

The Bean

The caffiene league cultural freesheet

Issue 1 February 2014

Hot, dark, steamy

Be aware that The Bean is produced by independent publishers of stimulating and refreshing insights for the consumption of intelligent and perceptive readers.

This publication is not to be distributed to, disclosed to, or relied upon, by knotheads, snots, or the differently humoured. Also, no dullards (with a small 'd').

Information and entertainment

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 Bean is a value-added publication of positive worth. This is proven by the observation 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Readers are requested to note these requirements and that the dress code will be enforced and facilities may be withdrawn in the event of non-adherence. Be warned that unmarked starbucks patrol this environment intent on jealously watching you read. You are welcome to take away this copy of The Bean. In the interests of health and safety please read this paper

using a minimum of irritating hand movements, folding, rustling; this is a periodical, not a petting zoo.

You are your own risk

While all reasonable care is taken to prevent the transmission of viruses, remember that paper is a part of the biological environment and may host irritating microfauna.

Alternative point of entry

The hypersensitive and those of a hypochondriac persuasion may prefer to visit us at: thebean.co

This is not a pornsite. We only publish tasteful nude erotica, or more likely something far more artistic.

You are cordially invited to contact us with your comments, queries, and suggestions. Please be aware that we monitor the presence of nuts in all incoming emails.

Sip-ability

You are encouraged to read this periodical carefully and to sip the culture along with the beverage of your personal preference. You must take all reasonable precautions not to burn the inside of your mind. Note that we are not able to provide you with any advice or recommendation as to what action or actions you should then take.

A disclaimer

If you are in any doubt as to the action or actions to be taken, you should immediately seek advice from your reading consultant, other independent adviser, or passing prodnose.

This smallprint (also known as 'mouseprint' or 'mouse****') does not constitute smallprint. We know you think you understand what you thought we wrote, but we're not sure you realise that what you read is not what we meant. This does not constitute advice.

Fair usage applies.

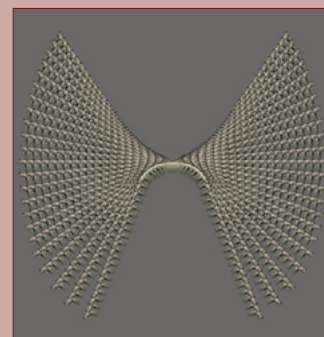
Inside:



Summoning the spirit of Frank Lloyd Wright in Azerbaijan on a magnificent scale, page 8



Animal attraction. Red on the outside and raunchy through and through page 4



Western philosophy insists that nothing makes sense. But making sense is a natural process of thought and a basic human need. What's the answer? page 2



This Gatsby got the green light but perhaps for all the wrong reasons. The changing taste of tragedy page 14

Cover image:

Coffee Cup Art&Poetry Winners

The best coffee is stimulating. The best coffee cup art is inspirational. Combine the two and you get something very special - the chance to win a great prize.

To see more visit www.thebean.co

The Dull thanks the following contributors to this edition:

Peter (Lep) Clarke, Lorna Collins, the late Simon Lane, Alex Hirschfeld, Kevin Gould, Tunga, Guy Lane and Glenn Glenn Greenhill

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 speak profoundly of what it is to be a human being.

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 effects that most often accompany commercial sensibilities and the maturity that comes with years of working for clients.) In a word, unjudged!

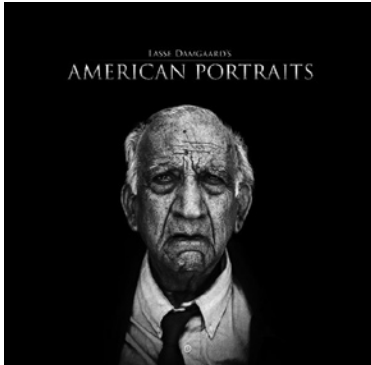
Enthusiasm

The photographer’s youthful energy and passionate enthusiasm seems to have transmitted itself into the subjects in a way that makes their likenesses literally leap off the page with life, vitality and human spirit Lasse – who works under the name Nullermanden – got his first camera – a small, digital compact Olympus – in 2005.

Fragments of real life

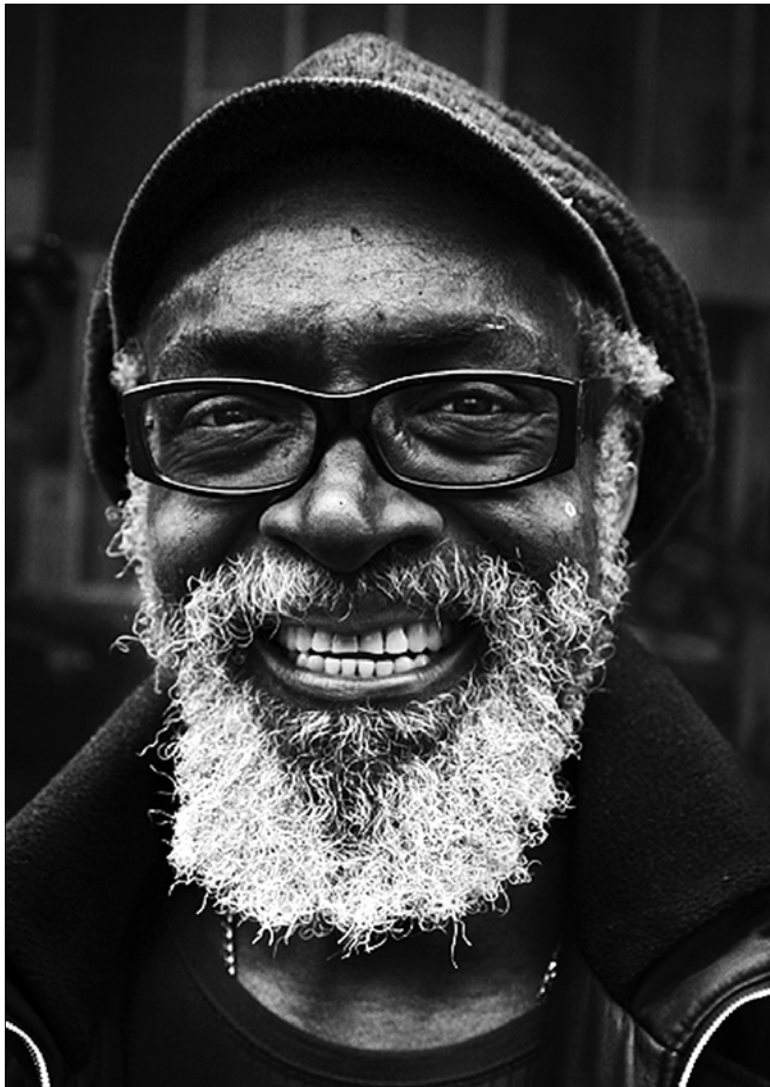
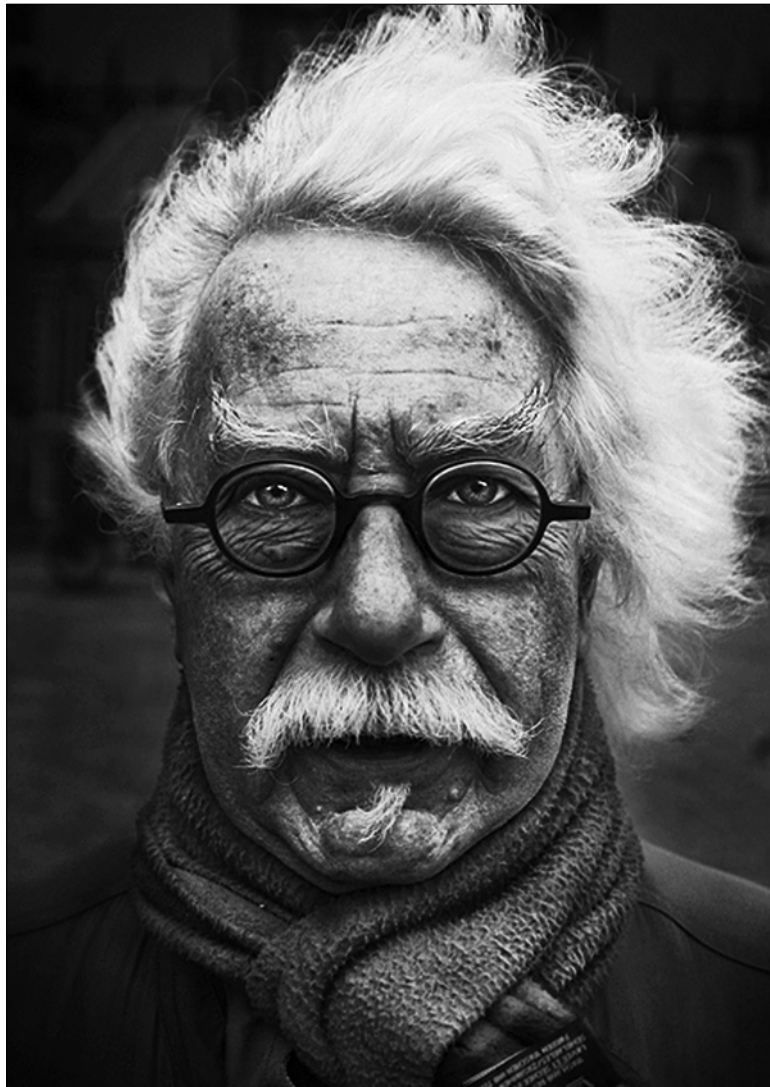
Half a year later he emptied his bank account, bought himself a Canon 350D – and started what has become an obsession; capturing the fragments of life most people seem to overlook.

