

the dull

August 2015

Sparks of dullness

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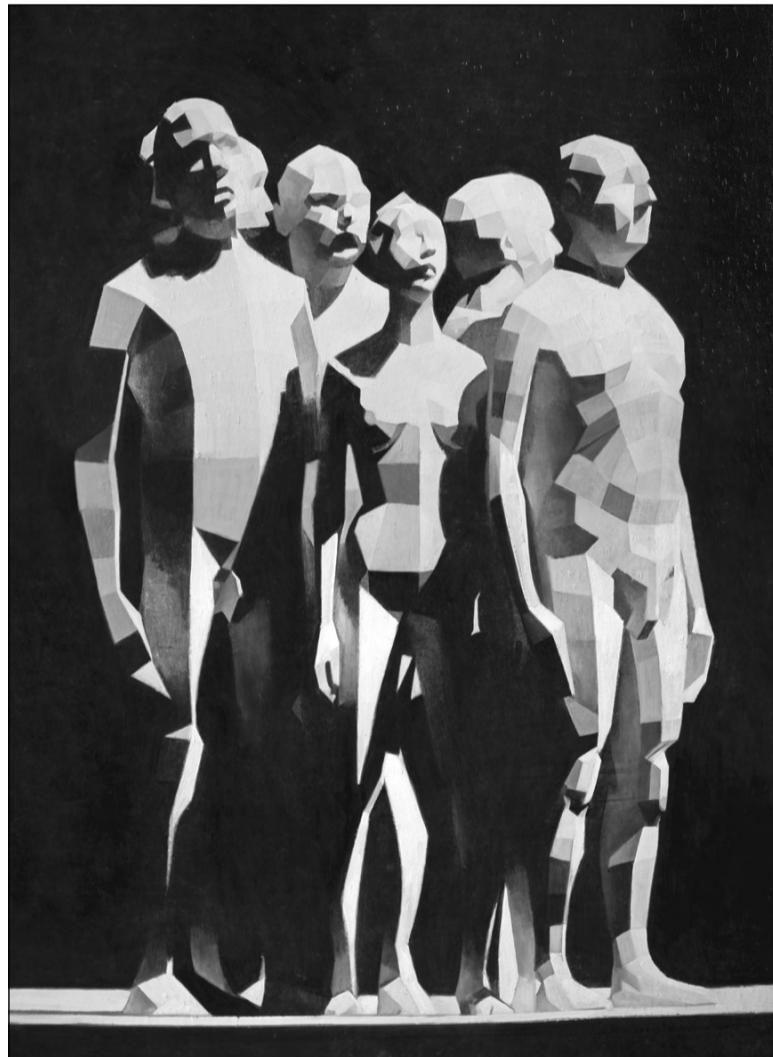
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All information supplied should be regarded as the expression of opinion for purposes of information and entertainment, taken from sources believed to be reliable. However, while we take all reasonable care to remove out-and-out fibs, we cannot ensure that core data will at all points meet third party accuracy requirements.

Worthless
The Dull is a value-added publication of positive worth. This is proven by the observation

Cover painting

John Clark's paintings have a sculptural quality - his figures are very three dimensional. This one, 'The Staff' has something in common with 'The Burghers of Calais'. The characters are resigned, quite forlorn and yet there are signs of pride and hope. Maybe John's experience for Sony as a games art director helps to give him a very contemporary take on the age-old genre of portraiture. All those tones and pixels locate the mannequins firmly in our digital age but there's an abundance of pathos and humanity in those postures and facial expressions.

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'The Staff', a painting by John Clark

of leading economist Milton Friedman, who said "Only government can take perfectly good paper, cover it with perfectly good ink and make the combination worthless".

Reading the dress code

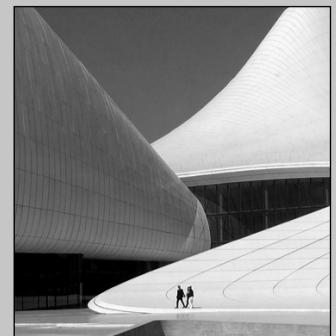
Dignity underpins all that we do. Your attention is drawn to our Readers' Dress Code. Gentlemen readers are required to wear tailored business suits, or jackets and trousers, together with

collared shirts and ties. Cravats are not permitted. No caveats. Ladies are expected to dress with commensurate formality (though nothing too 'strict') according to the occasion and within the spirit of the dress code.

Hand movements

Readers are requested to note these requirements and that the dress code will be enforced and facilities may be withdrawn in the event of non-adherence. Unmarked

Inside:



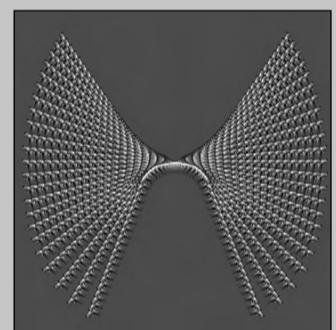
Take a look at this beautiful new museum in Baku

Page 9



Animal attraction. Red on the outside and raunchy through and through

Page 16



Dullism and all that... does philosophy make sense? Our Cambridge PhD explains...

Page 4



Sample the dry humour of Simon Lane's real illusion of a lost afternoon in 1980s Los Angeles...

Page 10

2 A poke in the eye of posturing prettified, ego-pandering portraiture

At a time when the prevailing sensibility is to surgically remove all signs of a life lived from the faces of the famous these anonymous portraits put the human back into being

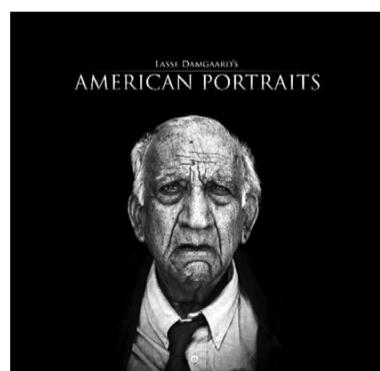
Images by Lasse Damgaard and text by Glenn Greenhill

In case you are thinking these pictures are the work of a seasoned professional photographer I need to point out that Lasse Damgaard was born in 1989. He took these shots in 2007/8 at the age of 18.

Secret code
Perhaps youth and inexperience are the secret code for unlocking the mystery of these 'once-seen-never-forgotten' images. It is apparent that both the eye and heart behind the camera are neither cynical nor fettered by compromise (these being the two typical effects of working with clients over many years). In a word... unjaded!

Enthusiasm
The photographer's youthful energy and passionate enthusiasm seem to have transmitted themselves into the subjects in a way that makes their vitality and spirit leap off the page. Lasse, who works under the name Nullermanden, got his first camera, a small, digital compact Olympus, in 2005.

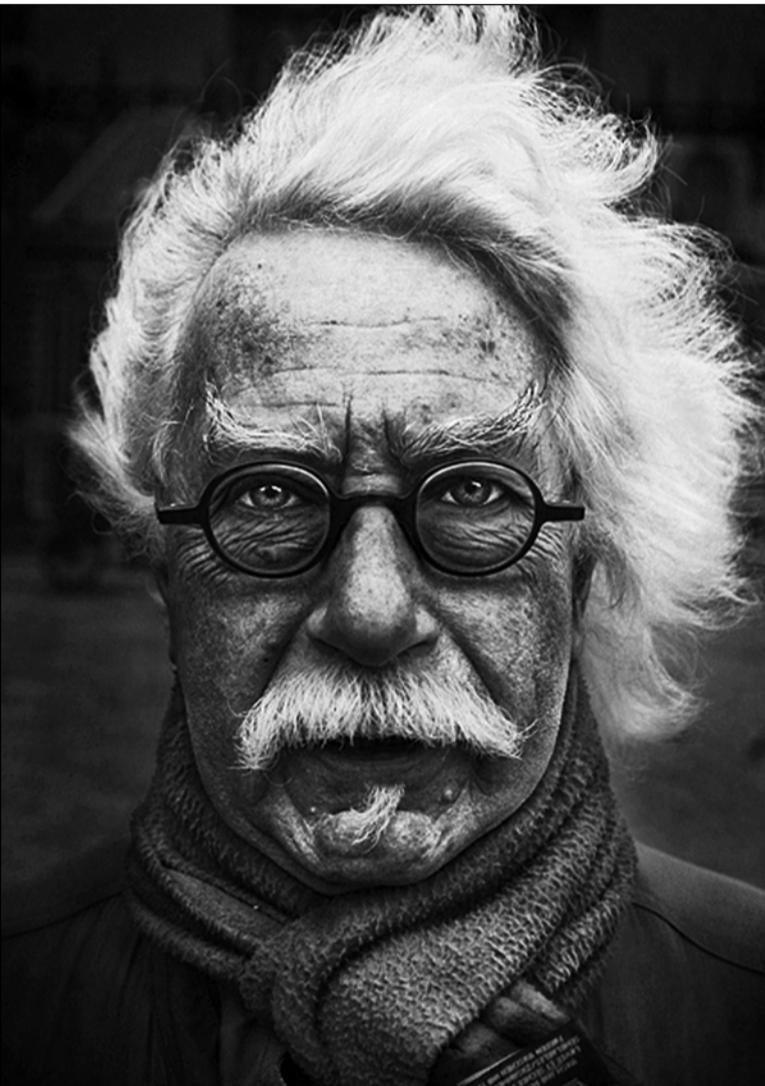
Fragments of real life
Half a year later he emptied his bank account, bought himself a Canon 350D and started what has become an obsession, capturing the fragments of life most people seem to overlook. A decade later and his 'hobby' and passion have evolved into a profession with a couple of contests won, features in a few select magazines and a handful of photos shown in international exhibitions and the publication of his book of portraits.



Lasse explains: "After going backpacking with my camera around both the United States and Europe, I've published a series of portraits of people on the street in my book entitled 'American Portraits'".

