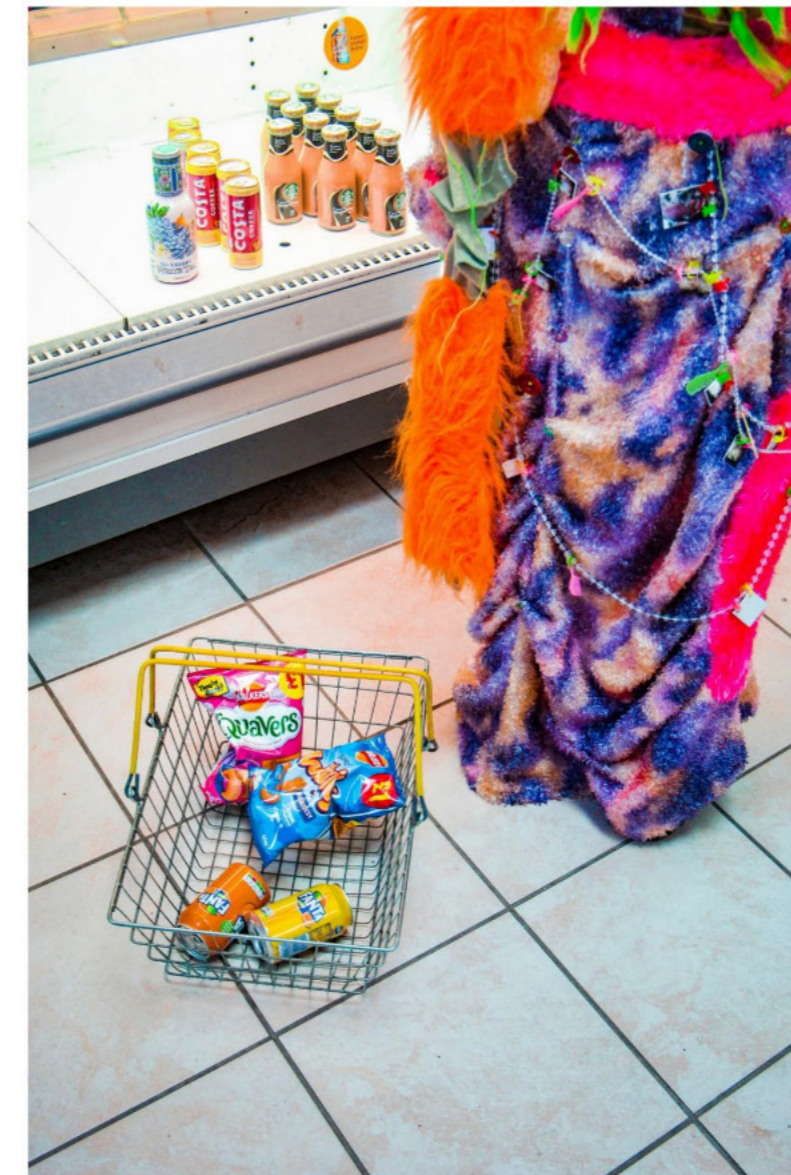


GUM

CONSUME



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EDITORS' NOTE

We hope you have a cup of tea ready. Dairy milk or oat (it's only 30p extra)? Sugar? Sorry, hun, we're all out of Earl Grey.

Welcome to an issue utterly fuelled by consumption: assembled between servings of pea and mint soup, a shameful amount of TikTok scrolling, and propranolol on the rough days. We present to you, CONSUME.

Consumption is disgusting. Or, at least, it disgusts us - to eat and shit until we die, to buy yet another item of clothing, and to drink ourselves silly at the weekend. It's embarrassing to admit our need to consume because what we're really admitting is a reliance on something external to ourselves. This 'something' is sometimes a Yorkie bar from your GUM co-chief; other times it's your mum's lasagna, a bit burnt on the top. It's all about survival.

Through consumption, we connect with the world around us. That means, however, that our consumption has an impact - on the environment, on individuals, and on ourselves as a collective. We must consider who is at the other end of our consumption and what such consumption will produce, now and in the future.

CONSUME seeks to lay out all that we consume and to face it head-on, rather than shy away. We look at the ethics behind our nail art and the anti-Blackness of white veganism. It delights in our media consumption - however trashy that may be. But we also spare a moment for the more moving aspects of consumption: the collective care present in the work of mutual aid groups and the sickening all-consuming nature of romantic love.

This issue's shoot, AT THE CORNER SHOP, opens the door on the outlets that feed our consumption. The corner shop is one of few spaces where too much is never enough: where cat food nestles between washing up liquid and toothpaste, where cornflakes are stacked on instant ramen. Channelling a sentiment of futility and fatigue the shoot ruminates on the true cost of this convenience.

Through CONSUME, we hope to take away the shame of consumption itself. This shame isn't productive or joyful. Rather, we hope CONSUME fills you with something - a reassurance, a resolve, or simply a respite. A good thing, fingers crossed.

With love,
Eilidh + Tiarna

Eilidh TIARNA

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IN CONVERSATION WITH

WORDS
EILIDH AKILADE
(SHE/HER)

Over a grainy Zoom call, Flo's (very gorgeous) cat crosses the screen while Rory gestures to stacks of boxes to his side, pulling out a tin of three bean vegan chilli. The pair riff off one another, finish each other's sentences, and nod in agreement - there's a certain energy to them, one of care and camaraderie. One gets the feeling that this energy runs throughout the entirety of the Food Not Bombs Glasgow chapter.

Food Not Bombs as a whole has been kicking around since the 1980s; it's made up of international independent chapters, all mobilised around bringing food justice and protesting against inequality. In winter 2020, mid-pandemic, Flo set up the current Glasgow chapter. It's a mutual aid group, primarily based in the south-side of Glasgow. Throughout 2021, the group regularly held a free food stall in Queen's Park but now primarily concentrate on community food pantries and mobile food distribution throughout the city.

The term 'mutual aid' has become increasingly prevalent since the beginning of the pandemic. It's one of those terms that many of us know but don't fully understand, nodding and smiling when it comes up in conversation. 'Nobody's getting paid to do it. We don't have a board or anything,' Flo explains. It's organised horizontally so there's not really a hierarchy within the group. 'For me a big part of mutual aid, as distinct from charity, is that we eat the food as well.' Mutual aid resists the saviour narratives often perpetuated by charity; in the case of Food Not Bombs, this means people from the community are distributing food to others within that same community.

Crucially, Food Not Bombs Glasgow is an anarchist group. 'At the heart of it, anarchism is the belief that we can and should look after one another and relate to each other as human beings,' Rory explains. Despite its strong politics, 'We don't subject anyone to a sermon about the evils of capitalism before we come up with beans and rice - we don't want any leverage involved in this.'

'Food Not Bombs exists to actually try and solve the problems [of food inequality] without theorising about them. We don't really talk about theory that much. We mainly talk about soup,' Flo laughs. Debates around the role of theory in activism come up time and time again.

At times, individuals are deterred from joining a movement, simply because they're made to feel ashamed for not yet reading Marx. Such elitism evidently does more harm than good. Theory has its place in activism but that place doesn't always have to be front and centre. 'It's not hamstrung by theory,' Rory adds, 'but we do it [Food Not Bombs] because we believe in stuff.' The theory is there but it's the practical application of the theory - at its very base level - that's important.

'It's about sharing food, sharing resources, sharing a conversation with someone, and a meal with someone,' Flo says. Food becomes a vehicle for connection, as well as a political statement. 'There can be issues with people feeling shame and like it's degrading to accept free food,' she continues. In sharing food with others, they hope to counteract this misplaced shame.

The chapter's Instagram page is filled with photos of their stall, their pantry, and, of course, their glorious food. Aside from picking up a tin of chopped tomatoes here and there, the chapter runs on donations. They've had it all - from 500 jars of pesto to 500 gram bags of vegan marshmallows. 'We actually ended up with quite bougie, really luxury ingredients,' says Rory. These aren't products on the edge of spoiling either: usually, it's simply a matter of shops wanting to clear some space for the season's next food trend. They've had to turn away bread simply because they can't take it all. The narrative of food scarcity is a made-up one. 'There is the food. There are the people. We can bring them together,' says Rory. In Tory Britain, the simplicity of the solution seems shocking - and yet, it really is that simple.

