

THE COURTAULDIAN

ISSUE 26

A grayscale photograph of a mountain range with a dark green silhouette of a hill in the foreground. The mountains are layered, creating a sense of depth. The sky is a uniform light gray.

FOLK



The Courtauldian
Issue 26
Folk

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Cover by Olivia Keable
Photograph by Lewis Eaton

EDITOR'S NOTE



Three-Legged Dog Toasting Fork, unknown maker, c. 1750-1850. Illustration by Olivia Keable

I recently found myself face-to-face with a *Three-Legged Dog Toasting Fork*. This whimsical 'dog' has long legs of gnarled and knotted wood that convey the wonderful illusion of knobbly knees. A small metal stand protruding from each foot makes it appear as if the fork is precariously teetering on its toes; in a perpetual state of anticipation for either food or affection, as most dogs are. Although the product of an entirely different set of aesthetic principles, this carved canine embodies the same liveliness as a spaniel by Titian, or the wiry little mutt in van Eyck's *Arnolfini Portrait*.

Three-Legged Dog Toasting Fork is exhibited as part of the largest collection of British folk art in the UK, at Compton Verney House. The collection feels more like a cabinet of cu-

riosities than a gallery exhibition. The toasting fork is displayed on a large table strewn with other unusual and uncanny objects, including a life-size papier-mâché pig once used as a butcher's shop sign and a tin serving tray featuring a hunting scene painted in oils. Despite the overwhelming eclecticism of the collection, there is a general trend throughout: most of these objects have unknown makers, were created on unrecorded dates, and all lie outside the category of fine art. This is reflected in how such objects are typically excluded from museums and galleries, as folk art has historically been considered a form of 'low' culture. Upon its establishment in 1768, the Royal Academy of Arts specified amongst its founding principles that 'no needlework, artificial flowers, cut paper, shell work, or any such baubles should be admit-

ted' – marking a firm boundary between the elite fine arts and the pre-industrial popular culture. In *The Courtauldian's* 26th issue, *Folk*, we have endeavoured to examine folk culture's place in both contemporary culture, art-historical discourse, and to celebrate historically overlooked and underdiscussed forms of creative expression. The works explored within this issue have artistic merit in their own right, often beyond the boundaries of fine art.

Folk culture is a notoriously broad and ambiguous category with a multiplicity of meanings our contributors touch upon in their articles. Folk art is often defined as art produced by individuals with no formal artistic training, termed 'outsider artists' or makers of 'naïve art.' Craft can also fall under the heading of folk and, although incredibly skilful work, has similarly been excluded from the fine arts. In her article *Bordando Justicia: Weaving Against Dictatorship*, Francesca Vella Bonnici provides an astounding example of craft used as a politically subversive artistic force through exploring how communities of Chilean women sewed vibrant patchwork *arpilleras* in acts of defiance against Augusto Pinochet's military dictatorship. Several of our contributors have interpreted folk culture as a potential antidote to the alienating effects of modern living. In *Craft on the Brink of Extinction*, Alice Dodds draws a compelling link between the disappearance of various British crafts and our diminishing connection with the environment.

Alice argues in favour of embracing a craft revival as a means of rejecting the industrial capitalist system responsible for the climate crisis. In Madeleine Jordan's entrancing short story, *The Pillowman*, folklore is used as a mechanism with which gendered experience, desire, and female anxieties are addressed. Conversely, the contemporary interest in folk culture is also subject to criticism by some contributors. In *Suzanis and the Fast Interior Market*, Rory Hayes investigates how the current demand for handmade 'ethnic' objects in interior design leads to the exploitation of the communities from which the crafts originated.

Folk artists often work without the financial support of patrons or the incentive of social prestige as found in the sphere of fine art. Their work is instead born of the sheer compulsion to create, to strengthen communal bonds, or perhaps to express a wonderfully absurd sense of humour such as in *Three-Legged Dog Toasting Fork*. Delving into folk art can provide a refreshing relief from fine art, its elitist history, and can generate discussion on countless pertinent issues facing the art world today. I am delighted to present *The Courtauldian's* perspective on this subject.

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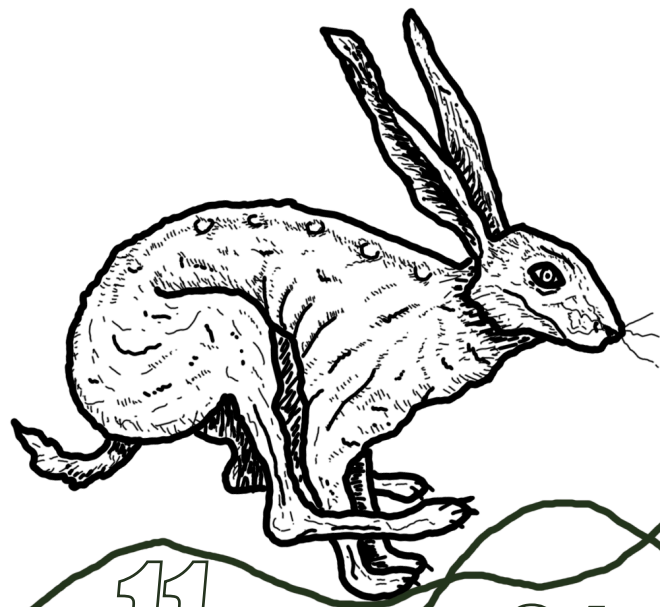
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Distribution

Folk was produced by undergraduate and postgraduate students at The Courtauld Institute of Art, London. If you are interested in supporting future issues or would like more information about the publication, contact: the.courtauldian@courtauld.ac.uk.

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Craft on the Brink of Extinction

Alice Dodds

Earlier this year, the Heritage Craft Association released its 2021 Red List of Endangered Crafts. The list details 130 crafts that are so little practiced in the UK that they are at risk of fading completely, plus four that are already extinct. Amongst the list are many centuries-old practices that have long been battling extinction, including various forms of basket weaving in the remote Scottish islands, loom knitting in the Midlands, and making willow crab and lobster pots in the Isle of Wight. However, some of the crafts such as neon sign bending are relatively recent, so much so that we might not even consider them to be folk craft practices at first glance. From pianos to cricket bats and balls, to surgical tools, the art forms of our modern folk life are quickly and mostly silently dying. Their fading takes with them not only a loss of skills and cultural heritage, but a loss of connection to the environment.

The impending extinction of these craft practices, whilst our own existence is threatened at the hands of the global environmental crisis, is no coincidence. Environmentalists have long noted the deep connection between the vanishing of crafts and the de-

struction of the world around us. One such figure is, of course, William Morris. Seeing the impact that capitalist industrialisation had on the environment, he advocated instead for a return to carefully hand-crafted products, searching for environmentally focussed folk practices from across the world to integrate into his design workshops in London. From Indian indigo dyeing to Icelandic *Blómstursaumur* embroidery, Morris's global influences were indicative of his concern over environmentalism as a worldwide issue, not restricted to conserving the 'green and pleasant' England of Tory pastoralism. In criticising the destruction of craft alongside the environment during the devastating colonial industrialisation of India, Morris clearly saw the revival and exchange of folk craft practice as of vital global political and environmental concern. No doubt, he would be hugely disappointed today to see that little has changed — that the craft-based, re-wilded twenty-first century London of his socialist utopian sci-fi novel *News From Nowhere* is, well, nowhere to be seen.

Since Morris's day, the revival of folk craft-based production does not come as easy as

simply turning away from industrial methods. In fact — although unsurprisingly — it is the very environmental crisis it hoped to solve that has made it all the more difficult. Through clearing land, climate fluctuation, soil degradation, and other effects of the environmental crisis, human destruction of the environment has forced the materials for many craft practices into dwindling numbers. All too common amongst the entries on the Heritage Crafts Association Red List are mentions of certain trees' waning populations and of the increasing rarity of some wild grass and oat fibres, as climate change wages war on biodiversity. For example, John Williamson, a Devon stave basket craftsman working in the forests of Dartmoor, began his career with much of the same philosophy as William Morris: to take environmental action through promoting the sustainable design of dying folk crafts. Yet, the survival of his mission is increasingly under threat, as tree diseases ravage the UK's ancient forests, exacerbated by the trees' physiological stress caused by climate change. It is thought that we will lose 80 per cent of our ash trees in the UK to these diseases, and with them centuries-old craft practices, plant species, animal species

and much of Britain's already dwindling biodiversity. But not all hope is lost — although these traditional crafts are threatened by the environmental crisis, they may very well also be integral to proactively resisting it and facilitating environmental recovery. And here, Morris's philosophy of global environmental craft exchange shines through. Another stave basket craftsman, Steve Tomlin, has been working with Indigenous American artisans to introduce ash-splitting basketry into the UK. With it, he also introduces the environmental stewardship that Indigenous people have long exercised, despite facing severe violence, persecution and land degradation at the hands of once British and now North American authorities. The ash trees on the land of the Potawatomi people too are dying — but in the areas where traditional ash basketry communities have been revived, the ash population thrives. The careful consumption and replanting of trees allow both the ash population to flourish without having to over-compete, and the community to carefully monitor the presence of deadly diseases and parasites. For plant populations, it is not consumption that threatens their viability, but underconsumption due to the near

extinction of indigenous craft practices. As the Potawatomi people undertake an ecological stewardship role as part of their craft, the trees rely on them just as much as they rely on the trees. The revival of folk craft practices not only resists industrial destruction, it also provides and facilitates environmental reconstruction. Steve Tomlin's work embraces Potawatomi artisanship as not only a sustainable, but a restorative environmental action and integrates it into the visual qualities of British heritage design.

The revival of rural heritage crafts is all well and good — but what does it mean for us in the cities? However idyllic and utopian, it is hardly possible that we would all drop our lives in the cities to pursue climate action through the revival of heritage crafts. Indeed, surrounded by concrete, by tarmac, by the products and fumes of industrial production, of the glass-sided coldness of capitalism's multi-national corporations, we perhaps feel like we have never been further from nature, from the environment, and from the folk culture and crafts that are dying out. Well, that is kind of the point. As the presence of nature, craftsmanship and cooperation is drawn out of our lives by streets of concrete, and mass-produced synthetic items in our homes, we lose touch with the environment and with the environmental stewardship of craft practice. So many of us are so far removed that perhaps we have forgotten what we even have to fight for. And therefore, we

are apathetic to the fight, to the collective cause, to our co-dependence with nature.

We have seen that craft practices are inherently co-dependent, not only with the environment but with each other. As one element dies out — be it a tree, a way of spinning fibres, or a method of weaving — so does another. The product of one craft upholds another. The 'waste' of one craft is the life-force of another. Work that is centred around valued co-operative relationships between each other and the earth are pushed out by a culture of industrial capitalism's competitive mass production — and it is hardly unintentional. There is a long history of craft practice being discouraged and destroyed during Europe's devastating colonial rampages as the imperial centres imposed their own industrial capitalism onto colonised nations. Therefore, it is perhaps not a surprise that a revival of these dying craft forms was often a vital element of anti-colonial movements, as they provided a site for subversive, revolutionary co-operation. Today, it seems there is much we can learn from the political resistance of craft revivals and much we can practice in our daily lives. To craft together, to buy crafted items, to look for and be grateful to the relationship with nature in the items we buy is important. It re-establishes these links of co-operation that industrial capitalism has tried so hard to subdue, and so is an important act in not only saving ourselves but saving these craft practices so that we may have

a better way of living in the future. Craft is a site of global solidarity. But this is not only down to us as individuals — it is down to the art world at large.

Ultimately, the question is this: in an age of extinction of nature and of crafts, is it time that art embraces its role as a site of alternative production? In doing so, is it time for art to turn away from chasing the western metropolitan art world, from the competition of the multimillion-pound auction houses, and the alienating, plain white walls of the contemporary gallery? Is it not time, instead, to embrace crafts once more, to reconnect with people and to save the planet from the brink of extinction? In my mind, we do not have a choice — and I believe William Morris, the Potawatomi peoples, and the Heritage Craft Association would agree.