If you would like to preview and/or purchase the book, please go to:

www.blurb.com/b/1312447-american-portraits-large-edition



Images: © Lasse Damgaard 2007 - 2015. Reproduced here under non-commercial licence.

Dear reader,

I owe the invention of The Dull to the discovery of the manifesto on the back cover of this, the first edition. (I am imitating Borges when he wrote 'I owe the discovery of Uqbar to the conjunction of a mirror and an encyclopedia').

It contains a tribute to dullness composed by my late identical twin brother, Simon Lane, itinerant poet, who at the time was living in Paris. It inspired me to launch The Dull, which I hope you enjoy. I hope to offer some surprises and hopefully a few delights.

With great assistance from contributors and The Dull creative director I have produced this first edition and hope to receive your feedback.

The Dull is an analogue creation but in the spirit of our digital times and for speed and convenience, you can email us at thedulleditor@gmail.com to express your views and/or request a PDF version.

I had in mind making The Dull a London-and-home-counties publication like the Evening Standard. Weirdly there used to be The Evening News and The Standard. They were virtually identical, most twin-like, and finally merged, not before time.

You will find The Dull unlike the Evening Standard, that repository of information about the London housing market, wardrobe preferences, unpleasant crimes, accidents, political opinions, carefully-placed business stories and large photographs of footballers with strange facial expressions (one of them wears a mask and looks like a baddie from Batman).

The Dull is slightly less predictable and tilts towards Cambridge, stopping at Mildred, Mildew, Harpeth, Shipwreck, Foxton, Folkston and Cambridge (where it will divide). Skateboarding and skydiving are not allowed in the station.

Yes, I want The Dull to tilt and be town and gown, go boldy and dully, or dually, or dually.

So if you want The Dull to continue and to have further editions please email thedulleditor@gmail.com and give your support by suggesting ideas to make it sustainably dull.

Dutifully,

Guy Lane

Newnham, Cambridge

PS: If you would like a PDF of this edition please email thedulleditor@gmail.com

the
dull

Images provided by Guy Lane © 2013



I visited Dostoevsky's apartment museum in St Petersburg.

Now you can crack the joke,

"Was he in?"

He lived in the flat for the last ten years of his life and wrote his definitive masterpiece 'Brothers Karamazov' at the large sturdy desk in the study, chain-smoking Russian cigarettes. There didn't seem to be a lot of reference books in his study and there was an absence of clutter generally.

Daily toil
Being in the apartment made me feel like I was his guest and he'd just popped out to buy some more fags. I found it hard to reconcile the suburban routine, the daily chores and imagined sound of young children whooping, with the production of some of the finest volumes ever devised!

I am now wondering if JG Ballard's suburban home might also become a museum... if so I would dearly like to visit it to get a similar taste of the daily toil of another writing genius.



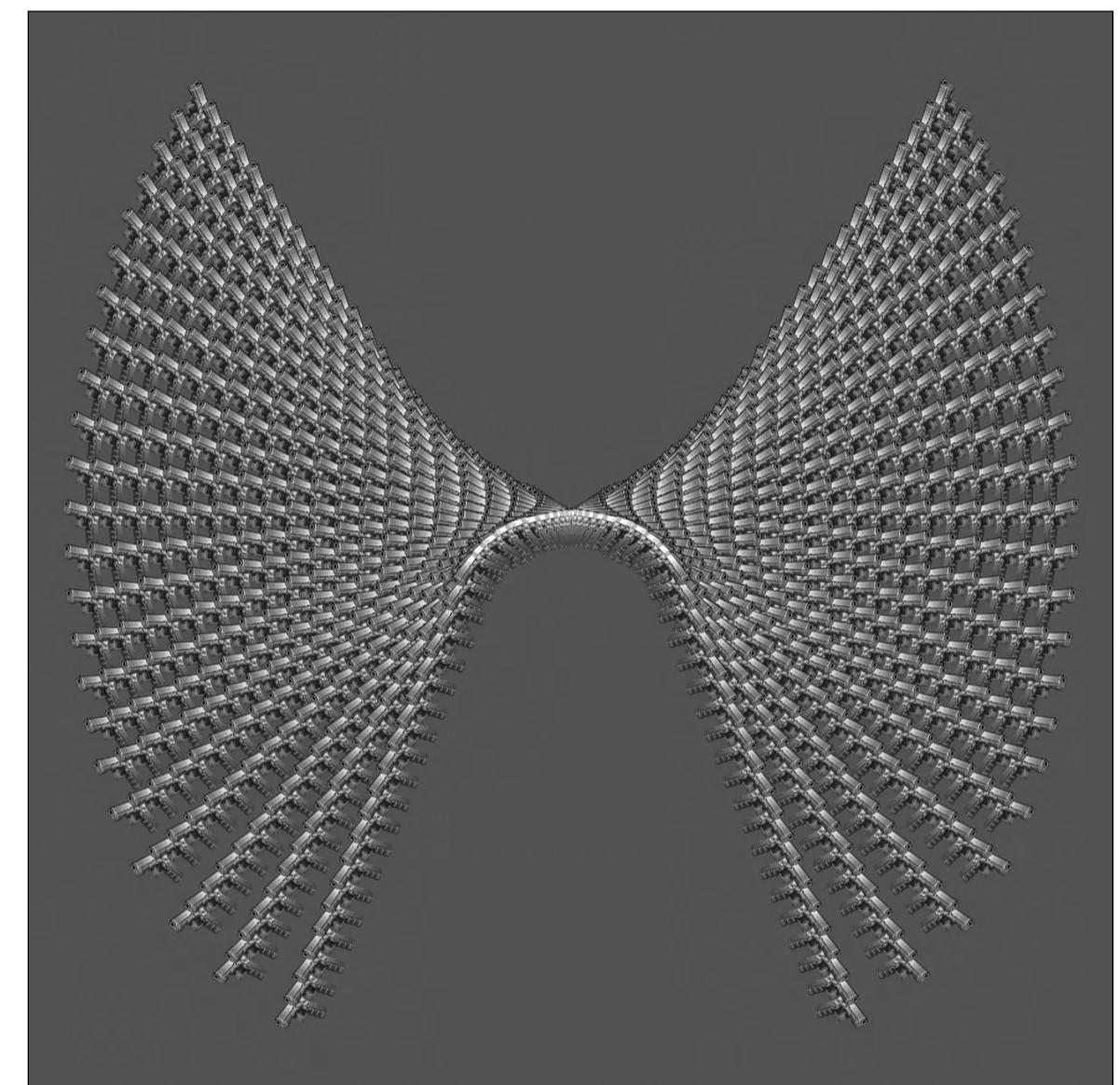
4 Cartesian dullism and the role of aesthetics in making sense of our lives (or why making sense isn't dull)

'Making sense' is a natural process of thought, a basic human need, and a common term in popular culture. From the superfluous (dull) sentence-enders of 'Do I make sense?' or 'Am I making sense?', to the Delphic oracle's 'Know thyself', we have an urge to communicate 'sense' about ourselves and the world. But there's a problem. The idea of dualism – embedded in Western philosophy – insists that nothing makes sense.

Fortunately, there could also be a solution. Surfing through Plato, Descartes and Deleuze, I believe I've found a way of making sense: solving the problem posed by Cartesian dualism, through the sublime aesthetic experience. Yes, art is the solution – not just to the mindless tedium of everyday life, but also to help us make sense of the world, and of ourselves.

Dull times in the cave

In his effort to make sense of existence, Plato distinguishes between the sensible and the intelligible worlds. He erects a hierarchy between sensible/sensory knowledge, which is what we gain through 'appearances' of the physical world on our senses, and intelligible knowledge, which is what we know through thought or ideas. According to Plato, sensory knowledge is faulty, merely a shadow or representation of the essences of true knowledge. To define this distinction, he uses 'The Allegory of the Cave'. According to Plato, our perceptions are shadows compared to the 'reality' outside the cave; and even this reality is just a shadow of the sun itself. We are a long way from seeing the real picture (whatever that may be). Plato's system posits our efforts at making sense of ourselves within a reductive mode of thinking that divides everything into two opposing categories – such as sensory/intelligible – which are obscured, and seem to block any direct path to the world. This dualistic mode of thought,



'Angel In Pieces'. Putting weapons to good use, this sculpture would be created from 1,250 decommissioned Walther handguns.
For a free large format digital colour file of this artwork please contact: theduleditor@gmail.com

in response to the on-going quest to 'Know thyself', has fired philosophical debate ever since.

Descartes' dualistic mode of thought is important. It overrules all attempts to make sense of the world and one's own existence. Descartes splits the mind away from the body, subject and object, person and the world. This initiates a dichotomous logic of 'binary opposition', which splits two separate things into two different and opposing categories. Two things become contradictory, presented as unequal, in a hierarchy, and a political situation ensues. For example, once we have begun to split mind/body or subject/object, soon we split man/woman, rich/poor, white/black, good/bad, in/out, right/wrong, win/lose. You can see how splitting things into this kind of categorisation can commence a struggle whereby one camp is favoured over the other. This is unfair, and potentially dangerous when the two opposing sides react aggressively. Making sense becomes a battleground of supremacy, judgement, and discrimination.

So it's not surprising that Platonic/Cartesian dualism has been

Dual but not equal

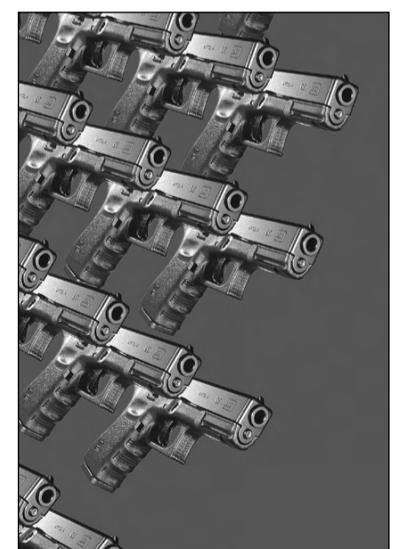
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An artwork opens a way to understand oneself, and the world.