It's all vegan and vegetarian; although this is true of most Food Not Bombs chapters, it's primarily a matter of ease. Some Food Not Bombs chapters opt for veg-packed meals; for the Glasgow chapter, they're big fans of macaroni cheese. 'Everybody deserves to have treats. We don't want to just be giving people lentils every day,' says Flo. Joy shouldn't have to be radical; however, within this country, there is an insidious notion that joy ought to be an afterthought, reserved only for those of means. As such, joy becomes radical.

SPRING 22

2

'I think some people in the UK have a very strong sense of 'if I've suffered then so should everyone else,' explains Flo. From student debt to increases in energy costs, there's a misplaced emphasis upon collective pain. Food Not Bombs want to make it clear: there is another way.

Last autumn, Glasgow City Council removed one of the group's community food pantries, based in Govanhill Park, for its alleged 'potential misuse'. The pantry also contained baby essentials - none of which were returned. Not all was lost, however: on bringing in a replacement pantry, Rory came across a mound of non-perishables 'very carefully and deliberately' sitting upon a nearby power box. 'Even if you take away the physical structure, we're just going to keep putting food there for people because we've established that's what we do now,' Rory says. The community persists in spite of council action.

But community spirit doesn't prevent the group from getting worn out. 'We've had a lot of issues with burnout - it's one of the reasons that we stopped doing the stall in September,' says Flo. As such, the group took a month off in late 2021. 'I love that we were able to do that. A lot of organisations just do not have the flexibility to say, 'We are too tired to do this right now.' The values inherent to their work are just as present within their interpersonal relationships. Food Not Bombs is all about looking out for one another - that includes those within the group, as well as those outwith it. Being a mutual aid group, rather than a charity, allows for this active love and care.

'The fact that burnout is such an issue in radical spaces and in radical communities is such a stark contrast to the way that radical communities get talked about in the mainstream,' Rory adds. In reality, Food Not Bombs and other activist groups are burned out from doing the work that a functioning government should be doing itself.

The role of the government itself has regularly been used against the group. 'We've had criticism from people saying that by providing free food it takes the pressure off the government,' Flo says. The alternative, however, is to let people starve. Hunger, poverty, inequality - these things won't wait for a better government.

'It's worthwhile us talking about these criticisms,' says Rory. The group isn't afraid to check in with themselves. However, some things are non-negotiable. Flo describes an encounter in the summer where someone took offence

at the group's anarchist flag and their politicisation of food distribution. 'It is political, by definition - whether we have symbols attached to it or not. Food is political and always will be,' says Flo, adding that he 'wasn't very happy about' her response. Flo explains that whether you're a Christian group with a soup kitchen or an anarchist group with a food stall, it's a political act. 'We just happen to be more overt about it.'

The group are often told that they shouldn't feed drug users or immigrants - inevitably, the list goes on, bitterly adding yet another allegedly undeserving group. Such prejudices create what Rory describes as a 'venn diagram of increasingly tiny concentric circles' relating to the notion of a 'deserving' individual. 'You end up with a "deserving" but entirely hypothetical person who can't eat the food at all,' Rory says. Food Not Bombs aren't interested in the hypothetical: there are real people, right now, who need food - and nobody's biases should get in the way of that.

It's practicalities that Food Not Bombs wants to focus on. 'If you want a revolution, someone needs to do the cooking and the cleaning and the childcare,' says Flo. On a very basic level, activism itself demands feeding. Last year, Food Not Bombs fed those at Glasgow's Free Palestine demo and the Kenmure Street protest. Feminised labour is often pushed aside and activist circles are not immune to this. But, as Food Not Bombs shows, there is a great deal of political hope in simple acts of care.

This feminised labour looks to both the present and the future. 'Feeding people and looking after their material needs and maintaining human connections and communities is what prevents people from getting radicalised and shut off and going down the Nazi path in the first place - to an extent,' explains Rory. 'That community building provides a defence as much as brawling in the streets.'

'You don't need permission but you do need friends,' says Rory. That's what underpins this group: not permits or volunteer application forms, but love for one another and a genuine will - and a way - to make things better. 'Dear reader, just make some sandwiches - it's that easy.' Food Not Bombs Glasgow shows us exactly this.

FEATURES

3

FOOD NOT BOMBS GLASGOW

GUM

CONSUME

SMOKING: THE AESTHETICS

WORDS
ANEST WILLIAMS
(SHE/HER)

OF ADDICTION

SPRING 22

4

GUM

There's this one specific NHS Scotland anti-smoking advert. It's from some time in the early noughties and has recently been unearthed by everyone's fave, @loveofhuns. Three gorgeous women, in the finest of y2k attires, are shown dancing in the club, sunbathing on the beach, and chasing after boys in the streets. Except, unfortunately, the boys don't want them, deterred by their 'breath, hair, and stinky clothes'. NHS Scotland wanted to tell the nation that no matter how hot you are, smoking is, and always will be, unattractive.

It's somewhat jarring because, usually, the media tells us that smoking is just about the most sexy thing there is. Fairly often, what influences someone to start smoking - and therefore, perhaps an involuntary smoking habit - is cinema. Holly Golightly, Mia Wallace, Danny Zuko, Tyler Durden, Lisa Rowe... the list of characters who embody the 'cool' persona associated with smoking is endless. These characters tend to exude 'badass' energy, someone who doesn't conform to the standards of society and goes their own way. Coincidentally they tend to be physically attractive as well, associating the act of smoking with an admired physical aesthetic.

If you peer further down the tobacco timeline, smoking has been linked to masculinity and female rebelliousness before these characters came about, through the marketing choices of major tobacco companies. Marlboro, for example, decided to utilise the iconic depiction of the 'rugged cowboy' to popularise filtered cigarettes, as these were considered to be feminine at the time. The campaign transformed straight cigarettes from feminine to masculine in a matter of months, and successfully spread the perception of smoking as a desirable masculine attribute.

On the other side of the coin is the 1920s 'Torches of Freedom' campaign. Before the 20th century, smoking was considered an immoral act for women, but following World War 1 and its recruitment of women into jobs vacated by conscripted men, the tobacco companies soon realised this was a prime selling area. Edward Bernays, a major figure in American propaganda, hired women to smoke their 'torches of freedom' while marching in the Easter Sunday Parade of 1929. It became a significant moment for women smokers because cigarettes then became synonymous with emancipation and equality with men. So, it's understandable why smoking is historically linked with notions of masculinity and female rebelliousness. We know that these notions are still portrayed by film characters and online aesthetic movements today.

The thought of being perceived as a rebel appealed to me at 13 years old (and honestly, it still does now that I'm 21) and cinematic depictions played a part in that. I grew up in a village populated with only a handful of people my age; in my early teen years there was nothing to do except sit in the park; smoking became a natural element of this activity. Coincidentally, this was during the Tumblr #grungecore aesthetic era at its prime, (quickly google tumblr cigarettes and you might be involuntarily transported back to 2013) and so we were all under the impression that smoking was cool, actually. Effy Stonem was smoking - and so were we. They say that people are more likely to start smoking if they have a parent who smokes, and this was certainly true for us: we would steal cigarettes from our parents, careful to only take what they wouldn't notice. At one point we got so desperate that we would unroll the half-smoked stumps we found in someone's garden, so that we could re-roll the tobacco into something barely smokable. We were trying our best to live out our grunge revival realities.

But when it comes to smoking, grunge, of course, comes with a price - the health risks being one of them. As such, nowadays, if you happen to walk down Sauchiehall Street on a Sunday morning, you might casually glance upon the remains of half-eaten cheesy chips in their polystyrene boxes, the discarded silver NOS canisters,

or increasingly recently, the rainbow of disposable vapes, left over from last night's club-goers. These are evidence of the newest form of packaged nicotine, now part of the cycle of addiction that has pervaded populations for centuries.

I too am someone who now (embarrassingly?) indulges in the newest trend of disposable vapes, although I do my best to dispose of them properly (AKA anywhere but the side of the street, please). All health warnings aside, one of the glaringly obvious issues with these kinds of vapes is right there in the name: they're disposable, and thus aren't designed to last the test of time. With an array of reusable vapes already available, it begs the question of why we would start buying something so environmentally unconscious when those friendlier versions are just as accessible? The answer, I believe, lies in convenience. With disposable vapes, you don't need anything except the vape itself: no chargers, no refill pods, and no need to commit to them (until you're hooked).

