode of concealment; modesty is invisibility.

Dressing in a revealing manner only entices crime, 'no wonder those things used to happen'. Clothing is deemed as a reflection of consent, and the imposed uniform of long, plain dresses is an attempt to avoid fashion being perceived as an invitation for harassment. This provides 'freedom from' men's unwanted attention, yet enforcing a uniform is an ironic deflation of the Handmaids' own free-will.

Similarly, women today can relate to this confinement, acknowledging that we are frequently sexualised and objectified. Rather than tackling the core of the issue - those who sexualise us - we are battered by a culture that relies heavily on the 'she asked for it' notion. We are scapegoats for those who push their unwelcome desires upon us, resembling the prominent issue of victim blaming in Atwood's text.

When Janine relays her traumatic rape, the other Handmaids are encouraged to taunt her, echoing 'Her fault, her fault, her fault' and claiming 'she' caused the assault to happen. Through reversing



© Hulu

the role of responsibility and accountability, women become the perpetrator whilst men avoid punishment.

Sadly, this is still seen in current society. Women have previously been advised to 'stick to well-lit streets. If possible, let someone know when you are coming home and the route you are taking and always be alert in your surroundings, so don't use earphones or handheld devices'. This advice comes from The Metropolitan Police, a system paid to protect us, yet they ask women to change rather than confronting the actual perpetrators. Focusing on the victim does not address the source of the issue: the deep-rooted issues within society that enable continuous harassment.

Jessica Eaton hit back at this, claiming 'Headphones don't rape women, nor do skirts, or dark streets, or clubs, or alcohol, or parties, or sleepovers, or school uniforms'. These things do not summon nor warrant harassment, and demanding women to alter their lives, appearance and routines simply restrains the victim. Both Gilead and today's society provide safety advice that is at women's expense, rather than promoting security and free-will. Though it is disappointing, society parallels Gilead's unacceptable, suppressive response to female victimisation.

Are we not, then, truly living in Atwood's Gilead?



DR ALEX SAVING LIVES AND MINDS

BY COURTNEY DAVIES

Alex George, who is known by many as Dr Alex has worked tirelessly throughout the pandemic as an A+E NHS doctor. When appearing on Love Island in 2018, Dr Alex was open about his career and even continued to work as a doctor after the show. After many YouTube videos, TikToks and Instagram posts urging people to look after their mental health and raising money for specific charities he has now been appointed the Ambassador for Mental Health.

Throughout the numerous lockdowns to tackle Covid-19, he has provided advice across social media about how people can take better care of their minds, bodies, and mental health, whether that is going for walks or what moisturiser is best after using an increased amount of hand sanitiser. He provides tips and tricks through online videos which is the most effective way of getting people to engage with and maintain healthy living. This is especially true for

the younger generation because they are the ones who spend most of their time on walks in order to pass the time. People who engage with the posts and have followed Dr Alex’s journey this past year not only know he tries to make a difference on people’s lifestyles, but also know he sadly lost his brother to suicide. He openly spoke about this and having been affected by the effects of mental health directly, more people may be willing to listen to his advice and see him as an inspiration or someone who understands.

For those who don’t know that Dr Alex is a doctor and are unaware of the advice he has been providing people with throughout the pandemic, instead only aware of him because he was on Love Island may have a completely different opinion on this. These people may wonder why a Love Island star has become the Mental Health Ambassador. Although, people who do only know of him from

the show could be aware of the suffering the Love Island cast face when they leave the villa and the struggles they go through, particularly because of online trolls and the abuse they receive about their appearance or how they acted on the show. Unfortunately, others may only be aware of the show from those reality TV stars that sadly lost their lives due to their battle with mental health such as Mike Thalassitis and Sophie Gradon and presenter Caroline Flack, enforcing the message of how important mental health is.

Some may consider Dr Alex a heroic influencer, in comparison to his peers who were seen jetting off on holiday to Dubai in recent months. He has faced Covid-19 head-on, helping save people’s lives through the peak of the pandemic.

I think that Dr Alex being appointed the ambassador for mental health will be a huge step for people accepting that they might need help, normalising that it is okay if they are not feeling 100% themselves. Because he is young and has experienced reality TV first-hand, people may feel they can connect with him more easily and feel as though he understands the troubles people face every day online. The more you talk about mental health and wellbeing, the less it is stigmatised and pushed aside. Dr Alex plays a crucial role in this process. Personally, I hope that Dr Alex will continue to post tips on his social media. Whether you prefer, TikTok, Instagram or YouTube, the messages remain the same and hopefully can help everyone improve their lifestyle in some way.



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PROGRESSIVE PATRIOTISM AND GARETH SOUTHGATE

“WHAT CANNOT BE QUESTIONED ABOUT THE CURRENT GENERATION OF ENGLAND PLAYERS IS THEIR PRIDE IN REPRESENTING THIS COUNTRY. THIS IDEA THAT SOME PLAYERS DON’T KNOW WHAT IT MEANS TO PLAY FOR ENGLAND — OR DON’T CARE — HAS BECOME SOMETHING OF A FALSE NARRATIVE. YOU DON’T NEED TO DIG DEEP TO REALISE THAT... THIS IS A SPECIAL GROUP. HUMBLE, PROUD AND LIBERATED IN BEING THEIR TRUE SELVES... OUR PLAYERS ARE ROLE MODELS.”



© Instagram/england

BY CAITLIN BARR

There were plenty of things to love about the Euro 2020 England team. Jack Grealish’s bouncy hair. Raheem Sterling’s joyful trot. Jordan Pickford’s air of disbelief and rage every time the ball came within four metres of him. All spearheaded by the nicest man in Britain, Gareth Southgate. Tweets were flooding in throughout the last few matches of the tournament, praising the talent and drive of the young players and their manager.

But what exactly about Gareth Southgate captured the hearts of the nation this summer? Was it his new stylish shacket, replacing the famous waistcoat of 2018? I think the answer lies in a far more important aspect of the manager’s personality: his demonstration of a new type of patriotism.

In his stirring piece for The Players’ Tribune entitled ‘Dear England’, Gareth Southgate wrote the following: ‘what cannot be questioned about the current generation of England players is their pride in representing this country. This idea that some players don’t know what it means to play for England — or don’t care — has become something of a false narrative. You don’t need to dig deep to realise that... This is a special group. Humble, proud and liberated in being their true selves... Our players are role models. And, beyond the confines of the pitch, we must recognise the impact they can have on society. We must give them the confidence to stand up for their teammates and the things that matter to them as people.’ His support for his team taking the knee at the start of each match can clearly be traced back to his belief that being a football player

is not just about scoring goals, but about using your platform to inspire and uplift others. He goes on to say of his team, ‘It’s their duty to continue to interact with the public on matters such as equality, inclusivity and racial injustice, while using the power of their voices to help put debates on the table, raise awareness and educate.’ A perfect example of this very sentiment is Marcus Rashford’s free school meals campaign, but all of the players modelled using their voices for good in speaking out against racism, both in response to crowds booing when players took the knee, or the racist abuse after the final.

Gareth Southgate’s patriotism is progressive – not characterised by protectionism or colonial nationalism. It respects players taking the knee to protest the treatment of black people. It rejects the hostile, isolationist patriotism we have seen in recent years, and focuses instead on the potential of a diverse team of English men with different backgrounds, united by their love for the sport of football. Southgate’s pride for his nation is not just pride for a certain type of Englishness, but for the way in which a team of young men can come together to unite the whole country, with everyone included in their celebrations.

I have never been remotely interested in football (apart from a summer fling in 2018 when we all thought it was coming home and I was buoyed by Wetherspoons pitchers), and if I’m being honest, I always viewed it as something I didn’t want to be involved in because of the stereotypes of football fans that we’re constantly seeing in the media: lairy, drunk, aggressive. Of course, there

remains a minority of fans who do fit this stereotype – we just have to look at the racism that was unleashed when three young Black players missed penalties in the final against Italy, or the state of Leicester Square after fans had partied there, or the haunting domestic violence statistics after England games, to know that there are some football fans for whom the beautiful game is an excuse to get drunk, act violently, and spout racist and xenophobic rhetoric. But for a couple of weeks, almost everyone I knew, all across the political spectrum, was revelling in the success of our team.

To call it ‘our’ team feels right – these young men represented all of us. Amar Singh wrote in *The Independent* about his experiences as an Asian fan: ‘When I was growing up in south London in the 1980s, the St. George’s Flag was not so much a symbol of national identity but a warning sign... Yet there I was at Wembley, holding aloft the flag and cheering on the Three Lions.’ The England team’s clear assertion and demonstration of their values made fans for whom football has not always been

a welcoming atmosphere feel like part of the celebrations. I believe that Gareth Southgate’s leadership both on and off the pitch was instrumental to this. He demonstrated unflinching support for and encouragement of his team, even when it meant receiving backlash, including from Conservative MPs, right-wing commentators and journalists, and even the Home Secretary, who labelled taking the knee as ‘gesture politics’.

Despite opposition, Gareth Southgate facilitated an environment in which his players could stand up for what they believe in, and fans could celebrate with them no matter their background. The England flag came to represent far more than its colonial, isolationist history, and instead became the symbol of a diverse, principled, talented team and their fans. Football may not have come home this year, but there is no doubt that this summer will be remembered as one of unity behind a brilliant team, shouting louder than racists, and Gareth Southgate’s inspiring management in a time when principled leaders are hard to come by.



© Instagram/england

SPORT VS THEATRE

WHY SUCH A DIFFERENCE?

BY PHOEBE HURST



What seems even more ridiculous, is the difference in restrictions between sporting events and theatres. Up until the 19th of July theatres faced very tight restrictions: running only at half capacity to ensure social distancing, and with an expectation that those attending would wear a mask. The difference between the two scenarios could not be starker. Even after so-called ‘Freedom Day’ many theatres are still imposing restrictions, to try and prevent covid from spreading.

The question is, why? Why is there such a difference between the two?

Earlier this month Wembley stadium was packed with sporting fans cheering on England as we dramatically lost to Italy in the Euros. Approximately 60,000 mask-less football fans were crammed into Wembley to watch the match; whilst those not lucky enough to have a seat rampaged on the streets, piled into pubs, or watched from the comfort of their own home with friends and family. It seems almost ludicrous that in the middle of a pandemic, with cases of the Covid variant rising daily, 60,000 football fans were allowed to attend a football match, with no social distancing or masks.

The simple answer is the Government’s perception of the arts. The government has made it clear that they perceive a career in the arts as less valuable than other career paths, such as footballer, rugby player, or cyber security expert. This was perhaps highlighted most significantly when, back in 2020, a poster was circulated featuring a young ballet dancer tying her ribbons with the message: “Fatima’s next job could be in cyber (she just doesn’t know it yet). Rethink. Reskill. Reboot.” Naturally there was outrage from the arts community; social media blew up with the voices of artists, actors, authors, and more, all expressing their anger at the Government’s disregard for them.

The idea that talented members of the arts community should “rethink” their career choice, “reskill” in something deemed better and “reboot” their career felt like a kick in the teeth for those who had worked hard to provide us with entertainment (in many forms) during the pandemic; when many of us had little more to do each day than binge watch TV.

When we look at this poster in conjunction with the stark differences in restriction rules it could not be clearer: sport is deemed more worthwhile. But perhaps there is an argument that the government felt sports was more accessible to all members of the British public: there is less of a class divide with regard to watching sport. You don't need disposable income in order to watch sporting events, just access to a television. Theatre doesn't offer the same accessibility; it requires spare time and spare income. It is no secret that

theatre is perceived as for those ‘posher’ members of our society, undoubtedly because of the expense.

Or perhaps the government was thinking of the income generated by sporting events: the money spent on tickets, merchandise, the pub. Rarely do we see hoards of theatre goers having a couple of pints in their local before heading to watch a play, or spilling out of the theatre and into an off-licence to grab a few tinnies to continue the fun. There's big money in sporting events, and after eighteen months of restrictions, our economy desperately needs to claw back some income.

Without being a member of the government, it is difficult to say 100% why there is such a difference in restrictions between theatres and sports events, however the government's treatment of the arts community does give us some indication.



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FACE MASKS:

A TEMPORARY FIX OR A PERMANENT SOLUTION?

BY RUBIE BARKER

To most of us living in the UK, the idea of it being compulsory by law to wear a mask in indoor settings seemed implausible. But nearly a year and a half after the initial lockdown began, I find myself leaving the house asking if I've got my purse, phone, keys, and mask. Many of us now have reusable masks in varying colours, fits and sizes and the discussion around the future of them in our lives is growing.

It has now been a year since it became a legal requirement for masks to be worn in indoor settings in England but it will no longer be the law to wear one in shops and on public transport from the 19th July, instead a recommendation depending on the company. Despite the government's initial plan stating they would be scrapped on 21st June, the concerning rise in the Delta variant of Covid-19 in the UK prompted ministers to push back this date by four weeks. But did anything change in those four weeks that makes it safer to be in these environments without one? Are face masks a thing of the past or should we accept that they are sometimes a necessity?

Across the other three nations of the UK however, the rules are varying. In Scotland, Nicola Sturgeon announced a move down to Level Zero on 19th July with

face coverings remaining compulsory for the foreseeable future, while in Northern Ireland although a relaxing of the rules is coming into effect on the 26th July, face masks will stay for now. While Mark Drakeford announced more easing of restrictions in Wales from the 17th of July and more easing expected on the 7th of August, it is thought that face coverings will remain required by law in most indoor public settings past this date. The varied approaches of the four nations reflect the wider discrepancies and views that the public has towards face masks as part of our lives.

In June of 2020 WHO (World Health Organisation) began to recommend face masks as a barrier to spreading infectious droplets and since then more data has shown how effective they are at preventing the transmission of Covid-19. When looking at global epidemiological evidence, the spread of Covid-19 slows when mask mandates are introduced. But in the UK since the start of the pandemic, there have been those unhappy about the government's decision to enforce lockdowns and compulsory mask wearing.

New York mental health counsellor Kathryn Stamoulis, discussed with the BBC her concerns about social development that mask wearing is



perhaps beginning to prohibit. While she says that many of her clients find online learning far less stress inducing, in the long term it could have an impact on how they deal with social anxiety. She says, "There's definitely the potential to lose out on social interactions that can be nourishing." but also suggests she isn't overly worried about these long term effects.

Aside from the benefit that face masks have in preventing the spread of diseases, there are other bonuses that have emerged. For people who are insecure or suffer with conditions like body dysmorphia they provide a sense of protection and reduce anxiety when in public settings.

For those working in retail, an industry where customers are no longer required by law to wear a face covering, employees are now face to face with possibly hundreds of strangers a day, and yet much of the workforce is still no longer double vaccinated. According to the Annual Population Survey in 2015 more than half of retail jobs in London were held by those aged 34 and under. But the vaccine programme was only made available to all over 18-year-olds in England on the 18th of June, meaning

many will not be eligible for their second dose until at least the 13th of August.

Looking past the pandemic and the spreading of Covid-19 though, face masks stop the spreading of other diseases, influenza and the common cold. As Professor Susan Michie, a member of SAGE (Scientific Advisory Group for Emergencies), said on Channel 5 news in June, the wearing of face masks is a good behaviour to have adopted in places where ventilation is inadequate and 'will be good not only for covid, but also to reduce other diseases'.

While the other three nations of the UK may not be scrapping the mandatory laws to wear face masks in indoor settings at the same time as England, it is unlikely they will carry on forever. But the benefits that face coverings can pose to public health during flu season are clear. As some companies and environments still request visitors to wear face masks, they are not going to disappear from our lives after July 19th, but instead become a moral dilemma and a question of personal choice and boundaries. Only time will tell us whether face masks become a symbol of the pandemic or a part of our lives for the foreseeable future.

#FREEBRITNEY:

WHY CONSERVATORSHIPS NEED TO END

BY ELEANOR ANTONIOU

Britney Spears has been trapped in a conservatorship for the past thirteen years, which has legally blocked her from making her own decisions, and denied her the freedom to be her own person ever since. Britney has become like a real-life Rapunzel, locked away in her tower and subject to the desires of others. Yet here it is not an evil stepmother who is controlling her, but something far more uncomfortable. It seems that misogyny has reigned over Britney for more than a decade: would a man in Britney's position ever have been placed under these same conditions for so long?

A conservatorship is typically used for elderly people, who are unable to safely make decisions for themselves, and involves the legal appointment of a person to manage the personal decisions and finances of another. After Britney's struggles with mental health, her father was appointed as the conservator of her person and her estate when she was just 27. Yet now it is unclear why the conservatorship is needed at all, especially considering that Britney has been releasing music and playing in sold out shows globally throughout this time, something which someone truly in need of a conservatorship would surely be unable to do.

Currently, Britney is facing a court battle

against her father, stressing that she wants his control removed completely. In the New York Times documentary, Framing Britney Spears, it was reported that Britney never wanted her father to be involved as a conservator in the first place. She was denied a choice in this from the start, even being refused the right to hire her own legal representation, until now. On the 14th July this year, Britney spoke out in court for the second time



Illustration by Daisy Ward

in two months, stating, “I would like to charge my father with conservatorship abuse.”

Britney has finally been permitted a voice, speaking about the “cruelty” of the conservatorship that has oppressed her for so long. She described being refused things as basic as coffee, her driver’s licence and a bedroom door, not being allowed to choose what to eat, as well as being forced to have psychological tests and blood tests whilst she was on tour, with freedom falsely promised in return for her compliance.

In another disturbing revelation, Britney described the IUD which she has been made to keep against her will. “I want to be able to get married and have a baby,” she told the court, but her conservators have not permitted her to have the IUD removed. This heart-breaking statement from Britney reveals a much deeper problem: the conservatorship is being abused here as a means to control a woman. Britney’s forced contraception brings to mind other attempts across history to police the reproductive rights of women, such as anti-abortion legislations or the Chinese government’s recent use of IUDs, abortion and sterilisation to reduce birth rates among Uighurs (an ethnic group in Central and East Asia).

Controlling the reproductive rights of a woman is something that should not belong in the twenty-first century, and it is all the more shocking that someone as high-profile as Britney has been subjected to such a misogynistic method without the world realising it for so long.

Britney, however, has not only had to fight a battle in the courtroom. Since

she first appeared in the public eye as a young teenager, Britney has also battled against the misogyny of the media and the paparazzi. Her ‘breakdown,’ which led to the conservatorship, was fuelled by the toxic vultures of the tabloids, who tore apart a young girl for their own amusement. Britney’s body has been repeatedly scrutinised and objectified, and her mental health became a frequent, tasteless joke during the 2000s, with the media propelling the narrative that Britney was a loose woman gone mad.

There was an ongoing public debate in the tabloids about the status of Britney’s virginity, and after her breakup with Justin Timberlake, he was praised for sleeping with Britney, basking in his masculine triumph, whilst she was painted as a heartbreaker, a girl gone wild and a slut. Britney was obsessively sexualised yet simultaneously shamed for her sexuality, expected to tread the fine line between ‘sexy’ and ‘pure.’

As well as this, Britney was shamed by the press as a bad mother, as single moments taken out of context were twisted out of proportion to vilify her. The reports of her driving with her baby on her lap fail to mention that perhaps this was the only option available to her when her car was surrounded by photographers, who would not give her the time or space to put her baby in his car seat. Heartbreakingly, this narrative built by the media can only have contributed to Britney losing custody of her sons.

It is hardly surprising that, after years of enduring the paparazzi’s harassment with polite, sweet smiles, Britney began to experience difficulties with her mental health. Who wouldn’t feel

like hitting the paparazzi’s car with an umbrella after being incessantly followed and harassed? Not to mention her ex-husband had just blocked her from visiting her children. I’m sure many of us would have shared Britney’s anger and grief at that moment, yet the photos from this night were printed without context, intended only to highlight Britney’s flaws and define her by these. The paparazzi nicknamed Britney as a ‘train wreck’, a narrative which is rarely applied to men, and propelled her further towards a breakdown, because images of her in distress brought them even more money.

Britney’s mental health issues and personal struggles became a cruel running joke in the media: she was having a ‘meltdown,’ she had gone ‘crazy.’ Following Heath Ledger’s death in 2008, the same year the conservatorship began, celebrity news blogger, Perez Hilton, asked ‘Why wasn’t it Britney?’, and even printed this phrase on t-shirts.

All of this shows that the tabloid world is built on criticising, attacking and judging women, tearing apart their actions

and their bodies for profit. In Britney’s case, this can only have fuelled the continuation of a conservatorship that she does not want. Meanwhile, Britney has also faced misogyny from the men closest to her, who have placed her in the conservatorship against her will.

Britney was once a woman who was powerful in her own right, the most loved and most famous pop star in the world. It is almost as if the men around her, and the male-dominated tabloids, couldn’t bear to see a woman flourish. They seemed to want to bring her down and enjoy seeing her fail. Now, they have taken Britney’s power and freedom away, stereotyping her as a ‘mad woman’ and a ‘train wreck’, degrading her in the public eye, and exploiting the resulting reaction from Britney to trap her in a position in which she can only be vulnerable to further abuse. The conservatorship has confined her for too long, and we can only hope that the court will listen to Britney’s pleas this time so that she can finally be free and in control of her own life, as she should have been for the past thirteen years.

THE PROBLEMATIC TREND OF SUMMER '21



Illustration by Daisy Ward

BY ALEXANDRA BIKARD

70s style is cool again, and one of its summer star-pieces: crochet, has quickly become one of the major trends of this season. As with any other large-spread trend, high street stores have quickly adopted it and created a plethora of garments around the theme. From cute crochet trousers at Zara that retail for £29.99 to sweet crochet halters on Asos that can be yours for £15, there's really a trendy piece for everyone.

However, while these prices are not particularly low for the previously mentioned stores, the specific case of crochet has become somewhat of a sensation on TikTok and generally amongst the sustainable community.

See, crochet has a catch: it can only be done by hand. Unlike other techniques such as knitting, there is currently no machine that is able to replicate it.

While it is no secret that fast fashion is detrimental to the planet and that corporations like Target, Zara and H&M are renowned for abusing their garment workers. Crochet has become an obvious metaphor for the unethical practices of the fashion industry as it blatantly reflects the horrendous wages that these companies pay their garment workers.