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the paintings of Francis Bacon – through your senses. This painting then exists as the event of your experience of it; it exists only insofar as you feel it when you look at it. This experience is composed of the electric current that passes through the body and directly affects the nervous system, during the time you are looking at the artwork. When you look, the artwork moves you; it affects your senses and you see the world in a different way. And this is the end of the binary rift. The dualism and dichotomy between subject (you) and object (the painting) decomposes in the forceful event of this encounter. There is just an immanent plane of pure sensation, which is held during the timeframe of the experience. The world, and yourself, come together to make sense. This is the sublime, aesthetic experience.

A powerful artwork's physical qualities are affective: they burst through the surface of their objective form to become a sensory experience within the viewer. When this happens, the dualism between the viewer's subjective reaction and the artwork's objective form disintegrates; this is achieved through the interface of the bodily affect that provides a connection and equator between them. In this way, the binary forms we saw through Plato and Descartes disintegrate through the vibration, rhythm, colour – the effect – of the artwork.



'Angel In Pieces' artwork created by Glen Greenhill © 2012

So we could now have found a way to resolve the philosophical and political problems that result from the reductive, discriminative logic of dualistic thinking. Art is able to create a liberal space for difference, where everyone can express and identify their individuality.

An artwork opens a way to understand oneself, and the world.
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What Modernism was

The Lawn Road Flats in Hampstead were built in 1933 as an experiment in modernist living. Significant both architecturally and socially they were also the first use of reinforced concrete in the UK

by Michael Lee

Isokon was formed in 1931 by Pritchard and Coates and it was envisioned that the company would make houses, flats, furniture and fittings designed by Coates. The 'Russian type of name'¹ was probably coined by him and derived from the term 'Isometric Unit Construction'.²

Bauhaus
The futuristic edifice was Wells Coates' first major work, inspired by constructivist architects Le Corbusier, Berthold Lubetkin and other European modernists including Walter Gropius, then director of the Bauhaus, the pre-eminent design school in Germany. Its monolithic structure was not only the first reinforced concrete apartment block in the UK but also the first in the truly modern style.

Flexible modular designs
Jack Pritchard was also employed by the Vanesta Plywood Company (established in England by the Estonian company, Luterma, renowned for high-quality plywood manufacture). At this time they were promoting a 'furniture for everyone'³ initiative which championed flexible, modular designs conforming to the 'existenzminimum'⁴ (minimal living) aesthetic. Consequently the Isokon building's interiors and furniture were designed for – and made from – this material.

Pritchard also established the Isokon Furniture Company with Gropius agreeing to become the Controller of Design. Pritchard left Vanesta to work on this new project but cannily continued as a consultant, thereby benefitting from special rates for materials and fabrication.

Professional intelligentsia
However, the Lawn Road flats building is remarkable not just for its use of new and innovative construction methods but also for the people who lived there. It was conceived to appeal to the young, single, professional intelligentsia as a place to live in a new, modern, minimal way unencumbered 'with permanent tangible possessions'.⁵ The building also attracted refugees from Nazi Germany and famous residents included Walter Gropius and Marcel Breuer, another Bauhaus émigré, the graphic artist Lazlo Moholy-Nagy along with writer

Agatha Christie – who remarked that the building reminded her of 'a giant liner which ought to have a couple of funnels'.⁶ In keeping with Le Corbusier's notion of a house being a 'machine à habiter' (a machine for living in) and central to the building's design ethos, was the creation of a communal kitchen. In 1937 this was converted into a salon/restaurant designed by Marcel Breuer – called the Isobar – which also served as a club for residents. The Isobar was frequented by artists, architects, designers, writers, critics and other modern thinkers. It provided reasonably-priced meals, that were also regarded as being ahead of their time, prepared by chef Philip Harben – who later became the world's first TV chef. Among the many visitors and regulars at the Isobar were leading contemporary artists Henry Moore, Ben Nicholson, Barbara Hepworth and Piet Mondrian, all of whom lived and worked close by, along with the author and subsequent

editor of *The Good Food Guide*, Raymond Postgate.

There was also a darker side to the Isokon experiment which, ironically, had a Russian connection. Some of the most dangerous Soviet undercover agents operating against Britain were residents: Arnold Deutsch, the controller of the Cambridge Five (Burgess, Philby, Maclean, Blunt and 'fifth man' Cairncross); photographer Edith Tudor-Hart, who had studied at

the Bauhaus under Gropius, and Melita Norwood, who was the longest-serving Soviet spy in British espionage history.

¹ Grieco, Anastas. *Isokon: For Ease, For Ever* (London: Isokon Plus, 2004), 5.

² Woodham, Jonathan. *A Dictionary of Modern Design: Lutema* (Oxford University Press, 2005) <<http://www.answers.com/topic/lutema>> (accessed 4 February 2014).

³ Hilde Heynen, *Architecture and modernity: a critique* (US 2000), 16.

⁴ Allinson, Kenneth. *Architects and Architecture of London* (Oxford: Elsevier Ltd, 2008), 318.

⁵ Picture credit: https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Isokon_Building_Hampstead_2005.jpg
Creative Commons Generic License/Justin Cormack



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The Isokon building in Lawn Road, Hampstead, London, is a concrete block of 34 flats. They were built between 1933 and 1934 as an experiment in communal living. Most of the flats had very small kitchens as there was a large communal kitchen for the preparation of meals, connected to the residential floors via a dumb waiter. Services, including laundry and shoe-shining, were provided on site.

Items you must acquire or actions you must take:

- 
 1. To transform one of history's greatest disasters into one of my greatest opportunities
 2. Pork-eating and other defilements
 3. To keep my morning freshness all day
 4. A ceiling painted by a descendant of Michelangelo
 5. To become involved in a number of private placements
 6. To trouser the uneducated rouble
 7. Special creams, condoms or gadgets
 8. To learn how to last longer in bed and how this will actually end up saving me money (a weekly saving that will last a lifetime)
 9. A real girl with a real medallion
 10. To get myself into the best prison possible, for just a mere \$10,000 extra in debt
 11. Nina the cleaner
 12. Tanya's cognitive enhancers
 13. To skew anew
 14. Something from the bucket under the table
 15. To rustle up a serviceable homage
 16. An immaculate execution (not mine)
 17. Five Macdonald's vouchers, a Campaign for Real Ale membership form, a handwritten letter about obscure goalkeepers, and a plastic badge
 18. Contemplative pivoting
 19. Contemptuous pivoting
 20. Thoughts that pollute
 21. To be kissed commemoratively by Elizabeth Taylor
 22. The massive grandeur of marble and the radiant smoothness of flesh
 23. Nice udders, nice lines
 24. Meredith taking the position quite willingly and quite peaceably at 10 o'clock
 25. At least a decent misfire
 26. A woman worth 20 oxen
 27. Twenty oxen
 28. Oxtail soup
 29. Delicate girly detailing
 30. To Kill Inflammation In One Easy Step
 31. More plush comfort
 32. Second wife Tracey
 33. A girl to make my radar go from 'bleep' to 'blip-blip-blip'
 34. Royal savouries
 35. To be pulled off the rocks and rolled upright
 36. La Bierra Premium Numero Uno Autentica Originali Naturali Superiore Tialzione e Naturalita
 37. Comfortable buffers
 38. To be brutal, overwhelming and inexcusable
 39. A whopping 0.3% in June alone
 40. Chicanery of magnitude
 41. Cash, credit and connivance
 42. An accounting device
 43. To ejaculate quickly to ensure I complete the sex act before the female escapes
 44. Janet, Jane or Jana in January



Images: Weather map illustration by Lorna Collins. Lord's Cricket Ground weather vane photograph used under Creative Commons Generic License provided by Robert Jones https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Lord%27s_weathervane.jpg. 'Love' and 'Hate' photographs by Glenn Greenhill © 2015



A chance to pit your wits against The Dull's professional meteorology team and trained Weathergirl Wendy

To start, make your prediction by licking your finger (or Wendy's) and choose from the list below.

Tomorrow's weather will be

- Sunny
 - Warm with summer spells
 - A cool start with developing sunny periods later
 - Other

Now look right (and stand on your head) to see your score!



ANSWER: Tomorrow's weather will commence with morning drizzle leading to patchy showers followed by intermittent conditions of intermission rain interspersed with outbreaks of rain giving way to periods of rain with downpours developing. Rain continuing tomorrow with scattered showers likely on Saturday and spells of rain on Sunday. You have scored: 0.000001 Dullcoins