As smoking is inherently bound up with aesthetics, it's a given that vaping is also. We position it as somewhat cringe, somewhat juvenile - but, simultaneously, despite some health risks, we all know it's better for our lungs than actual tobacco. Recent increases in vape appearances on TV might see us similarly romanticise vaping but it's hard to gauge the cultural impact just yet.

In 2017, following the lead of other European countries, 10-pack cigarettes were banned in order to deter young people from picking up the habit, as they were less likely to buy 20-packs for double the price. In 2020, menthol cigarettes were also banned, as menthol combines with nicotine to make an even more potently addictive experience. Alongside the inflating price of living, the price of tobacco has steadily been increasing, again with intentions to deter people from smoking. And alongside education regarding health, these policy changes appear to be working: 25.7% of people aged 18-24 were smokers in 2011, compared to only 16% in 2019. Our media consumption may encourage us to smoke; but financial constraints discourage us even more.

And as a smoker, I'm in no position to advise you on your nicotine habits, so take from this article what you will, I suppose. Smoking is bad for you; vaping less so. However, the romanticisation of the former means that, despite NHS Scotland's efforts, it's still portrayed as really very cool and sexy. And, let's be honest: we're all a bit pissed that they don't show Love Island's participants smoking anymore - those chats were some of the show's best.

FEATURES

5

CONSUME



6

IT'S TIME TO TRASH 'TRASH CULTURE'

WORDS
TINKA BRUNEAU
(SHE/HER)

ART
ELLA EDWARDS
(SHE/HER)

Watching some soap, a dozen episodes of a reality tv show, or a romcom you've seen a million with an obligatory tub of ice cream and a blanket: it's an activity we all partake in, although not one we proudly advertise. But why is it that we don't post on our story that we've cried over Noah's fate in *The Notebook*, but we do proudly post pictures of our park bench modern-classic reading session?

Trash culture is exactly what you think it is: trashy magazines, TV, film - the media that's easy to consume. It's all the so-called lowbrow stuff, the kind of thing that Radio 4 turns its nose up at. But, what such powers that be don't realise, is that trash culture feels so good. There is true joy to be found in switching our brains off.

The concept of trash culture relies upon our collective differentiation between activities that we are proud of completing - usually held in high esteem - and activities that seem easier to complete, ones that take a bit less effort. In general, activities that are seen as harder, generate more respect upon completion. Fully understanding a Kanye verse for example, is seen as more impressive than fully understanding a verse from a Taylor Swift song, because a Kanye verse is seen as more complex, therefore more interesting and worth investigating. Some cultural activities - like listening to and fully understanding Kanye's music - are seen as complex and somewhat intellectual, while others aren't. The things that don't seem complex, often fall under the term of trash culture.

But the category of trash culture isn't even a fixed state: literary classic *Jane Eyre* was frowned upon in its day; now, it wouldn't be out of place in one of those borderline-pretentious book pics. Such instability signals the failure of such categorization.

Moreover, refusing to see value in trash culture merely limits us: we miss out on the opportunity to see that *Love Island* raises highly compelling questions about gender and class dynamics or that the western popularity of K-pop is somewhat radical. True 'intelligence'

lies in the ability to think for ourselves and see meaning in what others deem 'trashy'.

As such, it is worth investigating what dominant culture deems trash. Why are all boy bands, romantic comedies, and reality tv shows all seen as culturally inferior? One thing that these examples all have in common, is that they are all stereotypically enjoyed by teenage girls (or, at least, women in general). Of course, men may also enjoy these activities, but in general, the expected target audience is women.

It seems that most things primarily catered towards women, or at least primarily enjoyed by women, are seen as less interesting or complex, and therefore more easily categorised as trash culture. This shows that our culture regards women in general as mostly enjoying 'easier things' and uninterested or unengaged with 'higher' intellectual pleasures. Women are underestimated in the intellectuality of their desires. Put that way, it makes sense that we wouldn't be proud of participating in these stereotypically womanly activities, because we would then be interacting with activities that are seen as being of less intellectual value.

This might seem like an overly dramatic conclusion, but I invite you to think about the things that you are proud of doing, or even things that you admire or find cool. Are they thought of as typically 'male' activities, or even neutral? Most activities associated with women or girls, will either be considered uncool, uninteresting or simply unchallenging, thus usually falling within the realm of trash culture. Discrediting things that women are interested in is simply another way of keeping women from power. It is incredibly demoralising to have your interests discredited and to find that the time and effort you invest in them will not result in the external societal regard which usually accompanies dedication to an interest. Someone who knows everything about One Direction will not be seen as a musical expert in their genre, whereas someone who knows everything about Kanye will be. Redefining trash culture and reclaiming the things society has deemed uninteresting, isn't simply about not feeling guilty while watching *The Notebook*; it's also about challenging the idea that the things that women are interested in are irrelevant, simply because women are interested in them.

Maybe trash culture isn't so trashy after all, but, simply, stereotypically 'womanly' - whatever that means. The term shouldn't be used to bring women down; rather, it's an opportunity for reclamation and - not to sound dramatic - societal progress. Go forth and take pride in your romcom watching sessions; post your *Notebook*-induced-crying-selfies and keep your park bench reading sessions private.

7

TOP TEN TOP

TEN

WORDS
JACKSON HARVEY
(HE/HIM)

SPRING 22



ART
ELLA EDWARDS
(SHE/HER)

8

GUM

Top ten lists are click-bait. They're easy to read, easy to process, clearly headed, bullet-pointed, summarised and succinct. Simple. They reel readers in and then they drive traffic through websites which eventually lead us into an online shopping basket, dropping what feels like monopoly money into the ether. Top ten lists are big business and companies know it. Up until this point, top ten lists have influenced the purchase of pretty much everything I own over the price of a tenner. Just the other day, I was reading up on the 'Top Ten Best Book Lights' after reading a novel for five minutes on my phone and somehow ending up playing Flappy Bird until four in the morning, lost down a dopaMine. The fact that I have bad thumb-eye co-ordination isn't the only thing I found down there.

The sheer existence of top ten lists means more to these corporate big wigs than the content of the lists itself. So, here's what I found. An immeasurable majority (talk about journalistic accuracy) of these lists are created almost entirely at random. There are writers, out there, whose objectives it is to merely materialise these articles. What I mean by this, is that there are a vast number of articles online wherein the top ten lists provided have been constructed algorithmically to include items from other, previously researched and published, top ten lists. And quite literally rehashed into a different order. So, when you next look for the best air fryer out there, there is a high probability that the "best" was once last in another list, and you've just cooked yourself up a steaming serving of hot shit for dinner. These people are the crooked vultures of the PressWorld, and if they get in touch, I'll send them my CV with vim. Arrivederci scruples - bonjour big bucks.

The truth is that nobody really knows what is true anymore. And really, even if I was sitting here, genuinely testing and reviewing ten items and ranking them numerically, who is to say that what I think holds any weight for anyone else. When it comes to larger publications like Vogue, The New York Times, Men's Health, and The Guardian, who says any of these journalists are the last word on which pumpkin spiced latte is "best"? I'll tell you: the fashion and retail and fast-food advertising-campaign agents who fund the press, who pay the writers, that's who. And no matter how much I wish there was, there isn't a single individual I can blame here. We are all just cogs in a laissez-faire wheel in a fairground ride of horoscopes, love, and inequality. As a matter of fact, even this article is sponsored. Yes, by Jobcentre Plus.

I watched this Tyra Banks video on YouTube where she bought two takeaways at the same time in order to try them and decide which was best, for future reference. I do that, between Lidl and Aldi. Now, this is just an idea, I no longer have a grasp on what truth is any more, we're well past that. The idea is that we all jump on the top ten cryptocurrencies of February 2022 and just, you know, get rich. Then, once that easy bit is out the way, we can all just buy, like, ten of everything and post our own, real, down-to-earth, and authentic top ten lists for the people. Who knows, the list might even go viral, and then you can get discreetly paid to sponsor your very own top ten carbonated aspartame-rich beverages. And what's more, you might benefit vultures like me when we come and scavenge the products from your publication for our publication. And merrily round we'll go like a spherical peanut-butter and jam piece with two circles cookie-cut out to look like a perpetual symbol of capitalist yin and yang. You can stick that at number one on your list of the top ten ideas of [insert article publication date and time here].

HERE ARE MY TOP TEN 'TOP TEN' LISTS ON THE INTERNET:

1) **BEST KETTLE 2021 - REVIEWS OF THE TOP 10 ELECTRIC KETTLES**
Handy.