If we account for design cost, cost of materials, shipping costs (and most importantly profit margins), when a crochet bag retails for £12.99 at H&M, it is obvious that the garment worker who hand-crocheted it was only paid pennies.



Photo Credit: Soul by K

Not only does the low price crochet items in fast fashion retailers demonstrate the horrendous ethical issues of the fast fashion industry, it also devalues the work of those who chose to work ethically and sustainably. Many small independent designers deplore how their work isn't valued for what it's worth as a result of this.

Wavey Yarns mentions that "it has been difficult appropriately pricing garments considering the amount of labour time that goes into producing them" since "consumers can be unwilling to invest in ethically made pieces because they come at a much higher price point than they are accustomed to." Soul by K further emphasizes the issue of pricing her items and how the prices of smaller brands, while much higher than the average fast-fashion piece, often don't even pay the designers a fair wage. One of her sweaters can be currently purchased for \$90 which is essentially pennies for the hours she put into it: "It was a freehand project and I wasn't using a pattern or

anything so it was a lot of like trial and error and it took me almost a month to make it. [It] is expensive for a sweater compared to one that you could just buy at the store. In reality it's not paying me anything because including materials and time that I spent on it (100+ hours) I'm making a dollar an hour if not less".



Stylist and photographer Plasmainvitro via Wavey Yarns

This is an underlying issue for most creators who often need to deal with customers who will try to bargain with them for a lower price. Only, more often than not, there isn't even a profit margin that they can cut from. Small designers will often price their garments by accounting for the cost of material and production, often even underselling and underpaying their skills to make the prices more affordable. Asking an independent business to lower their price is effectively asking them to cut their (already low) hourly wage.

Sumaiyah recalls how her first customer ever asked for a deal: "Since it was my first order, I still [lowered my price] since I was happy someone wanted to buy something I made, even if it was not for the price I originally listed. After that, I realised this was something I could not do anymore because the revenue was not worth the time and the effort." Soul by K even had friends and family ask her to lower her prices which felt like "a slap in the face" considering the time and effort she put into a single piece.

A trend on TikTok has shown small independent designers showing off their products with a sound over of a woman singing " [...] you need to pay for my skills because exposure doesn't pay the bills it costs that much because it takes me f***** hours". While perhaps not PG13, it does the job of explaining in about 20 seconds the core of the issue.



Photo credit: Sumaiyah

TikTok has actually been a surprisingly educative platform on the issue. Creators such as @inchwormcrafts and @dreas_hook have analyzed many aspects of it and have done a stellar job at articulating the underlying problems of fast fashion crochet. Drea notably dedicated an entire series which deconstructed a crochet bikini sold on Target for \$22, proving that it was handmade and showing how the price of the item reflects its exploitative nature.



Photo Credit: Kirstin Bunce via Wovn

If all this wasn't enough, not only do fast fashion retailers rob small businesses of their credibility which is problematic on many levels, but not unlawful as such. They also have a tendency of stealing designs from small designers

(way beyond the crochet community). Sumaiyah deplores how "this takes away from [crochet designers] and the hours spent coming up with these designs, the trial and error, and the making the final product". Of course, behind these smaller brands is usually a single person, or a few at most, not a multinational corporation with an army of lawyers backing them up. Legal action is usually out of reach and these businesses have to see their designs being mass-produced and sold for ridiculously low prices.

However, the conversation around crochet is only a launching point for the greater conversation that we need to have about the fashion industry and specifically the ethical issues behind the curtains. We need to address the working conditions and wages of garment workers and hold accountable the brands who refuse to work towards a better future. Crochet ultimately underlines how we must remain suspicious and critical of green-washing and ethical-washing.

LIFESTYLE

LIFESTYLE

Illustration by Lucy Williams



LITTLE MIX TAKE THE BRITS 2021: FEMALES AND THE MUSIC INDUSTRY

BY CASEY THOMAS

This year's Brit Awards was a landmark event for females in the music industry, especially for Little Mix who broke Brit Award history by being the first female group to win Best British Group since its start in 1977. Little Mix used their speech to challenge the male dominance and misogyny in the industry that they, and many others, have experienced. They praised the iconic female groups that came before them including the Spice Girls, Sugababes, Girls Aloud and All Saints, who, despite being extremely successful and popular, have never been recognised with the same award.

In addition to Little Mix's historic win, many other females dominated this year's Brits with 8 of the 11 categories being awarded to female artists. This is a huge leap from 2020 with only 3 female winners. Seeing woman after woman take the stage to accept awards was heartwarming and long overdue. Hopefully this is a glimpse of the future, one in which the females who lead the music industry are recognised for their achievements and new artists are encouraged, supported and celebrated as much as their male counterparts. Since 1977, only 8 out of 41 British album

of the year awards and 11 out of 42 British single of the year awards have been won by female artists and of those some only included a female feature. If we look at statistics on artists that are signed to UK Record labels, 19.6% are women meaning a massive 80.4% are men. At first glance these figures may reflect the results of the award ceremony but I think this highlights a deeper issue and a conversation that needs to be had; why are record labels signing a significantly higher proportion of men, when women have proven to be just as successful, talented and hardworking. These numbers do not show why men are nominated more but it does show a disparity and injustice towards women in the industry. The music industry needs to evolve and become better at encouraging female talent.

This lack of recognition of female artists is not just a problem within the UK. During 2013-2020 women made up just 7.6% of Nominees at the Grammys for Album of the year. It is a sad fact that these numbers are only a small part of a bigger issue of gender bias in many other male dominated industries. Music is a lifeline and passion for people all over the world and the industry should reflect all the races, religions, sexualities and genders of the people who support it.

It took 20 years after the show's creation for a female artist to win best British single of the year. The Spice Girls took home the award for their single Wannabe in 1997. To put that into perspective, I am 21 years old, it took nearly my entire lifetime to award a female artist with Best Single. In the timeline of women fighting for equality and being afforded

the same privileges as men this recognition came far too late and shows a lack of willingness to support women from the start.

As an intersectional feminist, I could not discuss sexism in the industry without acknowledging how white women are often the ones on the front covers, the ones winning the awards and the ones being waved in front of our face by the industry to say 'see we're not sexist'. Industries can't showcase a single white woman and think that they have done their part. Some of the most famous female musicians of all time have been women of colour. They have shaped the history of music in ways no one else has and they must be included in any advancements we make towards a more inclusive industry and world.

“**WHY ARE RECORD LABELS SIGNING A SIGNIFICANTLY HIGHER PROPORTION OF MEN, WHEN WOMEN HAVE PROVEN TO BE JUST AS SUCCESSFUL, TALENTED AND HARDWORKING**”

The Brit awards winners are voted on by a committee made up of previous winners, nominees, agents, publishers and managers. It is likely a large portion of these members are male due to the requirements to join. It is not just in singing and songwriting that we need to see more women receive recognition. Not once in its history has the Brit Award for British Producer of the Year been awarded to a female. We need a less toxic environment so that women feel comfortable joining the industry

and can progress without misogynistic boundaries in their way. We need more female producers, agents and managers so that they can nurture and uplift future female artists.

Overall it is clear that there are many steps to take and a lot more progress to be made for females to be recognised within the music industry. We all need to be aware of the gender bias and continue to support our female artists wherever possible. Artists and their supporters need to continue to challenge the industry practices that cause this inequality. Men within the industry need to acknowledge their privilege and continue to be in support of change.

I believe this year shows positive advances in how the industry is trying to move forward and be more inclusive of everyone. I hope people continue to acknowledge the singers, songwriters, producers, agents and all other females within the industry so that we can continue to experience award shows like this year's Brits.



SUSTAINABLE AND STYLISH SUMMER OUTFITS

BY RIBH O'NEILL

With ice creams and days at the beach being well and truly welcomed, summer is officially here. To help ensure our readers have a hot girl summer we have compiled a list of fashion ideas that are not only chic but environmentally-friendly.

Reinvent old tops

If you have any t-shirts that no longer fit, simply cut the sleeves and neck to make a loose vest top. To do this cut along the seams with a sharp pair of scissors or for a fancier design, simply follow online tutorials for the type of style you would like. Don't forget you can also do this with nightwear as well!



Tote bags

Usually in the summer we need to carry a lot more around with us. From sunglasses to sunscreen, the list is endless. Cloth tote bags offer a sustainable solution to this problem and with university fayres

often offering tote bags as freebies, the likelihood is that you have plenty already. To enhance the summer vibes, why not tie dye a couple with some bright colours? There are even ways to ensure the tie dye is environmentally-friendly; for instance, through using different vegetables, such as spinach and cabbage.



Sustainable sunglasses

During the summer months wearing sunglasses is extremely important for protecting your eyes against the ultraviolet light that comes from the beating sun. Yet, as we try to lower our plastic consumption, use of eco-friendly sunglasses could be a powerful decision. Alternatives such as cork and recycled materials are becoming more popular, with large corporations and even small businesses starting to sell them. A great place to find sustainable sunglasses and cases is in fact Etsy, allowing you to support the environment and small

businesses at the same time.



Water bottle

It's time to ditch disposable plastic bottles. Refill, a UK app that helps people find sustainable retailers, stated that approximately "one million plastic bottles are bought around the world every minute". With a vast range of reusable water bottles being available, it's time to call an end to using disposable bottles. Whenever you leave the house, fill up your bottle and be the sustainable superhero we know you can be! A top tip, especially for warm days, is to put your water bottle in the freezer for half an hour before you leave, allowing for a cool and refreshing drink wherever you are.

From jeans to shorts

If you have any old jeans you don't tend to wear anymore, why not turn them into a pair of shorts? Decide on the length you want to rock and mark it with a measuring tape. If your line doesn't look too neat simply roll the short up to cover it. Ensure that the scissors are sharp as otherwise it won't work. This is a great way to save your money and the environment at the same time! For a faded summer look use distressed lemon juice, as opposed to bleach which

isn't as environmentally-friendly.

Decomposable Headbands

Did you know that fabrics made from 100% natural fibres can be decomposed in your own compost bin? In fact, it could even take as little as a week for it to biodegrade. With silk and cotton falling under these categories, headbands made with these materials are an extremely worthy investment. Not only do they avoid wastage but headbands are great for keeping the sun off your head and your body cool. When purchasing them though, do ensure that they are made from 100% natural fibres.



Overall, if possible, find out ways you can reuse and recycle as opposed to purchasing more items. Look at what you have already and find sustainable solutions to create a new and improved summer wardrobe. The fate of the world is in our hands and every positive decision we make can help. To influence others to do the same, shout about what you're up to on social media and start a conversation, perhaps you can even find more top tips on creating a sustainable summer wardrobe.

BOYS DO CRY: EXPLORING MASCULINITY

‘Man up. Stop crying. Stop being a pussy.’ Sound familiar?

Male pride and expectations of men include being strong, confident, and concealing emotions; it's been ingrained within boys from a young age to 'toughen up' and not be expressive of their feelings, to hide any sign of weakness. How could they protect and provide for their family if they were emotional?

Yet, society has evolved from the days of the dominant male. There has recently been a pivotal focus on emotional wellbeing, for it to be natural for men to openly express their feelings and opinions. There are, though, remnants of old thinking, and much of the male mental health crisis can be attributed to the struggle that males face, of repressing their emotions to appear mentally and physically 'strong'.

This masculine image society has come to adopt as the ideal male form is outdated and needs to be rapidly re-evaluated, or even destroyed.

James Bond and Hans Solo... What do they have in common?

Within society, boys are constantly exposed to these male ideals and



BY EMILY FERNANDO

expectations within the media. The James Bond franchise, for example, portrays a wealthy secret agent who saves the world whilst still getting all the (aptly named) Bond girls – a true stoic lady-killer. Similarly, Hans Solo (played by Harrison Ford) from the iconic Star Wars franchise, is portrayed as a womanizing hero, strong and brave.

These films idolise men as world-saving, veritable Casanovas, but often fail to portray the reality of some of these scenarios. What about when James Bond is having a bad mental health day? Or revealing the vulnerability of Hans Solo, perhaps even going so far as to go to couples counselling with Princess Skywalker to talk about the issues within their relationship, which are made relatively clear throughout the Star Wars franchise. If these scenarios were portrayed to males by these heroic figures, then maybe they would think it

okay to be more open and unguarded about their feelings.

Whilst these types of figures are often viewed as valiant, emotionally-present men are often frowned upon or made fun of. Celebrities such as Drake, for example, have been given such differential treatment for expressing how they feel. Drake had a very public rocky relationship with Rihanna, with many aspects and his emotions surrounding it reflected in his music. Yet, society ridicules him for being expressive with memes such as “Drake is the type of person who sets his alarm to 11:11 to make a wish”. Whilst, perhaps, funny in today's society, these types of quickly shared, world-wide jokes can be detrimental to a man's mental health. In considerable contrast, when Perrie Edwards (Little Mix) dealt with a rough breakup by writing the song Shout Out To My Ex, she received very supportive reactions from her fanbase. More exposure to how men can feel and how it can be expressed is needed to normalise males feeling as though they can openly share their emotions.

The ‘Male Provider’

Throughout history, the male role has been viewed to be the provider for the family, the ‘conventional breadwinner’, working a 9-5 whilst women stay at home to look after the children. This role, and also the dual representations of men, is interestingly shown in the BBC show, *Peaky Blinders*.

This show, set in 1900s Birmingham, sees Tommy Shelby (played by Cillian Murphy) as the clear breadwinner for his family, being the head of his gang, whilst the female characters are either barmaids or housewives. Tommy doesn't

publicly show his emotions but, when in private, he is tortured by the memories of his involvement within the First World War. To be a successful provider, though, males would often have to suppress their feelings, both for their pride, but also to not be seen as weak and unable to commit to their jobs – especially as a gang member.

This is not relevant today, though. In this century, psychological potential traumas, such as fighting in wars across seas, or even family and personal issues, would incur negative psychological effects that could not be avoided. Whilst these effects may impair their ability to be the ‘breadwinner’, there is now more of a focus on the mental stability of men, and the equality of genders. Males are also not considered as the only potential providers anymore, as females and other genders have an increased presence within the workplace. Male psychological wellbeing is, therefore, considered far more important today, in comparison to the 1900s.

Gang environments

The enforcement of male pride and expectations can be seen within male gangs. Within this environment, young, impressionable boys may be pushed (by their friends) to complete initiation tasks such as killing other rival gang members or completing a drug run. Similar wild ‘initiation’ tasks can even be seen in gang-like university societies and frat houses; let's not forget the guy who almost died from beatings in a college hazing ritual, and the many similar stories you often hear of them going over-the-top due to peer pressure.

There is no room for emotion. There is no

room for doubts. The needs of the gang override the needs of the individual. Showing emotions and being a 'wimp', therefore, is not acceptable within this type of environment. An image of strength is all that's acceptable. But this cannot work.

The tasks they're required to complete and the risks they are exposed to are often extremely dangerous and emotionally wrecking. We need to begin to normalise males dealing with their traumas, even in the fiercest of environments, to receive the help they

may need and decrease the chance of future violence.

Throughout society, unrealistic expectations of how men should behave has been predominant. This not only damages their well-being, but can contribute to a rapid downspiraling of mental health. The time to change is now. There needs to be more presence of the idea that it is okay for males to show their emotions – negative connotations of this needs to be downplayed. Through understanding and equality, society can change for the better.

A STUDENT'S GUIDE TO:

MANIFESTATION



Do you attract partners who are all wrong for you? Are you struggling to move up a grade? Is life not going the way you thought it would? If one or more of these apply to you, this is your sign to give manifesting a try.

As a student, I have sometimes felt out of control throughout my university experience. Life can be overwhelming, at the best of times, but especially in a pandemic. Recently life has been chaotic and confusing, and as a result, life often seemed unmanageable. Manifesting, for me, was a way to regain control over my relationships, studies, and mental health.

You have more than likely already heard about manifesting either due to its recent hype on TikTok or the bestselling book from 2006 *The Secret* by Rhonda Byrne. It has certainly been a buzzword in the media lately and the attention it

has received is well deserved.

Despite its obvious popularity, it is still tricky to define. Though, most agree on what it fundamentally aims to do.

What is manifesting?

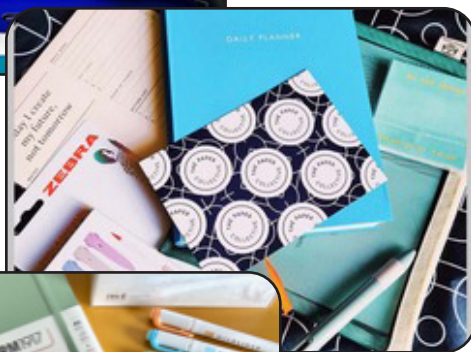
Essentially, manifestation is attracting something tangible into your life through belief, positive thought, and action. The Law of Attraction suggests that our internal thoughts can influence our external reality - this applies to negative thoughts too!

The aim of manifesting, therefore, is to use the mind as a tool to attract desires and repel obstacles.

Manifesting doesn't have to be difficult, with these techniques attracting the life you deserve is a lot easier, you just have to take a leap of faith.

Small Business Spotlight

THE *paper* COLLECTIVE



The Paper Collective is an online stationery retailer and quarterly stationery subscription service founded by stationery addict Laura Brooks in a bid to bring functional, yet beautiful stationery and paper goods solutions to consumers helping them to get organised and help them capture and realise their goals.

The range of products is curated by creative director Laura and features a wide range of brands consumers know and love and new stationery brands and products people will get to know and love.

The Paper Collective launched the retail arm of its business online in October 2020 as Laura-Ellen Stationery and Gifts, before rebranding in June 2021 as The Paper Collective and specialising in the sale of stationery and paper goods. It was at this time the second arm of our business 'The Collection, by The Paper Collective' was launched. The Collection is a quarterly stationery subscription box available at two price points and in a range of commitments to help customers decide how often and at what price point they access the service.

www.thepapercollective.co.uk

METHODS OF

1. VISION BOARD

A vision board is a great place to start your practise, as it is not only perfect for creatives, but it allows you to visualise your future clearly. If you are an art student or have a passion for photography this is the method for you. If you are eco-conscious or particularly tech-savvy you could create a digital vision board on Pinterest or another app.

Vision boards aid in visualising a life you deserve, some ideas of images to include are; a beach in Bali, a festival you have always wanted to go to, or you with a photoshopped graduation cap.

2. SCRIPTING

Scripting includes writing out the life you desire in the present tense as if it is the life you are currently living. This technique is ideal for the English Lit students out there. Not only is it a fun creative process but it channels the emotion and energy that mirrors the desired life.

This is a particularly useful tool when trying to attract a partner, by scripting you can describe in detail the attributes you'd like to attract in a partner, whether that is kindness and loyalty or 'good chat' as love islanders would say!

3. AFFIRMATIONS

Affirmations are statements that you say as if it has already happened, with complete belief. This is an easy low maintenance form of manifesting, so if you have a busy schedule this is the one for you. For this to work you have to repeat the affirmations either in writing or aloud.

Some use the 369 method, popularised on TikTok. First thing in the morning you write down what you are trying to manifest three times, in the afternoon repeat it aloud six times, and in the evening before bed write it out 9 times.

So, if your student loan hasn't dropped yet, and you are struggling for money, you might repeat the affirmation - I am abundant and I am a magnet for money.

MANIFESTING

4. GRATITUDE JOURNALING

Gratitude journaling not only aids in attracting your desires but also encourages you to be content in the life you already have. This seems counterproductive at first glance, but feeling grateful for what you already have allows you to decide what it is you truly need. The universe doesn't give readily to those who are greedy or ungrateful.

This method can also be used to attract more of what you are grateful for, for example, if you are looking for a student job, you might write in your journal 'I am grateful for the job opportunities I have had and I am ready to receive more.'

5. SUBCONSCIOUS PROGRAMMING

Don't be scared off by the title, it isn't as intrusive as it sounds. Your subconscious mind is a powerful tool that many overlook, it can also be the biggest block to manifesting. It is impossible to succeed at manifesting if your conscious mind wants one thing whilst your subconscious wants another. The subconscious mind is wired to protect you and because of this it favours what is comfortable and safe, which tends to block the desires that are new and exciting.

To reprogram your subconscious mind, you can use YouTube videos whilst you sleep that contain subliminal messages or take part in guided meditations that release mental blocks.

For students I would recommend guided meditations that encourage self-worth and confidence, especially during exam season!

IF YOU'RE WONDERING WHETHER YOU SHOULD TRY MANIFESTING, THE ANSWER IS YES! GIVE IT A TRY, AND YOU WILL SEE THAT YOUR MIND HAS A LOT MORE POWER THAN YOU GIVE IT CREDIT FOR. AND HOPEFULLY YOU WILL GAIN SOME CONTROL OVER YOUR LIFE IN THESE UNCERTAIN TIMES.

HAPPY MANIFESTING!

THE MOST ICONIC FASHION TRENDS SINCE THE COLLECTIVE MAG BEGAN

BY JESSAMIE RATTRAY

It's been a whole year since The Collective Magazine was born, and to my nostalgic style, I have decided to reflect on the most iconic fashion trends we have witnessed since the mag's first days. 2020: what an iconic year itself, and with that came a diversity of iconic statements from the fashion industry. Let's delve into the most iconic fashion trends for 12 months of The Collective Mag.



Tie-dye.

When The Collective Mag launched in August 2020, the fashion industry was riding the summer-lockdown wave,

and tie-dye was featured in many shop windows and fashion magazines. The social media pandemic-culture's love for all things sustainability and try-at-home meant that tie-dye fashion gained momentum at an impressive rate. We saw it all: a plethora of multi-toned tie-dye pieces in every shape you could ever need. Although not a trend I adopted into my own wardrobe, I can appreciate a strong tie-dye moment, especially in the form of an oversized tee or sweatshirt. Unlike the previous tie-dye prevalence in 2015, which featured bold primary colours and a whole lot of D-I-Y, 2020's tie-dye trend saw an emphasis on pastel colours, something that I can definitely get behind. Ultimately, I don't think the tie-dye hype will ever truly die, and it is definitely a circular trend we will see popping up continuously over the years!