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.



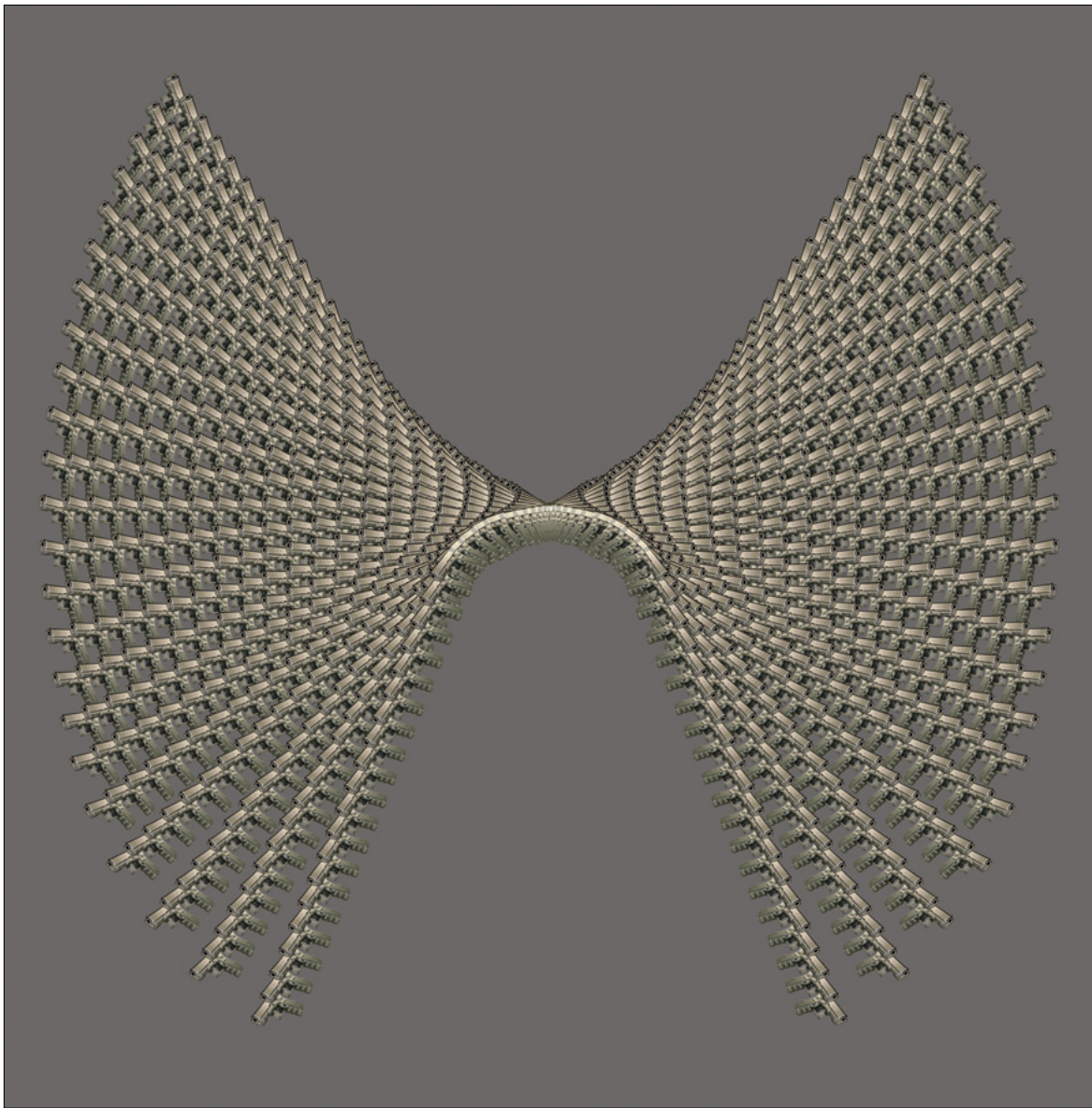
Lasse explains: “After going backpacking with my camera around both the United States and Europe, I’ve been working on a series of portraits of people on the street entitled ‘American Portraits’ and this will hopefully be followed by ‘European Portraits’.

To see more visit:
www.nullermanden.deviantart.com



How do aesthetics help us make sense of our lives?

by Lorna Collins, PhD



Above: ‘Angel In Pieces’. Putting guns to good use, this sculpture is formed from 1,250 decommissioned Walther handguns. It is claimed that the weapons were seized during a raid in Helmand Province.

This dualistic mode of thought, in response to the on going quest to ‘Know Thyself’, has fired philosophical debate ever since. Descartes, for one, was a huge proponent of the ‘Know thyself’ quest. His philosophical constabulary began (and continued) with doubt. The infamous cogito ergo sum became his deduced foundation for all knowledge – based entirely on doubt. He could not doubt that he was doubting. So if he was doubting he was thinking; and if he was thinking, he existed (in some shape or form). This is why the big problems with Making Sense begin with Cartesian dualism. It does not only echo Plato’s split between appearances and essences. Descartes’s systematic doubt also caused him to make a split between, on one hand, the body and the material world – which he could infer, but not ascertain for certain, since it remains possible to doubt whether perceptions of the material world are veridical – and, on the other, the mind or ‘soul’ (the

entity which is doing this doubting process).

Dual but not equal

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, soon 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.

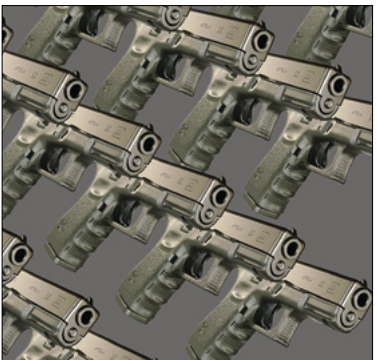
So it’s not surprising that Platonic/ Cartesian dualism has been the bull’s-eye target for most philosophers ever since. We can see this if we make the leap to Poststructuralist philosophy in post-1964 France. Gilles Deleuze was a French philosopher writing in response to Plato and Descartes (among others). In fact, he said he was trying to ‘overturn Platonism’. He wanted to demolish this systematic splitting into opposites, this bifurcation of reality, and so halt the problematic political consequences that this mode of thought creates.

Enter the aesthetic

Deleuze finds the solution to dialectic thinking in aesthetic experience – in the sensory experience of engaging with an artwork. Deleuze uses his concept of the ‘Figure’ (with a capital ‘F’) to consider how such an experience can provide a new way of thinking,

providing an alternative to Cartesian dualism of binary oppositions. This new thought takes place when you experience an artwork, such as a painting – Deleuze writes about 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.



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.
www.lornacollins.com

Items you must acquire or actions you must take:

- To transform one of history’s greatest disasters into one of my greatest opportunities
- Pork-eating and other defilements
- To keep my morning freshness all day
- A ceiling painted by a descendant of Michelangelo
- To become involved in a number of private placements
- To trouser the uneducated rouble
- Special creams, condoms or gadgets
- 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)
- A real girl with a real medallion
- To get myself into the best prison possible, for just a mere \$10,000 extra in debt
- Nina the cleaner
- Tanya’s cognitive enhancers
- To skew anew
- Something from the bucket under the table
- To rustle up a serviceable homage
- An immaculate execution (not mine)
- Five Macdonald’s vouchers, a Campaign for Real Ale membership form, a handwritten letter about obscure goalkeepers, and a plastic badge
- Contemplative pivoting
- Contemptuous pivoting
- Thoughts that pollute
- To be kissed commemoratively by Elizabeth Taylor
- The massive grandeur of marble and the radiant smoothness of flesh
- Nice udders, nice lines
- Meredith taking the position quite willingly and quite peaceably at 10 o’clock
- At least a decent misfire
- A woman worth 20 oxen