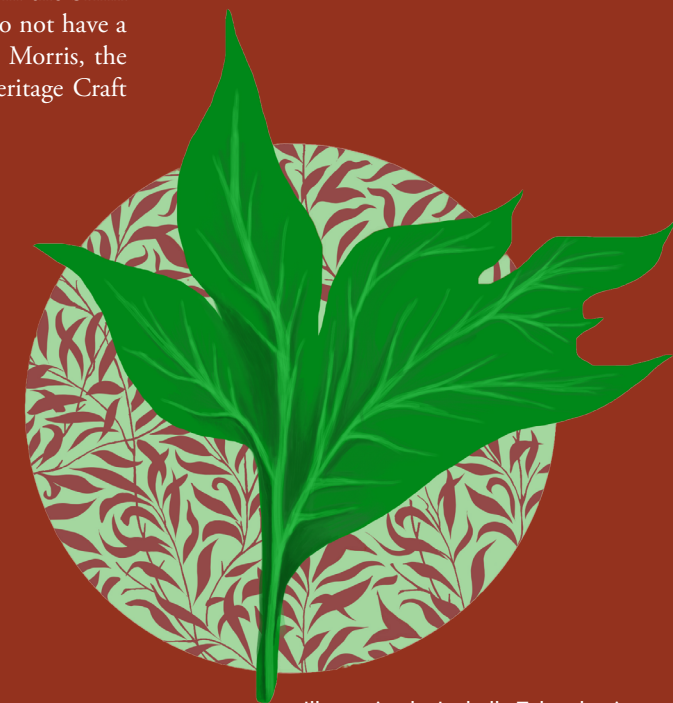


Illustration by Isabella Talenghani

The Pillowman

Madeleine Jordan

There once was a young girl, who lived in a small village with her Mother. The young girl was an only child and loved her Mother with her whole heart. They worked together making cream biscuits and white cakes in their kitchen and the young girl played snow queen with her floury doll.

One winter's day, the young girl sat on their kitchen table telling her Mother a story; it was a story about her doll, who she wrapped in a red napkin cloak, lost in the woods pursued by a beast. Her Mother hummed along to the tale and kneaded pale dough with her strong fists. The young girl uncrossed her legs and swung off the table but as she did, she felt a pain in her side. A large black-red mark had seeped into the wood from her thighs.

Her Mother gave her ginger tea and tucked her into

bed. The young girl continued to bleed, and she was scared. She wondered if she was going to die. She closed her eyes as the rain licked the window and dreamt of bloody sea storms as the day blackened.

Spring came and the Mother became fretful. Their little house was frenzied with the Mother's buzzing friends. The young girl smelt sickly ripeness in the air – perfume and cake nauseated her. The Mother's friends wasped in the hallway to catch a glimpse of the young girl so freshly flowered. Their buzzing voices sounded thick through her door and created a feverish hum.

Summer boiled out of a syrupy Spring. Kitchen-heat rose through the young girl's floorboards and woke her up in a sweat. Aching for air the young girl opened her window to a lavender sky. She played with her puppet

hands pretending her fingers were little men walking off the sill's ledge. The little puppets walked their way down her stomach and tickled her, the young girl tasted imaginary nectars, the jasmine breeze lapped up the sweetness, breathless and flushed she lay bare.

When the Sun rose, it screamed.

It was an orange-hot day, and their house was dumb in exhaustion. The young girl sulked on the doorstep and watched the dancing heat marble in the street. The Mother worked quietly in their kitchen. In the warbling airs, the young girl saw a pillowman approaching. It lumbered slowly in the stifling street. The young girl squinted to see the misshapen thing force open their rusted gate and trudge up their garden path.

The Pillowman came to tea. The young girl hovered in the hallway as his lumpen figure squished through their narrow doorway like he was being stuffed into a box. The Mother had veiled their kitchen table with a white lace. The young girl flushed with shame when the Pillowman's vacant gaze landed on the bruise peeping through the pattern. The Mother propped up the Pillowman's heavy head and fed him tea and biscuits at the table: her arm strained to hold him up.

After tea, the young girl raced upstairs to watch the Pillowman slump away into the early evening. The young girl didn't like the Pillowman – he was dark and misshapen and smelled of must.

Through the Summer, the Pillowman returned many times for tea. One night, as the skies became darker and air cooler, the young girl sat at her window overlooking the garden. The Mother and the Pillowman were talking in laced voices. The young girl heard their plan. She could not cry. She took her doll from beneath her pillow, kissed it, deeply drawing in the oat-scent, and drowned it lovingly in the sink.

On the day before the wedding, the young girl trudged home in an early Autumn sweat. Her clothes stuck to her skin and made her prickly. The young girl clambered up through the empty house and lamented her fate. She flopped onto her little bed and, in

the cooling silence, heard a soft sigh creak. There again, the feathery sigh floated through the air. In a hush, the young girl crept to the Mother's bedroom and peeked through the keyhole.

The young girl saw the Mother asleep on the Pillowman. The Mother snored quietly and the Pillowman lay silent and limp. The young girl pressed her smooth face against the rough wood and spied. The Pillowman looked soft, and the Mother looked peaceful: curled on the spongy mass of down and clinging to a fist of the Pillowman's cushion-stomach as she sighed in her sleep. The Pillowman did not make a sound.



Paula Rego, *The Pillowman* (detail), 2004. © Paula Rego, Image Courtesy of Marlborough Fine Art, London.

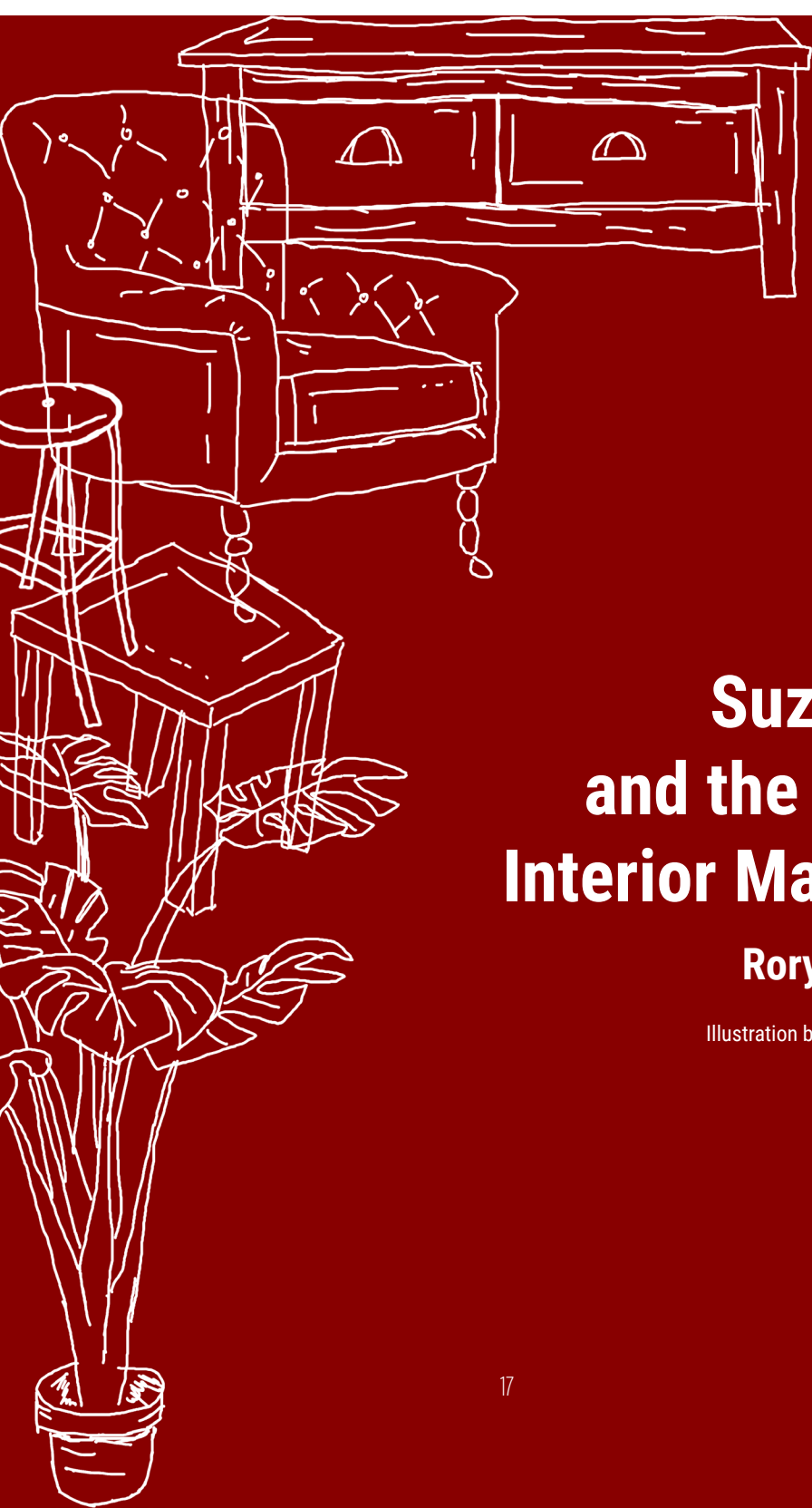


Illustration by Sasha Dunn

On the wedding night the young girl sat hunched over her knees and stared at the Pillowman reclining on her bed. She tasted sour black-red wine on her teeth. She felt sick. Her head swelled with blurring visions. Please let me get into bed, she thought. "I feel sick", she said. The Pillowman did not move from her bed. The young girl crawled to her footboard and saw he was asleep. Gingerly, she climbed on top of his downy body and rested her heavy head on his soft chest.

As I rested, I felt a warmth crouch beneath my nightgown. I rocked my hips in sleepy restfulness. I straddled the Pillowman and rubbed myself on his squishy leg. The Pillowman lay there, his breathing still and his eyes staring blankly upwards. I made him wet and heavier. My back arched and I let out a beastly cry. The Pillowman's large soft form hung weighty and solid over my bed. I fell on top of him and fell into a low sighing slumber.

Winter crept into the sky with grey-chilled whispers. The young girl was not cold. She was stuffed with plump pillowchildren who inflated her little belly with feathery folds. The Pillowman slumped in his chair in front of the fire and watched his wife with an unfilled gaze. She watched his thick face follow her around the room without seeing. The Mother made cream biscuits and white cakes.



Suzanis and the Fast Interior Market

Rory Hayes

Illustration by Olivia Keable

In recent years, there has been a growth of a particular handmade aesthetic in homeware. One of the most recent crazes being the Central Asian suzani throw, a beautifully intricate embroidered textile, using pomegranate and floral motifs made with chain stitch. Historic signals of a well-travelled and cultured household in England and Western Europe, they now flood the antique shops of London and the Instagram boutiques. But, as these important cultural items, with geographical origin from the peripheries of the West (re: colonialism), the centring of this folk aesthetic into the home represents wider trends within our culture dominated by consumption, notably that which I call, the industry of fast interiors.

Suzani textiles originate from nomadic communities of the Fergana Valley and extended into the broader region of what is now Tajikistan, Uzbekistan, Kazakhstan, and other Central Asian countries. They were originally created as a part of a woman's dowry. The action of chain stitch, common in suzani technique, and the balanced ornamentation typified in suzani, was a skill taught through matrilineal word-of-mouth, something sadly lost throughout the years. Traditionally hand-embroidered by many women of the family, they often include symbols for security, prosperity, and fertility.

A vital aspect of the textiles has been the talismanic properties of the motifs, often privately known only to the particular family group who crafted the design. Rich interior lexicons were created within each suzani,

with a significant aim to protect the newlyweds from the evil-eye during the first weeks of their marriage. Emotional strength was and is imbued into every stitch on the cotton or silk, wishing safety for the new family unit. Each suzani's decorative space came to represent a balanced and idyllic universe-structure, representing everlasting beauty and stability – importantly with a singular purposeful flaw in design, pulling from Islamic aesthetic ideals of human fallacy. The designs themselves came to be useful demarcations of their place of creation; with specific decorative styles and motifs being signifiers of local aesthetic preferences and traditions. These historic strengths of design have, however, been destroyed through the marketisation of these cloths, in part due to the increased popularity in the folk aesthetic, as well as – to use a broad euphemism – a variety of political stresses. The emotional weight of design and craft has been lost through mass production; their objecthood has been aestheticised, removing all regionality and personal importance from the fabric of their creation.

The Central Asian region has been oft forgotten in a dialogue of political otherness and oppression. With a high proportion of traditional nomadic communities, their perceived placelessness in lifestyle is often cited as reason to exclude these peoples from international conversations. Artworks such as suzani textiles are directly affected by attacks on such nomadic ways of life, with their movability central to their cultural importance. During the mid and late twentieth

century, USSR expansion into the region, and attempt to secularise and unionise Soviet society into homogeneity, destroyed the network of familial artistic creation, with its medium, textile, directly reliant on nomadic lifestyle and pagan-esque decorative motifs – both attacked by colonial expansion. Due to this historic oppression, it is therefore understandable to assume the growth in this cultural artwork in marketplace popularity represents a growth in local agency and industry. However, to reference the numerous other ‘folk’, and ‘ethnic’ arts sold up and down Camden market, we can see first-hand in London how western consumption and mass production of culturally ‘other’ goods serves little to no benefit to the land of their original conception.