2) **TOP 10 SCOTTISH GANGSTERS**
Top Trumps for murderers.

3) **TOP 10 COUNTRIES**
WW3 Come Dine With Me conversation starters.

4) **TOP 10 CAUSES OF DEATH (WORLD HEALTH ORGANIZATION)**
Prevention is the best cure.

5) **TOP 10 CRYPTOCURRENCIES IN FEBRUARY 2022 (FORBES)**
Get rich by Christmas.
Just do it.

6) **TOP 10 MAIN BATTLE TANKS**
If you're looking for subsidiary battle tanks, look elsewhere.

7) **TOP 10 CHARITIES**
Enough already, with the charities!
We have problems enough as it is.

8) **TOP 10 BEST BLOGS AROUND THE WORLD THAT WILL INSPIRE YOUR LIFE**
Go from Joe Bloggs to "You Go Glen Co-Joe" in 10 distilled diary entries.

9) **TEN COUNTRIES WITH THE HIGHEST POPULATION IN THE WORLD**
That's right. All ten of them have the highest population in the world.

10) **TOP 10 TIPS ON WRITING TOP 10 LISTS**
This is genuinely real. They all are. I haven't actually read this one through.

9

CULTURE

CONSUME

Marly Merle (she/her)



The character Nub Woman is the end product of the mating between a **woman*** and a creature called Nub. A fleshy pink Nub, a cylindrical organism, with the power to create new leases of life. As the Nub and woman mate — a process called 'The Nubbing' — it infuses its essence within her. The Nub's essence replaces predetermined conditioning women have inherited, and reconstructs the ideals of what it is, and what it means, to be a woman. Once they fuse together, the end product is a hybrid woman without the imaginary restrictions she has, for so long, lived by. Once they mate and consume one another, the Nub becomes an extension of itself — expanding from its original, to a larger and more exaggerated form. The woman's silhouette; externally transformed, leads to

the redefinition of the previously constricted internal self. A new femme form free from the chains of corrupt ideals of societal femininity.

Nub Land is a new world of otherness, which Nub Woman exists in. Nub Land is a renovated reality, that completely submerges you into a space of tantalising colour and form, a place of newness and reinvention. The wearer of this body sculptural piece Nub Land becomes part of a different reality and is completely submerged into a new space. The artwork is a means of transportation to Nub Land.

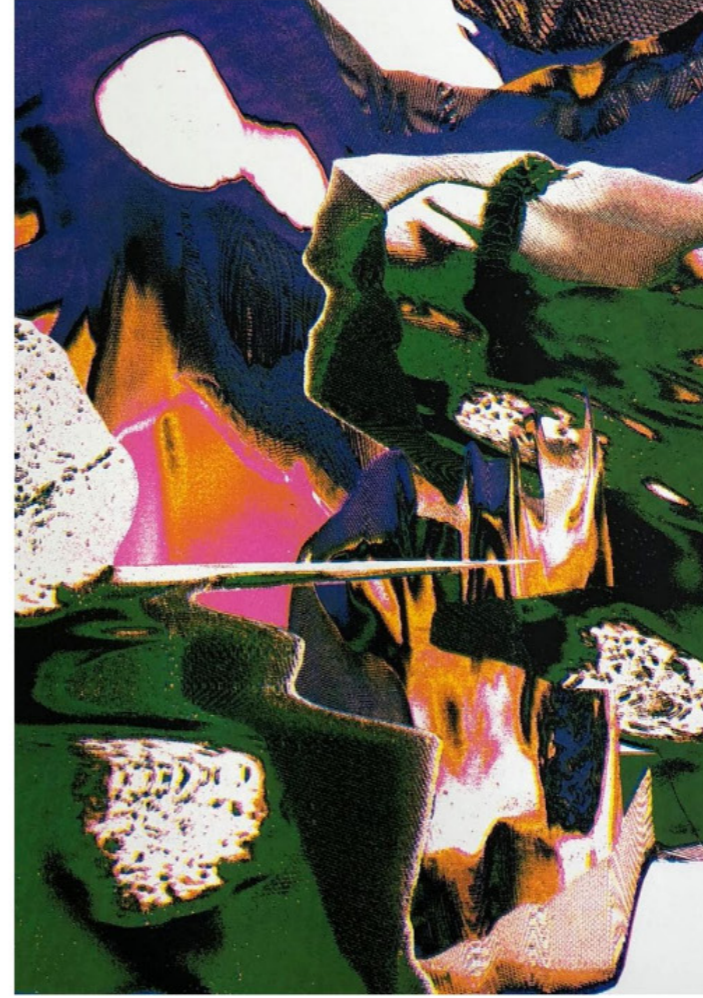
Woman* — Anyone who identifies as being a woman.



SPRING 22

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GUM



Photographer: Lauren Kellie
Models: Mirren Thomson
and Mariam Bayaty

13

ART & PHOTOGRAPHY

CONSUME

CHOPPING AT THE NECK:



WORDS
TREY KYEREMEH
(HE/HIM)

14

ART
MAGDALENA
JULIA KOSUT
(SHE/HER)

WHITE VEGANISM &

NEO-COLONIALISM

SPRING 22

GUM

Veganism is a word with a certain buzz to it. This diet shift is truly permeating all parts of society and media - we never stop seeing or hearing about veganism, one way or the other. Such a social phenomenon is unsurprising: after all, veganism, in the west, centres whiteness. Certainly, veganism parades itself as a progressive movement, both inclusive and culturally sensitive. However, it may also be regarded as yet another oppressive tool used by whiteness to obstruct progression for Black communities and other ethnic minority groups.

In 2017 I moved to Glasgow and I met my first vegan. Coming from Newham, East London, veganism had not yet entered my radar. Even when I go home now, there is not one single vegan residing within my friendship circle. Yet, veganism is taking the white-liberal-middle class world by storm.

Questions about the inclusivity of the vegan movement were raised in Michaela Coel's Emmy-winning BBC drama *I May Destroy You*. After Arabella (the protagonist) takes a job as a social media vegan 'climate-teer', her friend Samson complains about such movements: 'Why must the white man chop at the neck, just when the African has begun to swallow?' He positions the work and industry of 'climate-teers' as a neo-colonial tool used to prevent the progression of Black people like himself, after he was recently told to switch his hard-earned Mercedes to an electric car. For Samson, this is 'manipulative' and 'socio-pathic': white people are obsessed with the future but (unsurprisingly) never want to recognise the past. But Samson's proverb-esque statement can easily be applied to not only white-liberal climate activism as a whole, but to specifically veganism itself.

Why has the simple task of eating become so politicised? I don't have a cookie cutter answer but let's break it down.

Wherever whiteness is centred it inevitably becomes a dominating force. So, the concept of white veganism can be seen as another tool used to oppress minority groups, further consolidating the standard colonial superior-versus-inferior power dynamic.

Access to a vegan lifestyle is not a quick switch. At face value vegan alternatives tend to be more expensive. This is reflected in markup prices of organic food and new food retail fronts opening up in gentrified neighbourhoods. In a country built on the exploitation and marginalisation of Black communities and other ethnic minorities, there is a correlation between socio-economic hardship and living in dense underfunded or under-supported environments. So understanding this socio-political dynamic illuminates why Arabella's friend so vehemently believes veganism only works against Black liberation.

In Coel's drama, a character mocks that 'the ice caps are melting' but the scene's humour does not aim to trivialise global warming. Instead, it reveals the juxtaposition that occurs when white veganism only considers what's killing the planet and ignores what's currently killing the people on it. Most of us have never seen - and will never see - an ice cap in our entire life. Whereas, for many Black folks, worries about the contingent effects of greenhouse gases can seem futile because death is a lot more imminent in other areas of their lives. Social apparatuses and institutions that exist to protect white people and white property also

have an insatiable tendency to harm Black life in the process: police brutality, medical racism, the school to prison pipeline system. Seeing things from a different perspective, the comical scene in *I May Destroy You* becomes a lot clearer and more nuanced.

That said, a plant-based lifestyle is not foreign to Black or African identities, and many other cultures. However, for these communities, such lifestyle changes are bigger than solely eating plant-based products. In an interview with *METAL Magazine*, environmental educator and blogger *QueerBrownVegan* states:

'veganism is an anti-oppression stance that seeks to fight for the liberation of humans and animals.. veganism also takes an anti-racist, anti-imperialist, and anti-colonial lens that seeks to localize food systems where it is ecologically sound'.