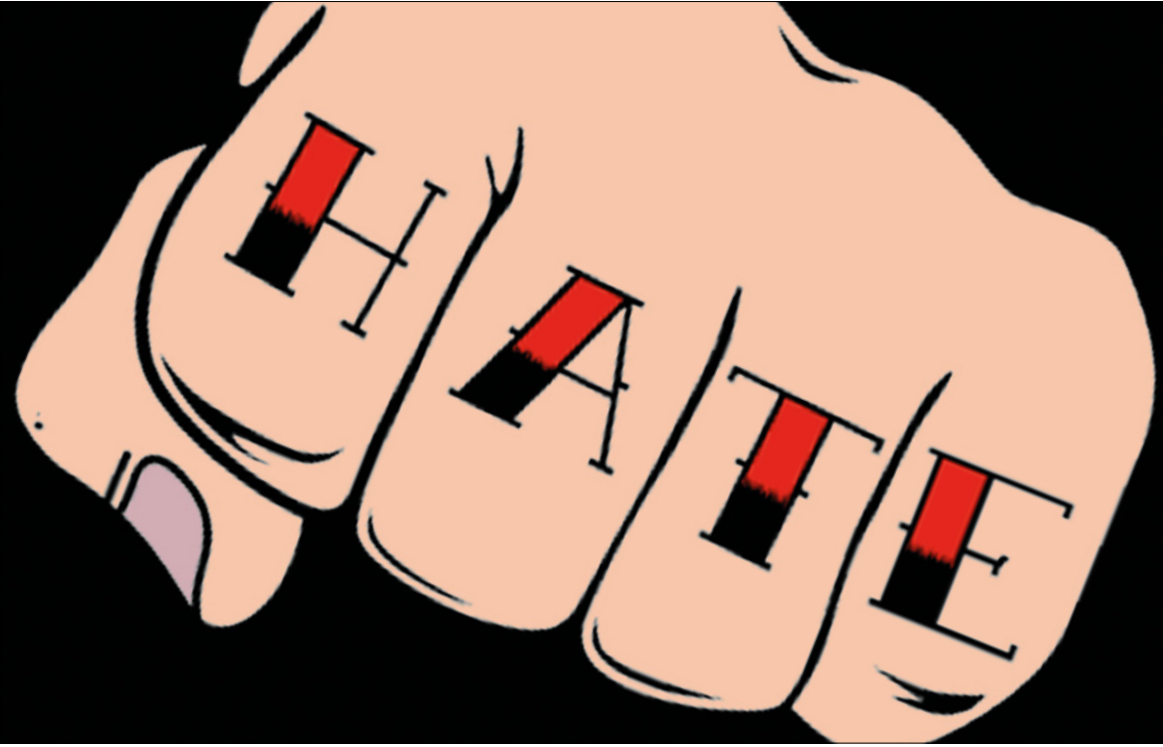
- | | | |
|---|--|--|
| 27. Twenty oxen | 44. To free myself from annoying floaters and flashes | government approved, to offer women like Wendy |
| 28. Oxtail soup | 45. The standard set of extraordinary measures | 64. The moonlight beams on the girl of my dreams |
| 29. Delicate girly detailing | 46. To continue to borrow and spend at a rate of \$4 billion a day | 65. The moonlight beams on the girl of someone else’s dreams assuming they’re richer and better looking and better connected than me |
| 30. To Kill Inflammation In One Easy Step | 47. To arrange to keep it off the books | 66. A maximally sized erection and a minimum of dialogue |
| 31. More plush comfort | 49. Some extra headroom | 67. Indifference to the bonobos |
| 32. Second wife Tracey | 50. A good national emergency to give me air cover | 68. Some mayhem to cover the long premeditation of my escape |
| 33. A girl to make my radar go from ‘bleep’ to ‘blip-blip-blip’ | 51. No significant spillovers | 69. Some place to eat and sleep while I shirk my duties |
| 34. Royal savouries | 52. To pull clear of relegation danger | 70. An authorised plunder |
| 35. To be pulled off the rocks and rolled upright | 53. To pull clear of regulation danger | 71. An unauthorised plunder |
| 36. La Bierra Premium Numero Uno Autentica Originali Naturali Superiore Tializione e Naturalita | 54. Stellar sprinkles | 72. To be tucked away next to a chocolate shop |
| 37. Comfortable buffers | 55. Urgent Information Obtained From Behind Closed Doors | 73. To secure \$2 billion over lunch (all on expenses) |
| 38. To be brutal, overwhelming and inexcusable | 56. To be reduced from extremes to only abnormal | 74. A shameless and completely successful legal manoeuvre |
| 39. A whopping 0.3% in June alone | 57. Some sign of Sonya | 75. A shameless and completely successful illegal manoeuvre |
| 40. Chicanery of magnitude | 58. Young widow Tiffany | 76. Extraordinary measures |
| 41. Cash, credit and connivance | 59. Some reasonable set of decencies | 77. Extraordinary measurements |
| 42. An accounting device | 60. Some reasonable set of indecencies | |
| 43. To ejaculate quickly to ensure I complete the sex act before the female escapes | 61. The first confirmatory trickles of adulation | |
| 44. Janet, Jane or Jana in January | 62. Suburban indelicacies | |
| | 63. Something reliably successful, and | |

- Poise, precision, audacity, and resolve
- Catherine from Canada
- To be able to put a competitive package on the table
- Six inches measured and indicated and another three inches inferred
- To ease the plight of the periphery
- To solve the mystery of Robbie Williams
- To solve the murder mystery of Robbie Williams
- To be rich in stern awe and disciplined wonder
- To roar my blood-soaked defiance at the politicians now visibly shrinking away from me
- An accuracy of detail combined with a depth of raw emotion
- To get cider all over Shula’s videos
- To get cider all over Shula (at a pinch)
- A sweet unearthly vision wearing only t-shirt, pants and skin
- To do it completely legally while I still can
- To do it semi-legally while I still can
- To do it while I still can
- To ‘hide’ assets, to avoid taxes or to take action for any other nefarious reason
- A whopping \$65 billion (with a capital B!)
- A stunning \$17 trillion (with a capital T!)
- Well over \$1 quadrillion (with a capital Q!)
- Roxy, a former gymnast
- Lorraine’s quickish Thai fish pie
- Indiscretion with Kristen
- A rupee and a new chicken

There’s no time like the present: we strongly advise you begin box-ticking this list today.

And things to dispose of, decline and/or abjure:

- A pork-dripping Christmas tree
- A strict and intrusive test
- A five-year non-trivial shrinkage
- Panicked easing
- Yet another gut-wrenching decline
- Moderate to severe collapse
- Parasites more than 60 feet long
- 18,000 squid beaks in my belly
- To be left outside the hospital with a gun wound
- A biot within earshot
- To play host to an entire ecosystem, including cyanobacteria, insects and other creatures that live in my sticky green fur
- To be caught introducing my god-daughters to the art of ‘topping and tailing’
- A number of troubling modifications
- Another troubling observation
- No shortages of uncertainty
- A real stench in my snuffler
- To be dangled and strangled
- Runaway electron breakdown
- A klaps and a klammity
- Only a modicum of fanfare
- An ominous drift
- Increased tightness in the physicals
- To be in for Jim Sinclair’s long talked about ‘spiritual experience’
- Things getting very disorderly on the downside
- A blood-in-the-streets bottom
- Laceration hazard
- An even nastier twist
- The unglamorous truth
- The application of Law No. 4
- A slithering pit of leeches
- Two larger sources of leakage
- My 2% fall becoming a 5% plunge and then an 8% nosedive



- | | | |
|---|---|---|
| 33. To be worryingly skewed | 51. A travesty of a mockery of a sham | 68. Not a squeak from Sonya |
| 34. An epic leaker | 52. A large suitcase full of evidence | 69. Quite a disturbing surprise |
| 35. Paranoia, confirmed by history | 53. Contentious tweaks | 70. To be unaware and be unaware of being unaware |
| 36. A sheepskin mug | 54. Something that is less obvious, but utterly catastrophic | 71. The untidy realities of economic life |
| 37. Degrado senza sosta | 55. Exacerbated physical tightness | 72. The untidy realities of uneconomic life |
| 38. Uncomfortable rigour | 56. To be pulled off the rocks and rolled upright and towed away for scrap | 73. A state of emergency in the regions |
| 39. To be gunned down in my palace (so much for my goons) | 57. A different availability of aptitude at the high end | 74. Ill-thought-out carrots |
| 40. More worrisome indicators | 58. To be severely dischortled | 75. The impact of relationship duration |
| 41. An unsettled afternoon in the Trossachs | 59. Clearly something in the background that even the pessimists don’t fully understand - yet | 76. To end up going up the smokestack or out the tailpipe |
| 42. Excessive shrink factors | 60. No escaping the arithmetic | 77. Cervical uncertainties |
| 43. Varying shrink factors | 61. Terrible trouble in my marginals | 78. Chloe, clutching a stopwatch and tallying copulations |
| 44. Just another hole in Oklahoma | 62. The night-time work of a dedicated prankster | 79. The wan realities of many women’s bedrooms |
| 45. To be crumpled out of my current shape | 63. To lose my oily grip on Europe | 80. The overwhelming randiness of Wallen’s monkeys and Pfaus’s rats |
| 46. Warts and all | 64. The Scary Future Facing Way Too Many Men | 81. To monkey about with monkey realities |
| 47. To see it through to the finish, whatever personal agony might be involved | 65. A horrible one for me to grasp | 82. A normal abnormality |
| 48. No recourse to lavish public funds | 66. To be defanged and defunded | 83. An abnormal abnormality |
| 49. Nothing else to distract the public from the ugly reality they find themselves in | 67. Troubles of the trunk | |
| 50. A rusting underside | | |

- To be taken behind the curtained area of the lab
- Being raped as a punishment for having anti-feminist fantasies
- An eroticisation of disempowerment
- An eroticisation of disembowelment
- Aberrant crests
- To spend my time playing ping-pong and hunting down an ever-diminishing supply of canapes
- Two things hitting me immediately between the eyes
- Good ears devoured by thin ears
- Powerful gusts
- A few more tentacles down there
- Parts shortage
- To feel like a shrimp running on a treadmill
- Giant pressure waves that come from the centre of the galaxy
- Young tearaways looking for trouble with flick-knives and tins of spinach in their pockets
- To get clunched
- To be lacking some beans
- To be ordered to remove my hijab before being fondled
- To be installed on a rotating plinth in Manchester Museum

You have been warned! Forward ongoing caution strongly advised.

by Lep



The Life of Saints

Sunday at Home [1894]

Day of the Dead

Weep Not My Wanton

Sunday at Home [1884]

Nouveau Larousse Illustre Vol VII

Quains Anatomy [1912]

Larousse Medical [1910]

Brockhaus 7 [1930]

Konversationslexicon [1907]

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.