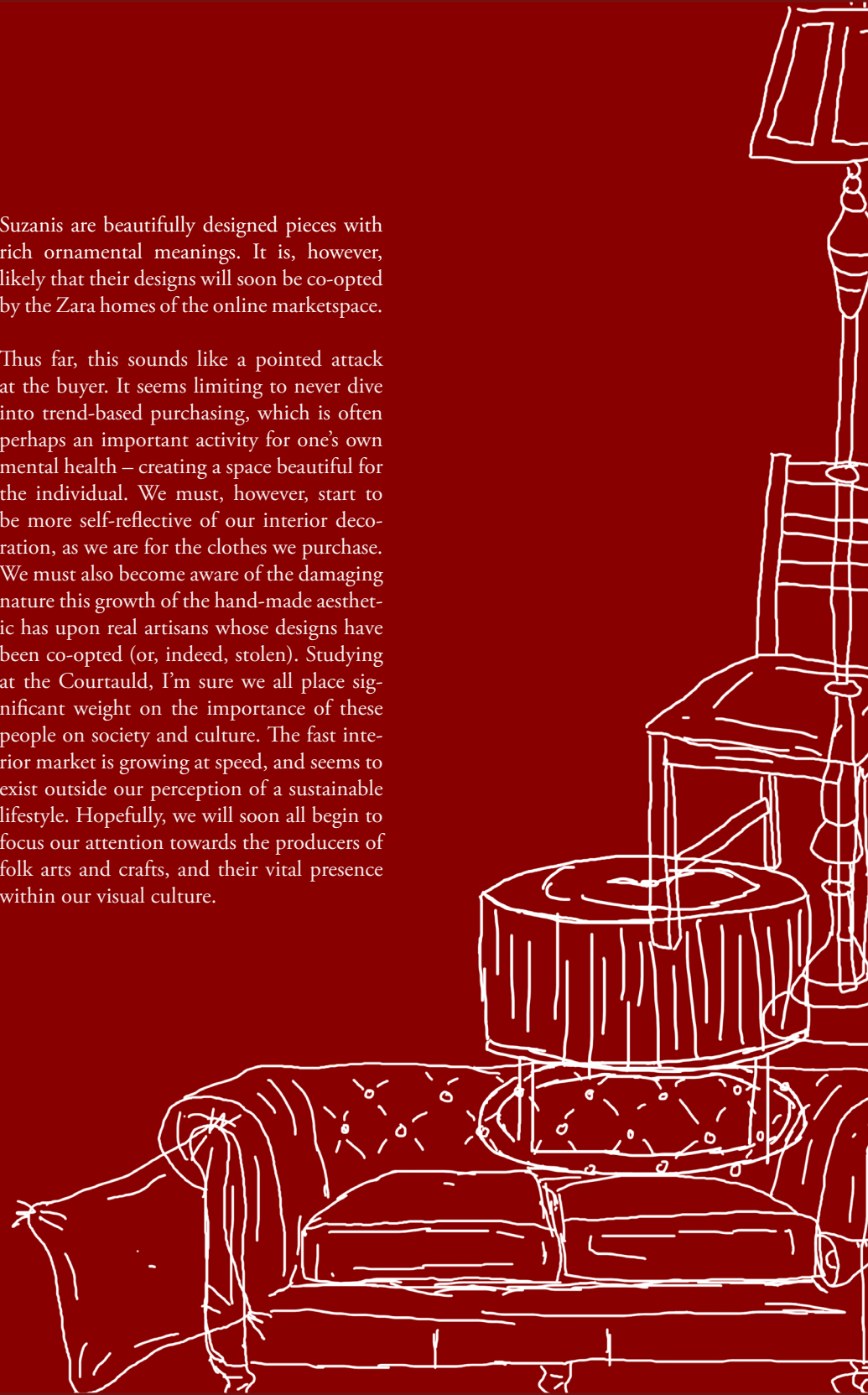
To bring this conversation to the generalised market, Suzanis are appreciated not only for their beautiful designs which are generally very appealing to the growing curated maximalist interior aesthetic, but for their intricacy of embroidery as a display of superior quality, something the market seems to have turned towards in a way not dissimilar to the Victorian Arts and Crafts movement. As fast fashion rests at the tip of our tongues as we walk down Oxford and Regent Streets, we are also confronted with numerous mass-produced interior design stores, playing into and producing current trends. A certain Swedish multinational clothing co-operation of two letters divided by an ampersand springs to mind.

White and terracotta textured abstract vases with superficial fingerprints suggest the hand of an artist, signifying an artisanal collector-cum-curator for the buyer; superficially damaged white busts, copying from old statues outside the realm of copyright gives a certain hint of the *Wunderkammer*. The romance of these items, however, is fleeting and trend-led, with longevity not a factor taken into account in their creation. We all long for a curated home. However, we must be aware of the micro-trends permeating almost every aspect of our consumption. It’s directly through avoiding (or trying to) these multi-national stores, which allows you greater possibility to avoid trend-based purchases. It is more environmentally friendly and arguably more beautiful to shop second-hand: be it through charity shops, the Facebook marketplaces, and eBays, your local ‘flea market’-style shop with individual stalls, contributing to a local-circular-economy or indeed looking into your local auction house, in which, assuming you don’t live in a W1 postcode, you’re certain to find some bargains.

These modes of creating home also allows yourself time to grow a collection and truly curate your space towards your personal aesthetic. You are more likely to put greater thought into the sources you get your objects from as well as research the objects yourself, their histories and how they related to your personal taste (rather than the taste being thrown at you via Instagram).

Suzanis are beautifully designed pieces with rich ornamental meanings. It is, however, likely that their designs will soon be co-opted by the Zara homes of the online marketplace.

Thus far, this sounds like a pointed attack at the buyer. It seems limiting to never dive into trend-based purchasing, which is often perhaps an important activity for one’s own mental health – creating a space beautiful for the individual. We must, however, start to be more self-reflective of our interior decoration, as we are for the clothes we purchase. We must also become aware of the damaging nature this growth of the hand-made aesthetic has upon real artisans whose designs have been co-opted (or, indeed, stolen). Studying at the Courtauld, I’m sure we all place significant weight on the importance of these people on society and culture. The fast interior market is growing at speed, and seems to exist outside our perception of a sustainable lifestyle. Hopefully, we will soon all begin to focus our attention towards the producers of folk arts and crafts, and their vital presence within our visual culture.



Love in a Time of Folk: Craft Couples of the 20th Century

Louisa Hunt



Illustrations by George Goodhand

When I think of folk, I think of two things: craft and love. The latter most probably because I am a hopeless romantic. But also, because I do believe folk, throughout the course of history, is rooted in community. Folklore can be defined as stories of a community passed down through generations, just as how crafts are kept alive by the people that dedicate their lives to making them. In the major craft moments throughout art history, endless friendships, partnerships, and collaborations have been forged. Looking at craft couples of the twentieth century is not only an opportunity for me to fan girl over romances of a time gone by, but I can also unveil fascinating stories of craft and its characteristics in a modern world.

Take Bauhaus. Let me introduce you to potentially the most recognised modern craft couple: Anni and Josef Albers.

She was a phenomenal textile designer, weaver, writer, and printmaker and he a teacher, painter, and colour theorist. Both made a significant impact on art and design throughout the course of the twentieth century and the influence of their work is still relevant today.

Theirs is a story of love that transcended expectations in Germany at the time. Anni was from a middle-class Jewish family in Charlottenberg, Berlin. She was born Annelise Fleischmann into the Ullstein publishing empire on her mother's side and the successful furniture

business Trunck & Co on her father's. Josef, eleven years her senior, was from the industrial Ruhr Valley and a devout Catholic. On paper, they were an unlikely match.

It was Bauhaus that brought them together. Anni was pushed away from painting by artist Oskar Kokoschka. Upon seeing her works, he asked "Why do you paint?" The Bauhaus myth goes that Anni stumbled across a manifesto while studying at Hamburg's School of Applied Arts and at the age of twenty-three moved to Weimar to apply to the new teaching institution. And so, Anni and Josef met there in 1922 and were married in Berlin in 1925.

The Albers had an extraordinary relationship, dedicating their lives to their work.

Art was central to their existence. However, aside from their annual Christmas cards, the couple never collaborated on craft. Curious as this may seem at first, in fact, this may reflect a Bauhaus determination to separate crafts into 'feminine' and 'masculine' practices.

Coined 'heavier crafts' by Walter Gropius, sculpture, woodwork, metal work, or painting were assigned to male artists and makers. These so-called heavy crafts were not for 'the beautiful sex' and the 'female Bauhäusler' to practise. This included Anni Albers. For Anni, this barring from 'masculine crafts' was reinforced by the expectations of her socially grand family.

Bauhaus women were pushed into weaving. Anni

was disappointed: "These limp threads," she once commented. Her objective became to masculinise weaving and today her works are renowned for their architectural and structural qualities. Anni revolutionised the way in which weaving has been approached since.

In our current cultural discourse, through examining the work and lives of Josef and Anni, it is easy to idealise Bauhaus as a gender-equal movement. Yet, Anni and Josef were probably the most equal Bauhaus couple of that time, both having careers with equal significance.

Bauhaus produced many love triangles and affairs. The institution, which transformed modern de-

sign, emphasised the connection between artists, architects, and craftspeople. For a movement that transformed the course of twentieth century design, it certainly also left a hangover of binary gender divide in craft that sometimes still stands today. How far did this divide influence other craft couples of the twentieth century?

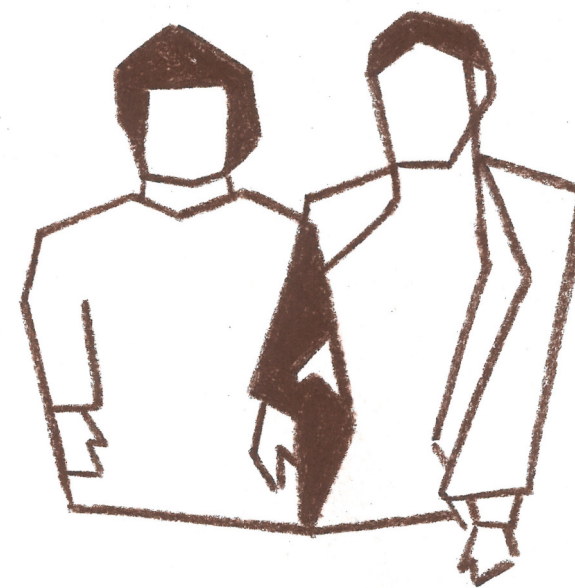
London. 1950s. Meet Althea McNish and John Weiss. Althea McNish was a textile printer, creating designs for Liberty and Heal's. She is renowned for her colourful textiles that livened up a dark post-war London. John Weiss was a jewellery designer and silversmith. They both started out studying architecture and, as a couple, they lectured around the world.

Althea and John were in many ways similar to Anni and Josef Albers, albeit living in a different cultural sphere. They were intellectual equals. Althea dedicated her career to textiles – in the eyes of Bauhaus – a traditionally 'feminine' domain, and John to metalwork, a 'heavier' craft.

However, to what extent do we still project these gender craft myths on past makers? How much were makers in the twentieth century pushed into their craft or did they pursue their practice regardless of gender?

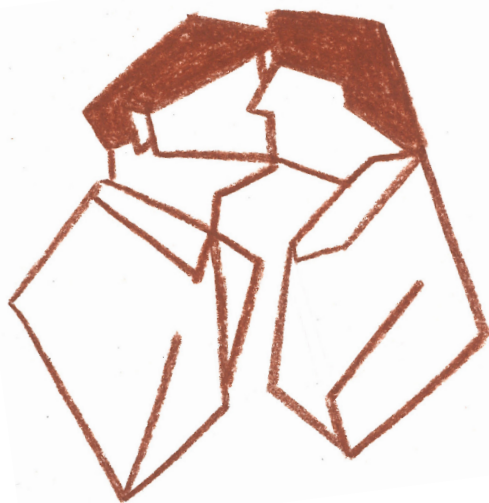
Althea was certainly a force in textile design. In an obit-

uary last year, Christine Checinska, curator of the V&A, wrote on Althea: 'She led the way, overthrowing the sterile rules of taste that had previously shaped British and international design.' Both Althea and John were strong figures in craft in 1950s London. In art history, they are much lesser



known than the Albers and yet their story also plays into an important question of craft and gender in the twentieth century.