The matching loungewear set

Boy, am I grateful for this one. Being stuck in the house throughout countless lockdowns inspired a desire in people to lounge in style. The initial early-pandemic thrill of spending all day in your musty Christmas pj's and your ex's

hoodie wore off pretty fast, and so the obsession with matching loungewear sets began. And quite rightly so, who doesn't want the comfort of pyjamas while looking not only cute but put together? The loungewear set trend took fast, slow and high-end fashion by a storm, available at either end of the price range and in basically any colour-way or pattern your home office fashionista could ever dream of.



Crocs

Yeah ... what a weird one this one was, and still is. The return of the croc was somehow so shocking and yet, considering the state of 2020 ... not surprising at all. The croc offers a colourful childhood-chic footwear option and it's undeniable that people loved their comeback. Crocs also boast a podiatrist-approved status, which makes them all the more appealing. Remaining controversial a good few months into their reemergence, the return of the croc is still up for debate. However, they are undeniably

an extremely practical shoe option and there is something fun about the variety of colourways on offer. And even the most passionate croc-denier cannot ignore the fact that being able to personalise your shoes with 'jibbit' accessories is pretty cool.



TikTok inspired 'cottagecore'

In the past year, TikTok has hugely influenced the fashion industry and shows no signs of stopping. The TikTok aesthetic of 'cottagecore' has taken our screens by a storm and there is no surprise that this influence has stretched to our wardrobes, too. Historically featured in the windows of the more expensive high street brands, such as Freepeople, the boho vibe has been adopted by more affordable brands in the light of cottage core, something I am really here for. Personally, the flowy summer dresses, floral prints and rustic embellishments on many 'cottagecore-esc' pieces is a style I can't get enough of.



Brown, brown, brown

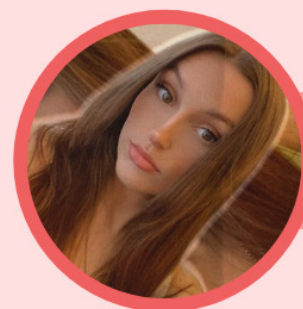
I can honestly say I never thought that the colour brown would take over with the force it did. Let me take you back, it's November 2020 and you're in lockdown number 16732. You are eagerly awaiting your Amazon delivery: a £5 bottle of brown fabric dye that you're intending on using to dye every white clothing item in your ownership. No judgement, I was also that person. However, now it's summer and my possession of white tops has significantly lessened, and the brown garments sit untouched at the back of my wardrobe. Don't get me wrong, I wouldn't say I'm regretful: I think that come Autumn, brown will emerge again into our outfits. It's an undeniably Autumn/Winter vibe, and one I look forward to seeing again as the season transitions.

So there you have it, the most iconic fashion trends since The Collective Mag began. While there were definitely others that could have been mentioned, I feel that these trends demonstrate the diversity that we have seen in fashion over the past year. Ultimately, I have to say that the boho cottage core vibe remains my favourite, and I don't see the vibe dying out any time soon. Here's to the next year of The Collective Mag and to another year of iconic fashion trends.

COMING SOON...

SPORTS

We can't wait to introduce our brand new Sports Section later this year! The Collective Magazine has welcomed three new sports writers to the team and they'll be sharing all the latests sporting news and events with our readers via our website. Keep your eyes peeled to find out more on our socials soon!



ANNA DUGDALE



SAM DRAPER



NAOMI FINNEN

The Collective Magazine

TEAM FAVOURITES

WE ASKED OUR TEAM TO SHARE THEIR FAVOURITES OVER THE LAST FEW MONTHS! FROM TV SHOWS TO MUSIC ARTISTS, STUDENT ESSENTIALS TO CLOTHING COMPANIES, WE'VE GOT IT ALL!

BOOKS



Zach Bishop
Deputy Editor

Conversations with Friends by Sally Rooney

A must-read this summer by the same author who wrote Normal People – set in Dublin, the story follows Frances, a twenty-one year old student at Trinity college as she embarks in an affair with a famous actor, Nick. The novel follows Frances relationship with her best friend and ex-girlfriend, Bobbi, as well as her relationship with Nick's wife, Melissa. It explores themes of love, friendship, intellectualism and polyamory. I simply couldn't put this book down during my ten days of isolation!

The Girl on the Train by Paula Hawkins

Not coming from a journalism background I need to hold my hands up and say that I don't read many books and when I do I don't read them to the end but the last book I read right to the end and really enjoyed was The Girl on the Train. I love a drama!



Lily Newman
Creative Collections
Editor



Lauren Bromley-Bird
Health Editor

MUSIC

'You've got your whole life ahead of you baby' by IDER.

Every 20 year old fearful about their future should listen to this song. This song spoke volumes to me during my time at University and helped remind me that I'm not alone in feeling this way and encouraged me to live in the moment. There's something empowering about not knowing exactly where you're heading, after all, 'you've got your whole life ahead of you baby'.

'Folklore' by Taylor Swift

Taylor Swift's album 'Folklore' has been my favourite recently! A very relaxing, calming and zen album to sunbathe too!



Alycia McNamara
Culture Editor



Millie Smith
Founder & Editor

'Groundhog Day' by Em Beihold

I am way too obsessed with this song. This song appeals to so many young people affected by the pandemic and just talks about life as a 20-something year old in general. From living at home to watching all your friends do amazing things, the song has something for everyone.

FILM & TV



Lily Newman
Creative Collections
Editor

The Bold Type

The Bold Type is a programme that touches on very real subjects in such a clever way and still keeps the programme fun! The programme is based around a New York female magazine and three friends that work for the magazine. It shows their personal lives and the struggles they go through personally as well as the real pressing issues affecting the world. It's one of the best shows I've seen in a while and I want to re-watch it already.

MARVEL

Any Marvel movie - I have watched them all so many times and they are always as enjoyable to watch as the last time.



Sam Draper
Sports Writer

Jane the Virgin

If you assume this is another 'chick flick', then you are hugely mistaken. The romantic comedy narrates the life of a 23-year old writer who becomes pregnant from accidental artificial insemination. It projects the ups and downs of life shared with her close-knit Latina family with a side of murder, disappearance and the occasional love triangles. It's straight out of a Telenovela!



Lauren Bromley-Bird
Health Editor

FASHION



Zach Bishop
Deputy Editor

Goose & Gander

I have recently been loving ordering from Goose and Gander having been introduced to the brand from some of my university mates. The brand is unisex and has been on a sustainability mission - they send all their clothes made to order and plastic free! Everything I bought from this brand is also unbelievably comfy and their t-shirts have the BEST oversized fit.

STUDENT ESSENTIALS

To Do List Pad

I LOVE a list! I have to keep track of everything by writing it down, so a desk pad for my to do lists has been the most useful thing! I'll sometimes colour code by what type of task - university, magazine, writing etc. Gotta love a list.



Millie Smith
Founder & Editor

A Planner

A PLANNER HANDS DOWN. I swear by mine, and I'll even use one after college!



Chloe O'Keeffe
Graduate Corner Editor

BY RACHEL MEASURES

WILD WANDERERS:



**WHY MEETING STRANGERS FROM THE INTERNET
HAS BEEN THE BEST THING TO HAPPEN TO ME**

Jemma - Mam for Sunrise



Melissa (left) and Emma (right)

Welcome to the Wild Wanderers, a group that actively encourages people to meet strangers from the internet – okay, so it isn't as creepy as it sounds, in fact getting involved with them has been one of the most empowering things I've done this year and I'll tell you all about it.

The Wild Wanderers are a newly formed, ever growing online community that aims to unite women from all over the UK and the ROI, by encouraging groups of women to meet up in nature for all kinds of wild experiences, such as camping, swimming, walking and much more.

After discovering them via a TikTok video, I joined their Facebook group and have actively participated in several meets in the Peak District. It has been amazing meeting some incredible women, making new friends, and I wanted to share my experience,

and the journey of others like me. Therefore, it made sense, that I started with the founders themselves.

I was fortunate, one Sunday morning, to join Emma Woodhall, 35, from Spennymoor, and Melissa Jones, 29, from South Shields, in a zoom call. The three of us were all still dressed in our pyjamas, none of us with our hair or make-up done. Their journey starts with the ending of toxic relationships, struggles with mental health, and being overwhelmed by career decisions at the end of 2020.

Knowing she wanted to try outdoor adventuring as a way to find herself again, Melissa reached out on an online camping page in October. "I put a post in there saying is there any girls in this group who would like to take me under their wing and do a wild camp and show me how to do it, because I've got no experience and no one to do it with, and then Emma commented."

Emma, an expert in wild camping from her late teen years, had recently moved back to England, and wanted to get back into adventuring again after losing her way during a marriage that had later broken down. She created the Wild Wanderers group to make plans with Melissa and a few others who had responded and soon enough they were meeting to do a wild camp in Blencathra in the Lake District.

“All of us met through social media. Nobody had met before. We were all strangers,” says Melissa, “We did this wild camp, and we had a brilliant night.” Emma and Melissa kept in touch throughout lockdown restrictions, meeting up and going for wild swims. In this time, following her move away from teaching, Emma had reapplied to go into the army. Unfortunately, due to circumstantial anxiety that she experiences, she was considered a liability and they refused her application. She confesses that this puts her in a dark place. “I thought, what am I going



Melissa (left) and Emma (right)

to do with my life... I was a bit lost,” she admitted.

Melissa encouraged Emma to get away. “I asked Emma if she wanted to come to Scotland in a camper van and do a bit of a tour round... and we did,” she told me. The pair were posting their adventures on TikTok and receiving comments from women. Melissa said,

“loads of girls commented saying like ‘I want adventure friends’,” and that’s when the group went public.

Only 9 weeks later, the group now has 17k followers which Emma says has been “positively overwhelming... We just never expected it.” She added that she and Melissa have been assisted by a group of volunteers online who have taken charge of running various regional subgroups which they couldn’t have achieved without this.

Melissa thinks that the best things come out of the darkest places and that’s how she feels about hers and Emma’s journeys to this point. She says, “the amount of women stepping out of their comfort zones and doing things that they would never normally do... have the time of their life and say [to me] ‘I can’t believe I’ve done this, thank you so much for setting this up, it’s not something I ever thought I’d do but it’s changed my life’.”

Drawn to the positivity that this group seemed to emulate, where women were encouraging, accommodating, and supporting one another, I decided to join in. It seemed so important to me, after 18 months experiencing a pandemic, three UK lockdowns spending a lot of time alone, only being surrounded by work colleagues older and in different situations in their lives, and struggling after leaving university, to get involved and begin living again.

I had started to feel stuck in my life. I think the biggest part of this was that I didn’t have a clear purpose and I felt like the people around me in my daily life just didn’t understand.

My first meet was at Bamford Edge in the Peak District, about a 20-minute drive from where I live. I was nervous but I had briefly chatted to the people I was meeting via messenger. One messaged to say that she had just parked up, and I had a feeling I had parked right behind her. I put in the chat that I was wearing a yellow jacket and was about to pay for a parking ticket. She came up to me, asked if I was part of the Wild Wanderers and immediately my nerves were gone.

We met 3 other amazing women, chatted with them, and stopped for a drink at a pub on route. It didn’t feel like we had only just met. Everyone was comfortable with one another, and I knew real friendships could be formed there. I felt really empowered having gone, knowing I’d pushed myself out of my comfort zone. I had driven somewhere new, met a group of people who didn’t know each other, and had an amazing day trip exploring somewhere I’d never been to.

The rest was then history. I continued going to events, some spontaneous, some planned, making friends through car shares and meet ups. I went to reservoirs, trig points, fields, hills, some a walk away and some an hour away. In 5 events, I’ve met 34 different women, and I am already beginning friendships that I never thought I would. They have all been so positive and supportive. I think everyone wants good adventures and good company and hearing about so many different people’s life experiences really helped figure out my own perspective in life.

Speaking to Jemma Goodwin, 28, from

Stafford, I found that she felt similar. She joined the Wild Wanderers recently to meet new people that were like minded. “I always wanted to find a group that I could do stuff with that doesn’t necessarily centre around going out and drinking.” Jemma, having joined 3 events, has explored Black Rocks in Derbyshire, Mam Tor in Castleton at sunrise, and Three Shires Head at Axe Edge Moor, stepped out of her comfort zone, and gained 10 new friends already.

It is important that the group invites women of all ages to join in. Amie Alissa Watson, 40, from North Lincolnshire, told me that she had joined the group to start ticking items off her bucket list after lockdown. Finding the group on Facebook, she’s been on one walk, taken part in axe throwing and is going on a trip to the Lake District to take part in a wide range of wild adventuring activities.

Amie enjoys belonging to a group. “It feels like I fit in, and I don’t feel too wacky for suggesting things when other people are suggesting more wacky things like knife throwing. Who would think that would be a good idea to do on a Wednesday night, but it is and we’re doing it, so yeah, [I’m enjoying] belonging to a group of crazy women.”

However, groups this size can be intimidating to join, and that is something the founders are aware of, so I asked the ladies I chatted with what they would say to someone who is nervous to join the Wild Wanderers. The overwhelming advice was just to do it, even though Jemma felt it was clichéd to say it. Melissa says, “Just join the group, there’s no pressure to interact,



Jemma - Mam for Sunrise

post, join in any event, if you just join the group and try to get a feel for a vibe inside the group, and then when you're ready pop a post out or message someone". It's important to join in, but at your own pace.

Offering reassurance, Amie praises how the group has cultivated a really nice atmosphere for a lot of women, and Jemma believes that "whether you're super super comfortable or whether you're super nervous, by the end of it you will be comfortable."

Of course, the world is not always the easiest to navigate and the safety of the Wild Wanderers is often on the minds of the founders. Melissa told me that they sometimes get the odd comment from men telling them that their page is sexist because it's a woman's only space.

"The nature of the things that we're doing, like wild camping and hiking, [is] quite a male dominated hobby. Women

just feel safer if it is just exclusively women and things like wild swimming, [and] getting in swimming costumes, women just feel a lot more comfortable doing it around other women, rather than having men there. So, it's not to be sexist... that's not the case at all. It's for the safety and comfort of women to make sure that they feel comfortable doing these types of activities," Melissa reaffirms.

Emma's advice is to meet in public places, and to never go anywhere that you don't feel comfortable with, and because the events are currently maintained on Facebook and their own website, there is always a space to start conversation and get to know each other before technically meeting.

Jemma told me that the groups she's met up with have shared the descriptions of their cars so that they can be sure when one of them has arrived without having to approach someone that is not involved with the

group at all. However, adding that she's never felt uncomfortable within the Wild Wanderers, Jemma told me, "I've never felt super concerned about the safety". As there are no tales about anything negative having taken place, the group is definitely doing something right.



Rachel - Stanage Edge Trig Point

The ethos of the group, started by Emma and Melissa, and continued by its members remains for women to empower community support. As the Wild Wanderers grow, they hope to establish their business as a Community Interest Company, refine their website, which has just launched, continue raising money for Women's Aid and other charities, through heeled hikes and sunrise swims, while they empower women, and ultimately choose fun every single day. Something I aim to support and get involved in for as long as I can.

This group has given me a new perspective on life and doing things that make you happy. It has cheered me up after bad days, allowed me to



Amie - Axe throwing

leave my comfort zone and build my confidence. It's given me activities to do on sunny (and rainy) days while I have met new friends. Finding the group and meeting complete strangers from this incredibly positive part of the internet, has definitely given me things I never imagined it could, and that is the story behind how meeting strangers on the internet has been the best thing to happen to me.



Rachel - Curbar, Froggatt and White Edge Walk

HEALTH & WELLBEING

HEALTH

THE PILL: EXPERIENCES, ISSUES AND INEQUALITY

BY CHLOE BAYLISS

Mood swings, nausea, headaches, breast tenderness - these are all NHS registered minor side effects of taking the Combined Pill. These reactions are supposedly meant to stop after a couple of months - whether this is true is another matter entirely.

For many women, taking the pill is one of the only ways they can have control over their own life - to have power over their bodies and when they get pregnant. For decades women have been subjects to their uterus, bound by the expectations of their gender, culturally allocated the role of mother and housewife. This was the social norm, women get pregnant, look after the kids and the house and the men go off to work - until the creation of the pill.

According to the NHS, the pill contains artificial versions of the female hormones oestrogen and progesterone. These alter the menstrual cycle and stop ovulation (when the ovaries release an egg for fertilisation), preventing the woman from getting pregnant. This medical breakthrough originated in the 1960s and has been a key lifeline for many women - helping women take back control of their bodies.

When taken correctly, the pill is 99% effective at preventing pregnancy. The pill needs to be taken at the same time

every day, for 21 days, then there is a 7-day gap, during which some women may experience a period-like bleed. This form of contraception is designed to keep the egg and the sperm apart - but it can also have some other positive effects, such as regulating periods and reducing PMS.

There is a common phrase consistently used in all the information online - 'no evidence' or 'not enough research'.

Why?

If the pill has been around since the 1960s why has there not been sufficient research into the side effects? Why are these side effects just accepted? And why, in all this time, is there still not a male alternative to the pill?

The answer is simple - a lack of funding.

Of course, it comes down to a lack of money. Drug companies and university research departments have little interest in pursuing research in this field, and there is not enough funding for research and development to find better contraception for women.

There is no evidence the pill makes you gain weight. Even though women repeatedly report having this as a side

effect, no research has been done on it. Why? Lack of funding.

There may be a link between the pill and depression, but further research is needed. This further research cannot be completed. Why? Lack of funding.

On the NHS site about the pill, near the bottom of the page, almost tucked out of sight, is a list of low-risk side effects of the pill. These include; blood clots, cervical cancer, breast cancer, and increased blood pressure. Now, the possibility of getting any of these side effects are extremely low, but once again there has been a lack of research into the side effects of the pill, preventing any scientific development to reduce these risks to nought.

Some women experience side effects more than others - every woman's experiences are unique. In my personal experience, as far as I am aware, I have not had any side effects and I count myself extremely lucky for this. It is a tremendous relief of stress, and I feel more in control of myself and my future since I took the leap and started taking the pill.

Social media is full of horror stories about hormonal contraception, warning people not to do it, brandishing the page of side effects in front of their cameras to scare young women who are just searching for options to take back control of their bodies. Many people do not know is that the large page of the

aftermath also has sections in another language.

It is always best to talk to your GP, or a Nurse at your local sexual health clinic, to get the right information. They can help you decide which form of contraception is right for you.

Female contraception is the type most socially accepted and with the most variations. For men, the only contraceptive options they have are a condom or a vasectomy. There are currently no hormonal pills for men - despite medical trials.

Trials on the male pill were stopped when some men had some side effects.

Now, while you let that last sentence sink in, just consider the massive cultural shift that would have to take place for a male pill to be socially accepted.

From what I can gather, it is acceptable for women to undergo various side effects from contraception, but if there is the slightest hint of a headache from the men and the whole trial gets scrapped.

In an article from the BBC in 2019, the male pill was described to be designed to be taken once a day to stop the production of sperm. However, the trials soon ended over concern of reducing the male sex drive and erections.

There was also the concern that some women may not trust men to reliably take

the pill. This comment led to a debate in the comments of this BBC article on sexism, as some women may also forget to take the pill - or, as some comments stated, some women have been reported to deliberately not take the pill to trap their partners into fatherhood.

In summary, new male contraception has been halted due to a lack of investment despite promising results. Pharmaceutical companies do not believe there is a market for male contraception, and the side effects some men experienced ended their trials.

Contraception is not a man's thing - that is the societal norm.

As a woman, would you trust your partner to take the pill?

As a man, would you take the pill if you could?

Sources:

inews: Pill Side effects

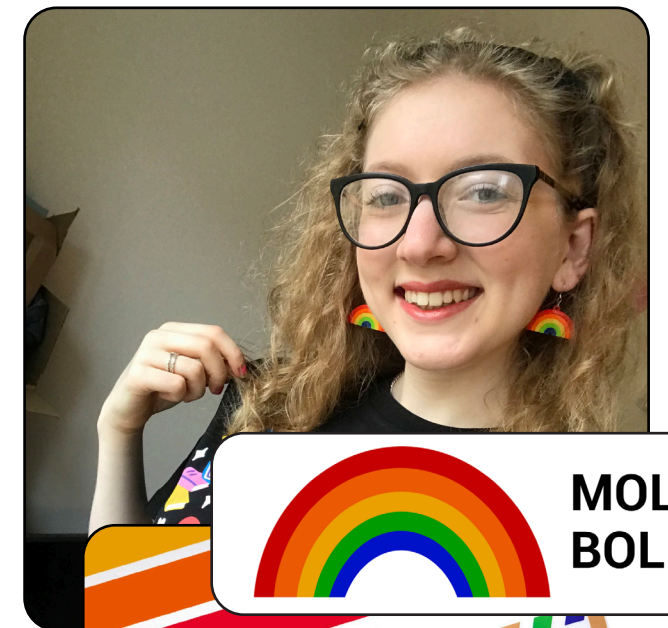
NHS: Contraception

BBC Future: Birth control pill

BBC News: Health

Small Business Spotlight

My name is Molly Bolding and I sell brightly-coloured stationery, wearables and jewellery for people looking to add a rainbow or two to their wardrobe or revision notes! Everything is affordable, ships worldwide and makes great presents for friends and family. My current special is an illustration collab between myself and Obinsun, a US-based artist, with a fun, feminist design on t-shirts, hoodies, sweatshirts and tote bags. All profits are being donated to Galop, Our Streets Now and Refuge UK, so every purchase helps to tackle the violence and harassment that women and LGBTQ+ folks face every day. www.mollybolding.com



MOLLY BOLDING



"I'VE FORGOTTEN HOW TO HOLD A CONVERSATION" AND MORE POST-PANDEMIC WORRIES

ELEANOR MASLIN

Over the past year, I've grown very used to staying within my social comfort zone, at home in my comfy clothes, spending time only with the immediate people I live with. As someone who can be quite introverted and anxious, I am like a purring cat in the haven of my own company. Stepping back into society in big groups of people after all this time is quite an overwhelming prospect for me and will be a process of dipping my feet in the water rather than diving right in. Even just traipsing back onto the high street is something that now appears a much bigger deal to prepare for. You might be someone who has flocked to a pub as soon as possible, and that's great and understandable. But look a little closer for some of the introverts among us, who are slowly venturing out for that first drink perhaps, smiling gently as our minds swirl with thoughts that are so noisy sometimes there remains little room for speech. The process it takes to get here might even make that first drink feel all the more satisfying.