Booming baritone growl

Stags have performance and they

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 pur 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. No radio is needed.

Un-deadened sensations

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 a few months ago.

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



Dostoevsky's apartment

Text and photographs by Guy Lane



I visited Dostoevsky's apartment museum in St Petersburg. Now you can crack the joke, "Was he in?"

It is in quite a dull part of the city. He wanted to have a flat with a bit of space and couldn't afford the smarter areas. He'd been in prison and work camps and been brought up in a very small place in Moscow, and he had a wife and two kids, so he needed some elbow room. The flat is pleasant, with well-proportioned rooms and simple but elegant furniture.

Depressed or miserable

Contrary to what many people would suppose, Dostoevsky was not terminally depressed or miserable. He was very happily married and adored his children. Like everyone he had his routines, which became more entrenched as he got older. A family meal at 1pm, some domestic chores and paperwork in the afternoon, an evening meal, again with his wife and kids, and then... off to work! He would go into his study at 11pm and work until 6am.

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.



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 tides of



trends and gentrification, for iskembe transcends class, and 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 two of garlic. Skim the pale fat that rises to the top. Take the tripe from the first two stomachs of a young cow. The first will be dun-coloured rumen - smooth, or blanket tripe - the second and third, reticulum, or honeycomb tripe. Boil both tripe types separately until tender, remembering to both skim the pan and hold your nose. Chop the rumen small, and the honeycomb into 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 buttons, some shiv-faced cutpurses, a pair of chatty whores, a table of taxi drivers who had just worked 18 hours solid, the odd food lover, some lost tourists and a blind accordionist.

The colours of sunrise

Lale’s chef is Ayni Gundogdu. There

are many nuances in the Turkish language. You can translate his name idiomatically as Having Seen The Day Born, or as Real Day Rising. Or you can just eat Ayni’s soup. He likes to add a few specks of isot pepper to his soups, sometimes. Their colour bleeds into the broth in slowly growing orange spots, for Ayni likes the colours of sunrise above all other colours.

My wine writer friend Andrew Jefford once said that iskembe soup smells closer to the animal it came from than any food he’d ever come close to. True, there is a memory of the farm in the dark and rich aromas rising from my bowl, but after a night on the tiles, these smells are grounding, comforting, real. Kelle paca is more definitely umami-savoury-meaty in character.

Ancient and true

Both are always served with a big bottle of vinegar on the table, and a crock of slivered garlic in light brine. A basket of chewy bread completes your feast. The cost is not quite £2.50. It connects with your soul, and with the soul of the old and new Istanbul, too, for iskembe nourishes, and tastes ancient and true.



Rubbish buildings

by Glenn Greenhill



Stacked tyre walls and coloured bottle 'stain' glass windows

Today, in response to environmental concerns, a few humans now seem to be re-learning long forgotten building techniques that utilise very contemporary waste products like tyres, tin cans, glass and plastic bottles and the more traditional straw and skip salvaged timber, fixtures and fittings.



Ancient construction technique of cob and elbow grease

Cob is a building material comprising a mixture of sand, clay, earth, straw all mixed with water. This is applied to a straw bale walls that sit within a timber frame all held together with wire and stakes. The roof is of traditional thatch construction



Walls of drink cans set in concrete

Building with tin cans started in New Mexico back in the early 1980s. It was done to utilise the huge amounts of refuse being thrown away. It also challenged the wasteful practices of the domestic construction industry. Construction is simple, cans are set in rows into a concrete mix.



onto a very basic timber frame. The 300-square foot dwelling is insulated with sheep’s wool and is not hooked up for either mains electricity or gas. Luckily, water is on tap, piped in from a nearby natural spring. Doors and windows were salvaged from skips and other local refuse facilities. The entire build cost £150.

Bird Nest Scoop

This compilation of photographs captures the diversity, complexity and beauty of the ultimate avian cribs

by Glenn Greenhill

These photographs offer new insights into the industriousness, ingenuity and instincts of birds.

Bird-brained

The homes shown here have been constructed instinctively. Birds are by far nature’s most diverse and fastidious architects and most intelligent builders. (A supremacy perhaps challenged only by termites, ants, bees and humans).

Maybe we can learn something. For instance, birds know how to forage for and recycle materials in their local area, they know how to be environmentally friendly and maintain biodegradable efficiency, they certainly know how to insulate and how to maintain security.

A collection of 50 images

The photographs are the work of Sharon Beal and selected from her book: “Nests: Fifty Nests and the Birtods that Built Them” all the nests are from the museum collection of the California Academy of Sciences (CAS) in San Francisco. (Sharon’s images are exceptional, according to reviews, her words not so much.)

Legislation

The institution was founded in 1852 and has benefited from the intake of many private collections - which had been built up from the early 1800s - and were subsequently transferred to the CAS when protective legislation came into force and outlawed them. The practice of egg and nest collecting which had been widespread and commonplace until the Migratory Bird Treaty Act of 1918.

Understanding

Today nest collecting is illegal throughout most of the world and threatened species have come back from the brink of extinction. Nesting behaviour is complex and fascinating. From these elaborate constructions it becomes apparent that birds have both practical and aesthetic sensibilities. They are artisan builders. Their nests need to be camouflaged, colour co-ordinated, storm proof. Ideally, out of reach of predatory cats and defensible against avian intruders of other breeds. Birds are highly territorial, readily fight for breeding grounds and are devoted to tending and protecting their young.

Drama

The nests yeild a wealth of data when subjected to DNA examination. For non-scientific types these nests set the stage for an extraordinarily wide diversity of domestic dramas. For instance, what happened to the parents of these baby wrens, all of which died in the nest, before they could fly?



Wake up call? Scrambled eggs with chili Mumbai style

INGREDIENTS:

2 or 3 large eggs

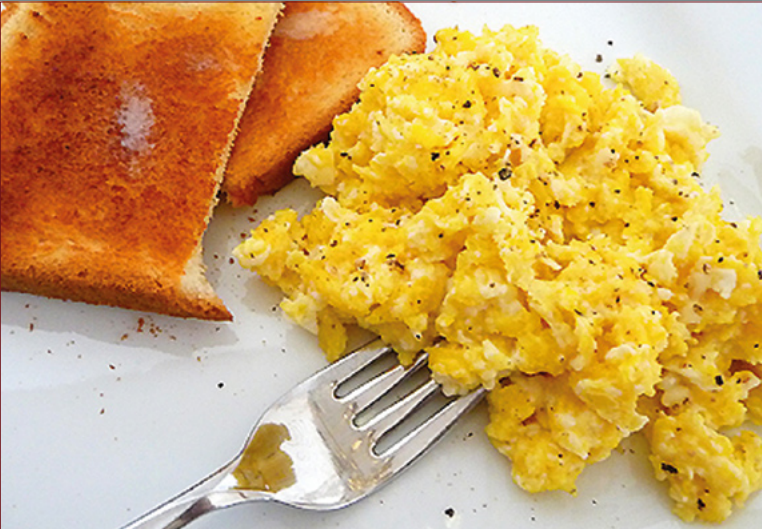
1 small chunk of butter, ideally unsalted.

1 fresh, medium heat, medium size, green chili

A generous splash of semi-skimmed milk

A white bloomer loaf.

A non-stick pan, fork 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. Rememeber, 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 or batch loaf and a big mug of tea.

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.

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 nature. And nature doesn’t do 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. This was the triumph of man over nature... the creation of order, geometry, the manifestation of engineering prowess.

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.



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.

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.

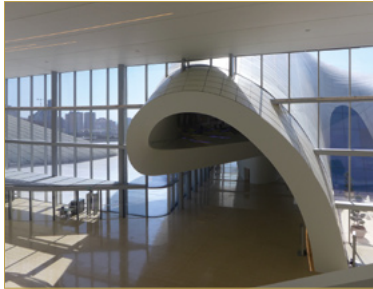
At first I thought it was a representation of an unmade bed or perhaps a giant coffee table



with a massive white drape thrown carelessly on top.

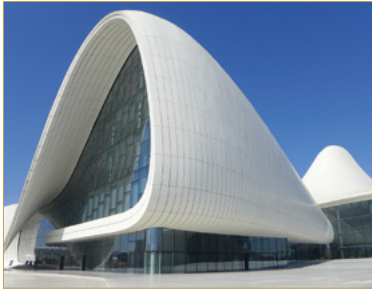
In fact it is based on President Aliyev’s signature! Thanks to this idea, and his handwriting, Hadid has created an apparently random yet perfectly ordered and balanced space, inside and out.