In the ceramics community, I find the barriers between 'masculine' and 'feminine' craft are less determined by form, type of practice, and material. However, gender roles do manifest when considering the fame and public profile of the artists. It is Bernard Leach who is most famed in British Studio Pottery. He advocated for simple and utilitarian forms and is regarded as the 'Father of British Studio Pottery.'



In 1956, Bernard Leach and Janet Darnell married. She was thirty years younger, trained at Black Mountain College, North Carolina, under Japanese potter Shoji Hamada. They both moved to St. Ives which became the home to the Cornish pottery collective, Leach Pottery.

Although they both loved Japan and frequently visited, it was said not to have been an easy marriage. Bernard's fame within the pottery community took its toll. In 1962, Bernard moved into his own flat, leaving Janet to run the pottery studio in St. Ives on her own.

Bernard wrote on Janet: 'Janet's pots show no direct influence from mine.' Janet was not a Leach worshipper. She did not seek her husband's advice, was critical of his pots, and did not share his faith. Despite this, Janet showed great commitment to Leach Pottery. Meanwhile, she carved her own international reputation. Yet, I wonder if she always lived in the shadows of Bernard?

A ceramics couple of the twentieth century also connected to Leach pottery is Katherine Pleydell-Bouverie and Norah Braden. Both trained by Bernard Leach in St. Ives, they potted together. From 1925, they lived and shared a studio together for eight years at Katherine's family estate in Berkshire. Katherine was an aristocrat

but called herself 'a simple potter.'

Little is written on their time together. The pots they made, as Katherine put it, evoked 'things like pebbles and shells and birds.' And so, the myth of Katherine and Norah continues to be that of a happy, creative partnership.

Throughout art history, there have been many love affairs, love triangles, and heart breaks. When looking at craft, it is important not to only consider artists' personal life in relation to a maker's work. However, we would be remiss to not acknowledge these connections which so often tell us the stories behind key craft movements. To explore these relationships allows us to question how certain

crafts have been assigned as 'feminine' and 'masculine' and how much these boundaries changed the dynamic for artists' work, careers, and lives.

What is certain is that love will always wrap its way around craft communities, and these couples will continue to add to the folklore of crafts that will pass down for generations to come.



Illustration by Olivia Keable

Reclaiming Romani Art

Lucas Ind



The Romani community is one of the oldest, yet most marginalised community in Europe today. An Indo-Aryan ethnic group, they originally hail from North India. It is believed that the first Romani communities arrived in Europe around AD 1007. As of the early 2000s, it is estimated that around four to nine million Roma live in Europe, though many Roma have refused to register their ethnic identity due to fear of discrimination. Today, the largest Roma populations live in Spain, Italy, France, and Russia. Records show that the Roma first arrived in England in 1515. Upon arrival, they were labelled 'Gypsies' due to their dark complexion and supposed resemblance to Egyptians. Today, approximately 300,000 Roma live in the United Kingdom. Many have settled, though a minority of the community continues the traditional nomadic lifestyle.

Across centuries, the culture of the ancient Romani people in Europe and its survival has been dependent upon a range of artistic forms – from oral history to storytelling, dance, woodwork and painting. Not only have these artistic forms served as a foundation for Romani identity, they have also served as inspiration for non-Roma people, as evidenced by Romani art and culture's appropriation into European culture. A notable example of such appropriation is Spanish flamenco performances which derives from ancient Romani dances. Despite the Romani culture's influence on other European cultures, this ethnic minority has faced violence and discrimination since its beginning and

continues today in the form of racist laws and state-sanctioned violence.

Since the Middle Ages, Romani people have been subjected to slavery and laws that advocated for their ethnic and cultural cleansing. During the fifteenth century, the Roma were enslaved in Hungary, whilst in 1545 the Diet of Augsburg, an assembly of members of the Holy Roman Empire, declared 'whosoever kills a gypsy, will be guilty of no murder.' Pope Pius V went further in 1568, banishing all Roma from the Holy Roman Empire.

During World War Two, Nazi Germany deemed the Roma as 'racially inferior' and conducted the largest systematic genocide of Romani people, known as the Porajmos in Romani. While they were often killed on sight, many Romanies were sent off to concentration camps. The total number of Romani deaths during the Porajmos is estimated to be between 250,000 and 1,500,000. This genocide was made possible due in part to the Nazis use of mocking caricatures that dehumanised and ridiculed the Roma to erode public empathy for them.

In 1937, the Nazi party launched their *Degenerate Art* exhibition, which showcased humiliating and dehumanising caricatures of supposedly inferior races. The exhibition included representations of Romani individuals by German expressionist painters, depicting them as primitive and animalistic. Paul Schultze-Naumburg, a well-known Nazi architect and painter argued in his 1928

text *Kunst and Rasse (Art and Race)* that ‘only racially pure artists could produce a healthy art which upheld timeless ideals of classical beauty, while racially mixed modern artists produced disordered artworks and monstrous depictions of the human form.’ Such a worldview delegitimised the art of Romani artists and served as an impetus for the Roma’s reclamation and reconstruction of their dignity and culture.

In Victorian and modern British literature, Romani people are often depicted as having ‘sinister occult and criminal tendencies’ as Abigail Bardi highlights in her essay ‘The Gypsy as Troupe in Victorian and Modern British Literature.’ A notable example of this is the character Mother Bunches in Charlotte Brontë’s *Jane Eyre*. Mother Bunches’s name comes from a colloquial British phrase to describe ‘a stout, untidy, or awkward-looking woman or girl.’ In *Jane Eyre*, Brontë states how the gypsy fortune teller’s strange talk leads the titular character Jane into ‘a web of mystification,’ emblematic of supposedly ‘sinister occult’ tendencies. Similarly, Romani women in opera, literature, and music have often been portrayed as exotic, gaudy, provocative, and/or sexually promiscuous. A notable example of this derogatory portrayal of Romani women is in Prosper Mérimée’s novella *Carmen* (1845). Carmen, a young Romani woman, is depicted as thieving and attractive. She seduces and torments her married lover, Don José. The proliferation

of Romani stereotypes through their misrepresentation in media is still widely practised today.

In the ongoing BBC television series *Peaky Blinders*, both the Shelby and Lee families are of Romani descent. Despite the show being a period crime television drama based loosely on a true story, *Peaky Blinders* misrepresents Romani people and further perpetuates the false narrative of their ‘criminal tendencies’ as the show centers on the crimes of the Shelby family. However, there is very little evidence to suggest that the real Peaky Blinders were of Romani descent. As a result, consumers of such media continue to believe false narratives of the Romani people, which further marginalises and dismisses the Roma across Europe.

It was not until the First World Romani Congress in 1971 that Romani artists were reintroduced into mainstream art discourse. The Congress, aiming to preserve Roma culture, was attended by twenty-three representatives from nine nations, with observers from Belgium, Canada, India, and the United States. During this Congress, the green and blue flag embellished with the red, sixteen-spoked chakra from the 1933 Conference of the General Association of the Gypsies of Romania was raised; an act reaffirming the national emblem of the Roma people. As of 2020, there have been ten World Roma Congresses. Prior to this, Romani art was

still perceived by ‘experts’ as barbarian, primitive, and naïve. Though as of 2015, over 10,000 works by Romani artists were included in state collections and storage across Europe, only two of these pieces were exhibited in permanent collections. Highlighting the lack of public access to Romani art, Delaine Le Bas, an English artist of Romani ancestry, told *The Guardian* in 2017, “Most Roma art is held in storage, gathering dust in basements of museums...as Gypsies, we’re visible only in a highly negative way.” Emblematic of how the Romani community and their art are ignored due to racial prejudices, this limited visibility of their art deprives Roma of their right to access their own cultural heritage and identity.

To counteract the dislocation of Romani influence from European culture, RomArchive was launched in January 2019. It aims to rethink and retell the culture of Europe through Romani arts, culture and history. Alongside the RomArchive, the European Roma Institute for Arts and Culture (ERIAC) aims to educate about, and to decrease negative prejudices towards, Roma arts and culture. In June 2017, ERIAC was registered as an association under German law, a landmark victory for the reclamation of Roma arts. However, these are baby steps towards reclaiming Roma art, considering the cultural underrepresentation of Roma art paired with the ongoing misrepresentation of the culture.

Romani people have faced centuries of misrepresentation and violence. In this context, the art created by the Romani community, their activism and scholarship, are political acts, as their identity and sense of belonging has been lost to history through racism and antiziganism. This reclamation should also help to re-educate the Roma people about their own histories and culture so that they may unlearn the historical prejudices and marginalisation they have faced, working towards redefining themselves in their own right and image.



Illustration by Isabelle Carey

Bordando Justicia: Weaving Against Dictatorship

Francesca Vella Bonnici

Augusto Pinochet's military dictatorship ravaged Chile for almost two decades, lasting from 1973 to 1990. As with most authoritarian regimes, Chile's democratic government was overthrown by a brutal military coup which resulted in a curbing of personal liberties and a culture of fear and oppression. Political opponents were silenced through forced disappearances and abductions and for seventeen years the state committed horrific human rights abuses, many of which went unpunished. It is estimated that upwards of 3,000 people vanished during the dictatorship as thousands more were detained or tortured. Amongst the most shocking events of the regime was Pinochet's use of the National Stadium in Santiago as a mass detention centre, with reports suggesting that over 40,000 people were interred there throughout the seventeen years.

With cultural production being met with severe censorship, anti-fascist art or quite simply art which the regime considered

external to the official national canon was forced underground. Chileans developed covert methods of creating art deemed subversive by Pinochet's administration, often aided by human rights or religious organisations working in opposition to the state. Amongst these emerged the rural tradition of arpilleras; intricately woven scenes created by rural communities of women, often brightly coloured and depicting bucolic scenes of farms and small villages. The church-led initiative supported women suffering from financial instability due to unemployment and the kidnapping of their husbands and sons by the military. Due to the widespread shortages of resources during the regime in rural areas, the women were forced to make use of the offcuts of material used by workshops, often unravelling their own sweaters to use the wool to create their designs. The very texture of the woven scenes is inherently linked to forgotten elements of society, discarded by the central government body, just as Pinochet's regime abandoned and persecuted rural communities.

The content of the arpilleras evolved significantly over the course of the authoritarian regime. While originally the tableaus represented idyllic settings, replete with rich-looking fruit and vegetables often seeming so abundant that they could not be contained within the boundaries of the weaving, the images presented were transformed as the increasingly dark nature of the dictatorship unfolded. Where once neat rows of crops lined the woven scenes, arpilleras modified their designs, choosing to depict the violent surprise invasions of military tanks, as soldiers descended on small properties to remove those suspected of plotting against the regime. The graphic and truthful nature of the arpilleras caught the attention of foreign markets and through a secret network the woven depictions were shipped abroad to North America. As the trade grew in popularity, Pinochet's administration at first outlawed the practice and then latched onto the uniqueness of the arpillera artform and appropriated the rural tradition, distorting the weavings into mass-produced commodities. The scenes



Illustration by Isabella Taleghani

of brutality were replaced by nationalist propaganda as official factories churned out renderings of historical sites, embellished by numerous Chilean flags.

This initial distrust and hostility followed by a subsequent authoritarian claiming of the arpillera tradition is a repeated pattern in folk art practices throughout history. The very essence of folk art culture lies in its intimate relationship to the people who produce it. Unmediated by a centralised, national discourse, folk art appears as entirely representative of the people of a given time or place and its immanent streak of truth establishes it as a threat to any autocratic or dictatorial regime. The singular nature of the arpilleras is yet more apparent when one considers its position as folk art as a means of resistance. In addition to being apart from the officially accepted culture of the time which was sanctioned by the regime, the content of the arpilleras was a direct confrontation with and condemnation of Pinochet's merciless rule.

Alternative means of protest art have proliferated throughout Latin American history, especially in the last century. From the performance protest art of the mothers of children stolen during Videla's dictatorship in Argentina in the late 1970s who gather weekly to commemorate and denounce the loss of their loved ones, to graphic posters produced in Cuba during the Cuban Missile Crisis in the 1960s, Latin American art is time and again intrinsically linked to representing the political and social worries of the people,

often in opposition to the official discourse of the contemporary dominant government.