This caveat of veganism is often overlooked because it's not necessarily palatable or marketable. There is no consumable vantage point to it. If you approach veganism in its totality, then you reach a very different position to that of white veganism. You instead reach a social movement that adopts a holistic approach to living on this planet. Since the industrial revolution, the Global North has emphasised a linear production system as opposed to a cyclical system, one that takes from and then gives back to the environment and community. This can be tied in with Samson's statement about whiteness never addressing the past. In the words of South African songwriter Miriam Makeba addressing Black history: 'We don't write our history. It has always been handed down to us'.

There is no linear approach to understanding or defining the importance and effects of approaching intersectionality as a critical lens. In the same vein, Coel's *I May Destroy You* does not exist to constellate how all Black people will interact with veganism. What it does allude to is that the experience of Black and African people is constantly dismissed despite being so complex and contingent to history. Later in the episode, we find out that the company Arabella works for is using her as a token to increase viewership all while her white friend who referred her makes more commission, simply because Arabella is Black. It's a bleak realisation that both on the surface and at the root of white dominated spaces - such as veganism - Blackness, Black culture and Black people are only vehicles for profit. Meanwhile, the pressing issues for people like Samson and Arabella are diluted because they aren't and never were included in the dialogue or aims of white veganism.

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POLITICS

CONSUME

ON DRUG CONSUMPTION ROOMS

SPRING 22

16

WORDS
ZOLA ROWLATT
(SHE/HER)

EW
DISCUSSION OF
DRUG USE AND
ADDICTION

1,264 people died of drug abuse in Scotland in 2019.
1,339 people died of drug abuse in Scotland in 2020.
722 people died of drug abuse in Scotland in the first six months of 2021.

GUM

That's more than three thousand people in just over two years. While many organisations, like the Scottish Advisory Committee on Drug Misuse, have strived for wider action against drug use, the increasing need to tackle this pandemic is unavoidable. The UK and Scottish governments have been advised by The Royal College of Physicians of Edinburgh to consider decriminalising drug possession in an attempt to lower death rates; safe drug consumption rooms are another suggestion. These are rooms that would take users off the streets and provide them with a sheltered, sterile environment where they could get high under medical supervision. Social support delivered through counselling and housing programs would also be available, giving users a chance to live an addiction-free life.

Some may argue this is reason enough to install such facilities; but what impact would these facilities have on society as a whole? Drug-related deaths? HIV rates? Criminal activity? Reduced, reduced, reduced. And a lighter strain on healthcare and the police force means the government saves money. Seems like a win-win solution, doesn't it? Not to the Westminster government.

In order to achieve significant results it's vital that both the Scottish and UK governments work together. But alas, the UK government controls drug policy and currently stands against measures proposed by the Scottish government. Drug consumption rooms do work, with seventy-eight rooms already introduced across Europe alone. They've been installed in Canada, Denmark, and the Netherlands and while there have been overdoses in these facilities, there has never been a recorded death.

Scotland's drug-related death rate soars far higher than any other European country. In 2018 the UK government's Drugs Legislation Team confirmed opposition, warning that 'a range of offences are likely to be committed in the operation'. Offences far more concerning than the preventable deaths of thousands of Scottish citizens, apparently. Why is 'the law' being prioritised at such a high human cost? What is the point of 'the law' if not to protect us all?

Glasgow sits at the epicentre of the crisis: currently home to almost 500 heroin users and the worst HIV epidemic in over 30 years. Of Scottish drug users only 40% receive treatment compared to 60% of users in England. Nicola Sturgeon accepts that 'this government should have done more earlier', and has since administered an extra £ 250 million to help tackle the crisis. This support proposes to inject vital money into rehabilitation centres across the nation and help provide addicts with necessary treatment. The city planned to embark on a pilot consumption room scheme yet the project was dissolved after it was announced it could not commence without a change in the law.

Some citizens, however, are not waiting for permission. Peter Krykant, a recovering heroin addict, drove around Glasgow in a converted minibus from which he operated his own drug consumption facility. He told the BBC that drug-use in Scotland is a 'pandemic' and that 'inaction now, on my part, is contributing to those deaths'. Krykant's actions shine a critical light on how Westminster's inaction plays a direct role in the deaths of Scottish people. Why should it be the job of civilians to rectify the crisis while those who hold the power wash their hands of it? Krykant

*Why is 'the law' being prioritised at such a high human cost?
What is the point of 'the law' if not to protect us all?*

was trying to protect people when he was arrested for his work in October. Yet since then he and his 'ambulance' have toured the UK with the Bristol-based Transform Drug Policy Foundation. With luck, this movement will inspire nationwide action.

The British government smothering Scottish autonomy is an antiquated practice. When Johnson declares that devolution has been a 'disaster north of the border' many are reminded of Thatcher's blend of British nationalism. It's also been pointed out that tight Westminster spending plans mean the next Holyrood government will likely have to consider spending cuts or tax rises. Crucial services such as free school meals, public transport, council tax, and mental health services in Scotland are being paid for with temporary Covid-19 funding. And while Edinburgh is starved of resources, Scottish politicians in London are mocked. The SNP leader Ian Blackford was told to 'go back to Skye' by a Tory MP as he stood to speak during an emergency Commons debate on Brexit. The divide has simply become a joke to some. In the wake of the overwhelming Scottish remain vote in the EU referendum, Westminster's neglect of the interests of Scotland is consistently made all too clear.

As the UK government takes their time deciding whether drug consumption rooms are appropriate, more people are dying. Inaction in Westminster demonstrates an undeniable lack of compassion. How many more lives need to be lost before the reins are loosened on the Scottish government?

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POLITICS

CONSUME



AT THE CORNER

EDITORIAL SHOOT

DESIGNER
ZIQING WAN
(@LACEWHOLESALE)

DIRECTION
EILIDH AKILADE,
LUCY MCLAUGHLIN,
TIARNA MEEHAN

PHOTOGRAPHER
JOY DAKERS

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MODELS
DANIEL CASTRO,
YANA DZHAKUPOVA,
NATHAN STRINGER

SHOP

AT YOUR CORNER SHOP — YOU'LL FIND IT ALL. BETWEEN FLICKERING TRACK LIGHTS AND STIRRING MILK FRIDGES, OUR SHOPPERS SKIRT THE SHOP PERIMETER. ADORNED IN KITSCHY COLOURFUL GARMENTS, THEY STOP ONLY MOMENTARILY TO PERUSE THE WINE SELECTION OR LEAF THROUGH THE GLOSSY PAGES OF A MAGAZINE. AS THEY EXIT, THEIR ARMS JUGGLE TENNENTS AND TAMPAX, THEIR BAGS BRIM WITH TOILET ROLL AND TOOTHPASTE, AND A PACK OF STERLING DUALS WEDGE INTO THEIR POCKET. THIS EDITORIAL SHOOT CAPTURES CONSUMPTION IN A SETTING BUILT ENTIRELY FOR OUR CONVENIENCE, 24 HOURS 7 DAYS A WEEK.

CONSUME



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GUM

SPRING 22







SPRING 22

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GUM



THE ETHICAL PRICE OF SELF-CARE: MANICURE'S MANY LABOURS

WORDS
KATHLEEN LODGE
(SHE/HER)

ART
SÉANIA STRAIN
(SHE/HER)

Deceptively masked in flowery infographics, the message 'Insta-Nails don't cost £30' is one I see increasingly on social media. Nail art and manicures have become exponentially mainstream over the last decade. It's no longer simply the dotted designs we attempted as children with toothpicks but a full salon service. Perhaps a by-product of our childhood obsession, it is the relatively new-found, younger consumers of nail art that are now heralded to have invigorated the industry, despite having less disposable income than traditional older-adult consumers. Furthermore, the shellac manicure of the eighties has been usurped by celebrity inspired sculpted acrylics whose costly designs take hours to create. Thus, today's manicurist is simultaneously expected to deliver ten tiny artworks all whilst maintaining polite conversation where little is off the table. Though rarely documented, this shift in the manicure/nail art history prompts questions about the value and recompense we endow to body labour, emotional labour, and body art.