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.



Addendum

I understand that the design was actually based on the president’s signature and I can see that his whacky scribble needed a lot of concrete

Just 210 miles and 60 years separate these two buildings

The Church of St Mary, Studley Royal, is a Victorian Gothic Revival church in the Early English style by William Burges built in 1878

by Glenn Greenhill

Burges was commissioned by the First Marquess of Ripon to build the church as a memorial church to Frederick Grantham Vyner, his brother in law. It is one of two such churches, the other being the Church of Christ the Consoler at Skelton-on-Ure. Frederick Vyner had been murdered by Greek bandits in 1870. A significant ransom had been demanded, and in part collected,

before his death. His mother, Lady Mary Vyner, and his sister, Lady Ripon, used the unspent ransom to build the two churches in his memory. Burges' appointment as architect was most likely due to the connection between his greatest patron, John Crichton-Stuart, 3rd Marquess of Bute, and Vyner, who had been friends at Oxford.



St Mary's, was commissioned in 1870 and work began in 1871. The church was consecrated in 1878. As at Skelton, Burges' design demonstrates a move from his favoured Early-French, to an English style. Pevsner writes of "a Victorian shrine, a dream of Early English glory". The interior is spectacular, exceeding Skelton in richness and majesty. The stained glass is of

particularly high quality. St Mary's is Burges' "ecclesiastical masterpiece".



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 intelligencia

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 intelligencia 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'.⁵

In keeping with Le Corbusier's notion of a house being a 'machine a habiter' (a machine for living in)

and central to the the building's design ethos, was the creation of a communal kitchen. In 1937 this was converted into a salon/restaurant designed 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 Grieve, Alastair. *Isokon: For Ease, For Ever* (London: Isokon Plus, 2004), 5.
² Grieve, Alastair. *Isokon: For Ease, For Ever* (London: Isokon Plus, 2004), 5.
³ Weidman, Jonathan. *A Dictionary of Modern Design: Luterma* (Oxford University Press, 2005) < <http://www.answers.com/topic/luterma> > (accessed 4 February 2014).
⁴ Hilde Heynen, *Architecture and modernity: a critique* (US 2000), 16.
⁵ Allison, Kenneth. *Architects and Architecture of London* (Oxford: Elsevier Ltd., 2008), 318.
⁶ Edmonds, Mark. *Isokon on the cake* (12 May 2001) < <http://www.telegraph.co.uk/property/4814443/Isokon-on-the-cake.html> > (accessed 4 February 2014).



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

Los Angeles

by Simon Lane

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



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 *Mountolive* 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 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?

Paris, 1997

A grating Gatsby

There are plenty of reviews of the 2013 version of **The Great Gatsby**. Critics concede that something, - or several things - went wrong with the film created by director Baz Luhrmann and writing partner Craig Pearce. However, viewer reviews reveal that just over 50% of the audience loved it!

I saw the 1974 version of the **The Great Gatsby** at The Odeon in Leicester Square in 1974. To prove it, I still have the souvenir cinema programme: a 16-page, A3 book printed on heavy paper. I was 19-years old and had just finished a course in drama, film and television. Contemplating the new film version of **The Great Gatsby** has given me a chance to glance back over the last 40 years and reflect on the differences between now and then.

Affection for the story

What strikes me within the first ten minutes is the steroid-pumped-up visual style of the movie: it's as peculiar viewing as a female body-building competition. After 45-minutes it has proved beyond doubt that a big budget can actually restrict the creative freedoms of the director, rather than expand them. I wanted this film to be great. I have long held a great affection for the story. I had some reason to be optimistic. The director's first film **Strictly Ballroom** is creative and engaging. It was made for just \$3million in 1992. It made a 1100% return on investment (ROI) of \$33million. It is just as enjoyable to watch today as when it was made, and stands repeat viewing.

A quarter of a billion dollars

By contrast, the Luhrmann and Pearce Gatsby movie is barely watchable once! The new film cost \$105million to make. It took \$348million at the box office. A 331% ROI and a profit of \$243million to date. Which is a heading towards a quarter of a billion dollars more than **Strictly Ballroom**. Even allowing for 21 years of inflation, that is a huge amount of money. And that's the problem. It looks like success on paper but is a failure on screen, where it matters.

I suspect the youngest

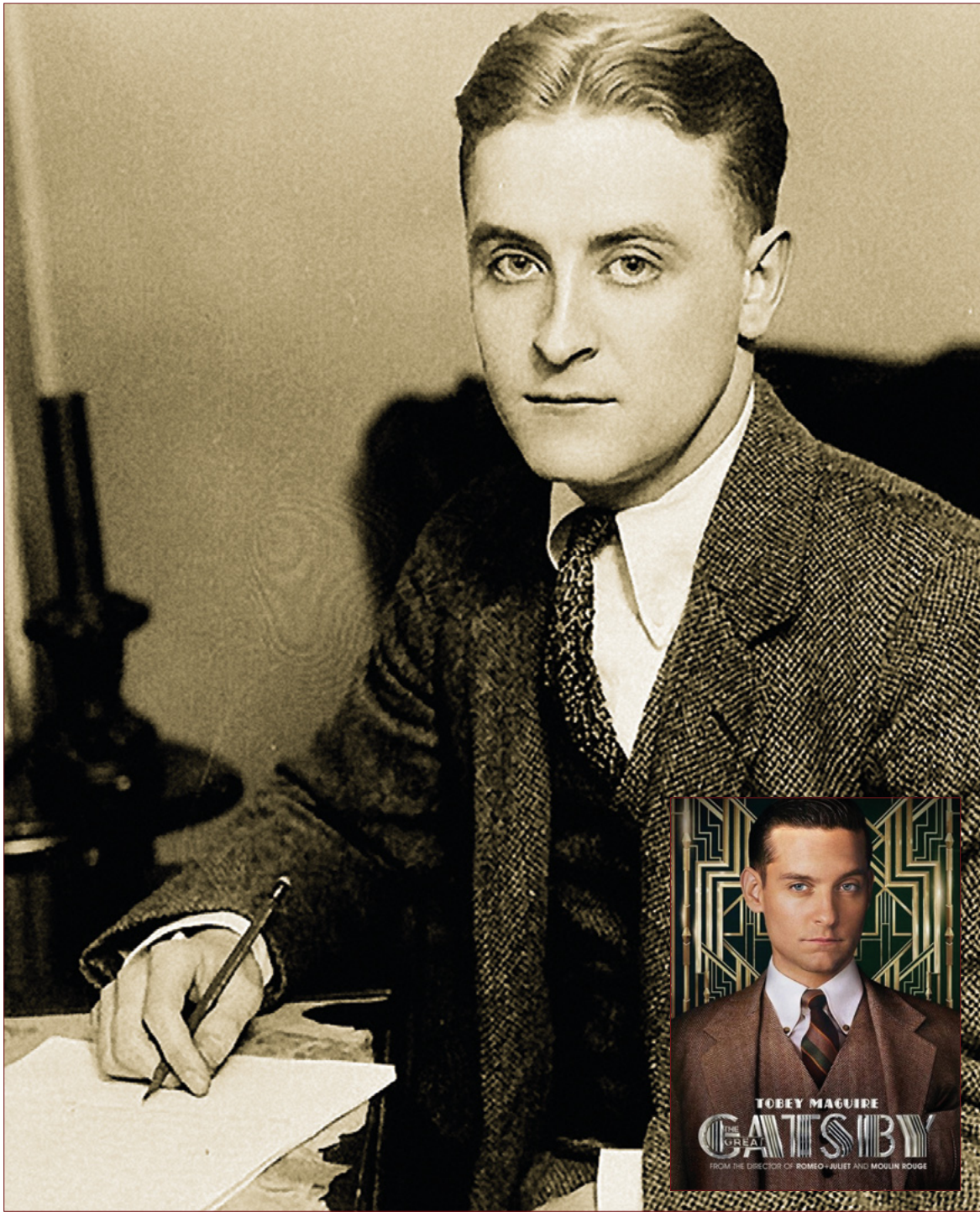
There is something else too that illustrates a marked shift in cinema tastes; of 580 user reviews on IDMB, only 274 are negative. That means over half, that's 306 people, score it above its average 7.3 rating. Some, I suspect the youngest, actually loved it! This is bad news for the future of film and filling cinemas is a tough challenge. New films are aimed at young people. Why? Because it's mostly the young who go to the cinema. This determines to a large extent what gets made.

Nothing to do with character

Unfortunately there isn't much

How come?

by Glenn Greenhill



Above: F. Scott Fitzgerald pictured here in 1929 bears a striking resemblance to (inset)Tobey Maguire, the actor who plays Nick Carraway, character, narrator, and moral guide who tells us how to interpret the events of this story. I have always assumed that Carraway was the author's portrayal of himself within his own novel.

that satisfies the more mature film going audience. I was disappointed by the 5th film in the Alien franchise, **Prometheus**, the last film in the Batman trilogy: **The Dark Knight Rises** and **Hitchcock**. Only Spielberg's movie **Lincoln** is fully satisfactory. I would hazard a guess that the decision to remake **The Great Gatsby** had nothing to do with the story or characters, but just because the story is set in the 1920s.