Once repressed by Chile's military dictatorship, the Museo Nacional de Bella Artes in Santiago now dedicates a large room to the exhibition of arpilleras. Suspended in the middle of the room so visitors can appreciate the weavings in their totality, the idea of folk art produced by small groups and communities still holds a privileged role in Chilean culture and society. The museum's website lists several workshops during which participants are invited to weave their own creations to explore various themes and emotions freely. The group BORDANDO JUSTICIA (translated as 'embroidering justice') recognises the importance of this folk art practice as the legacy of the original arpilleristas lives on. Given Chile's recent civil unrest during 2020, where civilians protesting harsh social reforms were met with brutal repression by the government, it is clear that the need and desire for resistance art produced by the people still exists. Arpilleras were a means for Chileans to weave their own narratives of life under a repressive dictatorship, away from the official rhetoric of Pinochet's regime. It appears as though the value they possessed nearly fifty years ago pervades into the modern-day, as Chileans continue to produce folk art which represents their own reality in the face of a government removed from the lives of its citizens.



Chilean arpilleras c. 1970s. Images Courtesy of Royal Alberta Museum.

Tang Da Wu: Antipyretics and Aphrodisiacs

Kylin Lew

Illustrations by Olivia Keable

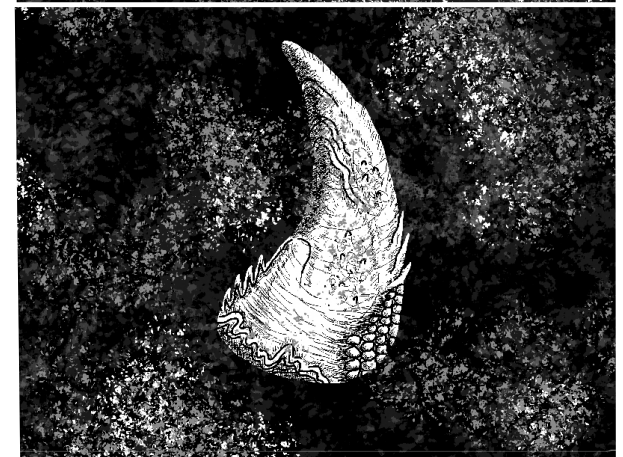
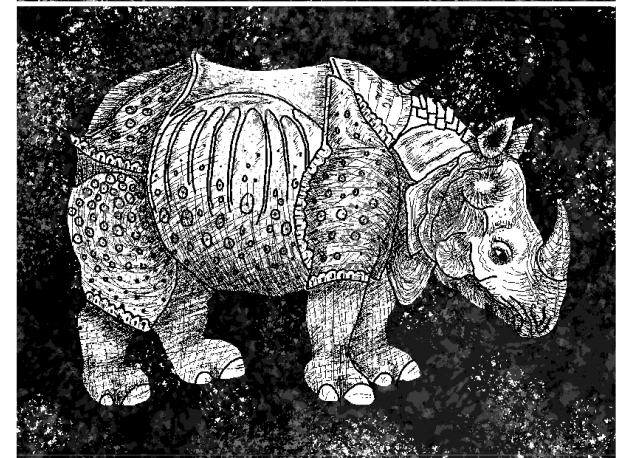
The Singapore I grew up in is markedly different from the Singapore of 50 years ago. Before the skyscrapers and tourist-destination landmarks was the 1960s–1980s post-independence struggle to rebuild Singapore’s infrastructure, economy, and identity, to educate its people and to create a new sense of self. Singapore was faced with the struggle of defining itself from its neighbours and coming to terms with its new post-colonial circumstances. The national narrative eventually came to centre around Singapore’s incredible growth within the span of mere decades. Its rapid industrialisation, infrastructural developments, and important positioning as a trading port placed its economy alongside South Korea, Hong Kong, and Taiwan as one of the four Asian Tigers.

Within this context of growth, there was also a budding artistic community that was likewise searching for its own identity in the face of a dominant western arts scene. Many local artists, having returned from Europe where they necessarily went to receive their art education, sought new, distinct subject matter and themes that were relevant to their local audiences. Amongst these artists is Tang Da Wu, an iconic figure in Singapore’s art history, credited for his contributions to the development of performance art in Singapore.

Tang’s work is hard to miss. Walking through the National Gallery in Singapore, I am always struck by his seminal work, *Tiger’s Whip* (1991), despite the simplicity of its elements. A deep crimson

cloth is draped over a rattan rocking chair with a red phallus painted on the seat. A life-sized papier-mâché tiger stands over the cloth, the front paws perched precariously on the chair. These elements were used by Tang as props, remnants of his performances, the first of which was staged in Chinatown, where many Chinese medicine shops were situated. Dressed in white and playing the role of a poacher, Tang dragged one of ten tigers behind him, interacting with the readymades on instinct.

Perhaps his intentions might have been clearer to the audiences then, than they are to us now. Tang condemns the then-popular Chinese folk belief in the powers of the tiger’s phallus as an aphrodisiac, which resulted in the hunting and endangerment of the species. Remedies such



as this were likely to have been distributed through Chinese medicine stores, and made easily available for consumption. Whether or not these folk beliefs had medical merit seems to be secondary in Tang's work; he condemns first and foremost the inhumane practices of the industry, brought about by – in his eyes – an absurd superstition.

Tang no longer performs this work, and the props remain static in the National Gallery. Yet, the sense of movement in the work is still palpable, and it is not difficult to imagine the tactility of his performance. The rattan rocking chair, a recognisable household item of the time, was not just a symbol of domestic life. Tang uses its rocking movement to allude to intercourse, made even more apparent by the crudely painted red phallus on its seat. The tiger too, is on the edge of motion, almost mid-pounce. Walking around the work, its impact is obvious and its presence is imposing, made

especially so because of its sinister undercurrent of implied violence.

However, Tang's concern for the issue ran deeper than this. In *They Poach the Rhino, Chop Off His Horn and Make This Drink* (1989), he addresses the Chinese myth that the horn of the rhino has medicinal properties when consumed, which likewise led to the hunting and endangerment of the species. The work was originally performed in the National Museum Art Gallery and the Singapore Zoo. A life-sized papier-mâché rhino lay on its side, surrounded by a spiral of plastic bottles with the label: 'Three Legs Cooling Water', a traditional Chinese medicine drink that uses the image of the rhino in its branding (but does not in fact involve the use of rhino parts), associating the brand with the perceived 'cooling' properties and antipyretic qualities of the rhino's horn. The brand was, and still is, widely recognised in Singapore as a consumer product, and

Tang's audiences would have understood the link between the iconic shape of those plastic bottles and the folk beliefs surrounding the rhino. Again, dressed in white, Tang, playing the ghost of the rhino, swung a prop-axe at the bottles in a gesture of resistance, a role-reversal of the violence enacted against them. Staged conspicuously in public, his performances were clearly meant for the people as he eagerly sought to alter the popular beliefs of the time and their convictions in baseless superstition.

In the decades that have elapsed, the belief in folk remedies of the 1980s and 1990s has since waned, and the sale of these animal parts is, of course, a punishable offence. As more than a direct critique of unethical folk practices, however, Tang's work can be understood today as emblematic of the collective artistic endeavours of his time, as artists attempted to synthesise their artistic education and knowledge

with their local realities. The art scene was still young, and Tang, his predecessors, and contemporaries were burdened with the task of creating and defining a 'Singaporean art' that was not necessarily unique in its form or medium, but rather in its approaches and concerns. These artists also sought to create works that spoke to their audiences. The struggle of forging a new identity where there had previously been none paralleled the country's cultural development in its post-independence years, an effort that has yet to see its denouement.

Tang Da Wu, *They Poach the Rhino, Chop Off His Horn and Make This Drink*, 1989. Documentation of Performance at the National Gallery Singapore, 1989. Collection of the National Gallery Singapore. Performance © Tang Da Wu. Photograph by Koh Nguang How. Image Courtesy of Koh Nguang How.



Language's Swansong

Carla Dusevic

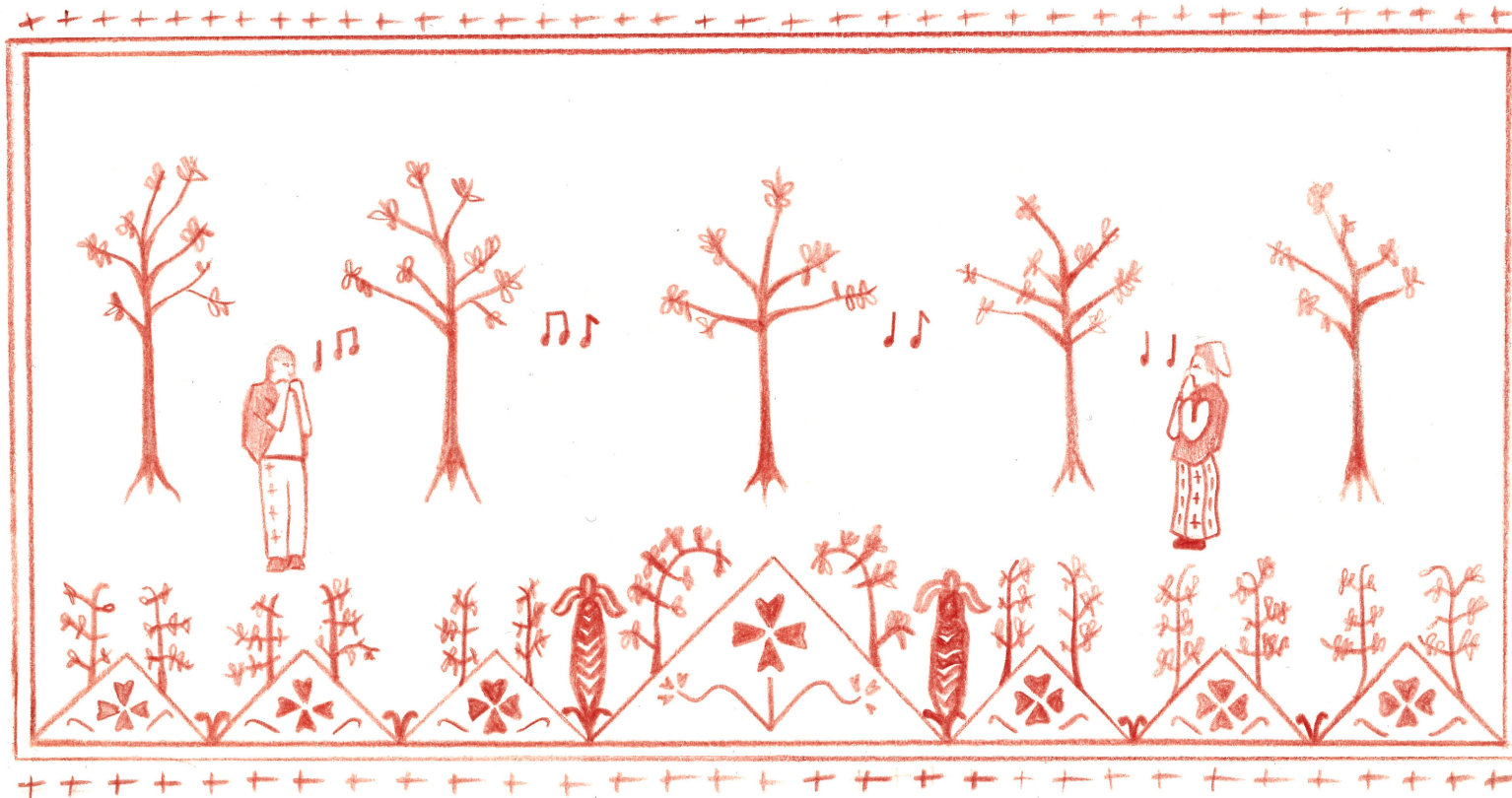


Illustration by George Goodhand

UNESCO's List of Intangible Cultural Heritage reads like a litany.

Coaxing ritual for camels, Mongolia.

Mwinoghe, joyous dance, Malawi.

Askiya, the art of wit, Uzbekistan.

Sauna culture, Finland.

Wine horses, Spain.

584 elements corresponding to 131 countries.

A quick search shows me there are five separate entries relating to something close to my heart: *bread*.

Another search: *Whistled language*, two. Filed under: *In Need of Urgent Safeguarding*.