1. A pork-dripping Christmas tree
 2. A strict and intrusive test
 3. A five-year non-trivial shrinkage
 4. Panicked easing
 5. Yet another gut-wrenching decline
 6. Moderate to severe collapse
 7. Parasites more than 60 feet long
 8. 18,000 squid beaks in my belly
 9. To be left outside the hospital with a gun wound
 10. A biot within earshot
 11. To play host to an entire ecosystem, including cyanobacteria, insects and other creatures that live in my sticky green fur
 12. To be caught introducing my god-daughters to the art of 'topping and tailing'
 13. A number of troubling modifications
 14. Another troubling observation
 15. No shortages of uncertainty
 16. A real stench in my snuffler
 17. To be dangled and strangled
 18. Runaway electron breakdown
 19. A klaps and a klammy
 20. Only a modicum of fanfare
 21. An ominous drift
 22. Increased tightness in the physicals
 23. To be in for Jim Sinclair's long talked about 'spiritual experience'
 24. Things getting very disorderly on the downside
 25. A blood-in-the-streets bottom
 26. Laceration hazard
 27. An even nastier twist
 28. The unglamorous truth
 29. The application of Law No. 4
 30. A slithering pit of leeches
 31. Two larger sources of leakage
 32. My 2% fall becoming a 5% plunge and then an 8% nosedive
 33. To be worryingly skewed
 34. An epic leaker
 35. Paranoia, confirmed by history
 36. A sheepskin mug
 37. Degrado senza sosta
 38. Uncomfortable rigour
 39. To be gunned down in my palace (so much for my goons)
 40. Warts and all
 41. More worrisome indicators
 42. An unsettled afternoon in the Trossachs
 43. Excessive shrink factors
 44. Varying shrink factors
 45. Just another hole in Oklahoma
 46. To be crumpled out of my current shape
 47. To see it through to the finish, whatever personal agony might be involved
 48. No recourse to lavish public funds
 49. Nothing else to distract the public from the ugly reality they find themselves in
 50. A rusting underside
 51. A travesty of a mockery of a sham
 52. A large suitcase full of evidence
 53. Contentious tweaks
 54. Something that is less obvious, but utterly catastrophic
 55. Exacerbated physical tightness
 56. To be pulled off the rocks and rolled upright and towed away for scrap
 57. A different availability of aptitude at the high end
 58. To be severely dischortled
 59. Clearly something in the background that even the pessimists don't fully understand yet
 60. No escaping the arithmetic
 61. Terrible trouble in my marginals
 62. The night-time work of a dedicated prankster
 63. To lose my oily grip on Europe
 64. The Scary Future Facing Way Too Many Men
 65. A horrible one for me to grasp
 66. To be defanged and defunded
 67. Troubles of the trunk
 68. Not a squeak from Sonya
 69. Quite a disturbing surprise
 70. To be unaware and be unaware of being unaware
 71. The untidy realities of economic life
 72. The untidy realities of uneconomic life
 73. A state of emergency in the regions



by Lep

You have been warned! Forward ongoing caution strongly advised.

the **dull**



You have been warned! Forward ongoing caution strongly advised.

the dull

by Lorna Collins

III INTRODUCTION

Poetry cornered

Funerary
rites
observed
with
string
in tail

dull
pulls the skull
AWOL until
its hull
of will
is tolled
and grills
the fool
who rills,
becomes a ghoul,
is culled
and schooled
th gruellng rules
and drooling stool
until the muse
is ruse for news
o cruise the blues,
refuse the bruise,
review those dues
that spew accrues
and lose the fuse
(n choosing booze).

By now the screws
enthuse and rouse
comprising vows
where taos espouse
and browse the rows
with loudened clouds.

Arising growls
douse the fool
who chooses null
when tries to bow
the dull carouse
the wows
of dozing droll.

Tax disc and charger
Snaffled, with a
Muffled snuffle

As a mountain
of steel
Makes its way
to the sea

From cool straight lines to warm folding curves

Lasdun's building for the Royal College of Physicians has all the qualities I look for in truly great design - intelligence, wit, boldness and a wonderful aesthetic

Text and photographs by Guy Lane

We started in caves. Well, not in caves. We didn't live inside them because they were cold, dark and damp. We probably lived in the mouth of them and used the caves for storage and ritual.



This was a time when man wasn't doing geometry.

After about 30,000 years the Egyptians were creating very large

triangles and shortly afterwards the Greeks had a field day with right angles, straight lines, and of course, columns.

Ever since, man has been extending, and perhaps been imprisoned by right angles because it has been the only way to build higher and higher.

The Royal College of Physicians is arguably the finest post-war building in London. It certainly continues the rectilinear tradition and it does so with great panache.

Designing for a gap in an elegant row of houses and apartments in a Regents Park terrace was the Pepsi Challenge of the day (in the 1960s). Sir Denys Lasdun rose to this



challenge and gives us a statement that is sublime, sophisticated, outrageously modern, and of enduring value. And not a single curve in sight!

One of the things I admire about Lasdun's approach is that he didn't try to imitate the Georgian terraces on each side of the plot. I guess if Prince Charles had designed it, it would have been a copy of a pastiche of a neo-Classical temple.

Not Sir Denys. He created something outrageously different, but in a such a way that it conveys the spirit and grandeur of the neighbouring vernacular.

As St Paul wrote 'the letter kills, the spirit gives life'.

Most other architects would have focused on providing views of the park. Lasdun offers only two pairs of lancet windows. This is a rather obtuse statement. Perhaps he was more interested in the view of his building from the park, rather than the view of the park from his building.

Perhaps the most striking angularity is presented by the two slender square columns seeming to support the entire edifice. What a lot of right angles.

This article is sponsored by Barr Architects, Cambridge. www.barrarchitects.net

The new museum by Zaha Hadid is staggering, a wonderful example of elegance and beauty, the triumph of form and the perfect execution of an idea

Text and photographs by Guy Lane

Nowadays architects have many choices.

Do they want hard lines or soft curves? Do they want stuff on the outside (Richard Rogers) or stuff on the inside (Norman Foster)? Are they Catholic and exuberant or Protestant and dour? Female or male? Yin or yang?

Thanks to computers, modern

materials and building techniques, they can have boxes, pyramids or random-looking, fluid curves.

You can see a wonderful example of curves in Baku at the Heydar Aliyev Museum, designed by Zaha Hadid.

At first I thought it was a representation of an unmade bed or perhaps a giant coffee table



with a massive white drape thrown carelessly on top.

In fact it is based on President Aliyev's signature! Thanks to this idea, and his handwriting, Hadid has created an apparently random yet perfectly ordered and balanced space, inside and out.

The museum sits on a cleared hill and has great authority and

prominence. Waterfalls and gardens cascade down the front of the hill towards the town.

This unique building presents a world without straight lines, one without a beginning or an end. It's not trying to reach the sky and it's not trying to box people in. It creates a sense of freedom, light and energy.

In some ways it refers to Frank Lloyd Wright's Guggenheim Museum but rather than being a coil, it is more like a giant, pristine-white cavern flooded with air and light.

the dull



Images provided by Guy Lane © 2013



Images provided by Guy Lane © 2013

Los Angeles

I am on a platform above a desert. In the foreground, green astro-turf. In the distance, a slice of blue ocean, severed by a neon sign: PACIFIC SANDS MOTEL.

I am in Los Angeles. No. I am not 'in' Los Angeles. I am 'at' Los Angeles, for Los Angeles does not exist, it is a mirage meeting its own reflection, a hall of mirrors leading to the mountains and beyond. In fact, I am 'on' Los Angeles, floating, three metres above the ground, on stilts, in a room numbered 26: telephone, television, mirror, Formica, plastic cups, thick carpet. Large bed.

This is my sentence: to be 'in' Los Angeles, even though Los Angeles does not exist, even though nothing and no one is 'in' anything under this strange, blue canopy. I have come to work, but the work does not come to me. The work is a conundrum, a chain of telephone calls to organize a documentary on horror films for European public television. I am 'doing' a horror documentary and the horror documentary is 'doing' me. All I am really doing is trying to make myself understood over the telephone. Dylan Thomas called it 'the barrier of a common language.' I don't even call it a common language.

I call the Director's Guild and I get the names of the film directors needed for interview. I don't know the directors, I don't know their films. And I am producing a documentary on them. I have as little interest in the directors and their films as their agents have in me. I occasionally see their names advertised on the sides of buses and I imagine them doing what I am doing, living a life, glancing at a sunset, adjusting a smile in a tired mirror. To be perfectly honest, I have a fear of horror films. They frighten me.

I am being paid to be in, or on, or at, Los Angeles, but I have little idea what I am doing. I want to give the impression that the documentary is based on only one director, to increase my chances of organizing the gig and getting back to Paris, where everything is easy and explicable and naturally complex. I am not a good liar but lying seems easier here. If Los Angeles is a place, then it is built for the purpose of deception.

Are you interviewing any other directors?

No.

Why I am being paid to be in Los Angeles when I know I will spend all the money I earn while I am here? Because I am also writing a script with a German director about love and gangsters. I have no interest in films, in gangsters. And here, even love becomes an



Image courtesy of Photodisc provided for royalty free use.

I have come to work, but the work does not come to me. The work is a conundrum, a chain of telephone calls to organize a documentary on horror films for European public television.

I am 'doing' a horror documentary and the horror documentary is 'doing' me.

'Los Angeles' is one of 21 stories from the anthology 'The Real Illusion' by Simon Lane

abstraction, teasing me as I glance at the large bed.

I step out into the absurd blueness of this place, or collection of places. Why absurd? Because the blueness is predictable and when blueness is predictable you know something strange is going to happen. I walk down the pavement and throw my cigarette into the gutter. A pedestrian stares at me quizzically. Have I done something wrong? People pass by, on wheels, large wheels, small wheels, roller skates; they are larger than people in Europe and they have sun tans and short trousers and they look ahead into the blueness of a place robbed of time and of the free cycle of seasons. And I pass them, invisible, a sometime associate producer of European public television, sometime gangster-scriptwriter, who is actually just a poet trying to earn money to buy time to write when he knows he will spend all the money he earns in order to transform Los Angeles from an idea into a place of comfort.

Comfort? A drink. Lunch. I step into a restaurant a hundred metres from the PACIFIC SANDS MOTEL and I ask for a table. A young woman smiles at me broadly as if I were an old friend. She asks me how I am. I tell her. Then I ask her how she is.

Me?
Yes. You.
I'm fine.

She shows me to a table. Soon a young man with gelatine in his hair is standing beside me recounting a list of dishes with impossibly exotic ingredients. Almost immediately, I lose track of what he is saying, there is a lamb on a bed somewhere, something broiled or char broiled and a sauce of great complexity. Calabrian olives and Japanese seaweed and Hawaiian mushrooms compete for attention in a swirling, stirring monologue declaimed by the waiter with such conviction I am obliged to avert my eyes for fear of distracting him.