The true spirit of the book

The 1974 film was written by

Francis Ford Coppola. It is true to the spirit of the book. The film starring Robert Redford and Mia Farrow cost \$6.5million to make in 1974 and took \$26.5million, a 407% ROI. It runs for 146 minutes. Surprisingly, the 2013 version runs for 144 minutes.

Lengthy indulgences

These days, films that go over 90 minutes rarely get made. Unless the director is well proven, when all manner of lengthy indulgences can be expected. That seems to be the

case here. In the midst of the digital landscapes, visual trickery, over-charged action sequences, stagey theatrical devices and in-your-face contemporary music, the essential dynamics of the story are rendered quite meaningless. And there is no excuse for Luhrmann/Pearce to write dialogue that has the tenor of am-dram or a school play; words, delivery and voices all ring false.

Scrutiny in the year 2052

I like the film with Redford and Farrow more now than I did when I first watched it in the cinema 39-years ago. It's good but not great. I wonder how the new Gatsby, with DiCaprio, Mulligan and Maguire, will measure up to critical scrutiny 39 years from now, in the year 2052. I wonder how much our world, its social structures and tastes might have changed by then.

Jazz Age New York

Looking back from 1974 or 2013 to the 1920's the world depicted is still recognisable. The twenty-somethings who went to the cinema last year to see Baz Luhrmann's film will be in their fifties in 2052. I wonder if they will recognise today's world. It is possible that by then the 1920s world of Jazz Age New York will have no more significance to them then than Camelot does to us now.

Comparable circumstances

F. Scott Fitzgerald's books are set in a period after World War I during the period of Prohibition, decadence, wealth and excess. That was abruptly ended by the stock market crash of 1929 and by The Great Depression that followed. Some comparisons can be made between the period in which the film is set and the economic crisis of 2008.

The curse of irrational exuberance

The phrase 'irrational exuberance' was coined by Alan Greenspan, chairman of the US Federal Reserve Board. It's code for speculative fervour, or the out-of-control greed in the investment market, that led to the sub-prime mortgage crisis in the USA, a crisis that spread like a toxic viral pestilence of biblical proportions right across the globe.

Getting high on leverage

In the 1920s booze was prohibited. Today, drugs are prohibited. Crack, cocaine, heroin, ecstasy and alcohol all combined have not caused human misery on such a scale as was wrought by bankers getting high on credit default swaps and leverage of up to 35 times their capital. George W. Bush provided them \$650-billion for their rehab.

Photograph of F. Scott Fitzgerald c. 1921, appearing "The World's Work" (June 1921 issue) Source: www.en.wikipedia.org/wiki/File:F._Scott_Fitzgerald,_1921.jpg

Detached and indifferent to society

I can't help thinking that the character of Tom Buchanan is an archetype of the investment bankers of Wall Street, uber-wealthy, cocooned in luxury, detached and indifferent to society, secure in their arrogance and self-justification. Their sense of entitlement means they never have to pay for their excesses like the rest of us do. Instead taxpayers money is used for their bail-out. We pay twice and they get away with it unscathed.

The tragedy of Gatsby

This is exactly the tragedy of what happens to Gatsby. The character Tom Buchanan isn't satisfied with his huge wealth and beautiful wife. He's greedy and wants more. More in this case, for Tom, the man who truly has everything, is to take from the hard-working but grindingly poor garage owner Mr Wilson. Tom's infidelity with Wilson's wife results in her death, Gatsby's murder and Wilson's suicide.

The ultimate price

I wonder how Tom and Daisy lived the rest of their lives. I would guess, just like the bankers who would not admit any responsibility for the misery they caused. This quote from the book could have been written about Wall-Streeters:

“ I couldn't forgive him or like him, but I saw that what he had done was, to him, entirely justified. It was all very careless and confused. They were careless people, Tom and Daisy - they smashed up things and creatures and then retreated back into their money or their vast carelessness, or whatever it was that kept them together, and let other people clean up the mess they had made.”

Urban legend

The urban legend is that during the crash of 1929, bankers and investors who were unable to face their financial losses, hurled themselves from Wall Street office windows. There were no comparative reports of despair among bankers in 2008. However, amongst the 500,000 US homeowners who suffered eviction and repossession, there were several recorded cases of suicide. In an attempt to fulfil their dreams they lost everything and then their lives.

It is this aspect of the novel that makes Fitzgerald's invention so poignant, tragic and still relevant. Gatsby's idealism, his desire to better himself, his enduring love for Daisy - it is all these things that drive his behaviour. Gatsby pays the ultimate price for his dreams. Tom and Daisy retreat into the security of their wealth like a pair of bankers.

The story of **The Great Gatsby** prompts consideration of many

Highly watchable low budget movies

2012/13 saw the release of several low budget movies. These films are not perfect but they are all worth watching.

Under \$10million
End Of Watch (2012)
The Sessions (2012)
The Words (2012)
Scenic Route (2013)
Don Jon (2013)

Under \$20million
Get The Gringo (2012)
Stand Up Guys (2012)
Drift (2013)

other contemporary issues: social mobility; the wealth gap; property prices; economic policy; social values; fashion; music and the quality of film making.

Highjacked an established vehicle

Unfortunately, Baz Luhrmann did not make a great version of **The Great Gatsby**. I think it is fair to say it misses the point in almost every respect and betrays the spirit of the book. My guess is that the project got the green light because it highjacked a world-renowned period vehicle for the director to indulge his trademark visual excess. The approach worked on **Rome+Juliet**. Credit where credit is due, it worked brilliantly on **Moulin Rouge**. Although that film is not to my taste, I can appreciate the creative achievement - and lots of women I know do love it.

Respect

My creative respect is reserved for F. Scott Fitzgerald's novel. On top of which, Redford's 1974 portrayal of Jay Gatsby - both his look and his manner - are enduringly iconic. Most of the audience for the new film will not be familiar with either the 1974 version or the book.

Monumental achievements

Leonardo DiCaprio is a fine actor. He has at least two iconic performances to his credit; he will eternally be Jack Dawson in **Titanic** and Howard Hughes in **The Aviator**. I don't believe any actor alive could have made a better job of those two roles. But under Luhrmann's direction, DiCaprio's Gatsby is more awkwardly contrived than convincing. There are numerous excruciatingly bad moments and stilted gestures. Either of the directors of those movies, James Cameron or Martin Scorsese, would have done a better job of making **The Great Gatsby**. If you doubt me then watch **The Aviator** or **Titanic**. The formula is similar in terms of period, romance, tragedy and lead character actor, DiCaprio. Both **Titanic** and **The Aviator** are monumental achievements of modern, yet classic, cinema.

By contrast, Baz Luhrmann's film suffers badly from 'irrational exuberance' and in the process the spirit of the original story is corrupted and debased. It proves that adage 'less is more'. Or rather

that Luhrmann's ideas of more and more and more excess actually result in less of everything. The most vulnerable of these is one's attention. In all my years of film watching, no matter how awesome the visuals, if characters don't engage, my mind wanders and the film fails. For me, over-the-top spectacle for the sake of it is tiresome. But maybe it takes this approach to hold the attention of a young audience - along with a script that has the characters explaining everything all the time - making it both hyped up and dumbed down!

Immersive experience

I fully appreciate that movies are expected to be an immersive experience these days. And in that context 3D is supposed to be an audience draw. The visual technology works well within the context of the recent hit **Gravity** because the film is set in space. **Gravity** is a combination of **Open Water** and **Apollo 13**. Is it more gripping than these two conventional films? Or does Gravity rely on 3D technology to engage? I enjoyed the movie in 3D in the cinema but will need to watch it on my home screen to decide if the film stands up dramatically. I am not convinced by 3D. Trying to make cinema more like the real world is a fool's errand. This may well also be a generational shift; today's audience has a short attention span and technological trickery is essential to hold their fleeting concentration.

Conventional footage

Watching Lurhmann's Gatsby is tiring; watching it in 3D is migraine-inducing and distancing. Cinema should engage us in a way - and to a depth and intensity - that we cannot find in the real world. But 3D doesn't do that. Instead it gets in the way and is a distracting. Drama and engagement come from something other than visual impact, they come from emotional impact, which is formed in the mind.

Of course visuals can be shocking, repellent, seductive but the 3D visuals in the new Gatsby are no more psychologically-impactful than well shot conventional footage. If you don't believe me then watch **Strictly Ballroom**. Luhrmann does with \$3million dollars what he couldn't do with \$105million (and three of the finest actors available) he makes you care about the characters and the outcome.