What does it feel like to whistle? To pitch a sound within you, to twist it, trill, warble, to wrangle beauty out of breath? My mind wanders to a reading for class a few weeks back. The Inca *quipu*, a recording device of knotted cords of different colours, was a sensual medium; tactile in its fibrous texture, embodying a sense of rhythm, not flat or linear as in writing, and yet with no real surface to it, spatially defined instead, in the in-between. Its inclusion in the reading's discussion had been to highlight limitations of ethnographic collections. Within the discourse of ethics and modes of display, it represents a grappling with the responsibilities of faithfully presenting objects that not only resist easy classification but embody a wealth of often inaccessible cultural knowledge.

Whilst UNESCO's List of Intangible Cultural Heritage is one offering, there is still something that shifts through its laboured application and evaluation process. Once cemented on this list, language, in all its phonic palpability, elasticity, its very living quality, 'becomes like an artefact in a museum,' says Angelica Mesiti.

Mesiti is an Australian artist based in Paris whose video works investigate how cultures adapt, change, survive, and die. Mesiti originally trained as a dancer and her interest in non-verbal communication and expanded forms of expression is resonant across her oeuvre, perhaps most poignantly in *The Calling* (2013-2014), a three-channel film peeking into communities where whistling languages have emerged and endured as a practical necessity for those working and living on the land.

The remote villages of Kuşköy in Northern Turkey, the island of La Gomera in The Canary Islands, and the island of Evia in Greece, topographies of deep val-

leys, naturally contain and amplify whistles to a stunning degree. Each language has persisted differently, which Mesiti poses as a life cycle across three chapters according to each community: its living, death, and rebirth. Mesiti's is not an anthropological study like those uploaded to compliment UNESCO's site, but one that harnesses the poetic and mnemonic modes of visual arts to afford an immersive, contemplative experience.

Across the three screens unfold quiet scenes capturing the textures of daily life: women working amidst dense green fields, goats chewing grass along cliffs, the precarious picking of trees, a gentle soundscape of tinkering cowbells upon lofty breezes. The slow panoramas only punctuated by bird-like cacophonies of whistles. We watch as the whistle of an elderly lady at the centre reaches the ears of those picking in the tea plantation below in the adjacent screen, a worker looking up into the distance and replying. Another scene shows a conversation

between neighbours from both perspectives. The impenetrable valley and dizzying heights separating them are so easily transcended by the whistle that arrives as clear as it was when it left the mouth.

If there's anything more slippery than categorising whistling as language, it is merely describing it. The whistle is spellbinding, sonically surreal. It feels at once out of this world and yet so fundamentally forged from it. In one vignette, a grandfather whistles out from the right screen asking where his grandson is. '*I'm over here*' calls back the boy in Spanish, somewhere inside the left screen, wholly obscured in the depth of cacti and shrubs. It's a subtle but striking moment that makes palpable the gorge between these generations. A later scene depicts a classroom of children transcribing notes as their teacher delivers a lecture on wind farms through whistling, recalling previous episodes of those depicted as hindering the endurance of their whistling counterparts on the Greek islands.

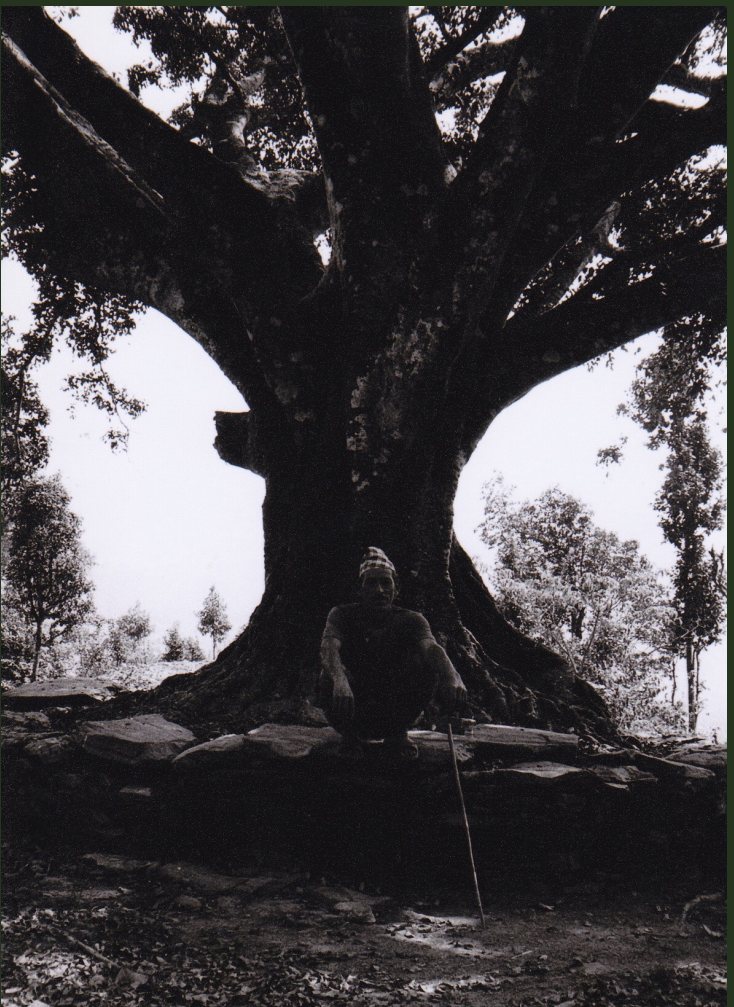
If Mesiti's work is marked by its quietude, it is to attune us to experience the echo of another's. Works like these are hard to come by in their empathy, that move for an expanded lived reality and artistic expression rather than relegation to outdated anomaly or artefact, or indeed a rung upon a litany's ladder. Whilst UNESCO's List is fraught by its own fragility, Mesiti recuperates language as truly living; enduring, renewing, decaying, and perhaps not always able to be saved by 'Urgent Safeguarding'.

Just as in whistling itself, *The Calling* reaches us and resonates long after it has left.



Portraits of Trees and People

Photographs by Lewis Eaton





Molly Thiebaud, *Tarot card after Lucas Cranach the Elder's Adam and Eve*, linocut (2021)

Pixie Colman Smith: Beyond the Oracular Spectacle

Mary Phan

A serpentine sigil emblazoned on every card in an immensely popular tarot deck bears the legacy of a woman once forgotten. Designed whilst she was a student at the Pratt Institute, the symbol is the stylised monogram of artist, writer, suffragist, and occultist, Pamela 'Pixie' Colman Smith. As a figure whose recent revival has seen her place in history intertwined with turn of the century cultural titans, the more we unravel, the more it becomes evident that Smith is a titan in her own right. Piecing together the mystery of Pixie Smith yields the portrait of a woman who, even in restrictive circumstances, was determined to craft her own fate.

Through the Internet-fueled popularisation of occult practices like astrology and tarot, Pixie Smith has come into the light through her illustration of perhaps the most iconic tarot cards, the Rider-Waite-Smith (RWS) deck. Commissioned by English occultist Arthur Edward Waite, the deck was first

published in 1909 by the Rider Company. Known for nearly a century as the Rider-Waite deck, the recent rediscovery of Pixie Smith has led to the use of her name in reference to the deck as well. Waite's commission of the deck came from his involvement, alongside Smith, in the nineteenth century occult society, The Hermetic Order of the Golden Dawn.

In a time when women's possession of their own intellectual property was out of the question, Smith's bold mark through creative labour ensured the survival of her legacy, even if it took until now for her story to be unearthed. Despite finally coming to the fore, our memory of Smith remains shrouded in mystery. Though records reveal her relationships with and influences on such figures as Alfred Stieglitz, Bram Stoker, and Henry Irving, we are still unsure of some facets of Smith that perhaps had been purposefully obscured for her own protection in her time.

A 2019 retrospective of her work at the Pratt Institute titled *Pamela Colman Smith: Life and Work* along with Stuart Kaplan's biography *Pamela Colman Smith: The Untold Story* explore the impossibility of determining whether Smith was mixed race and queer. No primary documents exist to corroborate if she was mixed race, but Kaplan's book includes accounts of Smith's contemporaries mistaking her as either Japanese or Black. Regarding her queerness, no direct proof of the matter exists. However, Smith never married, never had children, and lived with her friend Nora Lake for over twenty years (though the nature of their relationship cannot be determined). Despite the absence of historical documents to factualise much of her myth, Smith's complicated identities conjure the image of a vanguard for her own, and truly, any, time.

To further add to her aura as a bohemian quaintrelle, it is known that she was synesthetic, and had automatic colourful visions upon hearing music. As Smith stated: "What I wish to make plain is that these are not pictures of the music theme [...] but just what

I see when I hear music. Thoughts loosened and set free by the spell of sound [...] Subconscious energy lives in them all." Indeed, her romantic, richly symbolic Art Nouveau illustrations have a symphonic quality that make visible her unique abilities to hear colour and see music.

Synesthesia aside, Smith's fame and notoriety in her time earned her prestigious commissions and exhibitions. A close friend of Alfred Stieglitz, Smith had the first non-photography show at Stieglitz's famous 291 Gallery in New York City. Though her exhibition of occult flora and fauna drawings was so successful that it was extended by eight days and received high praise from critics, Smith's artistic legacy at 291 and in the Modern Art canon at-large is overshadowed by Stieglitz's other artists, among whom are: Matisse, Rodin, Brancusi, and Picasso.

In considering contemporary intrigue around Smith and why she was long forgotten by history despite accolades like illustrating the works of W.B. Yeats and Bram Stoker, it is appropriate to also consider Smith's

contributions to *Suffrage Atelier*, a women artists' collective championing women's suffrage, and Smith's stewardship of Jamaican art and culture. She illustrated a collection of Jamaican fairytales after living in Kingston for years. Though it may be too bold a claim to say that Smith was deliberately forgotten due to her activism and marginalised identity, there is no argument that traditional historical and critical practices have neither holistically nor kindly treated figures like Smith. Smith's erasure even after cavorting with the *beau monde* of the early twentieth century should accentuate the necessity of recovering influential women lost to a society that is now ready to celebrate them.

As I end this piece, I pull a card from my Smith-Waite deck, the memory of the inimitable Pixie Smith as my query. The card is an upright Three of Pentacles, representing the value of diverse ideas and experiences. Pixie, are you here with us?



Pamela Colman Smith, *Waite-Smith Deck*, 1909.

Ana Lupaş, *The Solemn Process* (1964-2008): Working Conditions

Miheala Elena Man

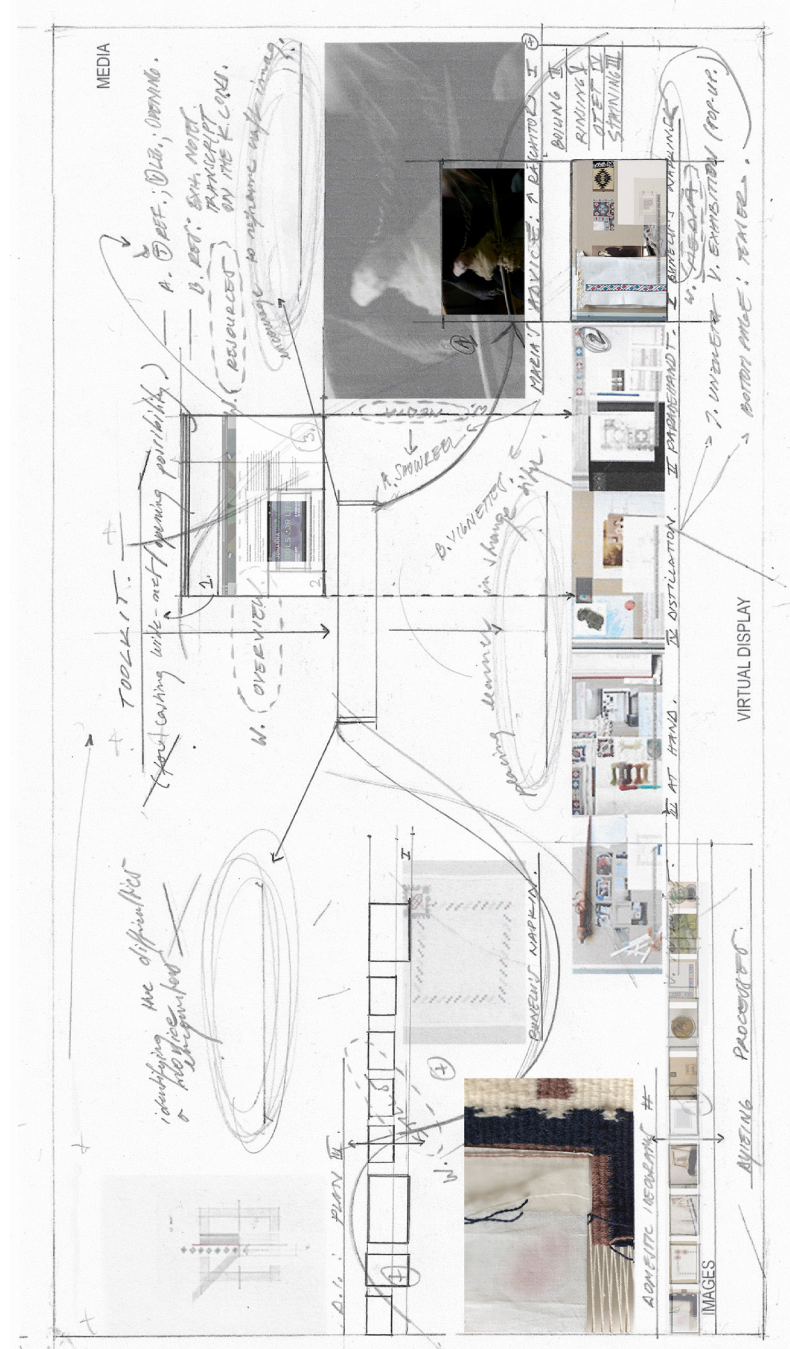
Ana Lupaş is a contemporary Romanian artist whose textiles, performances, and multimedia installations make use of folkloric artisanship and rituals in relation to her country's recent economic and social changes. Her most monumental work, *The Solemn Process* (1964-2008), is a collective action that surveys the contingent socio-economical aspect of allegedly negligible forms of labour that are in harmony with nature. In the wake of current conversations about traditional craftwork, adaptive reuse, or slow movement to encourage de-alienating models for labour, a survey of this long-neglected work feels more timely than ever.