ANNA DUGDALE

Going back to normality does scare me, as much as I hate to admit it. I've been so excited to go back to pubs and bars, but now the time has come, I'm filled with anxiety. The thought of standing in crowds of people like we used to makes me feel apprehensive to say the least. I've missed socialising with my friends, but I am scared that my social battery will be drained quickly and my introverted side will take over. Pubs, bars and restaurants are such an intense environment at the best of times, especially when suffering from anxiety. After over six months away from my last visits and over a year since life was normal, the intensity of it doesn't fill me with joy. Even though it's not as intense right now during restrictions, the potential lifting of restrictions is not far away. I'm partly thankful that I can use this time to ease myself back into post-pandemic socialising and somewhat scared that it's all coming at once.

"When are we returning back to normal?" and "Is it over yet?" are questions that have been asked continuously since the first lockdown we faced on the 23rd of March last year, but now that June 21st is vastly approaching; although people are thrilled, it's also paired with doubt and uncertainty. After all, lockdown has been our life for the past year and we normalised to that more than we thought we would. Here is what some of our writers had to say about entering post-pandemic life.

MADELINE LAKE

I worry I've lost the social part of myself that yearned for that night off work so I could see my friends. I yearned for those weekends away in cities I'd barely been to, but now I feel anxious. I feel I'm trying to repair a part of myself I never realised had broken. I worried my body had changed and would be judged for it, but now I recognise my value does not change when my weight changes. I am just as worthy as I ever was. The media is currently preying off our insecurities, telling us that we need to lose weight, have surgery and "slim down". In reality, I need to see my friends, tell them I love them and hug my grandparents. Those sort of moments are the ones no one can take away from me.

COLLETTE BIRD

The thought of going out on a dinner date with a stranger is just so unappealing after abiding by social distancing measures for this long, but how else can you meet a potential partner? Granted, everyone worries about whether or not to make the first move on a first date. Do I go in for a hug, maybe a kiss? But now, this fear is magnified by the risk of catching covid that comes with it. There's a safe sense of clarity with friends and family because I know where they've been and who they've been with, which can't be guaranteed on a first date with a stranger. Dating apps are not the same as dating in person and I do want to be able to meet my potential life partner, but it comes at a risk that I don't think I'll be jumping into straight away. I just hope this doesn't change the nature of dating in the long term.

HARMONY HOLLAND

Life after lockdown seems like something that will never happen, but it will eventually and hopefully soon. I miss the atmosphere and the freedom to go out with friends without choosing between who to see constantly.

However, I am nervous about going back inside where there are lots of people and being subjected to germs that I have managed to avoid through various lockdowns. Due to this fear, I will continue to wear masks in busy shops even after the pandemic has ended. I look forward to the world opening up, but I know that it will take some time to get used to.

LAUREN BIRD

Despite spending most of my free time with family and friends, I flourish in having my own space to recharge my social battery. Before the pandemic hit, I could still present myself confidently when social situations required it, and although being deemed 'shy' around unfamiliar faces, I was confident around the people closest to me. Now, I feel as if I've forgotten how to hold a conversation, even with the closest people around me. Instead of speaking fluently like I once did, I find myself stuttering for words and unable to piece sentences together that were once easy enough to say. I worry that my talent of faking it until I make it to get me through job interviews has resigned and that taking on these critical social interactions will be ten times harder and ten times more exhausting.

EMILY MANOCK

As someone with a disability, the pandemic has been somewhat of a blessing in disguise. The newfound acceptance of working and studying from home has made my life a whole lot easier because I have more energy to get things done on time. Working remotely has allowed me to gain work experience through online internships, which may have been impossible if I needed to move accommodation or commute. I've been able to do more in terms of extracurriculars since they don't require physically going to an event, and when I'm often tired or in pain, I can sit in comfortable clothing with things like heat pads while I take part. Losing this worries me as restrictions ease because I want to work full-time and get as much out of life as possible. I know that if I am expected to commute every day as I enter the job market, my chances of holding down full-time jobs will slim drastically.

DO NOT EQUATE THE FETISHISATION OF BLACK WOMEN WITH BODY POSITIVITY

BY ELLIE PHILIPS



cages which hypersexualize, objectify and commodify the black body. Whilst these stereotypes might increasingly be considered crude and outdated, the female black body continues to be fetishised and essentialised in new ways, often under the guise of body positivity.

The body positivity movement is inherently a good thing. It is a movement motivated by celebrating all bodies, promoting equality, acceptance and the normalisation of diversity. Nevertheless, the term body positivity has come to be appropriated: counter-intuitively being used to justify narrow depictions of the female body, most notably in the context of black women. Uncomplicated celebration of all black bodies has been disrupted by a parochial tendency to fixate or fetishise certain physical attributes of the black body—the hips, the bum and the lips. These features are so magnified that the body remains foregrounded as the first point of discussion, with black women denied the cultural space to express themselves beyond this.

It is, initially, refreshing that culturally we seem to be moving away from standards of beauty which raised the rail-thin, blonde white woman above all other body types. Society's newfound appreciation of curvier bodies reflects at

In 2019, Zadie Smith remarked that we are all 'trapped in this flesh cage'. For no-one, perhaps, is this more true than for the black woman.

The black female body has long been denied the privilege of neutrality. The Mammy, Jezebel and Sapphire stereotypes point to how the identities of black women have historically been constructed as tightly wedded to their physical attributes. The Mammy is the stout, maternal caregiver; the Jezebel; the sex symbol whose feminine wiles are her currency and the Sapphire; the strong, masculine-looking aggressor. Social commentary has made black women prisoners to these reductive flesh

least some headway towards increased diversity. Yet, the dogmatic focus on these features is problematic: these are attributes that are frequently linked to sexual desire, offering us a narrow frame through which we view black bodies. Much like the Mammy, Jezebel and Sapphire stereotypes, the tendency to place exaggerated focus on features of the black female body associated with sex, reifies the idea that black bodies are only valuable when they serve a specific purpose. The black body cannot exist neutrally and is only recognised in its ability to provide pleasure.

“ZADIE SMITH REMARKED THAT WE ARE ALL ‘TRAPPED IN THIS FLESH CAGE’. FOR NO-ONE, PERHAPS, IS THIS MORE TRUE THAN FOR THE BLACK WOMAN”

The beauty of the black female body is publicly lauded in a manner that only reinforces and cements pre-existing narratives and assumptions about black women. Michelle Obama's arms have received inordinate attention for their definition and have been equated time and again with her strength and competence as First Lady. Again, it is easy to celebrate this: it signifies we are moving beyond the idea that women, particularly those of high social status, must be dainty and submissive. Yet, the extremity of the fascination with Obama's arms and the singularity with which they are used to define her serve to 'Other' her. Her defined muscles are fetishised in a manner that alludes to

the fact that they present departure from the white 'norm'. Her strength is used to cast her as an exotic and mythological, an object to be gawped at and discussed. The fixation with Michelle Obama's arms is not merely innocent adulation, but reflective of an enduring discomfort with diversity. Her arms cannot simply be just arms: to exist in a society where racism pervades they are made palatable by acting as a symbol or statement.

Beyonce's body has also been used publicly to constrain her ability to exercise her voice and curtail her narrative. Beyonce is inarguably one of the 21st centuries' most eminent sex symbols and possesses many of the physical attributes typically associated with femininity and beauty, features which she has actively and publicly celebrated. Yet, the celebration of her body has been used to undermine her integrity in other aspects of her public life. Indeed, Beyonce's feminism has been hotly debated in the context of her own body. Critics argue that by celebrating her feminine curves, she undermines feminism by conforming to patriarchal beauty standards and that her body distracts from feminism's core messages. Her status as a sex symbol is used to deny her any freedom outside of this identity. Whilst her body may be widely celebrated, this celebration is simultaneously used to confine Beyonce to an object of pleasure, rather than a multi-dimensional woman.

Whilst Beyonce's activism has been dogged by accusations of disingenuity and illegitimacy, famous white figures of (conventional) beauty such as Jennifer Lawrence and Reece Witherspoon have received instantaneous and

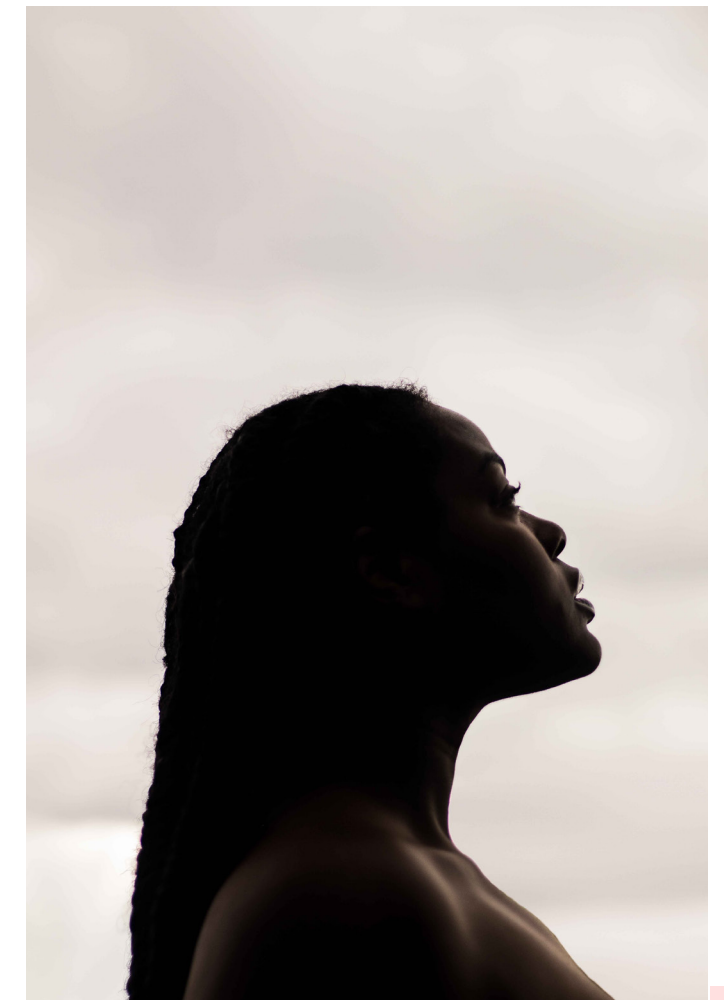
uncomplicated praise for speaking up within the #MeToo movement. Beyonce's body speaks first, and her second. Whilst white women can publicly celebrate their body and speak out on prescient subjects, black women are denied this ambidexterity. The black female body is venerated as a symbol of beauty but disavowed agency beyond this. Such stilted essentialism cannot be equated with the equality and neutrality of body positivity.

The magnified gaze placed on the physical attributes of black women has led to these attributes becoming increasingly appropriated. Under the guise of admiration and jealousy, white women try to emulate these attributes as a means of social currency: using darker makeup and fake tan to adjust their skin tone, augmenting their hips, lips and bums through surgery, photo-editing or cosmetic techniques. These practices are deeply problematic because privileged white women can try on these fetishised attributes without consequence, free from the discrimination and prejudice that those inhabiting a black body permanently have likely experienced.

These women can shed these characteristics and slip back into the comfort of neutrality, whilst the bodies of black women remain inescapably privy to relentless socio-cultural dissection. The preoccupation with these features further constrains ideas of what a black body should look like, leaving little room for the acceptance of black bodies which do not conform to this hypersexualised, aspirational form. Whilst white bodies have the privilege of trying on different identities du jour, society's Medusa-like gaze on

black bodies renders them immutable. This circumscribed celebration of black bodies is not reflective of the diversity that the body positivity movement seeks to encapsulate. Instead, it reinforces the idea that black bodies are only accepted when they can be easily categorised.

The black female body exists in a society where it is subject to crude essentialism and heightened scrutiny. We cannot extol the virtues of body positivity without acknowledging the additional work which must be done to allow black bodies to enjoy the same neutrality as white ones. It cannot be a matter of pick and choose-taking the glossy, uncomplicated bits of the movement and leaving the rest. Too often, we white people do half the work and call it a day. It is unforgivably premature to herald in a new era body positivity before all bodies can exist equally and neutrally.



THE MENTAL HEALTH PANDEMIC

WAYS TO HELP YOURSELF AND THOSE AROUND YOU

Eighteen months ago, the COVID-19 pandemic hit us like no other. We were forced into lockdown, with long, extended periods without contact with those outside our bubbles; mental health took a downhill spiral for many young people throughout Britain. Loneliness set in, and the mental health pandemic overtook. It is noted that in the UK alone, one in four people will be diagnosed with some form of a mental

BY SOPHIE STEEL

health issue a year. Not only this but one in five people experience suicidal thoughts over their lifetime. With these numbers only on the rise, it is scary and threatening to our society to know that we are facing a viral pandemic AND a mental health pandemic, which does not receive the same funding or treatment as the COVID-19 pandemic has.

After a discussion about the rise in mental health cases with mental health practitioner and psychotherapist from 'A New You Therapy', Kim Thomas, it was clear that she has also seen an increase in mental health issues in her practice. Thomas states that "there has been an increase in mental health issues across the board, non-specific on age group". Thomas says that the COVID-19 pandemic environment has contributed significantly to this increase because the choices and decisions we once had the control to make 'have been taken away.' In her practice, Thomas focuses on the human givens, which are nine needs all humans should be meeting in order to reduce anxiety. Thomas adds that when these givens are diminished or taken away, it causes us 'more stress than ever'.



Here are four ways to help yourself and others around you:

1. Go Back to your Comfort Zone

We are consistently being told to 'expand ourselves' and to 'step outside of our comfort zones' in today's world. Although this is an integral part of our development, it is sometimes reassuring to go back to something that we are comfortable and familiar with to ease moments of anxiety. This can be different for everyone, but it is essential to remember that staying in our comfort zones should not be a long term thing – it is only for a short while. If you spend too long in your comfort zone, you can't grow as an individual, and your state of mental instability could worsen. Whether your comfort zone involves going on a hike, baking a cake or rereading your favourite book – returning to your comfort zone every once in a while is a great way to ease moments of anxiety.

2. Words of Affirmation

For some people, words of affirmation are their preferred love language, but regardless of whether it is your love language or not, words of affirmation play a critical role in checking in with someone's mental health. Sometimes, it is hard to find the words to comfort someone else who is struggling, but reassuring them that they are worthy and loved can have a positive impact on their wellbeing. Saying something as simple as 'I am so glad to have you in my life' to those around you, or reassuring yourself that you are worthy and loved is a great way to practice words of affirmation and to remind yourself that you are valuable and welcome in our chaotic world.

Kim has been very kind and has offered a discount code to our readers. For your first online or face to face session with Kim, use the code 'COLLECTIVE10' to receive £10 off your first session. You can contact Kim at: <https://anewyouththerapy.co.uk/>.

3. Take a social media detox.

Easier said than done, as social media is the centre of many people's lives, but taking some time off of your phone can allow you to connect with reality and reflect on stressful periods. According to Medical News Today, users that check on their social media more frequently are twice more likely to be diagnosed with depression. It is important to stop comparing your life to others as we usually do by scrolling through unrealistic photos on our Instagram feed and instead spend some time away from social media, prioritising our mental stability. By spending time away from social media, we can forget all the distractions and focus on what is most important to us, releasing any feelings of unwanted anxiety.

4. Human Givens Therapy

Every human has nine given needs, yet more often than not, we are not fulfilling such requirements, as explained by mental health practitioner Kim Thomas. Kim explains that 'our human needs are not being met, mainly through the COVID-19 pandemic where restrictions set by the government restrict our human development.' Kim explains that through her role focusing on human given needs, she helps her patients to explore what is required to meet these needs, such as privacy, security and purpose. By doing so, she helps her patients overcome feelings of anxiety.

SOMETIMES THINGS GO WRONG, AND THAT'S OK

Did you envision being in a certain place in your life by 25? Dream job, a direction? Or were you on the right path until things went south? Like every mammal in the world, we tend to fear when things go wrong, but why can't we just embrace it?

Why does it bother us so much?

As beings with emotion, it's only normal to be discouraged when things go wrong, and we've all been guilty of fixating on the future instead of solely being in the moment. An example of this would be 'Next week I have something great planned' or 'That won't happen to me', which psychologists call optimistic bias. It's a simple example that we all tend to manipulate in our everyday life, and it's not necessarily a bad thing to do. The ability to hope, dream and envision happiness is healthy and enables us to lead happy and successful lives. It only becomes a concern when our expectations prevent us from accommodating when things go wrong and this is real life, situations can naturally go wrong. Pair

BY LAUREN BROMLEY-BIRD

this with social media, and it creates false beliefs that we are unable to live up to, so when things don't go accordingly, we get disappointed.

What we tend to do

Naturally, when things go south, we feel anguish, and our self-esteem drops as our rational thoughts become clouded. Upon reflection, we begin questioning how different the situation might be in various scenarios, repeating a draining cycle of ifs and buts.

But how can we embrace the unexpected?

1. Don't take things personally

When something doesn't go in the way we imagine, it's easy to take it personally but some things that happen are just simply out of our control. If you have ever worked in a Chef's kitchen on a Friday night, you'll know that you cannot control the situation, but you can control how you react to it. I'm not telling you to ignore your feelings, but to recognise when it's not personal.

2. Failure is your success

It's disappointing to place consistent effort and worth into something that doesn't go as expected, but think about all the skills and knowledge that you've acquired through being on that journey. It's preparing you for your next opportunity, and I'm a firm believer that when one door closes, another door full of opportunities will open. Life is full of surprises, but it's how you manage those surprises that make you who you are. Have you ever wondered why employers beg the question, 'How do you handle failure?' It's because failure is a necessary component of personal growth. To achieve success, you must own your failures and struggles.

3. Know when to let go

It's easier said than done but disassociate yourself from replaying scenarios in your head and trying to re-do the past. Recognising when enough is enough will give you the strength to embrace future opportunities. It is admirable to want to achieve a goal, but it's important to accept your limits. Understand that the mishap will pass, nothing is ever temporary, but if you can't let go, you're only delaying yourself from finding solutions.



IS LAUGHTER REALLY THE BEST MEDICINE?

BY PAIGE ROBSON

Laughter, the universal language of the world, widely linked to the term of joy, has been described as the 'best medicine'. The simple sound of laughter has been scientifically proven to improve our mental wellbeing, a positive fact that I think everyone needs to know about, especially after these recent pessimistic and unprecedented times.

For some laughter is a daily occurrence, for some it seems to be a sporadic event. Either way when the experience of laughter takes over our body there is an undeniable positive output onto our minds and bodies thus improving our health and well-being.

So how is laughter actually beneficial to us I hear you ask. Due to its physical nature of sound and expression the action inevitably has multiple physical effects on our bodies. For example, laughing actually makes our blood vessels dilate allowing blood to flow through easier transporting

oxygen around our body much more precisely, lowering our heart rate. Thus this easier flow of oxygen means our breathing improves. Can you believe it? It doesn't end there. Laughing is even proven to strengthen our immune system by increasing antibodies and aid digestion as the physical process of laughing involves multiple abdomen muscles. Ultimately, a little giggle a day truly can keep the doctor away.



First and foremost as a stressed society, anything to take our minds off the very thing that stresses us out is essential, and you guessed it, laughter reduces stress. Research has shown that laughter reduces the stress hormone, Cortisol in our bloodstream. Therefore more laughter means less cortisol then less stress which is what we all want.

Laughter can also have the following impacts:

- it can make us less aggressive
- we can become more sociable
- hard situations are made easier
- happy hormones are released
- laughter is a natural pain reliever

There you have it, laughter truly is the best medicine for multiple reasons both in the realm of physical and mental effect. A phrase that has been used for decades as a running comment truly and scientifically is correct, something so simple can result in such a positive way. Some have said the more you laugh the longer you live.

In conclusion, keep on laughing as much and as loud as you can, there's no excuse as it's all for the good of your health and now you know exactly how and why laughter truly is the best medicine.



CULTURE



THE SPICE GIRLS 25 YEARS ON WHY ARE THEY SO ICONIC?

BY ALICE FROST

When Little Mix made history at this year's Brit Awards as the first female group to win the award for Best British Group, they made sure to acknowledge the girl bands that paved the way and came before them, including Girls Aloud, All Saints, The Sugababes, and of course, the Spice Girls.

Despite this award snub, it seemingly didn't make much of a difference to the Spice Girls career as they achieved unbelievable success, and still to this day, 25 years later, remain the best-selling girl group of all time. Let's take a look back at 25 years of the Spice Girls; 25 years of timeless pop anthems, iconic British culture, and the prominence of girl power.

Before they were Scary, Sporty, Baby, Ginger and Posh spice they were just Melanie Brown, Melanie Chisholm, Emma Bunton, Geri Halliwell and Victoria Adams. Five totally normal, young women in their early 20s with different personalities, from different parts of the UK, but each with the same insatiable hunger for fame and success. Not only that, but they were completely unapologetic and confident in their approach. This was proven true when just over a year after the release of their iconic, debut single Wannabe, the girls made a bold decision to fire their manager Simon Fuller and took complete control of the group themselves. According to Victoria Beckham in her 2001 autobiography, Geri stole the mobile phone of Fuller's assistant containing Fuller's business contacts and the girl's upcoming schedule so that the group could continue as they were.

A consistent theme throughout the

Spice Girls songs and general message of the group was the importance of friendship, fun and girl power. In fact, the Spice Girls quite literally personified third wave feminism, with the feminist movement having seen a resurgence during the 90s. They constantly preached about 'girl power' in their interviews, and unlike their peers at the time, were making music directly for a female audience: Wannabe is a fun, bouncy, pop ballad about the value of sisterhood and female friendship; Say You'll Be There is all about being there for one another, whilst oozing power and sass in the accompanying music video as they perform martial arts moves; and the slower ballads like Goodbye is all about strength and acceptance in moving on, with particular emphasis on Geri's departure from the group at the time.