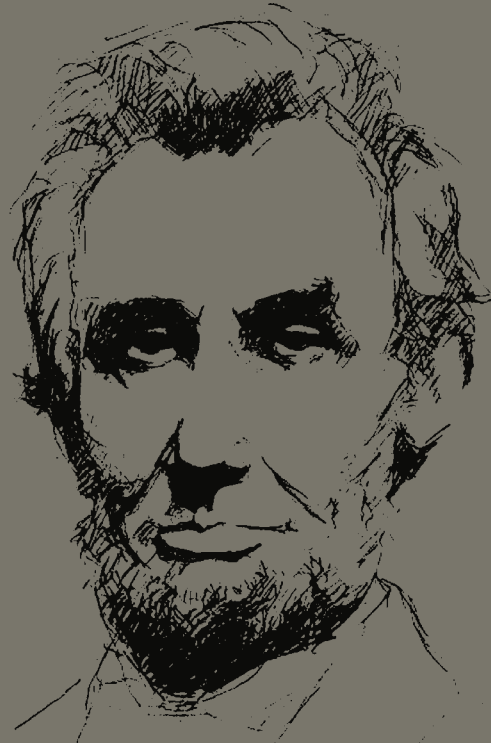
So if you want to find the true greatness of **The Great Gatsby** go back to the novel; it's a short book of just 180-pages and can probably be read in the same time it takes to watch the 1974 movie. Your choice.

I just don't care

Sad for all the wrong reasons, the 2013 version of **The Great Gatsby** grates; I didn't care that Gatsby was murdered I was just glad the film was over. Baz-ling and Luhr-rid, it's a movie for people that don't know any better and don't even seem to be looking.

That is a tragedy, old sport.

Spielberg's Lincoln gets to the heart of the man who made this historic 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 can not 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 19th November 1863

Movies that cash in on the financial events of 2008, that are well worth investing your time in: **Too Big Too Fail** (2011); **Margin Call** (2012); **Arbitrage** (2012); **The International** (2009); **Wall Street: Money Never Sleeps** (2012); and the documentaries **Inside Job** (2009); **The Flaw** (2011).

Swan lurk

File under:
economics,
geopolitics,
conspiracy theory,
in the national
interest,
psychotherapy

by Lep

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, sorry results!

Not being able to afford to ‘romance’ the usual strings of opera singers and ballerinas, as would befit someone of my station, had my train ever arrived, I decided instead to distract myself from worrying, worrying, worrying about the coming financial apocalypse caused by the coming collapse of government (‘short change!’) currencies, by soothing my nerves with a visit to my local park. And that’s when trouble came gliding into view!

The swan!

She (the swan) was beautiful and elegant in that ‘classy’ sort of way, and, as you would expect, unless you’ve been reading too much popular economics (‘popular economics!’ hahaha!), white in colour.

Limited to the backwaters

Black swans being, in the normal way of things, very much limited to the backwaters of (a) Australia, and (b), and more pertinently, economics, the well-named ‘dismal science’! As a metaphor for things you can’t see coming because you don’t know they even exist!

Unusual sensitivity

However – getting back to the white swan – because I am blessed with unusual sensitivity, I was able to perceive that this swan was no ordinary swan, but was in reality a human princess who had, by some evil spell. Stuff that need not detain

us, become imprisoned in a swan’s body! Truly, a ‘game-changing’ fact! In view of which, and recognising the fact that one is from time to time at the mercy of higher forces in matters of ‘I’amour’, I make no excuses for falling instantly in love with this beautiful swan princess, who, let us not forget, as immediately aforesaid, was a princess! Which means that, once my manly, true and noble love had broken the evil spell and she was restored to her natural, moneybags state, things would finally, finally, finally!, be on the up (swan-upping!) for yours truly! And, along with the miracle of true love, yada yada yada, I could look forward, in a calm and thoughtful, reasonable and measured way, to banquets... palaces... and, one day, a... a... a kingdom! A kingdom! Of my very own!

Our first tryst

That being established, I quickly expressed my undying love to my beloved. I did, however, point out that, in view of various by-laws, it would be better if our first tryst occurred during darkness, and so I left to prepare myself in the usual way.

I hurried back to the lake

At last, darkness descended and I hurried back to the lake. Yes! She was there! My swan princess! Just as beautiful as I remembered her! The tryst proceeded! As, I thought, flawlessly!

But then, just as I was waiting for my swan to change back into something a little higher up the socio-economic ladder, it happened! The foreshadowed disaster!

Because here she was again! Twice! Here she came, again, even though she was already right beside me, or so I had thought, gliding smoothly towards me, 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 shock and rising horror, that the swan I had taken for my beloved was, in fact, though still beautiful, black! A black swan! Something straight out of, as I said, the dismal science! Made flesh! With a colouration I had somehow managed to overlook, in the darkness

and in my excitement and haste! This new (black) swan was, in fact, an imposter! And a wrong’un! Something Tchaikovsky had once tried to warn me about! But I hadn’t listened! And, as a result, I had been duped! Abused! Hoodwinked! Like a duck to the slaughter!

Feathers flew

I won’t dwell overlong on what happened next, apart from confirming that ‘feathers flew’, and that my princess was not a happy princess! And apparently it was all my fault! And thus my dreams of true romantic fulfilment, and of a life, at last, on easy street, were shattered! Shattered!

Sneaky and vicious

Which is all by way of warning you that these black swan things are real! And sneaky! And

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

vicious! And that they can, as I have just related, shatter your dreams!

And there’s worse!

Now that my mind is no longer falsely soothed by notions of swan-princess-powered escape from financial serfdom, 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!

A major tiff brewing

Not only do we have a major tiff brewing between China (and Russia) and Japan (and America) over some dumb islands in some dumb foreign ocean somewhere (clue: could oil be involved? Hahahaha!). Not only do we have Syria (and Russia) (and Iran) (and America) (and Israel)

(and Saudi) (and, no doubt, the rest) building a superhighway to WW3 in the (guess where!) Middle East.

Not only do we have

gold mine) in order to maintain false

consciousness regarding the true value of government-printed currency notes (zero! eventually! and, maybe, soon!), and to cover up the mischief of printing far, far more ‘promises to pay’ than can ever be repaid, with stacks of bank notes piling up to the moon and back – well – to get back to ‘worst of all’ – the jig is up!

2,000 tonnes of gold

Last January, the Germans audaciously asked the US Federal Reserve to return some of their gold (just some of it!) that they’ve been holding for ‘safekeeping’.

But – are we ready with the smell test? – the gold ain’t a-coming! The Fed generously agreed to ship back just 300 of Germany’s 1,500 tonnes of gold, over (get this) a mere eight years! (Bearing in mind the Chinese have imported 2,000 tonnes of gold each year for the past two years, this shouldn’t be exactly, to use a suitably scathing and pleasingly alliterative word, ‘insuperable!’)

(And bearing in mind that, if you asked your neighbour to return your lawn mover, and he said he’d bring it back in eight years, you might ask him to think again! Somewhat!). So, here we are at the end of year one, and it turns out that the Germans have only got back five tonnes. Five tonnes! Five stinking tonnes! Hahahaha! Let that be a lesson to anyone else who wants their gold back!

Midget-brained central bankers

At this point, and as I do not consider myself to be an expert on Germany, I decided to seek the advice of my good friend Mr Richard Wagner, who tends to ‘cut to the chase’ in these matters. With a bit of boom, boom!, kapow! He said, ‘Dude, like, think Rhinemaidens! And dwarfs! Though, in this case, the dwarfs would be of a more symbolic nature, to whit, midget-brained central bankers who think they can support their evil, deceitful currencies by planning a Gotterdammerung of the gold price!

Swansong days!

And the way they’ve tried to do it this is by secretly selling (‘leasing’) the gold they were, like, ‘trusted’ with! Dumping it into the market to smash the price lower! In order to support the dollar as the world reserve currency in its swansong days! Because of all that canary stuff, as you so cannily noted earlier! And, by the way, if anyone knows anything about singing, it’s me! And now, boom boom! kapow! Trust me, the central bank gold is practically all gone! Dumped (‘leased’!), and gone! And not just Germany’s! It’s all gone! Everybody’s! All your gold is gone, if you’re fortunate to live in a central bank-dominated Western ‘democracy’! Hahahaha! There ain’t no gold in them thar vaults! Curtain! Bring on the Valkyries!”

Tumbleweeded vaults

And so, as all the world’s great composers are now coming to agree, it is! The gold! Gone! Dumped (‘leased’!), and gone! The gold belonging to the Germans, and to the people of (write your own name in here) has been replaced in the vast, echoing, tumbleweeded vaults of the US Federal Reserve (and its mini-me Bank of England) by a great big fat IOU! Signed by the very people the central banks ‘leased’(!) the gold to... who then sold it to China... those IOU-mongers who are the very same ‘Too Big To Fail’ banks who have, natch, failed! Because, as a result of world-class arrogance and idiocy, they no longer have any money! Except what the central banks have printed up for them! Out of thin air! Thin air, getting thinner and thinner as it goes round and round, round and round, losing oxygen minute by minute, time after time! Get it? Do you feel

‘quantitatively eased’ yet? Hahahaha!

‘Brown bottom’

I am reminded of when the fiend and traitor Gordon Brown sold half the UK’s gold (ours! not his!) into the market at the lowest price in 300 years, the occasion justly known as the

‘Brown bottom’, which price he had, fiendishly and traitorously, ensured would be the lowest price in 300 years by, fiendishly and traitorously, announcing the sale well in advance, so giving buyers plenty of time to (fiendishly but not traitorously) ratchet the price down, and which sale, by pure coincidence, seems to have come at just the right time to keep the gold price low enough, long enough, to save some major bullion banks (and Federal Reserve partners) from going, as we say back at the lake, underwater!