Manicuring has a rich history dating as far back as ancient China and Egypt. More recently, the contemporary work culture of nail art, has been punctuated by advances in technology and shifts in labour. The 1980s saw both a broad feminisation of the workforce and the immigration of Korean and Vietnamese manicurists to the US and UK. These compounded to create a proliferation of female, immigrant run, walk-in salons - ultimately democratising the provision of a professional manicure. Now accessible,

affordable, and popularised through the growth of social media, the manicure as a form of self-care has moved from being a domestic practice, enacted by 'the self' onto 'one's self', to a service paid for by one woman (often white and middle-class) and performed by another (often a working-class immigrant). Manicure, like many other forms of 'women's work' and 'immigrant work', is systematically undervalued, often dismissed via narratives of innate skill. Women perform domestic or 'invisible work' such as cooking, cleaning or grooming from a young age with little credit, never mind recompense. When these jobs are monetised (here, grooming is monetised by the salon manicure), their origin in invisible women's work causes the perception that their labour is 'natural' and therefore unskilled. There is, of course, also a certain racism at play: racist attitudes further diminish the work of PoC manicurists and often see them subjected to ill-treatment by their white customers.

Beyond the bodily labour required of the manicurist, they are expected to listen to everything from their client's trivial complaints and anxieties, to boasting about holidays and the intimate details of their romantic relationships. I classify this as 'emotional labour'. As those in customer-facing roles will know, it can be exhausting to perform interest on cue. The expectation for your 'nail lady' to remember your personal life and comment on trauma resembles something closer to therapy, a service paid significantly more than manicures.

As suggested by the name, nail art requires the creativity and expertise of any other artistic form. This manifests as everything from 'Pinterest nails' with simple, multicoloured swirls or diamantes (that you might pay upwards of an extra fiver for per nail), to reproductions of Van Gogh paintings (@oioioi) and Warhol prints (@nailedbytav) that can cost up to £100 an hour and require 4-hour long appointments. This leads us to question how society values body art in contrast to fine art. If nails reproduce fine art or are presented in a gallery setting, like Lil Ki's manicure in the Museum of Modern Art, their value increases exponentially as they are now endowed with the high cultural and financial status synonymous with the gallery-space. This demonstrates a broader hierarchy within the art world, where design or decorative art is perceived as inferior to fine art. The label 'Pinterest nails' seems to hold similar value judgments, and while intricate designs take longer and therefore should cost more, I am wary of charging significantly more for nail art in my own practice just because it mimics so-called high art. Another unfair value judgment occurs when a nail tech amasses a large social media following which increases both their demand and prices. In terms of labour, why should we award more value to nail sets which take inspiration from the museum, or those created by Instagram celebrities?

There is no need to inherently problematise the purchase of a manicure; however, there is a need to better appreciate all that is involved in the service, paid or unpaid. Forms of self-care which involve labour (such as the manicure) deserve to be paid appropriately and not in accordance to arbitrary artistic or popular hierarchies. The skill involved in nail art is, ultimately, always art.

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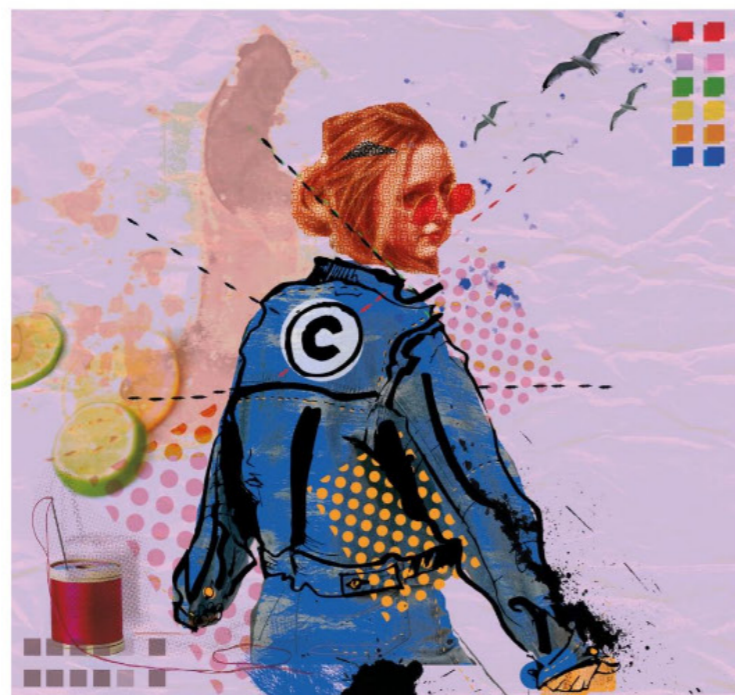
PULLING WOOL OVER OUR EYES: THE RISE OF FASHION PLAGIARISM

SPRING 22

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WORDS
MIA SQUIRE
(SHE/HER)

ART
ALISTAIR QUIETSCH
(HE/HIM)



GUM

It is also important to note that crochet is near impossible to be made on a machine meaning that the crochet garments you see on Shein's digitised shelves are likely also done by (a severely underpaid) hand.

We are all becoming increasingly aware of the horrors of fast fashion but we rarely think to add theft to the industry's long list of crimes. The fashion industry gets us all wrapped up in its very materiality: it's all about having the thing, wearing the thing. But these clothes are much more than their materiality - they came from a thought, a concept, and a design. When it comes to knitwear, that concept is increasingly subject to theft. Blatant plagiarism is the regrettable reality faced by many independent designers today.

Since Shein's establishment in 2008, the company has had its share of controversies and has frequently come under fire for ethical and environmental concerns. Nevertheless, the fast fashion tyrant has ruled supreme with its impossibly low prices and clever marketing techniques which ensure when we're online, a Shein advert is never too far. Adding to the morally-murky cloud which surrounds the company is the recent chain of independent designers who claim to have had their designs stolen by Shein. It appears that Shein has mass produced exact replicas of items made by independent artists without them knowing, and the victims have rather damning Instagram screenshots to prove it.

When Florence (@Flotje, she/her) decided to share some of her crochet designs on Instagram, she never expected them to appear on one of the world's largest fast fashion websites. The designer was alerted by one of her followers who was shopping on the site themselves. 'I felt a mix of emotions as a result - anger, sadness,' Florence says. 'I also felt quite exposed because it meant Shein had gone onto my social media and stole without me even knowing about it'. It becomes sinister, a little bit creepy even. We already struggle to escape this fashion giant with their incessant ads and relentless influencer marketing schemes, but there is something eerily omnipresent about a major brand spying on small Instagram pages to snatch popular designs. Despite her success, Florence's following is just a drop in the ocean of Shein's eye-watering 21.8 million followers, who appear to be mighty enough to drown out the screams of these small designers.

Lily (@lilykatemakes, she/her), a knitwear designer bearing a healthy 27.4k followers, claims that she wasn't surprised to have her patterns stolen, 'I'd been expecting it for a while, so many others had their designs copied that I knew my turn would be soon,' Lily explains. She's right: these are not isolated instances. You might be aware of the most high-profile case: Bailey Prado. Amplified by platforms like Diet Prada and Dazed, Prado recounts a staggering 45 designs being nabbed by the company in question.

Lily explains that, for her, an average sweater takes about 5 weeks of work - to plan, knit, pattern write, photograph, and test; however, Shein can ensure hundreds of replica items hit their online storefront in a matter of days. This rapid turnaround indicates an ethical labour issue inherently avoided by the small designer. Unlike Florence or Lily who carefully handcraft their garments, fast fashion brands exploit underpaid garment workers who work in horrific conditions. It is also important to note that crochet is near impossible to be made on a machine meaning that the crochet garments you see on Shein's digitised shelves are likely also done by (a severely underpaid) hand. Whilst a handmade top from an independent knitwear designer could set you back over £100, Florence's designs appear on Shein for around a tenth of the price. Brands like Shein are evidently fanning the flames which the designers they steal from are attempting to distinguish by using their own labour and pricing it fairly.

This plagiarism is no doubt spurred on by our exponential thirst for 'newness', supported by influencer culture and mega hauls (a phenomena where creators order over £100 of cheap clothing every week or so). This trend has begun to normalise the mindset of more clothing for less expense, and while vintage/sustainable clothing is becoming increasingly fashionable, the price-tag can be off-putting for micro-influencers trying to build a following. Why buy one jumper when you can buy ten for the same price? This thought process is key to Shein's success: they can copy, mass produce, and sell an item before the original artist has even put down their knitting needles - only for an influencer to wear it once on Instagram before shoving it at the back of some wardrobe. This snapshot is but a fleeting moment in the lives of influencers, however, it has a major impact on the exploited independent talent. Both Lily and Florence claim they have had to change the way they post their work on Instagram. Florence even suggests that she is having trouble sharing items at all, adding that Shein's theft has 'completely destroyed' her creative drive - not that Shein cares about that though.