Victoria once said in an interview during the early days of Spice Girls domination, "Girl power is about accepting the way that you are, having fun most importantly, and if you wanna wear a short skirt and a wonder bra, wear it, but be sure about yourself. And basically, have a good time". Words to live by! These girls weren't preaching anything new or unheard of, but what was most refreshing was the way in which they were doing it and presenting themselves, constantly bursting with energy and a fun-loving spirit.

Although their cheeky demeanour and unapologetic sass, particularly of Geri and Mel B, wasn't always well-received by the press: when meeting Prince Charles the two girls were criticised for breaking royal protocol when they kissed him on the cheek, and Geri's iconic, mini-Union Jack dress at the 1997 Brit Awards, as

well as a wardrobe malfunction causing her breasts to fall out made front page news. But their audience (particularly young women) adored them no matter what, and why wouldn't they? They lived life by their own rules without hurting anyone in the process, and always looked like they were having the absolute time of their lives.

Even long after the group split, myself and my friends growing up used to sing and dance around to their songs and pick a spice persona to embody as if they had just sprung onto the music scene, and not in fact been around for over 10 years by then. The fact that songs like Wannabe and Spice Up Your Life are still played in nightclubs today goes to show just how loved and appreciated the Spice Girls were, still are and will likely remain that way for many years to come.

Though perhaps what's most impressive about the girls is the reach that they had worldwide without access to today's social media platforms, which just alone can catapult normal people into social

media superstars and influencers. The group successfully achieved spreading Spice Girls mania worldwide without even a single tweet, Instagram post or Facebook status. Instead, they built an entire brand from the ground up that managed to resonate with people all over the world. It's interesting to imagine the kind of impact social media would've had on the group had it been around in the 90s. Would it somehow have catapulted them even further (if at all possible), or with today's instantaneous online access would events like Geri's outfit malfunctions or rumours of group bust-ups have been negatively affected by the often-vicious online world?

Needless to say, the Spice Girls weren't just a girl band, they were a movement. They embodied sisterhood, love and most importantly, fun. It's safe to say that no other group have ever had, or perhaps ever will have, the kind of iconic impact the Spice Girls had on not only the UK, but the entire world. Here's to 25 iconic years of the Spice Girls! Long may they reign in all their spicy glory.



© Sky News

WHY READING IS A FORM OF SELF CARE

BY ANNA DUGDALE

In essence, there are four types of self-care: physical, emotional, spiritual and mental. Too often do we get drawn into the physical side of self-care, and it can often seem as though there is a greater focus on the aesthetic of self-care rather than on what it truly represents, especially on social media. Everyone advises you to take a bath, wash your hair, do a face mask or paint your nails as the primary form of self-care. Whilst all of these are helpful forms of self-care, these aspects of performative self-care can become tiresome and repetitive. However, one form of self-care, which is often disregarded, that I have recently picked up again is reading.

When I was younger, reading was my favourite way to spend my time but as I got older and had more

commitments, reading took a back seat. Over the recent lockdown, however, I've found myself spending more time reading and enjoying it as much as I used to when I was a child. After struggling to engage with the genre of books I enjoyed so much when I was little, my friend introduced me to self-help and manifestation books.

When I was a child, I was like any other- I read a lot of Disney books and all the fairy tales you could ever think and dream of. It functioned as a form of escapism for me, I had an incredibly active imagination and these books helped to fuel it.

I was too young to have a phone or to stay up late and watch TV so I would read every night before bed, which I think helped shape me into the person I am today and encouraged me to become interested in English as a subject in school. It tapped into my imagination and it gave me the confidence to truly explore my ideas, thoughts and feelings through language.

Even when I was in high school, I still enjoyed reading. However, it became something I did less and less and found it increasingly difficult to factor into my schedule until it felt as though I could only commit to the time when on holiday. I definitely noticed a difference in myself when I stopped reading- I stopped doing something that had brought me comfortable escapism and

instead found myself filling my time with activities that weren't bringing me joy or fulfilling me.

Now, reading has given me the space where I can spend less time on my phone after realising that being on social media constantly was toxic and harming my mental health. It was an outlet that I didn't know I needed until I took a step back from living my life on my phone.

At such a difficult time, after finding ourselves in a year of continuous



lockdowns, it is so important to look after yourself and enrich your mind and creativity. Many people may not instantly connect reading to self-care- it isn't exactly the usual face masks, hair masks, painting your nails, watching a film that we see sponsored on social media.

Any book can function as self-care; you could be using it as a form of escapism or education, as long as you're enjoying what you're reading, I believe that it's a valued way to look after your own mental health and emotional wellbeing. I found that *The Secret* by Rhonda Byrne, a book that focuses on the idea of manifestation, greatly contributed to the idea of self-care through reading.

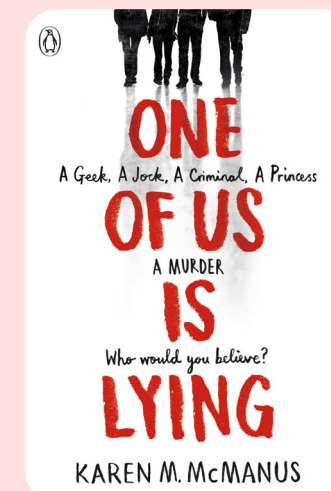
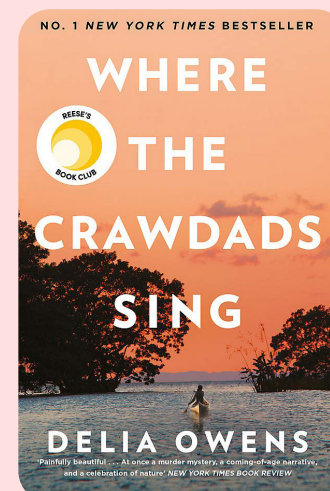
The premise of the book centres around the law of attraction and how you can apply it to each aspect of your life. In this most recent lockdown, I felt suffocated and scared about how I was going to cope but I found comfort in the advice *The Secret* offered me. In a time where I felt nothing but uncertainty, when I was reading I felt calm.

This book is the epitome of mental self-care. It taught me so many things about applying the law of attraction to every aspect of my life and I definitely believe the book altered how I approach areas in my life for the better.

Although I still struggle to immerse myself in fiction, I still value the escapism which reading holds, and I have found alternative ways to pursue this. Where I enjoyed reading when I was on holiday, which due to the travel restrictions surrounding coronavirus is not currently possible, I feel as though escaping into a book from my bedroom brings me a similar sense of peace and happiness.

If you are struggling right now, whether it's due to the lockdown, work, or education, I highly recommend reading as a way to find balance in your life. Sometimes the standard, traditional self-care can become repetitive and you may feel like it is not helping or being effective anymore so trying something new, like reading, can be a worthwhile investment into your mental health.

SUMMER READING RECOMMENDATIONS



TIMELESS OR TOXIC?

WHY THE ROM-COM HASN'T AGED WELL

BY EMMA LINE

Lockdown 3.0 may have seemed the perfect opportunity for a nostalgic binge of that timeless classic: the romantic comedy. But chances are, some familiar scenes may not quite be how you'd remembered them. Post-#MeToo, we're re-watching many 'timeless' films in a completely different light.

Blink and you might once have missed them; instances of sexual harassment abound in romantic comedies. Whilst remaining a genre consciously recognised as fantasy, these films do ultimately reflect real life. That's precisely their appeal. Any toxic behaviour portrayed is therefore also a representation of many people's lived experience. Bombshell (2019), which charts the high-profile sexual harassment allegations made at Fox News in light of #MeToo, proves that it's often subtle hard-to-define behaviours that combine to form a larger picture of abuse. With a heightened sense of the danger posed by leaving these

behaviours unchallenged, it's hard to ignore their presence in our 'timeless' favourites any longer.

Just as the MeToo movement proved you needn't look far to find someone affected by sexual harassment, toxic behaviour can be found everywhere in romantic comedy. Whether it's Kevin's refusal to take 'no' for an answer from Jane in 27 Dresses (2008), or Noah threatening to kill himself if Ally declines to date him in The Notebook (2004); these films encourage us to celebrate relationships founded on harassment and manipulation. Instances range from the unnervingly subtle to the immediately questionable. Yet, they are all swept aside in the wake of developing romance – and the guy almost always still gets the girl.

Take The Ugly Truth (2009) – a film aptly titled. On the surface, it may seem obvious where its offences lie. From a minor character joking about whether the women he's slept with were "conscious", to protagonist Mike Chadway (Gerard Butler) claiming that men "stick around

because of what [women are] willing to do with [their bodies]"; 'the ugly truth' which gives this film its title, is chauvinism in action. We could perhaps just put the film down as a relic of its era (albeit only a decade ago). However, watching female protagonist Abby (Katherine Heigl) ultimately fall in love with Chadway makes this much harder to do.

A thriving TV producer, Abby is nevertheless consistently undermined at work, harassed, and painted as neurotic. And her happy ending? A relationship with a raging misogynist. As we watch Mike gaslight her into believing that she's taken his declaration, "I'm in love with you, you psycho", the wrong way, we too are being gaslit by the film. We're not supposed to focus on the toxic elements of their relationship. We're persuaded that Mike, who follows the timeless trope: bad guy with a sensitive side, is right for Abby, despite our very valid reservations. The problematic love interest once again rides off into the sunset, their toxic behaviour left

unchecked.

Another thing you may be finding harder to swallow, upon re-watching these old favourites, is their regressive portrayal of female sexuality. In The Ugly Truth, Mike's dating advice unequivocally removes Abby from the equation of pleasure. Besides hearing him refer to her "orifices", and instructing her how to dress, we are confronted with his views on the climax *ahem* of misrepresented female sexuality: the fake orgasm. In a line that needs a disclaimer all of its own, Mike claims, "a fake orgasm is better than no orgasm at all." While we can hope that in 2021 Abby would have promptly left him with his cold cup of coffee and run home to give herself a very real orgasm, in the film she wholeheartedly buys into his advice.

Then, there's What's Your Number? (2011), a film whose plot hinges on a young woman convinced by a magazine article that sleeping with more than 20 men will ruin her future. We watch her friends reinforce this with their wide-



© Everett



© BBC

eyed shock as she reveals her ‘number’. Slut-shaming her, one of them even suggests that “when you’re too sexually available it messes with your self-esteem.” Their reasoning ringing in her ears, we watch Ally (Anna Faris) spend the whole film returning to ex-partners in search of ‘the one’, desperate not to risk spinsterhood by sleeping with anyone new.

Just when we think she’s escaped these toxic restraints on her sexuality – by dating her neighbour Colin (Chris Evans), lucky number 21 – the film reneges on its redemption. A plot-twist voicemail in the final scene explains that one of Ally’s past sexual encounters never really happened. So, her ‘number’ remains at 20. Celebration of this ends the film, along with any chance of it defeating the toxic narrative it could so successfully have challenged.

In Bombshell, Margot Robbie’s character

suggests that sexual harassment “condemns you to questions.” Survivors constantly find themselves questioning what happened and whether they should report it. The supposedly ‘timeless’ romantic comedy is leaving us doing a not so dissimilar thing. Inordinately romantic soundtracks accompanying uncomfortable scenes frame them as unquestionable gestures of love. And we’ve been conditioned to crave the happy ending. Given a narrow narrative scope within which to find it, we too are condemned to questioning. If the end goal is the main characters’ union, and they both seem blissfully content as the credits roll, then was their previous behaviour that problematic? We’re gaslit into believing that a relationship built on harassment, sexism or deception is healthy and ultimately aspirational.

Many creators for the screen have started to actively counter these ‘timeless’ narratives. Michaela Coel’s

TV series, *I May Destroy You* (2020), has truly set the bar for the representation of relationships and abuse on screen. Under Coel’s direction, the same toxic behaviour blithely skimmed over by romantic comedies is uncovered and scrutinised in heart-wrenching depth. Instead of the false-perfect partnerships offered by the rom-com’s supposedly timeless narrative, *I May Destroy You* paints relationships in all their honesty. Its characters ultimately find much healthier endings, in love with themselves and their friends. The Independent claimed: “it is Coel’s ability to intersperse the darkest of issues with bursts of joyous sunlight that makes the show so singular.” In short, she gets the balance right. Add to this the intersectionality the show presents, we’re left wondering: why can’t the romantic comedy do better?

Whilst many recent rom coms have sought to break the mould – think *I Feel*

Pretty (2018), *Isn’t It Romantic* (2019), *How To Be Single* (2016) – they nevertheless remain direly lacking in diversity and bound too tightly to the narrative structure of rom coms old. Protagonists must still find a happy ending within around a 90-minute run time – often with a particular romantic partner. So, has this timeless genre simply reached its expiration date?

I don’t think so. The ambition of the genre to be feel-good, aspirational, and comforting is more valuable than ever during this period of pandemic isolation. While we might be giving some of our ‘timeless’ favourites the same wide berth we give most of our exes, we can still demand better from future productions. A shift in narrative, greater complexity and diversity, alongside accountability for toxic behaviour are all desperately needed to reinstate this genre as timeless. And that’s the ugly truth.

WRITE FOR US!

There are no requirements for writing for us, other than needing to be a student OR aged 18 – 25. So, as long as you’re in education 18 – 25, we’d love to hear from you!

You can always pitch to us via email. When pitching to our editors, please ensure you include:

- **Your Full Name**
- **Whether you are a student or recent graduate (as well as your degree title)**
- **Proposed Article Headline**
- **Relevant information that you would like to include in the article**
- **Please include your full name and proposed headline in the subject of your email**

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LIGHTS, CURTAIN, ACTION!

BY HAYLEY BUTLER

As the song goes 'There's no business like show business'. But for the past 15 months props have been collecting dust, curtains have been down and boards have been untrodden. The month of May however saw the return of some shows and slowly but surely we have seen more and more performers able to grace the stage and audiences in seats again. Of course there have been some amazing pieces of theatre shared online but nothing beats a live in-person production and since the Arts received little to no support from the government through the pandemic we need to help them bounce back, so here are some of our recommendations on what to catch on stage in the next few months...

LONDON - MUSICALS

Mamma Mia (Novello Theatre)

While Greece may be on the amber list, you can always head there via everyone's favourite mum and daughter duo. Re-opening at the Novello Theatre on Wednesday 25th August, Mamma Mia boasts all the feel good vibes you could want after the past year with sing-along songs and an energetic cast taking you along for a journey of love, laughter and friendship.



© WhatsOnStage

Heathers (Theatre Royal Haymarket)

It's time to head back to school with the OG mean girls - The Heathers - at Theatre Royal Haymarket until 12th September. Based on the 1988 cult movie starring Winona Ryder and Christian Slater, Heathers follows Veronica Sawyer as she navigates her way through high school, joining The Heathers and finding love in bad boy J.D. This dark comedy is full of songs you'll be singing all the way home and ends with quite a bang. And don't worry if you miss it at its current home as it's heading on tour around the country this month - Big Fun!



© WhatsOnStage

Cinderella (Gillian Lynne Theatre)

Since Andrew Lloyd Webber was up for getting arrested over putting it on, his new version of the classic fairytale must be amazing right? Well since we haven't had a chance to see it we can't guarantee anything but after listening to the incredible vocals of Carrie Hope Fletcher on the cast recording and reading the synopsis, it definitely sounds intriguing. While there are characters you'll definitely know like Cinderella, Prince Charming and the Fairy Godmother, the plot might be a little different than what you remember from Disney. This is definitely a hot ticket but if you don't

manage to get your hands on a ticket, it looks like the show is following what others have done in recent years with holding a lottery which might be a great way to get a cheaper ticket last minute.



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LONDON - PLAYS

Sh!t-Faced Shakespeare: Macbeth (Leicester Square Theatre)

Went to school in the UK? Then no doubt you will have come across The Bard and potentially vowed never to read or hear a word of his again but, trust us, this show is worth breaking your vow over. The basic concept involves a Shakespeare play (in this case Macbeth), a drunk cast member and an unforgettable experience. No two shows are ever the same as a different cast member is plastered each night so anything could happen (although there is a crew member there to make sure things don't go too far) and be careful if you book the front few rows as you will be in the splash zone. This production is running at the intimate Leicester Square Theatre until 11 September but there is also a touring production of Romeo and Juliet setting out across the country in



© Sh!t-Faced Shakespeare

October too.

Audience Choice (Globe on Tour) (The Globe Theatre)

If you fancy some more traditional Shakespeare but aren't sure which show to see this season then why not book yourself a ticket to one of the two Audience Choice performances at the Globe. You won't know what you'll be watching and the actors won't know what show they will be putting on until you and the rest of the audience vote just before the show begins. Since The Bard wrote around 37 plays, The Globe has limited your options to three plays; As You Like It, The Tempest and A Midsummer Night's Dream. The Audience Choice performances are soon so be sure to grab your ticket soon!



© The Globe

ON TOUR - MUSICALS

Six

From its humble beginnings as merely a concept in a poetry class, Six has followed in the footsteps of Hamilton both in bringing history to the masses in a new way but also with its huge success - all with a women power touch. Join the six queens for this pop-concert-come-musical that'll get your foot tapping before you even know the words. As well as the characters drawing from the real queens they are based on you'll also see influences from pop queens such as Beyonce, Adele and Rihanna which makes it a great show even if you aren't

‘into musicals’. While earlier dates had to be rescheduled due to COVID, it looks like the rest of the tour is set to continue normal with the queens’ current stop being Southend.



© WhatsOnStage

Bedknobs and Broomsticks & Beauty and The Beast

If you’ve managed to work your way through the whole of Disney+ during lockdown then you are in luck! Disney is taking two musicals on tour around the UK. Head down to the bottom of the beautiful briny sea on a magical bed with Bedknobs and Broomsticks at one of the 27 venues currently on its touring schedule. Or maybe you fancy being Disney’s guest and reliving a tale as old as time with Beauty and the Beast on their short tour from Bristol to Dublin. (And if that isn’t enough Disney for you then head to the West End for The Lion King (Lyceum Theatre), Mary Poppins (Prince Edward Theatre) or Frozen (coming soon at Theatre Royal Drury Lane))

ON TOUR - PLAYS Austentatious

If Shakespeare isn’t your cup of tea, then how about the power house that is Jane Austen? The cast of Austentatious, unlike that of Sh!t-Faced Shakespeare, are completely sober and instead of working from a pre-existing play or novel, improvise an Austen-style show from scratch based purely on a title suggested by the audience. You may

even recognise some of the cast with comedians Cariad Lloyd and Rachel Parris making up their numbers. If that isn’t enough to Persuasion then just listen to the ticket sales with Austentatious being the sell-out show of the Edinburgh Fringe every year from 2014 to 2018. They have a few more dates in London before taking a gander across the country until November so be sure to join them for an evening which will see all Sense and Sensibility left at the door.



© Austentatious

ON TOUR - COMEDY Katherine Ryan - Missus

It is evident that Katherine Ryan can’t wait to get out on the road since her new tour has a whooping 65 dates across the UK and Northern Ireland. Despite being known for her comedy about being a single mother trying to navigate life in the UK, Katherine’s new show brings with it her new perspective on life and love following accidentally falling in love, marrying her first love and becoming a Missus. Be sure to snap up your ticket quickly though as many dates have low or limited availability.



© WhatsOnStage

REMOVING ART FROM THE ARTIST

BY ELEANOR ANTONIOU

Much debate surrounds the possibility of separating art from the artist: does a piece of art have an intrinsic value by itself, or is its worth always tied, at least partly, to the artist who created it? It is an uncomfortable truth that some artists, whose art still surrounds us, have, at times, acted in ways which ought not to be celebrated, and this leads to the question of whether these actions can be detached from the art itself, whether it is a painting or a sculpture, literature or film.

It comes down to a clash between art and reality: can these be kept within separate realms, or is it unavoidable that one will always be influencing the other? It seems that reality will inevitably seep into art, as the life of the artist will shape their creations. Indeed, in many cases, understanding the artist can help us to understand the art in new ways. It may not be necessary to know any contextual information about the artist in order to understand, interpret or enjoy their work, yet it is undeniable that a work can be seen in new or deeper ways when we do have some knowledge of the artist themselves.

This means that negative aspects of an artist’s life can also be an influence within their art, and perhaps these too should be considered alongside the artwork. This is where controversy begins, as when we enjoy a piece of art so much, we don’t want to taint it

with difficult associations, preferring instead to distance it from the deeds of its creator. But does it not become a moral duty to inform people of the stories behind pieces of art if these stories are awful or controversial tales? If we ignore someone’s bad actions, then does this not suggest that we are complicit in them? It is particularly difficult in cases of abuse against others, where if we do not speak out against the abuser, we are dismissing their actions, and further causing pain to those whom they have harmed.

One example is Eric Gill, a sexual abuser of two of his own daughters, Betty and Petra. In his diaries, he also describes incest with his sister, sexual experiments with his dog, as well as the rapes of his teenage daughters. Gill, however, is also a celebrated artist, whose work surrounds us everywhere in the UK. His typeface, Gill Sans, is used by British Railways, Penguin Books, and as the logo for the BBC. The BBC Broadcasting House also displays a statue by Gill over its front entrance. The work is a sculpture of Ariel and Prospero from Shakespeare’s The Tempest, yet it takes on an uncomfortable meaning when Gill’s paedophilia is recalled. The child, Ariel, is nude here, his genitals on display as the much older Prospero stands behind him.

More disturbing still are the works which feature Gill’s daughters, who

modelled for him in the nude. One engraving shows Petra in the bath, kneeling with her face turned away from us, so that our eyes instead travel to her breasts. We need a true understanding of who the girl is in this engraving, and her story of how she survived sexual abuse from her father. Otherwise, a darker side of the piece is hidden from us, and Petra becomes passive. She is romanticised and eternalised in the piece of art, yet this hides her own reality. Surely viewers of this piece should be informed of its uncomfortable back-story, so that Gill can be held accountable for his abuse, and so that we cannot be made complicit in it. With the true story, we can refuse to view Petra as an object here, and we can denounce the disturbing gaze of her father.