He must be an actor. Everyone is an actor here. Even the chef is an actor. He is Hamlet and the waiter is Rosencrantz. And I am producing a film which takes place in a restaurant in Santa Monica which will be a horror documentary combined with Hamlet in which Ophelia drowns in a lake of minestrone. *The strawberry grows underneath the nettle and wholesome berries thrive and ripen best neighbour'd by fruits of baser quality.*

What was the third one?
The lamb?
I don't know. That's why I'm asking. Excuse me?
I'll have the beef.
We don't have beef.

The lamb is fine.
Yes, it is fine. What would you like?
The lamb.
Fine.

Rosencrantz returns to Elsinore, which is the kitchen, and Guildenstern appears with a Bloody Mary, which has a stick of celery in it the size of a palm tree. I produce my notebook and begin to write of a love that makes my heart turn and become heavy, like a piece of luggage. I look at the nametag. Yes. It is me. Why do I always pack so much and always what I don't need? And why is my heart so heavy? Can I not simply unpack it, push it under the bed, which teases me, travel light just for one, empty moment? Lunch. Dinner. Lunch. Dinner. Bloody Mary. Lamb. Bloody Mary. Palm tree. I return to the restaurant which is an auditioning suite for a series of films without end in which everyone acts, even the audience.

After a week, I have become an automaton. I have already used up my expense account in telephone bills calling friends and family in Europe and New York, trying to describe a place that may or may not exist.

Can I help you? the young woman asks.
I'd like a table.
Certainly, sir.

When I came here for the first time, you treated me like an old friend. Now that I am a regular, you treat me like a stranger.
Would you like to sit inside? Or on the terrace?
I'd like to sit where I sat last time. Where I can smoke cigarettes. Come with me.

One night there is an invitation to meet 'Arnold.' It is a 'cigar evening.' What is a 'cigar evening?' People smoke cigars, explains the man who invited me to work in Los Angeles who is German and a man of energy and conviction whom I shall call Hans.

What do we do about dinner? You get dinner, explains Hans. So it's a dinner. No. It's a 'cigar evening.'

A limousine picks me up at the motel. We arrive at a restaurant, which belongs to Arnold, who is a large man from the Austrian mountains who once turned his body into a photograph. This is a private dinner for those lucky enough to be invited who wish to be in the same room as Arnold and smoke cigars. I take my place at a table. A waitress who could be Ophelia appears with plates of lettuce and I drink a whisky.

Another waitress, Ophelia No. 2, hands out packets of cigars and everyone opens up the packets and lights them. There are no Cuban cigars, only Dominican cigars, and soon the room is filled with the

smoke of a faraway country, rising in the air of a restaurant that is not only staffed by actors but also owned by one.

The man opposite me is a film director. He is trying to smoke his cigar. His neighbour explains that he should cut it first in order to let the air through. I've never smoked a cigar before, he says.

Everyone, whether they like cigars or not, is smoking. I calculate it will take at least another fifteen minutes before we start our meal. It occurs to me that people here do everything backwards. A stranger is greeted as a friend. And cigars are smoked before dinner. Will I be able to make love to Ophelia No. 2 and then ask her what her name is afterwards? As for Arnold, I eventually shake his hand and introduce myself.

He's smaller than I thought he would be, I tell Hans afterwards. That wasn't Arnold. That was one of his bodyguards.

So where was Arnold?
He didn't make it.
If he didn't make it, why were his bodyguards there?
They're always there.

He must be very important to have bodyguards watching over him even when he's not there.
Arnold is very important.
The next morning, I enter a bookshop. I have decided to take a break from the horror documentary and from the film script and read books instead. Chairs have been placed in rows at the back of the shop and people are sitting down and talking excitedly. A book signing is about to happen. On a poster I see the book advertised:

STOP BEING MEAN TO YOURSELF.
Underneath it is a subtitle:
A GUIDE TO SELF LOVE.
I am looking for the third volume of Lawrence Durrell's *Alexandria Quartet* and while I do so I glance at the audience. Presently, the author appears and stands before them. Questions are asked of her. I have now located *Mountolove* and I step towards the cash register. Does that mean I can be mean to other people?

The man at the cash register hands me the book and my change.
No. Not at all. Loving yourself is the first step to loving others.
I see.
Back at the motel I pour a large whiskey and read some Lawrence Durrell. 'A man is only an extension of the spirit of a place,' he writes. But if the spirit of a place is elusive or nonexistent, how do I go about extending myself? I see my body stretching like a shadow near sunset, extending towards a lost spirit and I realize that I have

become completely disorientated in this place of infinite blueness. I am truly floating now. Not even an awareness of the cardinal points is of use to me. Everyone is acting, I am a member of an audience which has been told how to behave at key moments in a drama without end and Los Angeles is falling slowly to my feet, an earthquake has come to claim it and I am slipping silently through a crack in the pavement.

There are no messages for me. There are never any messages for me. The man behind the bulletproof glass in reception is Chinese and speaks very little English. Each time I return to the motel, the same dialogue repeats itself.

Any calls?
Yes.

Who were they?
I don't know.

There is nothing I can do about it. There is nothing I can do about anything. I'm just existing on a platform above Los Angeles. The time moves slowly and I move slowly with it. I am becoming completely abstracted from myself, I am watching an English poet as he goes about the task of being in a place. I turn on the television. A young man is explaining how it was that his daughter was shot through the head by her friend. They were playing at the friend's house one day. The friend's mother had a boyfriend who was an FBI agent. He left his handgun on a table. The friend picked it up and the cartridge of bullets fell out onto the floor. She assumed the gun wasn't loaded but there was still a bullet in the chamber. When she picked it up and pulled the trigger as a joke it blew her friend's head off, so she didn't have a friend anymore, she just had a gun without any more bullets in it.

I turn off the television. The telephone rings. I am invited to a party. It is forty-five minutes away by car. But I don't have a car. I take a taxi. The driver does not know where he is going. He embarks on a monologue as he enters the freeway, a diatribe against pollution and automobiles.

All these cars. It's terrible. It's not good for the world.
Does Los Angeles have a spirit? I ask.

I don't know, he replies. I come from New York.
We turn off the freeway and drive through the hills. To the north, the city spreads like a map, its folds made indecipherable through a haze of smog and sunlight. Eventually, the driver finds his way and delivers me to the right address. When I get to the party, I am given a huge plastic beaker of Tequila Margarita. I stand beside the pool and look at everyone. After a while I meet a beautiful woman who tells me she

has made a documentary on Pier Paolo Pasolini. Another woman tells me she is producing a documentary for CNN on war photography that will have an audience of fifty million. I mention the Crimean War, the Franco-Prussian War and the video footage of American fighters in the Gulf.

How do you know all that? She asks.

I am thinking of Pasolini, that he was a poet and a soldier, which Philip Sydney said are the only things for a man to do. I can't imagine how it is that I know of things. What do I know, anyway? I drink the Margarita and the woman who invited me to the party tells me I can go home now.

Now?
Yes. Lisa can give you a ride.

OK.

My stay is coming to an end and Hans is to take me out for dinner. But he's working. I go for my final, solitary dinner in Los Angeles to the restaurant on the corner. Inside or outside?
Same table, please.

I drink too much. I go to a bar and start talking to a young woman who turns out to be the barman's girlfriend. Then I go to a pool hall. I approach a man and ask him if he would like to play eight ball. I'll beat you, he says. One handed. I beat him. He racks up another game. Then he beats me. He seems happier. I return to the motel and pack. The next morning, I walk down the street to buy a coffee. Over the Hollywood Hills, I see a huge white circle in the sky. It is a vapour trail from an aeroplane. What could it mean? The aeroplane moves into another part of the sky and describes an S. I step into the café and buy a newspaper. Then I take a seat outside. In the newspaper is an article about a young man on death row who murdered his lover, cut up the body and threw it into the East River. I thought I was in a Roger Corman film, he says at the end of the article. As I return to the motel I see that the S is not an S at all, but a 5. Hans comes to pick me up. Ready? he says. Yes. Hans, why has a plane made a 'fifty' in the sky? It's Arnold's birthday. I see. We shake hands at the airport and I give Hans the article from the newspaper. Here's your documentary, Hans. A murderer who thinks he's an actor in a horror film. What could possibly beat that? I don't know, Simon. An actor who turns his birthday into a smoke ring?

Simon Lane
Paris, 1997

the dull

A load of tripe in Istanbul

Text and photographs by Kevin Gould

Seasoned food consultant and food and travel writer for The Guardian

Istanbul is the New York of the Near East. Where NY's penicillin is chicken noodle soup, Istanbul soothes, nourishes and heals herself on tripe. 24-hour neighbourhood Iskembe (say it like this - 'ishkembeh') salons serve tripe soup and kelle paca ('kelleh pachah') - a broth made of roasted sheep head and boiled sheep trotters simmered in juicy tripe stock.

You eat these soups when you're cold or sick, hot and happy, drunk (especially) or horribly hungover, for iskembe is a single cure for all human ills, especially those that are self-inflicted

Marbled to tarnished
Iskembe salons vary in style from the marbled to the tarnished, from designer chic to down-at-heel. To discover a good salon, you ask any taximan or dolmus driver. I have favourites all over Istanbul; in the Old City they are sanctuaries where tourist guides disappear to recover from a day of inane questions; on the Asian side where old boys in flat caps suck soft soup through what

used to be their teeth; in the New City, bravely holding back the twin

two of garlic. Skim the pale fat that rises to the top. Take the tripe from



tides of trends and gentrification, for iskembe transcends class, gender, and money.

Drain and repeat
The recipe varies little. You make a rolling stock of beef bones, butcher's fatty spoil and tripe bits flavoured with salt and pepper and a nub or

large postage stamps. Have ready a bowl of glistening stock fat, one of pinkish wine vinegar flavoured with rough-chopped garlic, another of beaten egg yolks. Refresh a spoon of rumen and one of the grey-ish honeycomb in a bowl of very hot stock. Drain and repeat. Stir in a dribble of stock fat, a spoon or two of pungent vinegar, and another of the beaten egg, to thicken the soup a little.