Ana Lupaş's *The Solemn Process* (1960-2008) began with a set of simple directives: a handful of villagers from Transylvania would make wreaths of wheat inspired by ancient weaving traditions. These organic objects, placed in and around remote villages, would become a perennial, large-scale installation made by several generations of craftspeople over five decades. However, throughout the

many years spent producing *The Solemn Process* significant socio-economic transformations affected and, eventually, even hindered the making of the work.

The Solemn Process merged everyday practices undertaken within mid-century Transylvanian villages — such as the wrapping of dry hay and hand weaving — to make twenty-one hay sculptures recalling traditional motifs. Assisted by a group of skilled craftspeople from farmsteads in the villages of Sălişte and Mărgău, Lupaş made 'wreath-like structures using locally sourced fibres and weaving techniques traditionally employed to make wreaths for harvest festivals.' In co-ordinating the wreath production, Lupaş drew bright lines around 'behavioural patterns, engendered by traditions that had been validated for several millennia by being kept alive in the community's consciousness.'

The French sociologist Jean Baudrillard argued that 'the unity of the polis [ie. an ide-



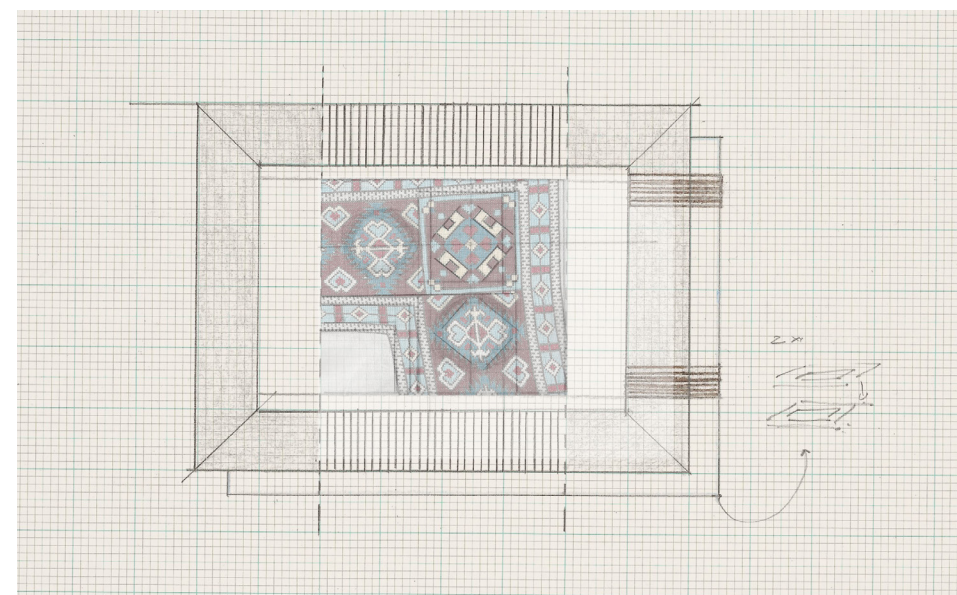
Score for Domestic Ideograms, 2020 (coloured pencil and graphite on inkjet print)

al city characterized by a strong sense of community] is not based on a distribution of tasks, a division of labour, a functional differentiation, but on a 'philia', a political community of citizens defined as peers' and that 'the social bond is established beyond the craft at that level where the citizens can reciprocally love another.' *The Solemn Process* brought about the importance of 'the workshop as the craftsman's home' through the particular site and means of production deployed. The large-scale objects commissioned by Lupaş were positioned inside and outside domestic spaces and photographed by their makers. In having the craftspeople photograph the fruits of their making, Lupaş emphasised the nature of the artisan class, not merely as a collection of individuals, but, in the words of Baudrillard, as 'a mode of social relations in which the collective process remained internal to the group, and in which consumers and producers were one and the same.'

Following the initial act of weaving a dozen hay structures, *The Solemn Process* goes on to map the transformations artisans faced during the second half of the communist era in Romania. With investments made to consolidate the heavy industries, many other means of production were left neglected. Agriculture, in particular, was deemed inefficient within the consolidation of the state economy, as it was believed 'to employ too many people for too little production.' Therefore, the potent rural workforce had to migrate to the urban environment. As a result, traditional artisanal practices were left,

in many cases, in the few remaining hands of the elderly or less skilled. This difficult socio-economic situation in Romania, and the creeping qualitative degradation of the original organic sculptures, demanded a new solution in order for Lupaş's artistic process to carry on. The artist found her solution within the hostile factory space that the villagers were forced to populate. By directing these novel industrial workers to enclose dilapidated hay structures in uncanny metal carcasses, Lupaş signalled toward the dire conditions that workers faced during the blooming industrial production of a late communist Romania. The villager was pressed to adapt to a mechanised environment, entirely stripped of familiar tools, people, and spaces.

Echoing the forced relocation of the artisans into the cramped space of the factory, the enclosure of the hay structures in metal carcasses marked the last stage of *The Solemn Process*. As a result, not only did the woven forms lose their initial organic identity, but they also became austere units that lost touch with the interdependent world they initially inhabited. One could go as far as to see this formal gesture of fragmentation to highlight the individualism promoted by Romanian communist politician and then-dictator Nicolae Ceauşescu. The convergence onto themes of self-reliance were of a piece with 'the outgrowth of the Ceauşescu personality cult, where leadership and the individual were exalted and deemed as motivating social processes.' Diminished social interaction to optimise the labour process in Romania led to the sheer isolation of its people. So to-



talising was this change, it would have been impossible to continue *The Solemn Process* in a collaborative form, given the sweep of the departure from a lively social dynamic that artisans had taken for granted for generations.

The Solemn Process surveys the relationship between peasants, their craft, and the system of production they had operated in before and after the establishment of a robust market economy during Ceauşescu's putatively 'communist' rule. With the Communist Party's decision to force an industrially-driven labour model onto an agrarian society, a fissure occurred in the natural progression of the peasant's life; a fissure highlighted by the abrupt completion of *The Solemn Process*.

These traditionally woven bulks of hay, preserved in metallic shells, became documents of a community brutally severed from its natural environment, with all its immanent means of living, socialising, and making.

Drawing for *Napkin V*, 2020 (coloured pencil and graphite on inkjet print)

Young Poland: An Arts and Crafts Movement Review

Rachel McHale and Caroline Benedict

Illustrations by Jago Henderson



A large architectural model of a wooden house stands on the first-floor of the William Morris Gallery. This house, reminiscent of Swiss-style chalets and bearing intricate wood-carved patterns, is considered the most representative of the *Zakopane* style – a style that emerged in the village of Zakopane, near to Kraków in the Tatra Mountains. Conceived by artist Stanisław Witkiewicz (1851–1915), this style became integral to the Young Poland movement, drawing inspiration from the landscape, traditional folk motifs, and history. The exhibition *Young Poland: An Arts and Crafts Movement (1890-1918)* explores this style in more depth, alongside other artistic pieces, displaying works that have never before been exhibited in the UK.

Young Poland – or *Młoda Polska* as it is known in Polish – was a cultural movement that emerged in

response to the invasion of Poland and its various states of partition, resulting in Poland's disappearance from the map of Europe. The arts were thus a means through which to preserve a cultural identity, and craft played a central role in this. Located in the William Morris Gallery, the exhibition is the first in the world to situate the movement within the context of the Arts and Crafts Movement, drawing connections with the work of Morris and John Ruskin.

Whilst the featured works and artists are likely unknown to the viewer, the parallels are unmissable. For instance, Stanisław Wyspiański's 'Pansy' design for a wall painting for the Franciscan Church in Kraków bears striking resemblances to Morris's first wallpaper design, 'Trellis'. Both designs show a pattern of flowers against a grid, and both artists opt for a realistic style, retaining

key features of the plants. By placing works from the Young Poland Movement in dialogue with works by William Morris, the exhibition creates a broader map of the Arts and Crafts Movement, bringing to light various mutual influences and aims.

Many works exhibited in Young Poland showcase a synthesis of tradition and modernity. Various native handcraft and vernacular techniques were used by Young Poland artists to distinguish their national creations from imported mass-produced goods. Whilst inspired by Polish history and traditions, craftsmen and artists introduced modernity in their production with two-dimensional, abstracted designs. This particularly stands out in the textiles displayed in the exhibition. In the room featuring works of the Zakopane Style hangs a wonderful multi-coloured Kilim, handcrafted by

the Zakopane artist Karol Kłosowski (1882–1971). In it, two Highlander figures warm up by a campfire; surrounded by geometrical and abstracted floral and folk motifs, the dignified symmetrical figures don traditional clothing and hats. Kłosowski was a founder of the Kilim Association, which formed in 1910 to preserve this native peasant tradition.

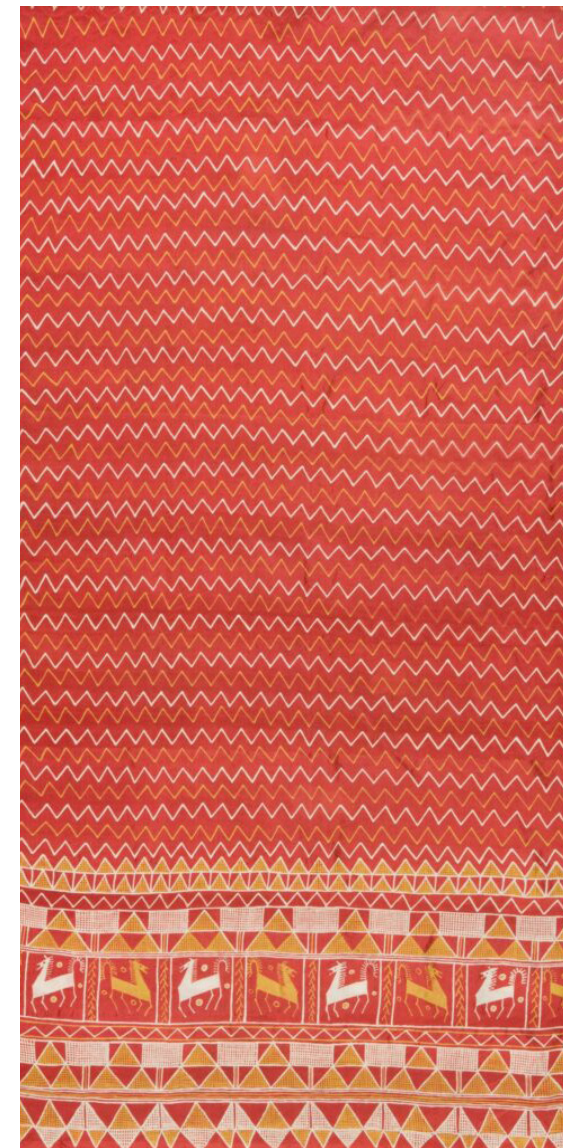
The exhibition brings to the fore another important collective described as part of the Young Poland Movement: the Kraków Workshops, founded in 1913 by artists, artisans and

architects. The workshops experimented with metalwork, weaving, batik and wood. The room dedicated to the Kraków Workshops showcases Christmas decorations, toys and furniture pieces, as well as beautifully handcrafted textile pieces. The batik studio became one of the most successful of the Workshops and included peasant women who produced a green and orange blouse and skirt, items distinguished by their simplicity and geometrical patterns. A blue batik covering also illustrates modern organic forms combined with traditional peasant motifs. This piece was displayed at

the *Exposition of Modern Industrial and Decorative Arts* in Paris in 1925, which successfully brought Polish design onto the international scene.