In this case, then, it seems art cannot be separated from the artist, as behind every image which Gill produced of his daughters, their rapes are lurking. It is uncomfortable for the viewer, but it is a side to the art which needs to be explored. We need to hold up the mirror of reality to these pieces in order to fully understand their context and meaning, even if this reveals something which is discomfiting.

In a similar way, and more recently, sexual abuse allegations against men in the film industry have led us to question whether their work should still be consumed or not. It is undeniable that their atrocious actions have a profound effect on the audience of the art, suggesting that art and artist cannot, and should not, be separated here. The behaviour of these men has been allowed to slip by us for some

time, but as women began to speak out, they sparked the Me Too movement. This has had such a significant effect on our society that it shows how great the issue is when the artist has harmed others or acted wrongly, and it is only right that we consider this when we look at what they have produced. Would we even want to support such artists when they have assaulted others?

Does this mean, then, that we should boycott art by controversial artists? Surely we do not want to fund abusers, even if they have created art which we would enjoy. Does this art not inevitably become tainted by their actions, which we have a moral responsibility not to merely sweep under the rug? Do institutions or exhibitors therefore have a duty to tell us the full story behind artists whose work they chose to promote, so that we can make up our own minds whether to partake in viewing or experiencing their work or not?



DID THEY REALLY JUST SAY THAT?

CANCEL CULTURE VS CONTROVERSIAL TV SHOWS

BY CERYS BELL

We've all sat watching something and felt that uncomfortable cringe. The cringe that comes from knowing that what you've just seen has crossed a line and made you say; 'if this was made nowadays that wouldn't have been allowed!'

So, should these shows be 'cancelled' all together or should we keep them and accept that they are 'of their time'?

The idea that a person, show, or a brand can be cancelled – meaning they are culturally 'blacklisted' and refused a public platform – is a polarizing topic! For some people 'cancel culture' allows for a call for accountability and is a useful tool of social justice and social change. Often working through collective action to challenge power imbalances or discriminatory views. However, 'cancel culture' can be considered a new form of silencing and of limiting free speech. This new form of call-out culture has grown alongside the growth of social media. But is it a good thing?

In recent years many TV shows and films have been criticised for their controversial and often discriminatory views and storylines, with many people calling for these shows to be 'cancelled', despite the fact that they aired years ago. To cancel these shows and remove them from streaming platforms and TV, due to their problematic plots, could



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creep scarily close to censorship. To not cancel these shows could be to accept outdated and problematic views without holding anyone accountable, or challenging them.

The Friends reunion show alone was watched by 5.3 million people in the UK, and is shown on numerous platforms all around the globe! Despite its popularity it is most certainly not without its problems. With storylines full of blatant homophobia, transphobia, misogyny, body shaming, not to mention the complete lack of diversity!

For example, one storyline that would cause a stir today is Chandler Bing's transgender, drag queen father. Sure, you could argue that its commendable for a sitcom from the 90's having a transgender character. However, this character is the subject of cheap laughs

throughout the series. With jokes around the struggle of which pronouns to use, and the fact that Chandler appears mortified about his dad and admits to ignoring their attempts to contact him over the years. There is also a lot of body shaming - 'Fat Monica' was a running joke shown in flashbacks throughout the series. Jennifer Aniston wore a facial prosthetic during these flashback scenes for Rachel's original nose. As well as the 'Ugly Naked Guy' which the group spies on regularly!

But listing these problematic storylines and plots (as well as others I've not mentioned), takes them out of context. The context being that it was written in the 90's, an era where there was less social understanding and acceptance of difference than there is now.

the office



Another sitcom, The Office, has also been subject to the scrutiny of cancel culture. Ricky Gervais himself, the creator of The Office, said in an interview with Times of London Radio that the show wouldn't be able to air today because of cancel culture, that people take things too

literally and 'outrage mobs [...] take things out of context'.

For Gervais, the use of satire and comedy is a way to talk about differences and about topics that are often considered taboo. As the audience we are supposed to relate to the everyday people in the office, the reason many people love the show, we feel the same awkwardness as the people in the office when their boss - David Brent (Gervais) or Michael Scott (Carrell) - crosses boundaries and act inappropriately. Should real issues, that are the lived experiences of many people be made into comedy, could this normalise rather than challenge homophobia, racism, sexism, etc.

What is the solution? Cancel culture can be toxic and prevents conversation and the possibility for growth and change; it doesn't allow things to be challenged, it simply 'cancels' them. On the other hand, these shows like many others do venture well into the inappropriate and these issues do need to be addressed!

In October 2020, Disney Plus added a new content warning to films that contain racist depictions, such as "Dumbo", "Peter Pan", "Swiss Family Robinson", "The Aristocats", "Fantasia", "The Jungle Book" and "Lady and the Tramp" as a way of avoiding their films being 'cancelled'.

This content warning states that these programmes include 'negative depictions and/or mistreatment of people or cultures. These stereotypes were wrong then and wrong now. Rather than remove this content, we want to acknowledge its harmful impact, learn from it and spark conversation to create

a more inclusive future together'. Disney claims to be committed to avoiding making the same mistakes again and uses a third-party council which is composed of leading organisations who advocate for the communities they represent.



But is this a solution? The debate here is whether shows that have storylines, plots, or depictions of prejudice stereotypes should be 'cancelled' and removed from public platforms so they can no longer be available to watch. Or, leave them as they are and acknowledge that they were first on our screen when there was less knowledge and understanding of difference in any form. That now the majority of the audience will be able to acknowledge that what is on the screen is not ok!

It may be a pessimistic view but is it hopeful thinking to presume that people will be able to separate historical prejudice (which has always been wrong), from current views and attitudes, and not use these shows to bolster their own prejudices and

discrimination. Disney may have made a step in the right direction but is it enough? Also, surely it is very possible for comedians to make jokes that can push the boundaries and start conversations on topics that are usually avoided without themselves being racist, homophobic, transphobic and sexist!

I personally like the way Disney have responded, and believe that it's a good start. Shows that we have grown up and have been around for ages, often don't get questioned we blindly accept them. The simple acknowledgement that the views they show are wrong and that we still have a lot of progress to make. But, I also acknowledge that most people won't pay attention to the content warnings! Something needs to change and that change ultimately needs to come from more diversity and representation in current tv shows to normalise all and form of difference!

HOW OBSESSED ARE WE WITH PRODUCTIVITY CULTURE?

BY ALYCIA MCNAMARA

Productivity culture is everywhere, ingrained in us all everyday through the media...

It begs the question – how much are we becoming obsessed with the idea of being productive and successful? Instagram is mostly to blame for showcasing ‘the best bits’ of our lives, showing what we have achieved and even our smaller daily successes. This can be a good thing – celebrating life milestones such as passing your driving test, getting into university, or even getting married are things that we naturally want to share. However, it also reinforces productivity culture and makes us compare the achievements of others with our own which can lead to lowered self esteem and a feeling of Hopelessness.

Alongside Instagram, the popular platform YouTube has an incredible role to play in creating and reinforcing productivity culture. A series of video trends which encourage productivity may often be seen in your subscription box. These videos may be titled: ‘Clean With Me’, ‘Study With Me’ or ‘A Productive Day In My Life’. Have you ever found yourself watching these and enjoying seeing other people ‘get stuff done’? I certainly have, and it is easy to find yourself questioning how much

you have achieved that day. Sometimes all you may have done that day is watch a few episodes of your favourite show on Netflix while snacking on some biscuits... I think what we all need to remember is that doing nothing sometimes is okay! Not everyone wakes up and spring cleans their whole house before breakfast – although often the media would have you thinking differently, which is where the problem begins.

In film and television, many characters also reinforce this productivity culture. For example, the role of the successful business woman is seen throughout Hollywood cinema. The shining example of this being Elle Woods in *Legally Blonde* – an effortless, perfect example of both brains and beauty and an icon for many women. Another film showcasing this role is *The Devil Wears Prada* in which Meryl Streep plays ultra-successful fashion editor Miranda Priestley who has every success in her career. As for productivity culture in television, Netflix added the show *Tidying Up With Marie Kondo* to their streaming service in 2019 which had a huge impact on the way many clean and organize their homes. I’m sure you’ve already heard of Marie Kondo but if not, she is an organizational queen who has sold millions of copies of her life changing books on tidying up.

So, let’s go back to the question we asked at the start. How obsessed are we with productivity culture? I think it’s fair to say it plays a pretty big part in our lives. For women, these differing types of success and productivity which are portrayed through the media alter our self-perception and the scary thing is... we may not even be conscious of it. However, the reality of everyday life is very different from what is portrayed to us in the media and it is important to remember this. Not everyday is going to be a successful one and that’s okay. But when we are thinking about the

successes we want to achieve in life, some women may be more focused on career success including promotions, leadership and pay rises while others may be more interested in homelife success including marriage, babies, and an organised home. It is easy to feel like having the best of both worlds is not possible but you have to remember that you can be successful in both and still have a few days off!



GRADUATE CORNER

GRADUATE CORNER

LIVING IN LA MANCHA

BY BETTY HENDERSON
MY YEAR ABROAD EXPERIENCE

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Mum and I drove down from Madrid, through miles of scrubby fields, until finally, we glided past the white and orange painted walls of Tomelloso for the first time. As we passed through the cobbled streets where the buildings turn inwards and the modest central square where they open out, a strange thought flitted across my mind: “One day this will feel like coming home.”

I studied Spanish at university, so spending a year abroad in a Spanish speaking country was a requirement of my degree. Students are given the choice between studying or applying to work as an Auxiliar de Conversación through the British Council, a programme where native English speakers are placed as teaching assistants in schools and language academies across the world.

For me, it was a no-brainer. My main goals were to experience Spanish culture and improve my language, neither of which would happen, I felt, in the Erasmus bubble of a university campus – plus, on the auxiliares programme, you get paid! That said, when I selected Castilla-la-Mancha as my first choice on the application form, I was expecting to be placed somewhere like Toledo, close enough to Madrid, cosmopolitan enough for my city-girl heart, and beautiful, a holiday destination. Tomelloso was none of those things.

For those who don't know (everyone), Tomelloso is a small, agricultural town about two and a half hours south of Madrid, with a population of around 36,000. It's best known for its locally-produced wine and its proximity to Don Quixote's “land of giants” and other notable stops on the great hidalgo's

infamous journey, including the Lagunas de Ruidera, a series of breathtakingly blue lakes linked by waterfalls, and Toboso, home of ‘La Dulcinea’.

Tomelloso is a town with character, pride, and a big, open heart. It doesn't immediately strike you as a place of beauty but there is history there. You just need to look a little closer.

If you were to glance up as you walk along it's long, straight streets, you might notice the odd mysterious white bird perched in large, twiggy nests, on top of tall orange-bricked chimneys. If you were to glance down, you would occasionally pass over a vent in the pavement, larger than a drain, but smaller than a cellar door. The wafts of cold air that brush against your legs as you pass by are the only hint of the magic below.

Tomelloso has long been a centre for wine production in Spain. La Mancha today remains the largest wine region in Europe. Nowadays the main factories have moved to the outskirts of the town, but these impressive chimneys and underground wine cellars are a reminder of Tomelloso's long, proud agricultural history.

And just as these vents hide an impressive secret, so too do the closed doors and stark white walls of Tomelloso's buildings hide the true warmth and welcome of the people who live behind them. As I drove into Tomelloso that first time, I felt anxious, unsure, and mildly terrified of the sheer unfamiliarity of the place, but I need not have worried.

In fact, within hours of my arrival, I had already been rescued from a parking fine

by a friendly hotel receptionist, amused kindly waiters with my nervous Spanglish, and been warmly and affectionately greeted by my boss (and future ‘Spanish mum’ as she likes to refer to herself), Pilar.

By the next day I had met Daniela, another auxiliar in the town whose spare room I moved into, and who quickly became a fast friend. We then met Liam (Welsh), Valentina (Italian), Jess (French), Anne (French-Canadian) and JD (American) and our small band of ‘guiris’ was formed. (‘Guiri’ – an affectionately insulting term for a tourist.) Together, we travelled at weekends, partied till the wee small hours in one of the two nightclubs in town, and generally stood out like sore thumbs wherever we went.

Moving to Tomelloso was a bigger culture shock than I had expected. It wasn't just that the food was different, or the weather, or even the structure of the day – school and work took place from 8:30am-2:30pm then 4:30pm-8:30pm and it was quite normal to go out for food at about 10pm any night of the week – but that I realised for the first time, just how difficult it is to become truly fluent in a language. I'm not only talking about Spanish, but the cultural language of unspoken understanding that a community shares without even realising it.

This was likely more pronounced in a small town like Tomelloso, but I found that I was never quite sure if I was doing something that people found totally foreign and weird, and I was never able to process words quick enough to get all the jokes. As welcome as everyone made me feel, it was unnerving, and a little

exhausting, to exist constantly just on the edge of understanding.

I was in at the deep-end in a year of self-discovery, isolated from friends and family, experiencing new people, new places, new food, new ideas, and developing a new respect for the nuances of language and another culture.

I fell in love with solo travelling. At the weekends, I would make the mammoth trip to Madrid (three hours on a bus, then another 45 minutes trawling across the city by tube) where I would wander through Retiro Park or El Museo Reina Sofía, getting lost in the beauty and unfamiliarity of it all. I visited Barcelona, Valencia, Malaga, Sevilla, and lesser known treasures like Toledo, Segovia, and Cuenca.

And I got to know Tomelloso. Us guiris became locals, not only in our favourite bars, but in the small cafe round the corner where breakfast cost 1.70€ and consisted of café con leche and a tostada con tomate (lightly toasted baguette-style bread smothered in delicious olive oil, salt, and fresh tomato grated into a sort of sauce), or a large fresh pastry, still warm out of the oven and better than any pain-au-chocolat in France (I have this on the authority of a highly-opinionated French woman!).

La Mancha is one of the increasingly few regions in Spain that still serves free tapas with every drink, a tradition that Daniela and I made the most of everywhere we went. We tried local dishes in every restaurant: ‘migas’ small chunks of bread fried in oil and paprika with bacon or chorizo and often topped with either an egg or some

grapes, ‘gachas’ a traditional dish often described to me as a type of porridge (it’s absolutely not), which mainly consists of flour, oil, paprika and spices fried together to form a very flavourful mush, enjoyed with a big chunk of soft white bread (as is every Manchegan dish).

My wee gang of guiris and I grasped life in La Mancha by the horns (although we stopped short of attending an actual bullfight in the local ring – I wasn’t a vegetarian then but I still drew the line somewhere). We enjoyed many public holidays in honour of various ‘virgenes’. I amused my colleagues with my ignorance one day when I exclaimed surprise at just how many ‘virgins’ there were in Spanish Catholicism as I had only ever heard of the one – turns out Mary goes by many names in Spain.

Of these festivals, the Romería is one of the biggest events of the year. In the last weekend of April a procession

of tractors, carriages, and people leave from the town centre and make their way to a nearby shrine to La Virgen de las Viñas (Mary again) where, for a whole weekend, people dance, drink, and eat in gazebo covered pop-up bars. It’s muddy, messy, and a lot of fun.

Tomelloso might not have been the exotic, cosmopolitan year abroad experience that I had always envisioned for myself, but in reality, it was better than anything I could have imagined. It was a time when I learnt as much about how to be alone as I did about forming new relationships. A time when I somehow experienced adventure while living in a town where nothing much happens. It wasn’t without its challenges but I wouldn’t change it for the world.

And the next time I drive through those white and orange walls, I know it will feel like coming home.



“SUFFOCATING WITH PRESSURE”: A PERSONAL INSIGHT INTO POSTGRADUATE MENTAL HEALTH



BY MAX BOVER

I suppose you can consider me to be a university drop-out. Last October, I started a two-year postgraduate programme at a top university with every intention to complete this step to a long and sustainable academic career. Flash forward to January, I am crying at my kitchen table. I am exhausted by the entire premise of a Master’s degree and I decide I am done with university. Years of plotting my steps on a narrowing path dissolve like sugar in your fourth black coffee of the day.

This might read like a familiar image to many of you; universities are incubators for stress and exhaustion, anxiety and depression. Years of neoliberalism has left the fragile university propped up on its largely empty promise of a simple equation: degree = job = money = happiness.

For some, a postgraduate qualification is the logical next step; for some, it is because they “didn’t feel ready to start

job hunting”. Whatever your reason, it is fine, but the life of a postgraduate is a far cry from your run-of-the-mill degree. Imagine your last three years squashed into one, more expectation, less time, many of your friends have left town and (hopefully) moved onto the next brave step, you have less time to work but the degree is more expensive, it is not mandatory but certainly a good sign if you can prove you are smart enough to be treated (almost) as a colleague by the same people who taught you how to reference properly just a few years earlier, and you still have to figure out what you’re going to do next year – and that means taking up time you do not have. Who said it would be easy, right?

From the postgraduates I have spoken to, there is a near-unanimous feeling of suffocation that comes as a side to a postgraduate degree. At times, it will feel like there is simply too much on your plate and it is the minimum expectation to finish it all. All of this

means that one's social life becomes an unconscious sacrifice, and without time for oneself, it is a short step to lose sight of personal fulfilment in the here-and-now. This is how the pressures of postgraduate life can quickly spiral into depression.

Don't get me wrong, postgraduate life can be a time of enriching experiences far beyond what your previous degree ever offered. It can truly be a time to find out what you want to offer the world. But with a million pieces of a rich life laid out in front of you, it can feel like an impossible jigsaw to ever finish.

I dropped out and I don't regret it, but I don't want you to do the same. Universities and governing bodies need to do more to alleviate the stresses of postgraduate life; 50% of students are currently experiencing daily or weekly feelings of loneliness, an 11% increase from the previous data set. This data is from lockdown 2.0, one can imagine the ongoing strain of the pandemic to have

“ I CAN'T BREATHE WITH ALL OF THIS WEIGHT ON ME... THERE HAS TO BE A REASON WHY I AM GOING THROUGH THIS. ”

Postgrad, University of York

only exacerbated this issue. It is all well and good for universities to have mental health weeks, but the support that is provided is largely overwhelming. This is not isolated to universities, counselling services across the country are under pressure to a point where they are almost not fit for purpose; what use is a six week waiting period when someone can feel the floor crumbling beneath them right now?

Life as a student is incredibly difficult right now, and there is very little than we can do about it. Please, support each other, sometimes a friend is all we can have. What is needed is structural change, not just in the university, but in our country. The powers that be must start tailoring society to be built around fulfilment, not around constant pressure. And if they refuse to act, we must force the issue.

A young person needs every advantage they can get, and a postgraduate degree is certainly a solid step, but “nothing is worth sacrificing your mental health”. Stay safe.



FACING FEARS: HOW TO APPROACH TOXIC FLATMATES

BY ELISE ROSE

First year uni students have never had it so tough. The COVID-19 pandemic has dismantled every part of the university structure students are promised when they apply and has dried up the social aspect of campus life that many of us seek out. Forced to learn in entirely isolated environments, separated from friends and family, and prohibited from forming close bonds with anyone outside of their flats; It has meant that many students are living out the so-called best years of their lives surrounded by the same 4 walls with the same 5 unfamiliar faces.

With all the uncertainty that still prevails over living with COVID and the natural teen angst that exists with every new cohort, it's no surprise that not every flatmate will get along. The chances are, you will live with — or will have lived with — a toxic housemate. Think about it: strangers sharing the same grimy sink and overflowing set of bins, all sleeping side by side in dimly lit box rooms for months on end. If uni has taught me anything, it's that you won't get on with everybody but that doesn't make you a bad person. Here are 5 reminders that helped me to communicate with toxic flatmates I have encountered along the way.

Confrontation doesn't mean aggression – if you're anything like me, the word

'confrontation' will make your stomach turn. Suddenly we envision cat fights from Real Housewives episodes that end in the housewives uninviting each other to the white party, and so we put off approaching toxic flatmates to avoid reenactments. Confronting someone who has hurt your feelings can be nerve-racking; It means going against our natural instinct of Ignore It and It will Go Away. A calm and level tone of voice is vital to demonstrate maturity in the moment, especially if part of your flatmate's toxicity includes guilt tripping or causing arguments. Whatever your desired outcome - whether that be a reunion to make things work or staying civil to preserve the harmony of the flat - taking a collected approach will help get your point across without the unnecessary RHOBH drama.

Keep it real - In scenarios you feel you have been wronged or are upset because of your flatmate's actions, telling them how you really feel is crucial. This complements calm confrontation in that expressing how you really feel doesn't need to get heated, but should be clear and direct. This can be challenging if you're a serial apologist as you probably just say sorry to end the awkwardness of it all. But make you don't fall into this trap, if something has affected you speak up! In these situations it's important to normalise your nerves and uneasiness, if you didn't feel awkward it probably

means you like the life of drama. Your flatmate will likely respond with frostiness which you should be prepared to handle so don't be surprised if it's not straight sailing. After all nobody wants to be told that they've hurt someone, but don't let that deter you from getting things off your chest.

Sooner is better rather than later – Although you don't want to act hastily or fuel any fire that might be bubbling inside your flat, approaching a toxic housemate is better done quickly to resolve any issues. Take it from someone who delayed confrontation for months in fear of causing upset, the feeling after talking with someone who wronged you is freeing and will allow you to focus on more important things (including your £9,000-a-year course). It's easy to get overwhelmed with the idea of approaching your toxic flatmate, so sorting out any issues where you live for the majority of the time at university is best done quickly to alleviate the stress and anxiety that comes with it.

Speak to someone outside of the flat – A toxic housemate will likely cause people to take sides because ... Well,

they're toxic. That's why speaking to someone outside of who you live with will offer a fresh perspective. This can be someone from secondary school, a parent or sibling, or even university support groups and organisations. These are people who can offer the most level-headed and sensible advice which might include things you don't really want to hear. Moreover, they are people that want to help you so their input is valuable and will encourage you to do the right thing – even if that means a dreaded confrontation with the toxic flatmate.