We mustn't let these corporate giants pull the wool over our eyes. Society has a growing desire to understand where the things we consume come from and this must extend to what we wear and who is behind it. Although Shein may be claiming the profits from the items they sell, creative ownership always belongs to the artist - no matter how much they are silenced.

This is a cautionary tale. The next time you double tap a fashionable blogger, or spot a Shein ad featuring a Pinterest-worthy knit, remember to question where it came from, or if it's even theirs to sell.

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STYLE & BEAUTY

CONSUME

THE PHOTO-DUMP & BEYOND

WORDS
EVIE GLEN
(SHE/HER)

ART
SÉANIA STRAIN
(SHE/HER)



The camera roll is like the junk drawer of our phones, a hoarder's attic of things not worth remembering and things we never want to forget. You take a photo - sincerity experienced, disrupted by a blinding flash - and stockpile it amongst screenshots of recipes and a picture of your tonsils. Something saved to be re-lived, shared or forgotten. Such an eclectic collection of photos is the closest we can come to recording the authenticity of our own lives. I think we all seek to record this authenticity. It is something we can refer to and say, 'Yes, this is what I've done, these are the people I've met, and this is what I like'. Something entirely personal that reminds us of who we are.

The current trend of Instagram photo dumps seems to mirror the idiosyncratic sincerity of our camera rolls, though the extent to which it does so is questionable. How sincere can an Instagram photo dump be when each element of that 'dump' is curated to manufacture an image of perfect apathy? Such is the great and ridiculous paradox of the modern Instagram age: the care we take to convey carefreeness.

Sparked by the platform's removal of likes in 2019, there emerged a trend of the 'casual' Instagram feed. Fronted, perhaps ironically, by the likes of Kendall Jenner

and Bella Hadid, these social media 'it girls' began to intersperse their feeds of magazine shoots, modelling campaigns and sponsored selfies with the occasional 'dump' of raw photos. These 'dumps' seemed, at once, to directly challenge the perfectly saturated Instagram masquerade of the mid 2010s. The influencers, it seemed, had grown tired of the act. A new front was necessary, and so came the mask of carefreeness.

As a generation, we seem to always attach 'coolness' to a kind of perpetual apathy towards everything. Think of the 'not like other girls' trend: they did not care about their looks, popularity, or relationships; they refused to care about the things they were supposed to, because to do so would be inauthentic. The 'coolness', then, of this alternative girl was not, as it seemed, in her apathy, but rather in her efforts towards authenticity. She was cool because she was real - but was she really? Of course, the dichotomy of the 'not like other girls' trend was the efforts girls began to take to repress their other-girliness to conform to the alternative. It is this same dichotomy that underpins the Instagram photo dump.

While it is true that there is something refreshingly sincere about a reel of photos that pockets a crying

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Such is the great and ridiculous paradox of the modern Instagram age: the care we take to convey carefreeness.

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selfie between a picture of a hamburger and a video of a pigeon, the authenticity is limited by the fact that the photos are always curated. So long as we post to a majority of followers we do not know personally, there is always an element of performance, consciously or subconsciously, when we post on Instagram.

The photo dump is merely a performance of spontaneous apathy. We are drawn to it, as to the alternative girl, because we crave the authenticity of someone who knows themselves well enough to reject conventionalities. So, as the photo dump merges into the conventional, we necessarily question how Instagram will re-fill the growing void of authenticity.

I believe there are two options: a move towards further candidness or an embrace of the performance. The former, like the photo dump, will seek to communicate authenticity through the arbitrary, unfiltered and spontaneous. Its aim: to convey reality to the closest degree. We might just go entirely rogue and start taking photos on the Instagram app to post directly! That seems unlikely, however. I am inclined to question if we really want Instagram to reflect reality. Perhaps it is healthier to retain it as a kind of aesthetic escape from the blurry dullness of the analogue world.

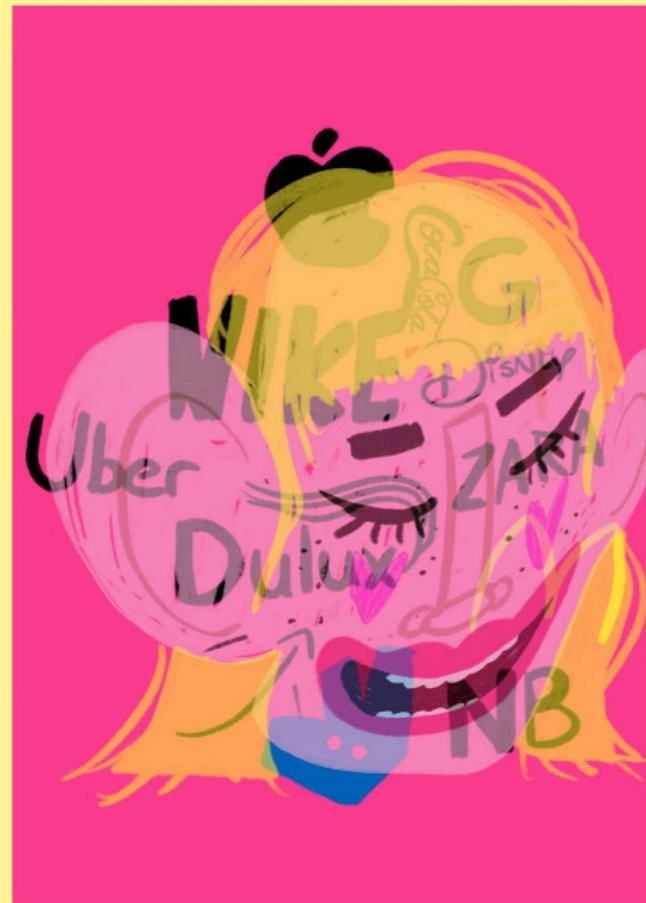
It seems more likely that we embrace the fantastic, the obscure, and the extravagant in recognition of the performance that Instagram most unavoidably is. To abandon realism for surrealism. As a predominantly image-based app, there is a wonderful opportunity to use Instagram as both an outlet and source of artistic self-expression. Our grids could be artwork if we wanted them to. Certainly, a trend that encourages people to be creative, especially in a time when conservatism dominates, would be far more beneficial than one that encourages us to post a photo of our lunch.

At least on Instagram, the surreal is more authentic than the 'real', entirely because it is self aware. As a generation so obsessed with self-judgement, I doubt it'll be long before we adopt such a trend that acknowledges the contradictory follies invoked in the photo dump and inherent to Instagram. Our memories will once again be contained within our camera rolls, ourselves resigned to accept the muddled life they convey, instead of the perception curated within a 10-photo slide.

AN INNOCENT CATERPILLAR WALKS INTO TWIT TER:

WORDS
CAM COCHRANE
(THEY/THEM)

ART
SÉANIA STRAIN
(SHE/HER)



32

BRAND HUMANISATION IN THE DIGITAL AGE

SPRING 22

GUM

*Conglomerate big wigs can
humanise their brands faster and more
effectively than any small business
could ever dream of.*

The pristine image that brands meticulously cultivate can create a system of brand worship, consumer hogging, and infatuation. Apple, Disney, Nike, and many other popular brands maintain their relationship with their devotees to a scary level of co-dependency, yet the simple clockwork running of these companies seems unable to cut it anymore. Consumers need, want and expect more from the relationships established with their favourite brands. This self-awareness of expectation and growing need for satisfaction has been dubbed the 'Age of the Customer' and of course, the capitalist machination has found a way around this; Brand Humanisation.