Until it’s all gone

Woody Allen once explained that a stockbroker is someone who manages your money wisely until it’s all gone. The Fed has wisely managed Germany’s gold, likewise! And Gordon Brown, your gold, likewise! And after Gordon Brown, and elsewhere in ‘the free world’, the other clowns! Likewise!

Teutonic swanfoolery

And, getting back to the theme of worse (and worst), there’s still worse to come! Because this Teutonic 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 (house prices rising! inflation falling! recovery in progress! Everest found to be made of chocolate!) we could ponder on what might happen when somebody else, or a lot of somebody else’s, also decide (or decides) they want their gold back.

Big-bazooka’d

Or when enough people, or worse still, big-bazooka’d and somewhat terrifying ‘entities’, try to buy gold, or cash in their gold futures, and discover that there isn’t any gold to be had, not even for cash money, because the deceitful Western central banks are no longer able to illicitly dump (‘lease’!) gold onto the market... because it’s all been dumped (‘leased’!)!

Faith and credit

The pond life have given away (‘leased’!) your gold! And so the Western currencies are now backed by... nothing less than the full faith and credit of their governments! Hahahahahaha!

Colour-toned vampires

At which point, you may be wondering exactly how you can protect yourself from these perfidious, paddling, unexpectedly colour-toned vampires that are even now on their way, and the financial devastation they will surely bring in their beaks. Of course, there’s never any totally fowlproof way to protect yourself against the genuinely unforeseen. You can, however, 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 deceitful, desperate, rapacious, money-printing central-bank-cahooted governments, it (they) (gold and silver) may have seen quite a few foul things come and go, while remaining itself (themselves), unfouled. And there may still be a few beakloads of the good stuff left for a last few plucky purchasers, until, suddenly, there aren’t.

Financial survival

And then, if you’re feeling plucky today, and if your beak is full, 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 with no need to marry some temperamental swan!

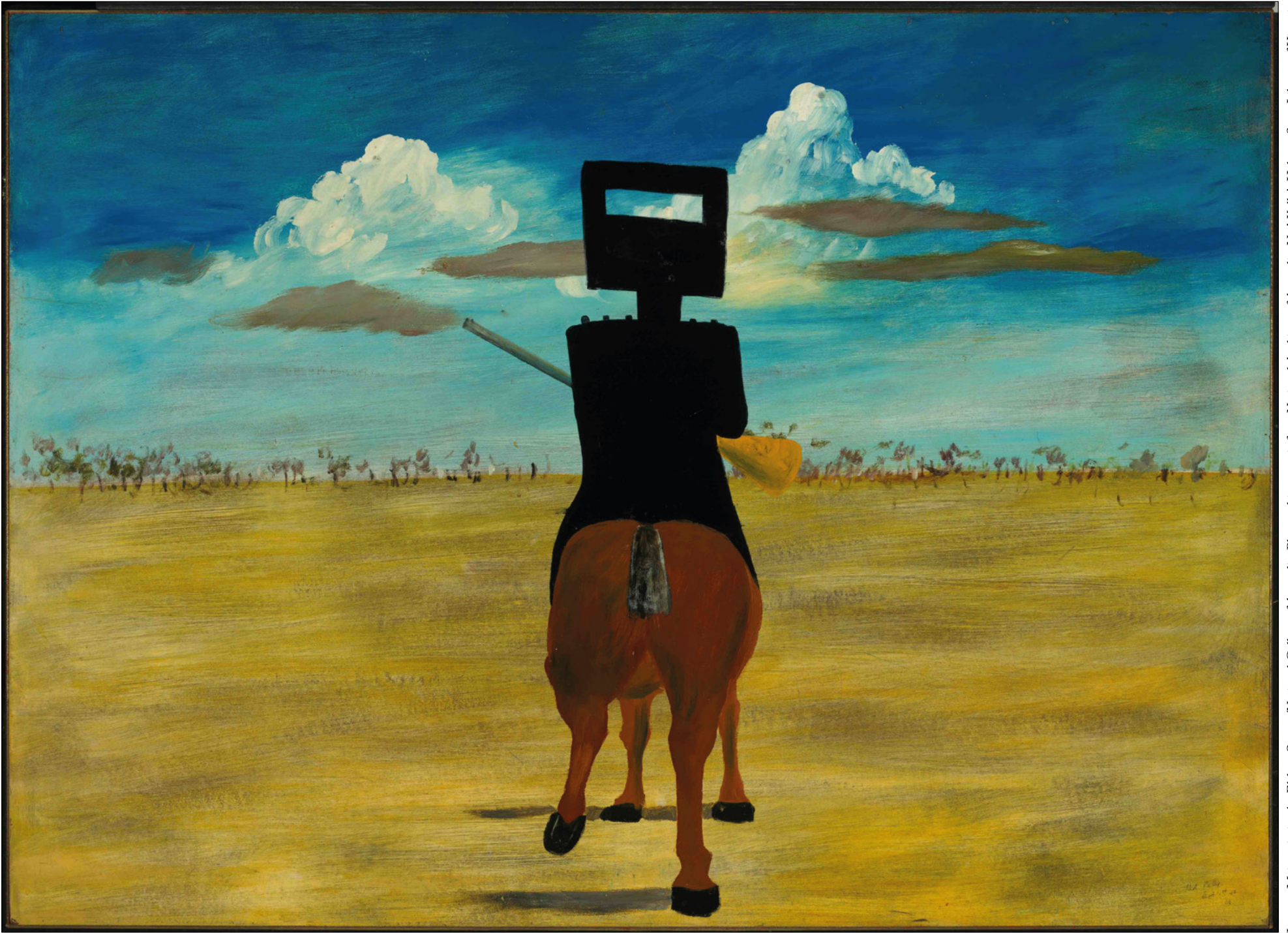
For further information begin by visiting:

www.gata.org and

www.mauldineconomics.com/ttmygh/that-was-the-weak-that-worked-part-3

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constitute financial
advice.

The last page gallery



Images: Main painting by Elthne Owens/National Gallery of Australia. Photographic portrait from National Archives of Australia. Ned Kelly's Helmet: State Library of Victoria

Ned Kelly (1946) by Sidney Nolan is an exceptional painting. The Ned Kelly story is exceptional and compelling too: a bank robber on the run in the 19th century who home-made an iron helmet and became a cult hero.

by Guy Lane

This painting is wonderful. You get the pathos of a real life-and-death story, the bold presentation of the lone bandit hero, the defiant posture of the rider, the gait and attitude of the horse, and the supreme wit of the clouds appearing through the aperture of the helmet. I cannot praise this painting enough.



History is often kind to mavericks, rebels, revolutionaries and outlaws. Men like Ned Kelly are few and far between. He, and others including Butch Cassidy & The Sundance Kid, Billy the Kid, Jesse James, John Dillinger, Bonnie & Clyde, Al Capone, Che Guevara have all been elevated to the status of folk heroes. Through generations of books, television and film, their image and reputation is polished and heightened to legend.

To quote Thoreau "Most men lead lives of quiet desperation and go to the grave with the song still in them". It is therefore human nature for law-abiding citizens, to embrace the rogues gallery of restless and reckless spirits who confronted, challenged and took up arms against the establishment of their age. And in every case without exception they sacrificed their liberty and lives through their lifestyle choices. But on close examination it seems that it is in fact a complete absence of lifestyle

choices that drove these desperate individuals to kill, steal and fight - to the death - in heart-breaking attempts to survive, in a world that had stacked all the odds against them. In most instances - the odds were worse than unfair - in the form of corrupt police, courts and prison systems. In most treatments of the tales of this maverick band - it is a blend of injustice and poverty - that is invoked to excuse, justify or explain their vicious actions. Whilst grinding poverty may have been the catalyst and injustice the propellant, it is the instinct for self preservation that makes these lives so incendiary, destructive and homicidal. It is a combination that still fires the imagination of ordinary people.

Who among us is immune to a bit of road rage? Who doesn't at some time fantasise about resolving extreme frustration and anger with a bit of Clockwork Orange style 'ultra violence'.

A little bit of research reveals

many believe Ned Kelly to have been a villain. He was born into an impoverished Irish Catholic family of farmers in Melbourne. He wasn't a Robin Hood, robbing the rich to help the poor. Ned was a thief and had been convicted on three counts of murder. Nonetheless, his stand against corrupt British colonists in the 1860s made him the folk hero he has remained to many to this day. Much of this is revealed in Peter Carey's novel 'The True History of the Ned Kelly Gang' which won the Booker Prize in 2001.

His protective metal helmet captured the imagination of ordinary folk, but did not endow Kelly with the morality or fighting skills of a noble knight. It is the remarkable genius of Sidney Nolan's painting that it encapsulates this sense of a hopeless armed quest for something better; Ned's last words were: "Such is life".

In 2010, using DNA identification, Kelly's remains were exhumed from

a communal prison grave and given a separate burial. The new grave is unmarked to avoid the risk of vandalism. Descendants of both the Kelly family and the killed police officers still live in the area.

Without doubt, Kelly's life was short, sad, difficult and tragic. Heroic? That simply depends on one's perspective.