Distance yourself and remember who your real friends are – If all else fails, take yourself out of the situation and bare in mind who is really there for you. These people will respect your decisions and have your best interests at heart. This one is something I only really learned very recently and can honestly say improved my living experience. Your three years of university will fly by, so make sure you channel your focus on what really matters, whether that's smashing your course or making lifelong memories with those who are looking out for you.



“SHE-E-O” AND “GIRLBOSS” A NECESSARY DISTINCTION OR JUST PATRONISING AND DEMEANING?

BY LUCY EVANS

The phrases “she-e-o” and “girlboss” have been slowly working their way into articles, reports, Instagram posts and more in an attempt to create a fun, gender specific alternative to “CEO” and other socially male dominated positions. These phrases have been called demeaning and degrading, criticised for preventing women from doing their jobs by placing a heightened focus on their gender.

The main issue with these overtly gendered phrases is that they often end up minimising business accomplishments due to gender consistently being made a focal point. The gender of male CEOs is rarely centred when we talk about their accomplishments. For women, however, an accomplishment prefaced with “she-e-o” or any other explicit and heavy mentioning of their gender often takes away from the accomplishment. Language like this indicates that, in society's eyes, women are never considered on the same playing field as men; female CEOs are never considered equal to male because they are instead the feminised “she-e-o”.

If these phrases are so demeaning and dividing, why do people use them? The reason why people might spin a gender specific variation on “CEO” might be

understood if we delve further into the number of female CEOs in the UK. According to Business Leader, only 6% of UK FTSE 100 CEOs in 2020 were women. Of course, this is only the statistics for CEO positions. As we move down into boardroom positions on the UK FTSE 350, the percentage of women in these roles rises to 34.3%, as stated by The Guardian. By understanding how small these numbers are in comparison to the statistics for men in leadership, we can begin to see why people might feel the need to explicitly note when a CEO is a woman; women in top CEO positions is such a rare occurrence that when it does happen, it must be explicitly noted with a gendered variation on a classic phrase.

Lurking beneath this seemingly playful variation on “CEO” is the understanding that women are the “other”. Male CEOs are the default whereas female CEOs are the rare “other”, a deviation from a male-centric societal norm and so must be explicitly noted as a spectacle with a gendered phrase like “she-e-o”. These phrases are not simply a cute and playful variation – they expose how leadership roles and CEO positions are socialised and coded as male. Society feels like we need to bring attention to any CEO or leader who isn't male through an explicitly gendered phrase so that we know they deviate from the norm.

When aimed at women, these phrases are understandably demeaning. They reduce female leadership to a gimmicky phrase founded on the “othering” of women. But some women have tried to reclaim these phrases for themselves as terms of empowerment, as proof that women are making it into top CEO positions, working against the grain of the patriarchy. While there is definitely some sense of empowerment in this reclamation – a moment of “girl power” to stick it to the patriarchy – it feels transitory and fleeting. By claiming these phrases are empowering for women, we fail to recognise that even though women are becoming CEOs, they still only account for 6% of the UK FTSE 100. That means a staggering 94% are male. Additionally, all six of these women are white. If we try to reclaim these phrases as a fun expression to show how far we’ve come, we are neglecting the fact that no real change has occurred. These statistics indicate that society still has a systemic problem where women, especially women of colour, are not afforded top leadership positions.

Trying to claim that “she-e-o” and “girlboss” are empowering is society’s attempt to mask true systemic issues with a performative phrase in order to prevent any real change from occurring. When I say this, I do not mean to suggest that the onus is on women to create this systemic change – far from it. I only mean to imply that gendered phrases like “she-e-o” and “girlboss” falsely provide us with a fleeting sense that we’re getting somewhere, finally moving into high leadership and CEO roles. Instead, these phrases should remind us that, for society, women are the “other” that can never truly adopt the traditionally male

role of CEO without it being adapted and feminised. By accepting and trying to reclaim such phrases as empowerment, we are agreeing that this small number of white women becoming CEOs is real progress for women. In reality, accepting these phrases as “empowering” does nothing to structurally empower women.



“She-e-o” and “girlboss” are phrases that are simply not needed when talking about women in leadership – they are demeaning and distract from accomplishments, centring gender instead. Moving forward, we need to create discourse surrounding the societal problem that systemically prevents women, especially women of colour, from becoming CEOs. We don’t need performative “empowering” phrases, we need real change.

COMPLETING A MASTERS IN A PANDEMIC

BY CHLOE O’KEEFFE

Graduate Corner editor, Chloe O’Keeffe discusses the highs and lows of completing a Master’s programme during the Pandemic.

I finished my undergraduate degree as the pandemic started. Ireland closed down for the first time due to Covid-19 the week following handing in my final year project (FYP), and the college’s Charity Week. From then, I’ve said that if anyone was at any of the packed events during Charity Week, I don’t think you’ll ever contract Covid-19. It went from ninety to zero in a millisecond; from going on a big, mid-semester blow out for Charity Week, and then to celebrate our FYPs – a 12,000 word project many of us had been working on for the best part of a year – being handed in, to pubs, clubs, schools, and Universities across the country closing until further notice.

I decided to move home immediately and see the final weeks of my undergrad out in the safety of my family home.

I had always planned to go on to do a Master of Arts (in Journalism), but the pandemic had put a large question mark over this path. As a result of Covid-19 I had lost my part-time job, so the idea of paying for a Masters degree as well as sustaining myself seemed near impossible. There wasn’t much help in

terms of grants or bursaries. I reached out about one such bursary and had said how I was looking for a part-time job to assist. I was advised against doing a part-time job while studying at MA level, which was incredibly disheartening.

I decided to apply by the deadline and see what time would show; baring in mind I could always defer. Fortunately, my circumstances changed, and I secured a part-time job nearing the end of Summer. I was also over the moon to have taken on the role as Editor in Chief of the college newspaper for the year.

Online college was quite different come September to what I’d come used to in the closing weeks of my undergraduate. I guess by the end of the semester people tend to distance themselves anyway, to get the last of the assignments perfected and submitted. Whereas this wasn’t only a new academic year but was a new course to me also.

Naturally, it took a period of time to adjust to online learning, and although I would have loved to have been on campus for even one lecture, as a whole

online learning wasn't the worst thing in the world. The classes were all recorded, which made for an even more flexible timetable. I've recently seen a lot of people being on board with continuing on with blended learning- a mix of in-person and online learning, which I think would be a great idea to continue. The management team where I work were very accommodating with my class-time, but the lectures being recorded would have been extremely beneficial to a student who didn't have as flexible a work schedule, as you could catch up anytime.



Assessment for the course was very agreeable with me. There were no exams, which I don't think was a massive change as journalism is quite a practical subject. One of the more gruelling yet rewarding and fun assessments were a series of news days our class participated in over the course of the academic year.

There were ones for radio, newspaper, and television individually, and we got the opportunity to take part in a newsroom simulation, and were required to pitch, create, and produce a story for each individual day.

The days were stressful yet rewarding, as we had the opportunity to put all our theory to the test and got a first-hand glimpse into what the industry we were training for would require of us.

Juggling a job whilst studying for my MA wasn't as difficult as I'd led myself to believe, which was probably helpful. I would recommend a certain level of organisation, and I always swear by my trusty planner, which definitely helped with my organisation and juggling the two.

All in all, there weren't many drawbacks or negatives for me personally. I did find group work in this setting difficult at times, particularly for the television Newsday where myself and another group member were meant to work together to produce a segment for a TV news broadcast. I was virtually left in the lurch and created the news package single-handedly - but, again, it's a hurdle I came across, and overcame.

Looking back, I'm delighted I made the decision to pursue the Masters programme during the pandemic, as it taught me extra things I may not have learned in a no-Covid world. I'm over the moon to say that I have passed all my classes in both semesters, and I am approximately one month from submitting my MA thesis, which will determine if I graduate with a Graduate Diploma or Masters of Arts degree.

CREATIVE COLLECTIONS

SELF & BARING LOVE & A L L

BY MEG GRIFFITHS

IG: @MEGFFIONPHOTOGRAPHY

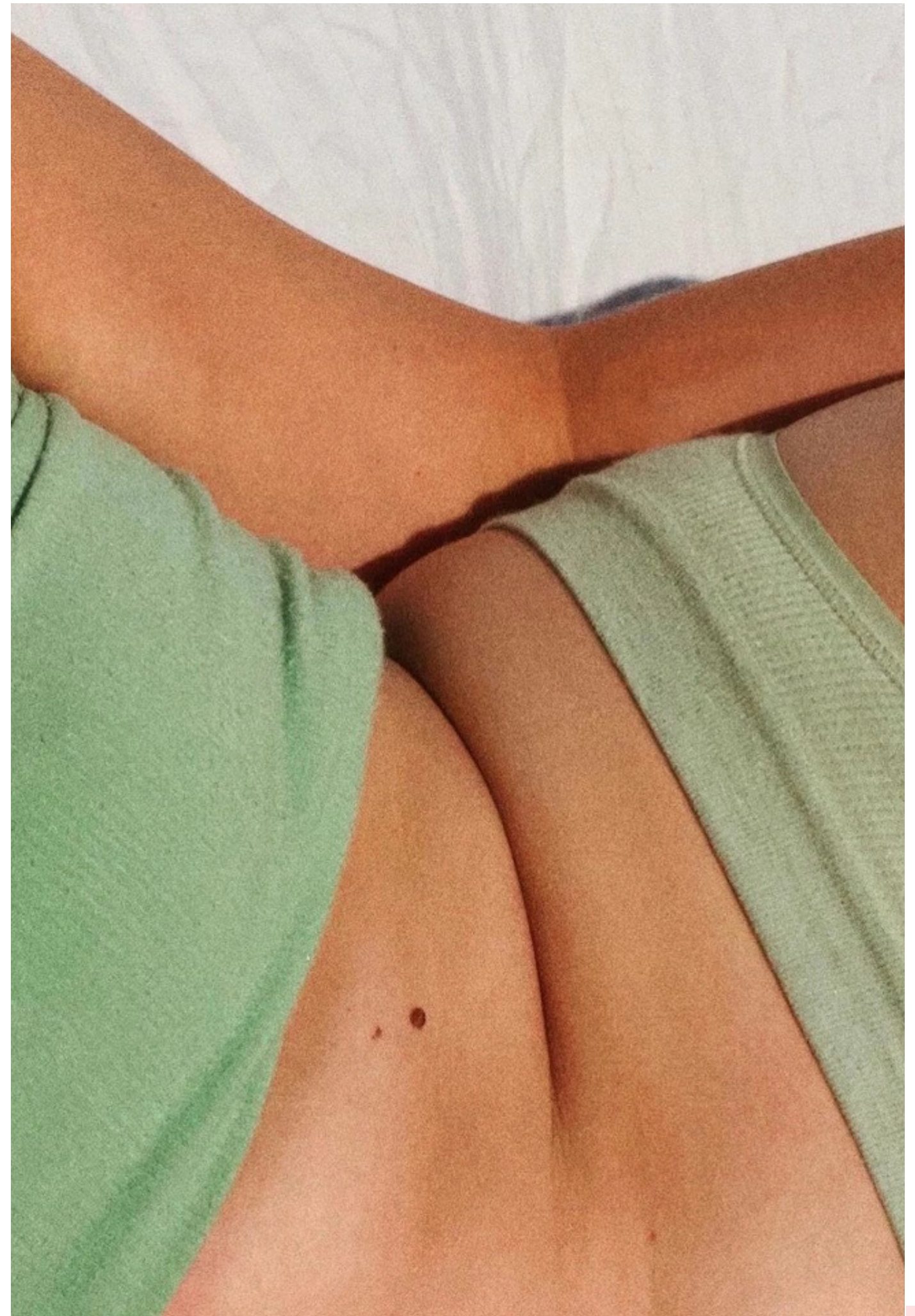
Meg Griffiths is a recent BA History graduate from Cardiff University. With a passion for photography for years but no time to pursue it, Meg explains that “photography has been a passion of mine for years, but due to the demands of uni life, I was unable to find time for it. Ever since moving back home for COVID19 lockdown, I’ve slowly been getting back into practicing photography and art, with a specific emphasis on body positivity.”

Like the majority in today’s society, we have felt the direct impact of the unattainable and unnecessary bodily expectations we face as women. However, the movement surrounding the increase in ‘body positivity’ and ‘normalising’ certain body types and features, has allowed me to embrace the idea that it really is what is inside that counts. As well as normalising body diversity, we should also be

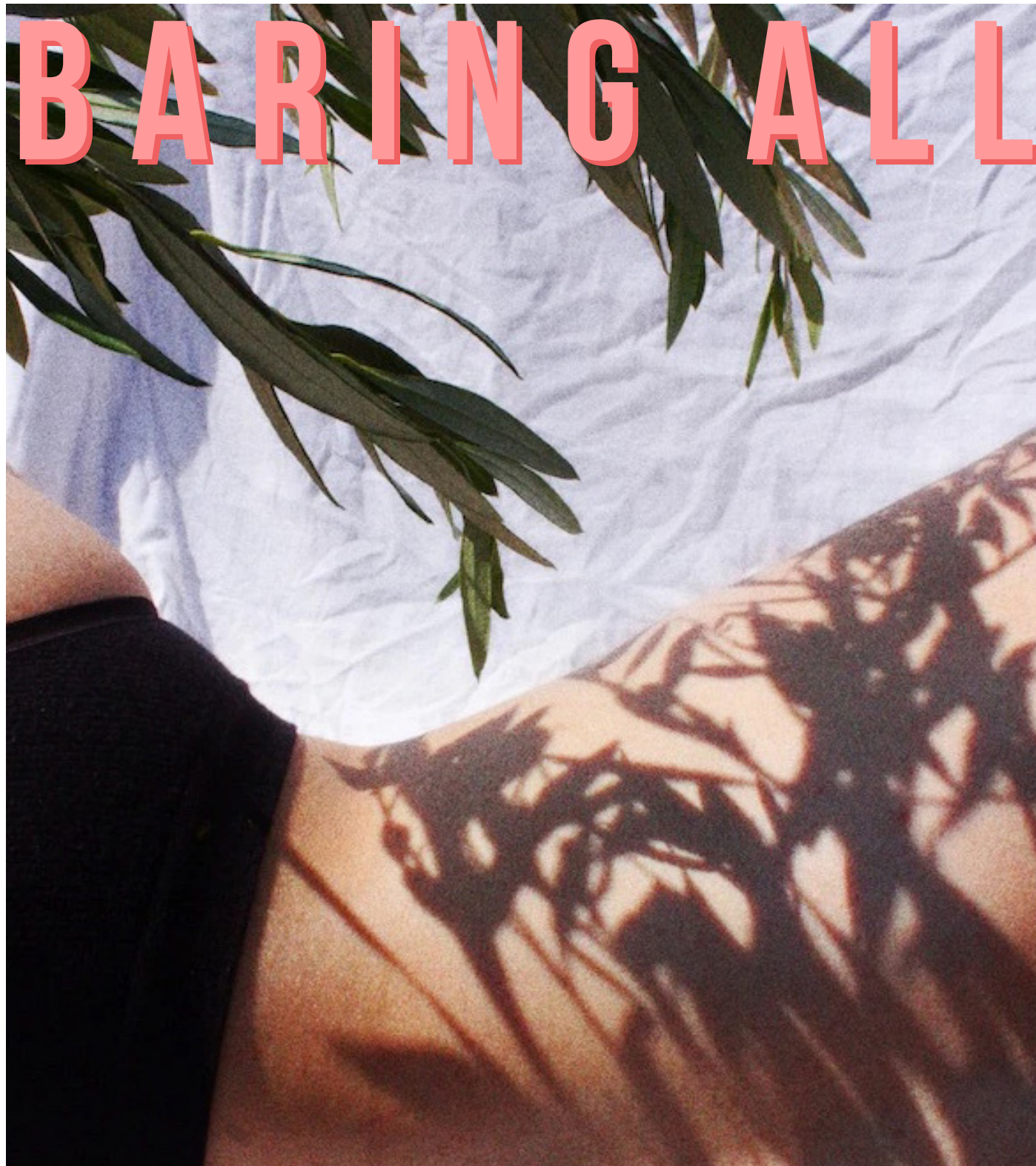
normalising the importance of taking care of our physical and mental health. I have personally suffered with depression in the last two years, and having creative outlets like photography have not only allowed me to escape from my depression (to an extent), but have also allowed me to address particular topics such as body image, and how these can directly impact our mental health. The self portraits I created begin to celebrate the human form in a raw state, drawing attention to the way skin and fat naturally roll over each other – something that should not define you as a person. “Baring All” also celebrates the beauty in natural curves, whilst using nature itself to enhance the detail and content of these three photos.

SELF LOVE

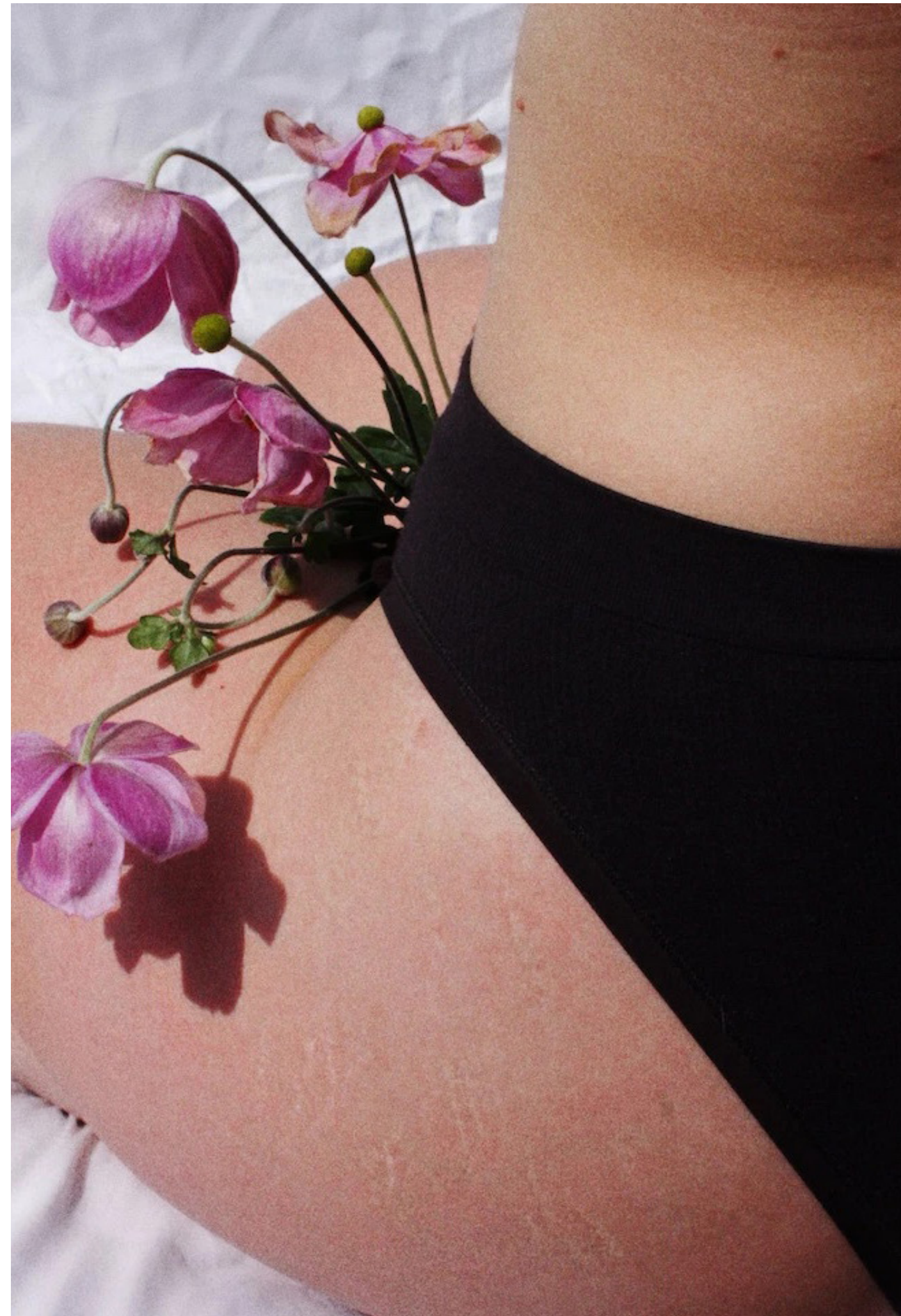
For years I had hated my stomach, envious of all the flat and ‘perfect’ bellies that my friends and sisters possessed. However, after struggling with my mental health for the past couple of years (unrelated to any body views I had) I’ve realised that it really is what is on the inside that counts. Feeding my brain with positivity and self love is far more important to me than being preoccupied with what my body looks like on the outside. Taking these pictures was a celebration of that fact, as I’ve started to value maintaining my mental health more than trying to grasp any form of ‘perfection’ on the outside.



B A R I N G A L L



This shoot was one of my favourites, incorporating nature into abstract portraiture is a dream! My sister allowed me to take these of her, and she thoroughly enjoyed the outcomes of this shoot as much as I did. Although the shadows of the plants and flowers undoubtedly compliment the curves of the body, they also act as a contrast to the lightness of the skin. Curves should be celebrated, and what better way to do it than alongside nature?





TIME TRAVEL

BY IMOGEN JAMES

Did you know I can time travel?

Yeah right.

I can.

How?

The beach.

The beach?

Yes, the beach. Where I am five and laughing and sandy and messy and greasy and sticky and sweet and happy. Time passes so slowly there – I have no concept of the last train home and the structure of dinner time and bath time and bed time. And when that's over I am 17 and tipsy and smoky and in love and chatting pointless things and dating random people. We stay out too late and get too drunk but those silly little nights are with me now. And then I am 21 and settled and wandering and walking further and further and enjoying it and sitting to watch the tide. It is no longer a silly boy but a man that I love, that will last. The world looks older at this beach. I swear, the beach is a time machine.



© Instagram/maudafashion

INDUSTRY INSIGHT:

AN INTERVIEW WITH THE FOUNDER OF ADAPTIVE FASHION BRAND 'MAUDA'

Hi Carla! Can you tell me a little bit about yourself and your work?