Brand Humanity stems from the idea that during communication, marketing and consumer resolutions, brands adopt a form of natural communication with their customers to appear more like another human being. This curated image has an impact on the return and devotion of consumers to said brand. According to the Braze Brand Humanity Index -an index created by analyst company Forrester Research- brands that have adopted a form of brand humanisation are 2.1 times more likely to cultivate an environment of customer love for their brand and are 1.9 times more likely to see increased customer satisfaction. Furthermore, they discovered that brands that are perceived as human are 1.6 times more likely to receive new customers and 1.8 times more likely to have their brand recommended. The index even refers to what brands could do in order to increase their brand humanity. It states that 36% of brand humanity stems from communication i.e., clear and understandable language used in consumer interactions, instead of heavily relying on business jargon. 33% of brand humanity comes from activating an emotional connection with your customer such as enacting policies that inspire feelings of responsiveness, helpfulness and allyship to the social needs of customers. The Humanity Index clearly indicates that brand humanisation is the future for companies and brands that wish to succeed in the murky waters of the free market. Though the index and this form of brand cultivation is available for businesses of every size to try out, there is an unfortunate pattern developing. Conglomerate big wigs can humanise their brands faster and more effectively than any small business could ever dream of. The global reach of big business could therefore drown out the new kids on the block with promises of connection, loyalty, understanding, and high-quality products.

It doesn't take much effort to look around and begin to see brand humanization everywhere. An example close to home is the Twitter beef turned lawsuit of M&S against Aldi for their gauche attempt at selling a similar caterpillar shaped cake. If one is lucky enough not to know this "drama", it boils down to M&S attempting to

sue Aldi over the Colin the Caterpillar Cake lookalike, Cuthbert, due to an infringement on their copyright of the metamorphosing baked good. In the end, the lawsuit was dropped as an agreement was struck between the supermarkets. However, Aldi saw a key marketing tool to win over the hearts of those invested in the internet beef. Tweets frequently left the Aldi stores account mocking the situation as though a lawsuit wasn't hanging over their heads. Tweets such as 'Cuthbert has been found guilty... of being delicious' and '#FreeCuthbert' trended on Twitter and many people seemed to engage and side with Aldi in the copyright fight. This relaxed communication from their marketing team is a clear example of brand humanisation in action. By engaging so fondly with other Twitter accounts, Aldi cultivated an attitude of 'See? I'm just like you' in an attempt to win over new and returning customers during the heightened media coverage.

However, this tactic isn't rare. In 2019, Innocent released their new blue smoothie 'Bolt From The Blue' yet, the blue smoothie looked suspiciously green. This absurdity caused many on Twitter to hit back with the obvious greenish nature of innocent's blue smoothie, but the company refused to take the snarky quips lying down and replied in a childlike nature. One Twitter user stated, 'looks greenish blue, to be honest' and Innocent replied, 'looks blueish blue, to be honest'. This media back and forth happened often with other tweets from Innocent such as '101% blue' or just plain and simple 'it's blue'. This brand humanisation created a cultivated image of Innocent as cheeky, clever and a little bit childish. If ever a brand name did not represent their attitudes online, it's Innocent. This insightful tactic got people talking about the product and eventually when seen in stores results in a 'let's see what this is all about', prompting a purchase.

Brand Humanisation isn't inherently negative. A closer and more relaxed relationship with our brands may invite us to critique them more freely and hold them accountable as though they were our real friends. Yet I worry about this new capitalist move. A stronger loyalty to brands entails a stronger loyalty to the system that raises them up and therefore, a stronger loyalty to capitalism. Large conglomerates already have access to us continuously, and when those brands enter our social circles, it feels like it might be harder to pull away from their grasp. Brand Humanisation should be looked at with a critical eye. Regardless of the funny tweets we receive from our favourite brands, Brand Humanity is an economic and marketing tactic that attempts to sidestep the horrors of capitalism and blindside us with humour and approachability.

SCIENCE & TECH

CONSUME

33



Cloak and Dagger

WORDS
VIOLET MAXWELL
(SHE/HER)

ART
OLIVIA JUETT
(SHE/HER)

i.
You are in love
Your lover sits across the room from you
Their touch is still iridescent
Shimmering slapdash on your thighs like a stray cat
Their saliva and their sweat occupy your body
You are under a glorious siege
You no longer recall what was once your taste, your smell
Their odour sticks like a dagger
In the cavity of your chest

ii.
You are in love
But there is a soul and there is a body
These entities love with you but they do not love you
The flesh says
I want to consume you
The soul asks
Can you contain all that I need to be?
The soul begs the flesh
For the lover
For the earth
For its own hands

iii.
You are in love,
You are in love, yes, but
Now the world is your lover
Glossy and all-consuming
She rolls you around in her mouth
Salient and green
You, like a marble made of sugar dissolving
On the tongue of empty ocean and endless skies
Cloaked in this spinning globe

THE EMPEROR IS STARKLY NAKED

SPRING 22

WORDS
NAOMI MAEVE
(SHE/HER)

Mouth haranguing, Pret-a-Manger egg muffin and turmeric shot gripped in manicured hands, yolk sucked off silver fingers, the Emperor makes his stately way to work.

Bespoke-suited and brogue-footed, he strides towards his Uber bullet with that unashamed confidence of the undeserving, diverting the course of those unfortunate enough to occupy his vicinity in the bustling morning. He discards the greasy paper wrappings over his shoulder, where they are carried by exhaust-fume-breeze down a street where each metre affords its inhabitants another ten-grand to their salary, like doves caught in a plastic bag, plummeting gradually, with treacherous and undignified grace.

He has learned from his forebears, the fathers of Ancient Rome in their hawthorn circlets and linen togas, to occupy space without remorse. To come, see, and conquer. Colonise. Corrupt. Dominate the boardroom. Heckle the slave as he stands off, knees knocking, against the lion. Emulate that King of the Sahara and sneer in his throne at the peak of the food chain. Demand a coffee from the intern. Throw it at their feet, spit on their high-street ballet pumps. The display of such brazen middle-classery conjures vomit in the throat and warrants a double-dose of Rennie to be chugged alongside the standard lunchtime Powerade, protein shake, black americano and quick key of coke in the disabled cubicle. Revel in the waste; be responsible for 12% of the company's plastic consumption and the porn ban on the office WiFi. Fire the receptionist because she didn't show enough leg, smack those pork-chop lips at the younger, newer model. Drink her in like a cocktail in the Shard. Whip the wench that fans the palm branch when he requires more grapes to be fed off the stalk.

Following his nights of mindless bacchanalia and rogue hedonism, the Emperor will return to his penthouse suite with two leatherette women draped around his neck, specially instructed to depart before the wife returns, so he can awake, spread-eagled and migraaine-inflicted, to the smell of gristle on the hob and a doting, if somewhat dissociative, smile from his spouse. She will accept his misdeeds on account of the million-pound view from their kitchen window. She consumes his scraps; the single rasher of bacon, the spare fourteen-grand on his credit card, the men whose names he forgets from the country club.

The women on the arm of his Roman Empiric father are Goddesses of the Nile, and the amber sands of his conquered lands; mere trophies that made the transcontinental journey alongside the spices and silks on uncharted waters. They use their olive skinned, languid hands to skewer golden marbles out of china ramekins — bees cocooned in honey — and deposit them into the awaiting cavern of their prisoners mouth. Having never seen a day's work, his own fingers may be uncalloused, but the hands of the Emperor are nevertheless invisibly blemished with brown bloodstains, as he disposes of more pawns, advances more knights and consumes more space. The high-rise office dynamic is much the same. The power of the gold plaque awarded to he who sits behind the CEO's desk intoxicates with blinding and addictive power. Cartoon dollar signs have begun to replace the Emperor's eyes.

Lulling in his heavily salted bath, he smirks with suffocating self-assuredness — an adopted Mayfairism — at the thought of how proud his imperial ancestors would be. In tandem (and centuries apart) they inhale the rose-petal steam of their lordly bath-houses. Thalios/Julius/Bacchus gazes with unfocussed piggy eyes on the Mediterranean frescoes gilding his walls, blind to the artist's hard graft (and mammoth cost), before retreating onto a velvet-draped chaise longue to be quelled with grape-wine. Meanwhile, Dean/Lloyd/Andrew wraps himself in a silken dressing-gown and completes the ritualistic undertaking of muscle-toning, hair-regrowing, womanising, beta-destroying pills and powders, some whizzing up his nose when the eyelids start to shut, some disappearing back into the toilet bowl when last night's Grey Goose threatens to rear its head.

As the bees drown in the golden coffin of their own design, so the clogged arteries and imperial warmongering, brutal decadence and teeth-gnashing violence of their dominions will bring about an untimely demise for our Emperors. And so, their days of consumption will expire, and they will lie face-down in their drapes of linen and Armani, penniless in whatever life follows, to be pulverised by the worms and maggots, diminished to food for the Earth.

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GUM

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