Red pepper flakes

For kelle paca, or paca soup, you add a spoon of roasted sheep's head whose meat has been cut into dice the size of small fingernails, and/or the same of long-boiled shredded sheep's trotter - with the nails removed, of course. Some chefs add to either soup a sprinkle of the hot isot red pepper flakes introduced to Istanbul in the last generation by Mesopotamian migrants. Others do not, for iskembe resists fashion.

Prim dignity

In the New City, my favourite iskembe salon is behind thrusting Taksim Square, on Tarlabasi

Boulevard, the screaming, gritty highway that bisects Beyoglu and splits the latte drinkers from the luck-lorn. It is called Lale-Tulip - and maintains a demanour of prim dignity. There's a small taxi stand and dolmus terminus outside. Inside was a representative iskembe constituency of nostalgic millionaires with bulging shirt

Wake up call? Scrambled eggs with chili Mumbai style

INGREDIENTS:

2 or 3 large eggs.

1 small chunk of butter, ideally unsalted.

1 fresh, medium heat, medium size, green chili.

A generous splash of semi-skimmed milk.

A white bloomer loaf.

Black pepper.

You'll also need a non-stick pan and wooden spoon.



METHOD:

Melt the butter in the pan on a low heat.

Pop two slices of bloomer into the toaster or under the grill

Crack the eggs into a mixing jug and add a splash of milk about enough for a white coffee. Toss the chili in the butter.

Using a pair of scissors, snip the chili over the pan and gently fry it in the butter. Remember, the closer you get to the stalk the hotter it gets.

(Note: Using scissors makes it easy to avoid getting chili juice on your fingers and keeps your eyes safe.)

Lightly beat the milk into the eggs with a fork to get an even mix of milk, egg white and yolk.

Pour the mix into the pan and stir to get an even distribution of chili pieces - agitate gently with the wooden spoon keeping it fluffy and moist.

Serve with or on white, thick cut buttered toast, cut from a bakery made farmhouse bloomer, a twist of black pepper and a big mug of tea.

Image and recipe provided by Glenn Greenhill © 2013



Image provided by Kevin Gould © 2013

'The Correct Manner'

I am standing in a pub in Mayfair. The pub is a place where people exchange stories and this one proves no exception to the rule.

The barman is talking to me as he pours me a drink.

"The tears of a certain kind of seal may serve as an aphrodisiac."

A wealthy romantic kept several such seals in a pool in his house in Avenue Road.

In order to make the seals cry, his butler would tempt them with copious amounts of fish and then feverishly dice onions under their noses.

He would then catch the tears in a bowl and place them on a silver salver, carry them into the kitchen and pour the tears into a decanter, depositing the latter onto a small table in his master's bedroom."

"Strange tale, barman", I suggest, taking a sip from my drink.

"Oh, it's not a tale, sir. You see, it was my job to collect the tears, as it is now."



"The tears of a certain kind of seal may serve as an aphrodisiac..."

Illustration by Tunga. www.tungaoficial.com.br

Excerpt from:
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by Simon Lane
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and available at
amazon.com

the dull

Between still life and narrative painting

Paintings and text by John Clark



In the studio tumults of anxious actors, churning in unruly masses, butt up against barely articulated figures chiselled from the dark. Implausible, rumbustious action meets monolithic stillness.

The paintings pull at the thread of pictorial possibility, testing its strength at a time and in a place where painting has been reduced to either asset or consolation, investment or trinket, consumed and often produced by those who risk nothing in doing so.

But the work does not aim to unsettle and has little in common with the now familiar questioning of institutionalised art and its aesthetics. It does not seek to dismantle assumptions.

It makes use of them. It plays with them and in doing so paintings emerge that are not just pretty but which support thought. The experience at their heart is not rooted in art but is re-invented through it.



So the figures stand and fall in work that occupies a space somewhere between still life and traditional narrative painting.

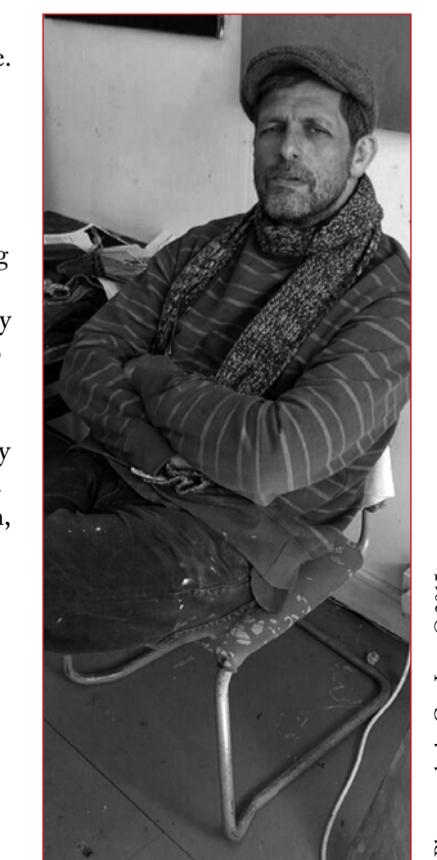
It is as ambivalent in its meaning as it is crisp in its aesthetic. You can track its progress on my website www.leadwhite.co.uk and if you'd like to visit my studio you can reach me at: garaiburu@gmail.com

For 15 years I worked in the games industry, most recently as Art Director at Sony Cambridge. Following more than a decade in which I worked exclusively and enthusiastically with the computer, I began to paint again in 2010. It's a return that is in large part explained by a growing feeling that, for all its utility and power, the computer is limited by the very qualities that make it so exciting.

In the time since returning to my own work fulltime I've exhibited in New York, London, Stockholm, Bristol and Cambridge. In addition to these exhibitions, other open shows, and art fairs, I was also featured in a BBC2 Arts Programme 'Show Me The Monet', and the Guardian, which featured an interview 'From Killzone to Canvas'.

Currently I'm undertaking a

number of commissions and developing a new series of paintings that builds on the work shown here.



Photograph by Guy Lane © 2015

1890-1910 and 1990-2010: a tale of two epochs

Economic change, movement of peoples and great technological advances characterise these two periods. But how did cultural activity shape up? That is the question. A little more than a century ago intellectual and creative activity was at peak... literature, painting, sculpture, design. A century later and it's gone to pot. Let us examine.

by Guy Lane

In the pre-marketing world of the late nineteenth century artists, writers and designers were exploring new ways of working based on their recognition that they needed to have a craft and that they couldn't bypass hard work. They were continuing a tradition of inspiration and perspiration and had as a goal the pursuit of truth and beauty, those two words celebrated by Keats.

Instant gratification
Fast forward a hundred years and we have the farce of conceptual art, the over-promoted Young British Artists and the comical workings of an art market that contains the systematic collusion of artists, critics, dealers, collectors and curators. We also have an internet generation that demands instant gratification from data and believes that easy and speedy data transfer represents knowledge.

A wonderful flowering
1890-1915 witnessed a wonderful flowering of great art in parallel with technological advances. The impressionists were in full flow and new waves of vorticism (and the incomparable Wyndham Lewis), cubism and futurism were on their way. In fact Wyndham Lewis and his vorticists were arguably the most interesting art group of the twentieth century. Everything they did showed genuine creativity, invention and supreme talent, the three things that were generally lacking by the end of the century.

One of his number, Henri Gaudier-Brzeska, was recently celebrated at Kettle's Yard where there is a fine exhibition of his work. His paintings and sculptures are so refreshing, so original and so inspired. Tragically he died aged 23 in the First World War in 1915.

Am I getting carried away yet? Well, you get my point. It was all going on.

Recent times
So why is it that 1990-2010 ended up being the Age of Unenlightenment? Or is it that



Wyndham Lewis photographed by George Charles Beresford 1913.

The nineteenth century novel, that ideal format for social and psychological enquiry, was alive and well. Great examples of how this genre was being further developed and enriched are Joseph Conrad's 'Heart of Darkness' and Jack London's 'Martin Eden'.

Clearly it was not just a time for British artists and writers. Conrad was originally Polish (amazing that he wrote so well in English); Jack London was out in California producing his blockbuster 'pulp fiction' which in actual fact was, and is, classic literature. And Zola was still working - 'La Bete Humaine' was published in 1890.

Emile Zola provided us with an extraordinary range of engaging and poetic literature. Balzac's vast oeuvre tended to always centre around Paris society but Zola chose diverse subject matter, characters, levels of society and locations. He wrote about the desperate conditions of coal miners in 'Germinal'; the squabbles of farmers and landowners in 'La Terre'; the supreme power of the definitive courtesan, 'Nana'; the sheer hell of alcoholism in 'L'Assomoir'; and the beast within us in 'La Bete Humaine'. I wonder if any writer again could cover such ground convincingly.

Meanwhile art nouveau was invented and Rennie Mackintosh's radical new style anticipated art deco. William Morris started the arts and crafts movement. Oscar Wilde was being Oscar. Poets dotted the landscape. The Paris expo presented the Tour Eiffel. Whistler and Sergeant were producing wonderful paintings, portraits and otherwise.

Thomas Hardy, one of our greatest novelists, was in his prime and produced, among other titles, 'Jude the Obscure', a typically lyrical yet sad tale of naïve, good-natured Jude frustrated by female manipulation.

To make matters rather worse, in our epoch we have a very efficient marketing and distribution system that actually exports our content to other places. Rather like all those shipping containers: they bring us TVs from Asia and to avoid them going back empty we fill them with scrap metal. So too with our art recycling. We send Hirst's spot paintings to museums abroad. I guess people around the world think they are good because they are expensive.