I'm originally from Portugal and moved to Edinburgh in 2012 after meeting my now husband.

Fashion has always fascinated me and Mauda is a very special project I kicked off in January 2021. It's a fashion brand for women, all women, but primarily focussed on adaptive design. Clothing that is easy to put on and take off to make the dressing experience slightly easier for people with disabilities. I design clothes I'd like to wear and consider the detail around user-friendly fastenings and closures. Disability has for a very long time been under represented in different industry sectors. Mauda is a little contribution to change disability representation in fashion and promote universal/adaptive alternatives.

How did you get to the point you are at now?

I worked in IT/Financial Services up until very recently. Although fashion has always been a passion, it didn't offer many opportunities in Portugal. It was only when I moved to the UK that I felt I could invest in a fashion career. There's respect for practical skills and craftsmanship in the UK, which I had not seen before, and that then led me to enrol in a Fashion Design course a few years back. During the course I experimented designs with different body-shaped croquis and was really pleased with the results. However, I'd get positive feedback on designs in extremely

(unrealistic) slim croquis, but not on designs in larger sized croquis. I think it was then that I realised how much we need to break with pre-conceived notions of ideal body image. Fashion is a way for people to express their individuality, so it really needs to be available to everyone, regardless of body size or shape. I then came across Sinead Burke's campaign for a more inclusive design and that was it! From then on, I knew I'd be designing with a focus on disability.

Can you tell us about a role model who has inspired you?

I have two in fact. They helped define what is now Mauda:

1. Elsie Inglis - a Scottish doctor, teacher and suffragist - peaceful and constitutional women's vote campaigners (not to be confused with the suffragettes - the more militant ones). Inglis was told to go "home and sit still" when she offered her services in World War I. She didn't. She set up the Scottish Women's Hospitals, instead. The brand is a merge of her middle name Maud, and the word moda (pronounced mawda) which means fashion in Portuguese.
2. Sinead Burke - an Irish writer, teacher and disability activist. It was via Sinead, more precisely her book "Break The Mould" that I woke up to the challenges the faced by people with disabilities due to lack of more inclusive design.

When you were a child, what career did you see yourself having?

I always hoped I'd work in fashion, but my parents always encouraged me to go to university and get a degree that secured me a safe job and fashion didn't offer that then. From a very early age I used to sew my Barbie's clothes, which then progressed into trying to make and alter clothes for myself. At some point in my teens I tried working as a model with this agency in Lisbon, but that was short lived (literally one photo session!) I genuinely hope the pics taken then are nowhere to be found these days... So, I studied European Studies and with my first savings bought my first sewing machine!

What are you most proud of doing? What do you consider your biggest achievement to date?

Mauda is in fact what I'm most proud of doing. It's such a meaningful project and a subject I'm extremely passionate about. The years studying and working in areas unrelated to fashion weren't in vain though. Everything I've learned has helped me define and lay the foundations to bring this amazing project to life. I'm delighted I pursued my interest in fashion eventually, but I'm grateful for everything I learned from different industries and my previous career.

What do you hope to achieve over the next year? What are you most looking forward to?

Mauda is in its "infancy" and I'm currently trying to give the brand

more exposure. I'm looking forward to being completely out of restrictions and able to speak to people, physically show Mauda's clothing to the public and work further with our customers to meet their needs. Ideally, I'd like Mauda to be a reference for adaptive/universal fashion in the future. We'll see...

What is your favourite cultural product at the moment?

The Defiant Ones, a short documentary about Beats Electronics and the partnership between Dr. Dre and Jimmy Iovine. Watched 3 episodes and really loving it!

What do you think is the biggest issue today facing women in the creative industries?

We were just talking about Elsie Inglis... 100 years on and women are still fighting for equality. Women in leadership roles are under-represented across many sectors and the creative industry isn't an exception. There needs to be a shift for more equality for sure, but we (women) also need to help ourselves. Women are less likely to apply for a role if they meet 7 out of 10 skills in a job spec, whereas men will apply if they meet 1 or 2 out of 10 skills.

From imposter syndrome to guilt we sometimes allow us to "boycott" ourselves. Elsie Inglis's offer was rejected by Britain so she offered it to the French who accepted it. Eventually Britain were seeking her services. Inglis truly was the change she wanted

to see and we need to be more like that. Believing and recognising our own value is an important step to get others to do so. Obviously, we need support, but most times we can take that first step ourselves.

How important is it for women to lift each other up and what does that mean to you?

In the words of Shelley Zalis (The Female Quotient) "a woman alone has power; collectively we have impact". Individually we can take small steps to drive change, but the "power of the pack" can give it the right visibility to expand its reach. For me, more than the support from other women, I have greatly benefited from their experiences and learnings. We never know what challenges lie ahead, but learning from other women helped me prepare for what I was planning to do and overcome challenges that got in the way.

What is the most important message you want to send out to young female-identifying creatives thinking about their careers? Any resources you've found useful?

Don't wait for something to happen, make it happen yourself. Just go for it and lead by example. My mum always said if I wanted something done, I

should do it myself. It has served me well so far. We're likely to get push-back when we ask for something, but as soon as we do it, that's when you spark people's interest to also do it. It's contagious!

I reached out to Business Gateway (Scotland) when I was setting up my business. I'm not sure whether there's an equivalent in England, but I know Barclays has been supporting start-ups via their Barclays Eagle Labs: <https://labs.uk.barclays/>. These organisations help with mentoring and events exploring different aspects of running a business: marketing, finance, etc. Networking events were also extremely helpful to connect with other creatives. Start with your local creative hubs and take it from there. Nothing to lose!

Where can we find you?

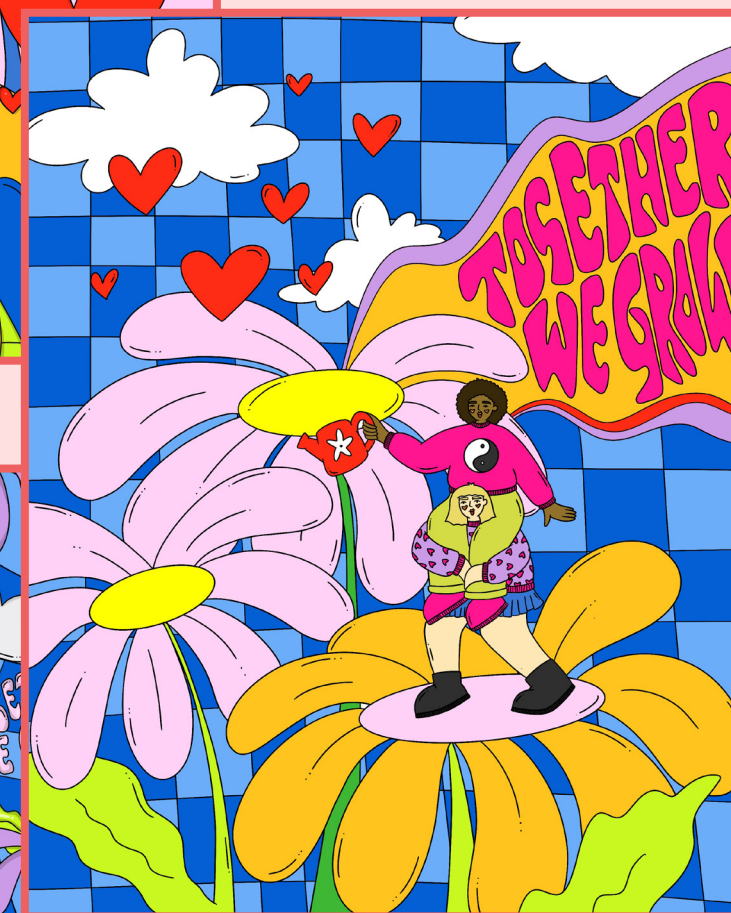
You can visit us on <https://www.mauda.co.uk/> or if you'd like to know what we've been up to on social media just follow @maudafashion on Instagram.

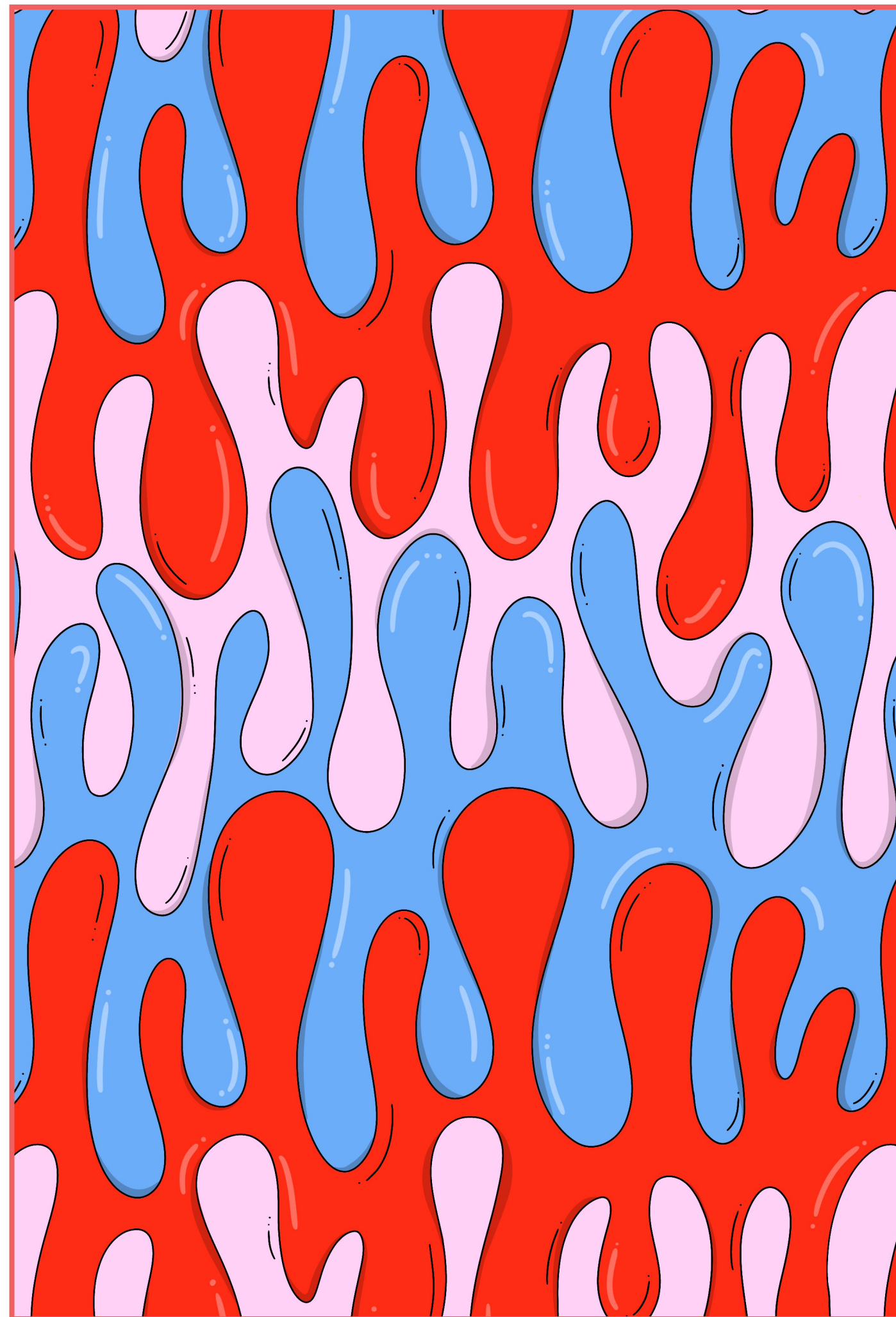
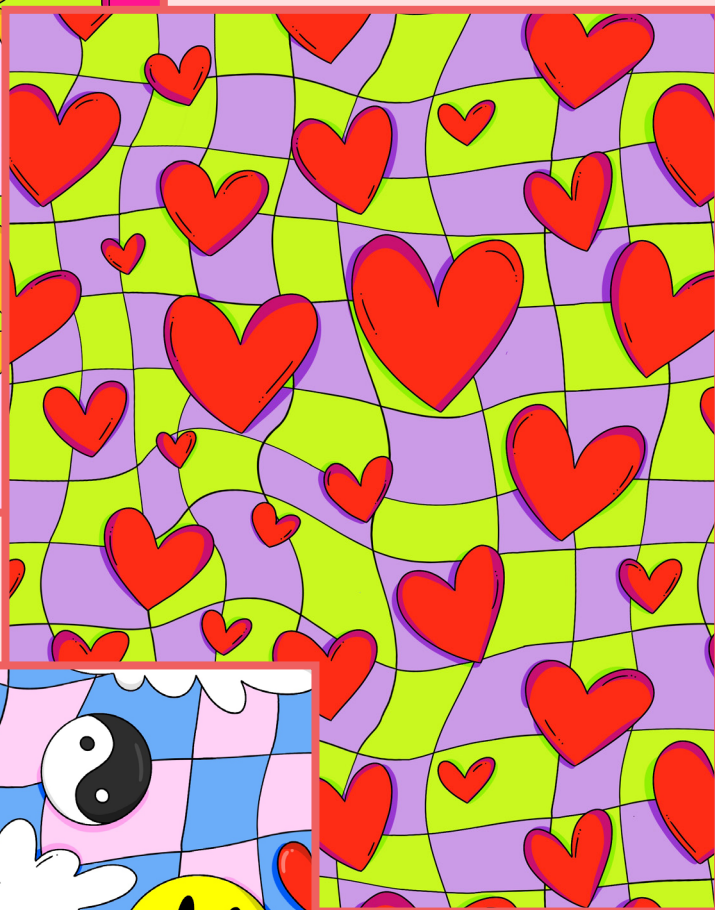
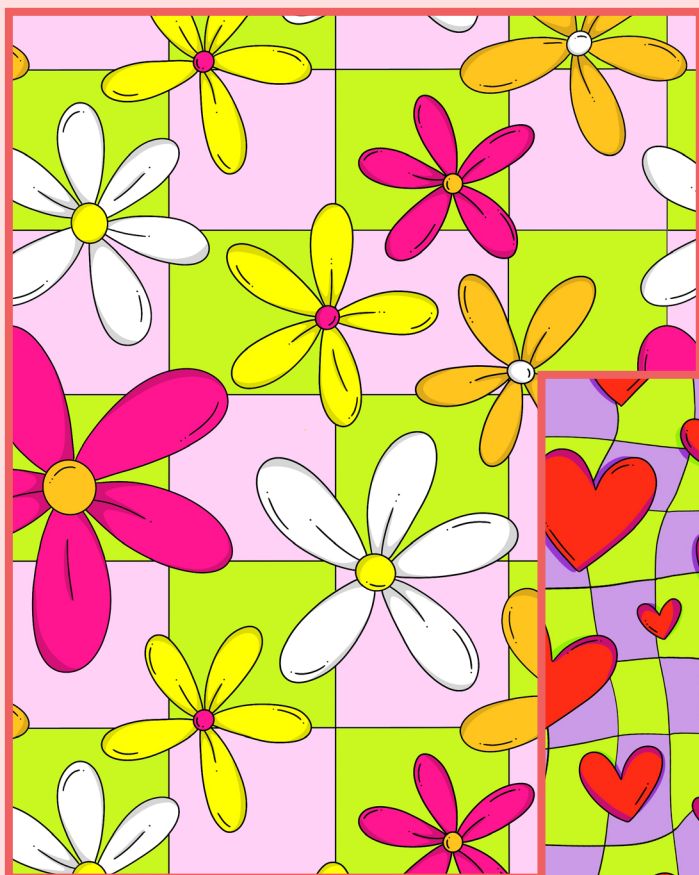
INTERVIEWED BY MEG SHEPHERD

JOYFUL FEMINISM

BY LUCY TURNER

“THIS COLLECTION IS CALLED ‘JOYFUL FEMINISM’ MADE DURING MY FINAL YEAR OF UNIVERSITY BASED AROUND POSITIVITY AND JOYOUS COLOURS. ‘JOYFUL FEMINISM’ IS A GIRL-POSITIVE PROJECT THAT HAS MANY GRAPHIC ILLUSTRATIONS AND IMAGERY WHICH CREATES A RETRO FEEL. DESIGNED TO EMPOWER YOUNG WOMEN AND ENCOURAGE SELF LOVE.”





'BEAUTIFUL STRANGER'

What is it about you?
That makes me smile
Even on the worst days
The walk is worthwhile

Beautiful stranger
Cannot wait to call you mine
As I gaze into your wildfire eyes
Beautiful stranger
Some days I take my time
Brace the cold of the falling night
Just to sit and ponder your name for a while

Beautiful stranger
One day our paths will cross
And stand still will time
When you kiss upon my wrist
And light my light
Beautiful stranger
Will you spend the night?
Truth transcends illusion
Amongst all the confusion
Stood the most beautiful human

Beautiful stranger
Another two seasons
Until we meet again
For you are beautiful
But the cold and I do not agree
Though we are apart
It is of you I dream
Farewell beautiful stranger

BY KIMBERLY
LAMBERT

'RAINY SUNDAY'

Mesmerised by the sounds
Rhythmic thumping pounds the ground
Slicking rooftops and windowsills
As birds scuttle into chimney hilts
Some at peace within the brush
Sheltering beneath the plump green lush
Others feast on the fertile grass
As creatures from beneath, emerge at last
To brave a world rarely seen.
Passable only in that moisture sheen.
From the bursting floss, dense and proud
Thick with ripeness and the sun enshroud
The workday, Mondays eve,
Looming, after one more sleep
The blues haughtily settling in
To mark the day the week begins
A lazy sort of atmosphere
As if prolonging the calming fear
Any enthusiasm undoubtedly insincere
When clouds as soft as goat cashmere
Fill the sky with unforgiving grey
And Monday comes to claim its prey.

BY KIMBERLY LAMBERT

'MUSA'

BY SIMRAN KAUR

'Simran Kaur is a surrealist, still life, and creative portrait photographer and artist currently based in London. She is Punjabi and she was born and raised in Italy.'

Simran's main objective is to make her viewer's dreams come true by creating intriguing setups, but she also explores mental health and environmental awareness with her experimental photography. At the same time, she also creates dreamlike abstract visuals to make the viewer explore another reality.

Simran Kaur is inspired by people's dreams and visions, but her childhood memories also inspire her to create various projects. To keep her childhood memories alive she started doodling digital and traditional illustrations which helps her to understand how she feels about the foggy memories of her childhood.

The traditional doodle illustration "Musa" by Simran Kaur, showcases Simran's childhood struggles of accepting her hair colour. Simran was a victim of bullying at school, either because she was Punjabi or for the way her body looked and the colour of her hair.

She grew up hating herself, especially her hair colour until she started watching a cartoon called Winx. The diverse cartoon was full of various characters with different ethnicities. Between the various characters of Winx, Simran Kaur was especially inspired by Musa who has dark blue and black hair almost like hers. Thanks to Musa from Winx, Simran started accepting the colour of her hair and the way she looked.

In addition, Simran doodles digitally and traditionally to keep her childhood memories alive which she uses to create her various projects.

Simran Kaur stated: "Talking about what I went through in school during my childhood is not easy. Sometimes it really triggers me the fact that my teacher did nothing about that, and cause of what happened I ended up hating school. I always try to not talk about it as is out of my comfort zone."



THE STORY OF A 2020 COVID CREATIVE GRADUATE

BY LILY NEWMAN

Last year I ‘graduated’ during the pandemic which is definitely not how I had imagined my university experience would end. No degree show, no final hand-ins in person and no graduation. This was something that I definitely had to get my head round, as even before I started university I had a vision of how my educational journey would end.

Before I graduated I always had this vision of how my uni life would start and end including when and how I would get my first job in ‘the big wide world’! When I was at school I had never even considered going to university because nobody in my family had ever attended and I just saw it as a waste of money, getting myself into a lot of debt, but I was wrong! When I started college my mind completely changed and I knew it was the best decision and the next step to take. When I first started thinking about university I had always seen me moving away from home but I soon realised I was just going along with the majority and not thinking about myself and what was best for me. I then started to think about my future and my university experience and got really excited. The best decision for me was to go to an arts university where I knew I could grow creatively while still living at home and having support at home, which was really important for me.



Going to university can be a lot of pressure, with pressure from your family, lecturers but mostly from yourself. My family wanted me to go to university for the right reasons because they only wanted the best for me but once you graduate it can be really frustrating at times when the only question they have for you is “have you found a job yet?”. The amount of times this question has been asked to me, well, I’ve lost count. I’ve learnt that once you explain to them that finding a job isn’t easy and then adding a global pandemic on top of that makes it 10 times harder, they understand. They don’t mean any harm by it, they just want to understand. University also wants the best for you but from my experience they always make out that from previous alumni that you can land a job pretty much instantly, but this definitely wasn’t the case for me. My advice for anyone else creative at university or in their first year as a

grad is to get as much experience as you can, mostly it will be voluntary but it’s good for your portfolio.

Now, let’s talk about the reality of graduating. IT’S HARD. 50+ job applications with almost as many rejections that you almost become immune to being rejected. It’s not all bad though. What I found helpful was having a few days off to think about things and to maybe research a different path that you wouldn’t have considered before. I started to push myself out of my comfort zone a little and at the end of last year I signed up to The Prince’s Trust’s Enterprise scheme which helps young people start their own business. Throughout the past year of being on the course I have created my own website, gained social media followers, and started to get back into shooting photography that I love again. I have also been given a mentor to help me set up and launch my own business for 2 years which really is something that money can’t buy. Whether this is for you or not I would definitely say push yourself

out of your comfort zone. Another piece of advice for fellow photographers is don’t be afraid to do work for free to help gain more experience and build up your portfolio, it’s what I’ve done and the experience it’s given me has been invaluable.

So, where am I now? As I am finishing writing this it’s just less than 24 hours since I finally had my in person graduation which I know for a lot of 2020 grads is something that they didn’t get to experience. I am still working part time in the job I had whilst I was at uni while seeking full time employment as well as setting up my own business. I definitely have a busy few months ahead of me and even though it’s not going to be plain sailing I’m excited for the future which is something I wasn’t sure was going to happen if you had asked me a few months ago.

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