Robert Hughes, probably the best

art critic of recent times, did an amusing interview with an über-wealthy collector of Warhols in New York. Hughes asked the chap why he had so many Warhols. He said he thought Warhol was a genius or some such. Hughes looked rather puzzled, and rightly so. I think we can say with confidence that whatever he was, Warhol was not a genius!

In recent times, depending of course on your point of view, we have witnessed some cultural delights including Coen Brothers' and Tarantino's movies, the first 'Breaking Bad' series, 'The Office', Norman Foster's work and most of the operas staged at Covent Garden. And I am sure there must be plenty of good artists around and about. But I never seem to come across them.

Technology and convenience
Perhaps part of the malaise is that our era promises so much and provides so much technology and convenience, so much PR (remember 'Cool Britannia'!!) and branding (everyone's a brand now, not just the Beckhams), that producers of content feel overly-empowered.

Clip art and parody
All you need now is a 'concept' (or preferably someone else's), a little bit of time and effort, and passion for insincerity and pastiche, and hey presto, the world is at your feet. It's a period of laziness, clip art and parody.

It is not helped by the institutional desire to be politically correct and get everyone onside by dumbing down. Good idea to be inclusive of course (Shakespeare and Verdi managed it) but surely not at the expense of truth and beauty!

Tony Blair certainly did a good job in promoting insincerity with his New Labour initiative. He won three elections, the last one actually after the Iraq war fiasco had started. I never managed to work that one out. He was a 'papier mache mephistopholes' (I borrow this descriptor from Joseph Conrad).

Of human bondage?
Or maybe I should be having a rant

about Apple products and social media. Apple's brilliant marketing makes people feel it is so cool to use iPhones, iPads, Mac laptops, et al. But 24/7 bondage to screens doesn't seem to provide cultural inspiration. These devices provide more of a basis for passivity or in the case of content creation, a kind of lick-and-stick, cut-and-paste assembly and editing process, often with very uninspiring results.

Talent and tradecraft
The opposite was the case during the previous turn of century. Back then people had their own, genuinely new ideas, passion, sincerity, and above all, talent and tradecraft. When Whistler packed his watercolours and went round Venice the result was....great watercolours! Picasso and Matisse were kicking off.

Need I mention Van Gogh, the Rembrandt of the age, a man who single-handedly presents the defining case for inspiration, genius and glorious unique talent! I am slightly cheating here because Van Gogh died in 1890, but you get the idea.

Embarrassing
Now we have the phenomenon of social media, a process by which people upload embarrassing information about themselves and generate a vast circle of friends'. This incessant self-promotion and personality brand management (or mismanagement) results in a false virtual society where there is no substance, just bits of data. I should leave it to Jeremy Clarkson, whose every movement and rant brilliantly encapsulates the spirit of our age and celebrates the end of culture. Well done Jeremy, I mean, Clarkson.

But perhaps I should sign off with Stephen Bayley from 'Spectator' (16 May 2015) '...at some point in the last 50 years, art ceased, on the whole, to be either beautiful or interesting'.

So, it's not just me.

the dull

Triumphant growl

Text and photographs by Alex Hirschfeld

Alex is the owner of two, virtually identical Triumph Stags



The Triumph Stag is one of my favourite cars of all time. I am in my fifties, so I have already had my own mid-life-crisis. I've changed career and given the pretty ex-wives their marching orders, so the only thing left to do is to sit in one of my beautiful convertible Stags, remove the hard top and listen to the awesome engine noise.

It's somewhere between a rumble and a rasp which just gets better and better as the car picks up speed. It is unmistakably a triumphant grunt.

Undigested petroleum

If you sniff the air while the Stag is idling, you get a potent whiff of raw, undigested petrol - a heady scent that modern exhaust systems and catalytic converters have entirely banished.

Cast-iron and aluminium

The engine: it's the Triumph 90° V8 with five-bearing, cast-iron block and aluminium alloy cylinder heads with overhead valves. One overhead camshaft per cylinder bank. Capacity 2997cc (182.9cu in). My 1977 red stag growls, while its older brother, a 1976 white stag (after a recent engine rebuild) rumbles and gurgles.



Italian design

So these are the ingredients: A silky smooth Triumph V8 engine and the fact that there is just about room for four passengers come rain or shine. The Stag is my favourite V8 noise. No radio is needed.

Booming baritone growl

Stags have performance and they are comparatively rare. The gorgeous Italian design is by Giovanni Michelotti, who defined those long, elegant, tapering lines in the 1960s. The design, a strong and refined GT,

was sensationally advanced for a grand touring sports convertible of its era. In the right hands it is, both simple and relatively easy to maintain. The superb, dateless styling boasts a wonderful V8 soundtrack with impressive amounts of performance. Turn off the radio and listen to the purr of the V8 engine, then as the revs increase and the wind blows through your hair the 'grunt' from the exhaust is wonderful and triumphant. This is a real British sports car. The Stag's stylish presence and design fills you with a warm feeling of satisfaction.

Overdrive and power steering
My youngest Triumph Stag V8 is manual with overdrive and power steering. This Triumph Stag is one of the last ever made in 1977 and still with the original Triumph engine (that really matters!). The sweet V8 growl, always turns heads, especially when cruising at 35mph in second gear, the engine running at about 3000rpm. The sound of the engine and exhaust is glorious.

Un-deadened sensations

The V8 rumbles, has looks to die for and is a real pleasure to drive. Driving the Stag makes you aware of the extent to which modern cars cosset us, deadening all the sensations involved in driving and insulating us from the experience of the road. The Stag's narrow steering wheel and its power-assisted rack-and-pinion steering communicate every contour of the road surface, while the Stag's independent front and rear suspension produce a splendid ride and an exhilarating sensation.

A rare beast: a vintage Triumph Stag.

This testament to 1970s typography is sadly no longer an open book.

The fabulous letters, along with extra-ordinarily ugly multi-storey car park, were demolished last year.

It was built when Birmingham city centre was given over to cars, not people, 50 years ago.

The type and sign design expresses the mood of the time, exuberant and American in style.

Something of Starsky & Hutch struggles through.

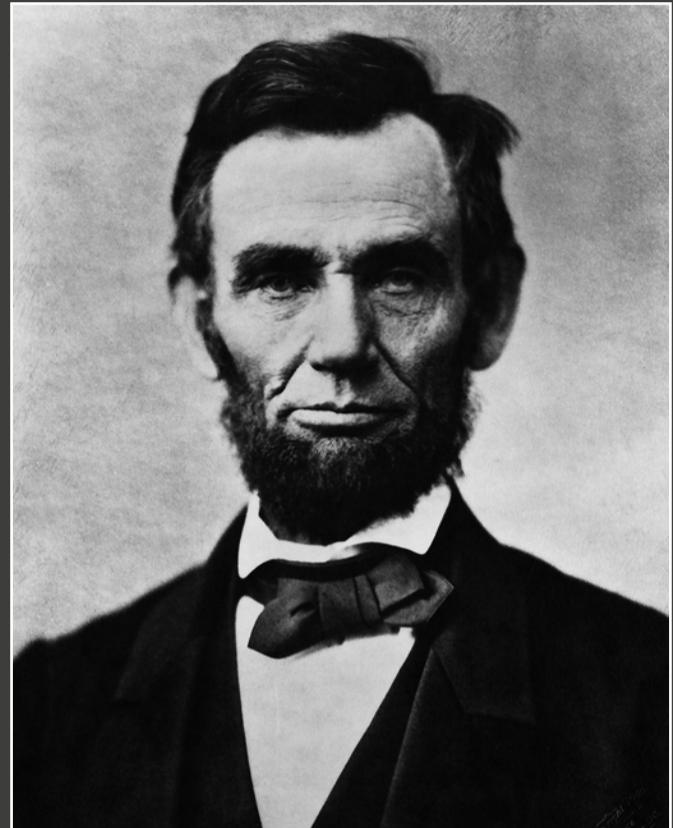
Text and photograph by Guy Lane

the dull



Photograph in the public domain, provided by United States Library of Congress via http://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Abraham_Lincoln_head_on_shoulders-photo-portrait.jpg

What has happened to America since Lincoln made this immortal speech?



Four score and seven years ago our fathers brought forth on this continent a new nation, conceived in liberty, and dedicated to the proposition that all men are created equal.

Now we are engaged in a great civil war, testing whether that nation, or any nation so conceived and so dedicated, can long endure.

We are met on a great battlefield of that war.

We have come to dedicate a portion of that field, as a final resting place for those who here gave their lives that that nation might live.

It is altogether fitting and proper that we should do this.

But, in a larger sense, we cannot dedicate, we cannot consecrate, we can not hallow this ground.

The brave men, living and dead, who struggled here, have consecrated it, far above our poor power to add or detract.

The world will little note, nor long remember what we say here, but it can never forget what they did here. It is for us the living, rather, to be dedicated to the unfinished work which they who fought here have thus far so nobly advanced.

It is rather for us to be here dedicated to the great task remaining before us — that from these honored dead we take increased devotion to that cause for which they gave the last full measure of devotion — that we here highly resolve that these dead shall not have died in vain — that this nation, under God, shall have a new birth of freedom — and that government of the people, by the people, for the people, shall not perish from the earth.

Abraham Lincoln
The Gettysburg Address
Thursday 19 November 1863

Photographs by Alex Hirschfeld © 2014 and Guy Lane © 2013

Swan lunk

I get a little annoyed at people constantly telling me to 'Get out more'. ('Where?' 'Anywhere but here!'). But just in case there could be something in this 'get out more' stuff, I did! With, I am sorry to say, disastrous results!

In order to distract myself from worrying, worrying, worrying about the coming financial apocalypse caused by the looming and inevitable collapse of government ('use me or else!') (inflate it away and steal it while they sleep!) currencies, I strolled down to my local park. And that's when trouble came gliding into view (TCGIV)!

The swan!
She (the swan) was good-looking enough as swans go, and, as you would expect, unless you've been reading too much 'popular economics', white in colour. Black swans being, in the normal way of things, limited to the backwaters of (a) Australia, and (b), the aforementioned economics, the well-named 'dismal science'! In which dismal definition, a 'black swan' is a metaphor for 'things you can't see coming because you don't know they even exist' (TYCSCBYDKTEE)! So – getting back to the white swan – I was somewhat surprised when it started talking to me, and explained that she was no ordinary swan, but was, in reality, a human princess! Some rich, hot, and, as if that

wasn't enough, royal babe who had, because of some evil spell stuff, become transformed into the said swan! Tragic for her, perhaps, but not so tragic for me! Because, having read up on all this fairytale stuff, I reckoned that my true love, nobly expressed, would 'do the trick' and break the spell so that she (the swan) could be swiftly restored to her natural, moneybags self (princess!). And things would finally be on the up for yours truly!

To think is to act. I speedily expressed my undying love to my swan princess, and told her I would return for her after dark, when our tryst could proceed free of prying eyes. And it did! The tryst! Proceed! In the dark park! All according to plan! Or so I thought!

That night!
I swore all the undying love stuff, then gave her a kiss to work the magic. But then, just as I was waiting for my swan to change back into something a little more princessy and creditworthy, it happened! The disaster!

Because here she was again! Twice! Here she came, even though I had thought she was already right beside me, gliding smoothly but no doubt paddling furiously underneath, and that's when I suddenly realised...
I HAD BEEN TRYSTING WITH THE WRONG SWAN!!
Looking more carefully, I now noticed with rising horror that the swan I had taken for my beloved was, in fact, though still beautiful, black! An alternate colouration I had somehow managed to miss in the darkness

and in my excitement! An impostor swan! I had been duped! Hoodwinked! Like a duck to the slaughter! Well, 'feathers flew', and my princess was not a happy princess! Apparently I had been trysting with her evil sister (the black swan)! And I hadn't noticed the difference! And, guess what, it was all my fault! And now I should 'get lost'! And so my dreams of a life on royal easy street, or 'golden pond' as it were, were shattered! Shattered!

And the point of this story is to warn all thinking entities on planet Earth (ATEOPE) that these black swan things

We have the looming but inevitable bankruptcy of America, the UK, the Eurozone, and Japan ('the West') flapping towards us!

are real! And sneaky! And that they can, as I have just related, shatter your dreams!

And there's worse!
Now that my mind is no longer befuddled by notions of swan-princess-powered escape from financial serfdom (SPPEFFS), I shake in terror as I perceive that we are standing up to our knees in a whole lake of the things! Black swans aplenty! Frantically paddling closer! A whole thundering herd! Closer! Closer!

Not only do we have war, and rumours of war, and rumours of money-grabbing governments

trying to foment wars in order to distract us from their multiple financial misdeeds, with major

gold! Because, after at least 20 years of brutally suppressing the gold price ('the canary in the gold mine')

It turns out that the foul and conniving central banks (FCCBs) have been suppressing the gold price by slyly and evilly selling their gold into the market in a sort of 'not 100 per cent honest' way, known as leasing! This 'leasing' in fact means lending it to evil, conspiratorial bullion banks (ECBBS), who then sell it to the highest bidder, while (wink, wink!) agreeing with the FCCBs that they can get their (people's) gold back whenever they want it! Which, they both further agree, is never! Hahahaha! The perfect crime! Meanwhile, the gold (at everyday-lo prices!) is being gobbled up by mysterious and not-particularly-inscrutable foreigners, such as China and Russia, who, coincidentally,

have been getting pretty miffed at having to support the death throes of the corrupt US empire by buying its worthless dollars every time they want to buy something from somebody else!

Two words, two lies

Needless to say, the cretins at the Federal Reserve ('two words, two lies!') and the cretins at their satellite Western banks see no problem with this gold 'leasing' outflow. Let the dumb foreigners get the gold – we'll stick to selling our promises! The only problem is that not everyone is fooled.

Not even other

(And also bearing in mind that if you asked your neighbour to return your lawn mower, and he said he'd bring it back in eight years, you might ask him to think again! Mucho pronto!).

dullard Western central banks! And why the delay? Because it isn't there! There ain't no gold in them thar vaults! It's gone! Dumped ('leased'), and gone! And, getting back to the theme of worse (and worst), there's still worse (and worst) to come!

Because this gold suppression swanfoolery doesn't even count as a black swan anymore, because we've seen it. The black swans to worry about are the ones we can't even imagine coming – as I, for one, can attest! Have, indeed, already attested! Holding you, with my glittering eye! So, keeping our minds for a moment off the beautiful white swans parading serenely in front of us (government-fiddled inflation figures falling! Recovery

strengthening! Government debt has just about less than doubled since 2010!) we might ponder on what could happen should everybody else decides they want their gold back. Or when enough people, or worse still, variously terrifying 'entities', try to cash in their gold futures (promises!), or cover their gold shorts, and discover that there isn't any gold to be had!

Not even a solitary nugget! Because the pond life have given away ('leased') your gold!

Stealing
And so Western currencies are now backed by nothing less than the full faith and credit of their lying, cheating, stealing, desperate, rapacious, money-printing central-bank-cahootted governments

(LCSDRMPCBCGs)! Hahahaha! At which point, you may be wondering exactly how you

File under:
economics, geopolitics,
conspiracy theory,
In The National
Interest,
psychotherapy

by JMR Pete

can protect yourself from these perfidious, paddling vampires that are even now on their way, and the financial devastation they will surely bring in their beaks. In which case you might consider that if something like, say, gold (and silver) has (have) been respected as a store (stores) of value for at least 40 (some say 60) centuries, by everyone except LCSDRMPCBCGs, then it (they) (gold) (and silver) may have seen quite a few foul (or fowl) things come and go, while remaining itself (themselves), unsullied! And there may still be a few beakloads of the good stuff left! Until, suddenly, there aren't!

Financial survival
And so, if you're feeling plucky today, and if you sensibly fill your beak, you may just possibly be able to contemplate looking forward to a life that, if not awash with banquets and palaces, may at least offer some prospects of financial survival and security. And plenty of tasty snacks and beer! And all with no need to marry some temperamental princess, avian or otherwise! Because when princesses get older they do, of course, turn into frogs! Perfidy fans may continue their explorations at:

gata.org/node/13185
DISCLAIMER
This article is for information and entertainment purposes only, and does not constitute financial advice.

the dull

WHEREAS; for his qualities of : Eveness, Consistency, Homogeniety, Continuity, Regularity, Constancy, Stability, Identity, Normalization, Accord, Agreement, Consensus, Unison, Conformity, Regimentation, Standardization, of his personal, mold pattern and stamp with Conveyor Belt Routine, Stereotypical Production Line Sameness, Drabness, and Monotonous Qualities of his Daily Round, Groove, or Rut, AND WHEREBY his character is Alike, of a Piece, Unbroken, Uninterupted, Rhythmic, Stable, Unchanging, Unvarying, Identical, Unisexual, Off-the Peg , Typecast , Same, Monotonous, Repetitive, Drab, Monochromatic, Self-Coloured, Undifferentiated, unrelieved and Monolithic, AND THEREFORE: because he strives to Make Uniform, Level, Even Off, Grade, Size, Regularize, Stabilize, Normalize, Standardize, Systematize, Bring into Line, Rehabilitate, Align, Drill and Regiment Uniformly, Across the Board, in Line, in Keeping with the Standards of Inertness, Inactivity, Langour, Sluggishness, Lethargy, Inertia, Torpor, Sloth, Lifelessness, Immobility, Stillness, Stagnating Hibernative Dormancy, Apathy, Passivity, Indolence, Laziness, Stolidity, Impassivity, Numbing, Nonchalant Fallowness , Paralytic, Apathetic Idleness, and owing to his Passive Indifference, demonstrated by his Stagnating Vegetitive Slumbering, Unreasonable Unintellectuality Mindless Moribund Vacuity, Obtuse Backwardness, General Cretinism, Duncelike Thickness, Cabbage-Headed Moronic, Bone headed, Slow on the Uptake, Slow-witted Dim Retardedness, Feeble Moronic Fatuous Empty-Headedness, Vacuous inanity Numb Sloth, Indolent Indifferentiation, Leaden Gray Drabness, Colorless Essence, Insipid Hoariness, Obtuse Disregard, Imperturbability, Robotic Stoicism, Comatose Imperviosity, Iceberg Detachment, Inured Deadly Lack of Resonance, Invulnerability, Muffled Indistinction, Blunt Tediosity, Composed Innocuity, Analgesic Cool-Headedness, Mitigating Wooliness, Middle of the Road Mildness, Bland Mollification, Torporous Moderation, Dilapidated Dissolution, Eroding Attention Span, Solemn, Ernest, Deadpan Straitlacedness, Feckless Slunkiness, Prosaicness, Uninspired, Unaccented, Vapid Ponderous Flatness, Jejeune Mawkish Schmalziness, Achromatic Pallor, Neutral Bloodless Pastiness, Sallow, Lacklustre Etiolation, Stifling Plonk, Cataleptic, Catatonic Unfeeling Stupefaction, Smooth Boundness Without Edge, Massive Tackiness, Clotted Soupiness, Dormant Langour, Even-Keeled Deadlock, Static Ballast, Self-Regulated Impartiality, Stalemated Equation, Co-extensive egalitarianism and Level Pegging, that his devotion to any and all mediocrities entitles him to be acknowledged by his peers;

THEREFORE:

Let all Dull Men know by these presents that whereas

SIMON LANE

demonstrates daily, hourly and minutely the qualities cited, he is a member in good standing of THE DULL MEN'S CLUB and is thereby entitled to all rights and privileges at the Paris Pindar/Hesiod Branch as well as all global affiliates.