Yet it is not only visual similarities that are evoked; an ideological similarity is underscored between the Young Poland designs and Morris's advocacy for a revival of handicrafts. Throughout his career, Morris sought to reform the effects of Victorian industrialisation through ethical production that supported nature, social equality, and a return to craftsmanship. The artist took the pollution

and cutting of trees around him to heart and engaged in environmental actions to protect the countryside. By relocating his workshops from London to Merton Abbey in Surrey, Morris improved the working conditions of his employees, in sharp contrast to Victorian industrial factories in the city which he despised. The artist was determined to raise the standard of manufactured goods and looked to international craft techniques for inspiration. The products of Young Poland illustrate a similar effort to return to a more humanistic approach to production. Zakopane traditional handicraft constituted a resistance to the mass-produced goods which entered the divided and weakened Polish states. Whilst celebrating Morris, a renowned artist considered one of the main figures of the Arts and Crafts Movement, the gallery, through this exhibition, also unveils many unknown and lesser privileged artists who played a vital role in the movement.



Norbert Okołowicz, *Batik silk scarf*, 1913. Image Courtesy of the National Museum in Kraków.





Photograph by Natalia Lewis

fell

Natalia Lewis

One

*Dark earth. Rocky scree.
Wicked yellow gorse. Bolts of
cold light fall from the heav-
ens like something divine.*

*Sky, gathering shadow like a
spider.*

It's three o'clock in the morning. Three o'clock in the morning, and I'm standing on the fell. I'm standing on the fell. It's three o'clock in the morning, and I'm standing on the fell. I'm standing in the long grass on the fell.

It's dark.

There are no street lamps or road signs or headlamps. There is almost no light at all. I told them it would be like this. I told them there would be no light, and we came anyway. The beams from our headlamps disappear over the moor. The interior car light burns and dies, halogen orange in the gloom.

I am wearing a coat that is not mine. I am with two boys. Men. Boys. I am with two boys.

We scrambled up that bank, there, to the left. We scrambled up the bank and

now we are overlooking the moor. We are overlooking the moor on one side, and the fells on the other. Not mountains. Not hills. In between. I explain this to the boys. The boys are like fells, too. Not men. Not boys. In between.

I don't tell them this.

Seth shifts where he stands. Seth is tall. He's wearing a coat. It's an old one. A long one. The kind that soldiers used to wear. It whips about his heels in the wind.

Adam's on my other side. Adam's scared. He hasn't

said he's scared, but he is. He was quiet in the car, sat in the backseat and ricocheting off the ceiling and doors as Seth spun us up the fell. He's quieter now.

We stare together, the three of us, out across the roll of the moor and the slip of the fell.

Everything is very far away.

You can track the passage of a car ten miles away with your eyes.

Is this the highest point then, Seth asks, bringing his lighter up to touch the cigarette between his lips. I look up at him and I say no, but it's not far. The wind bites at my neck and I can see the dirt under Seth's fingernails but I don't say anything (why would I say anything?) because that would be rude.

Great view, Adam says, but what he means is, *I'm afraid*.

It's six minutes past three.

Seth snaps his lighter shut. Right then. Best get crack-ing then. Hadn't we?

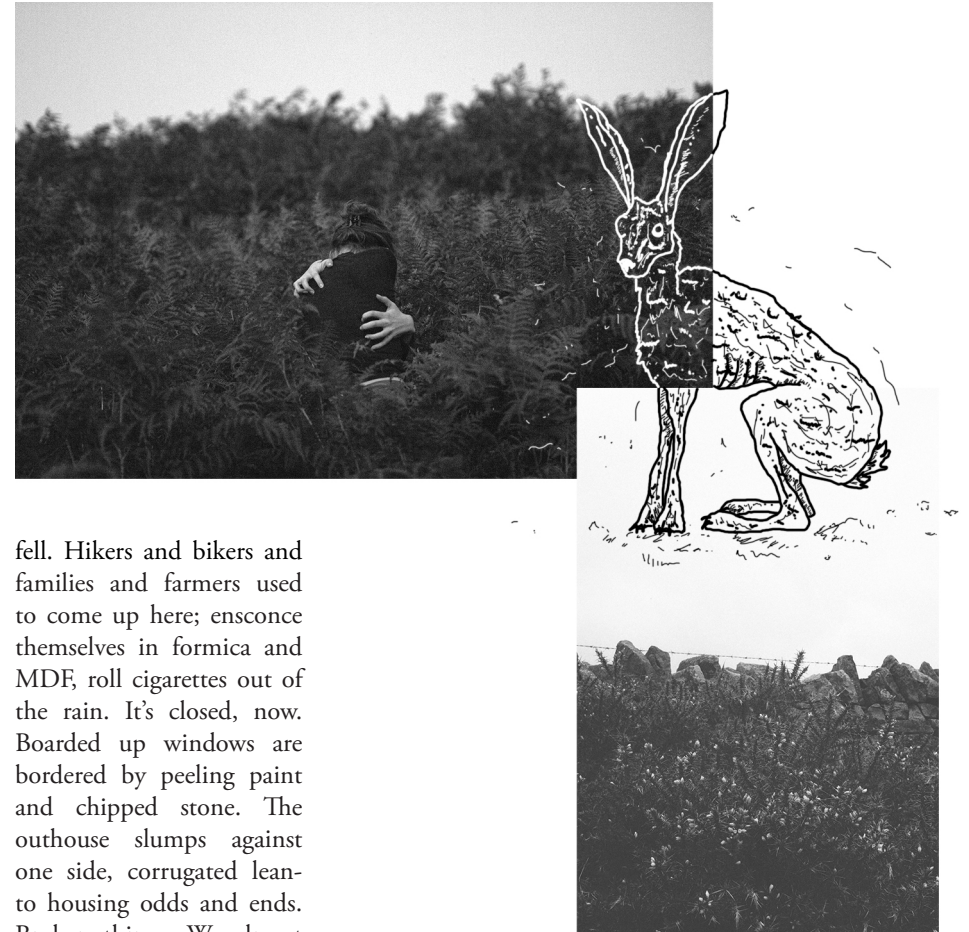
In daylight the clouds hang low here, close to roll of the earth. There is something in it. Something strange. Something twitches, in the bruised fells and heavy clouds, tangled roots and murmuring rivers. Floods come, every year; in winter, farmers spend their mornings hauling drowned sheep out of the ditches.

Then springtime comes. Springtime comes, and it comes tender and soft.

Of course, Wordsworth came in the spring.

Beneath my feet, the fell is breathing.

This is the highest point. The nearest thing, the only thing, is the old cafe. I think that's quite hard to picture. Can you picture it? Nothing for miles but a little tinder-box cafe, wedged into the



fell. Hikers and bikers and families and farmers used to come up here; ensconce themselves in formica and MDF, roll cigarettes out of the rain. It's closed, now. Boarded up windows are bordered by peeling paint and chipped stone. The outhouse slumps against one side, corrugated lean-to housing odds and ends. Broken things. We almost parked in front of it, but there was another car there. Interior light on. I saw someone move inside.

Photograph credits left to right:
Ollie Lansdell, Natalia Lewis
All illustrations by Olivia Keable



Photograph by Natalia Lewis

It's cold. We take photographs in the dark with the flash on. In the pictures later my nose is pink like a rabbit. The coat that I'm wearing that is not mine is not very warm. The boys have gathered props. They hold them aloft with their long boy-limbs, like weird Poundland invocations of gods or kings or fairies, white-eyed and unaware. Seth is holding a stick. Adam's fingers are skittering

over his phone. Electric light floods the gloom, and our eyes find it together, all six at once. There's something in the long grass.

My vision blurs in the iPhone glow. Adam gives a little start beside me, but he doesn't say anything. There's a dead sheep sprawled on the moor. His face is pale, and his great horns curl quietly into the grass.

It's started to rain; beads of water gather, glimmering in his wool. I wonder when he died.

Seth drops to his heels. What's her name, then?

What I think is, *it's a boy*, but what I say, is *Catherine*.

Why? Seth squints up at me through the falling rain.

I shrug. For the fell. Seth straightens up. I fold my arms across my chest. Adam sniffs.

When we first got here, I walked the corpse paths. I left the boys in the garden. They were drinking tea and rolling cigarettes, sock-footed and counting the starlings. I didn't tell them where I was going.

I walked the corpse path from the church — the church, not the chapel — as far as I could up the fell. I didn't see anyone; I thought I would, but I didn't. It is very quiet here. I'd for-

gotten. How quiet it was. God's own country, that's what folk say. God's own country. You want to keep God close, out here.

I didn't tell the boys any of this. I only told them about the view.

The wet grass rolls in the wind. Seth touches Catherine with a stick covered in lichen and dirt and moss.

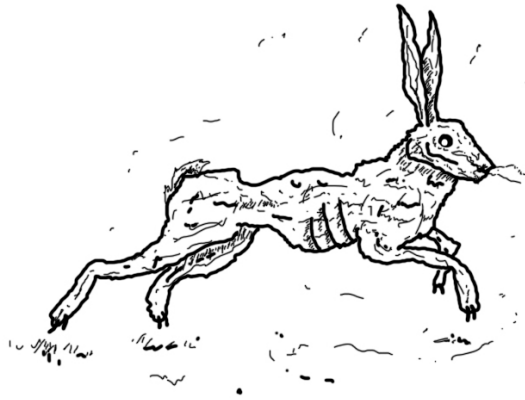
We drive up to the cafe car-park to turn around. Seth worries the radio dial with his long fingers as he twists

the wheel, shower of gravel kicked up and spinning behind us. There's no service. Static skips unsteady over the airwaves, a B-movie horror track from the 50s. The other car has gone.

We drop into the valley.

Seth flings an arm out the car window and a cigarette end with it, burnt amber end disappearing into the underbrush, swallowed by the roaring night. I crook one leg beneath me and watch the trees flicker past like insect wings, brown lit





white by the headlamps.

Seth slams on the brakes. Adam hits the back of my seat; my seatbelt wraps deft and sudden about me, pulls me back against the grubby felt.

There's a man in the road, standing, arm out, blinking.

The indicator ticks pointlessly in the silence.

The man waves.

Who is it, Adam whispers, somewhere near my right

ear. I don't know, I tell them, I don't know. I know everyone round here. Not that I'm particularly popular. Just everyone does. Everyone knows everyone, round here.

I don't know him.

He's very still.

What does he want? I say it aloud, as if Seth or Adam or someone else hidden in the backseat might suddenly know. Maybe this is a toll road or a troll road and the man-in-the-road has always

been here, lying in wait, taking copper pennies off passersby. Maybe it's no big deal. It's probably no big deal. I wonder if he stopped the other car, too.

Is he hurt? Adam.

Doesn't look it, Seth mutters.

Are the doors locked?

What?

The doors. Are they locked?

It's too late. The man-in-the-road is moving.

Right then, Seth says.

Right.

Right.

The man-in-the-road taps on Seth's window. He crouches down til his face is level with ours. He gazes through the glass. He holds his hand up beside him, fingers crooked. Taps.

Seth rolls down the window.

You alright mate?

The man nods; alright.

Late to be out for a wander, Seth says.

I nod. Adam nods beside me.

The man laughs. There's something — I can't see, he speaks too quickly and closes his mouth too fast.

You lost, or?

Lost? The man has curled his fingers over the window-glass.

No?

He shakes his head. No.

Nearly hit you, there. Seth indicates the road before us.

Nearly, the man says.

The indicator tick, tick, ticks.

Right then. We'd best—we're heading back to the village, so—

You're heading back to the village?

Yeah.

You?

Er. Me and these two. Seth points at us. I really wish he hadn't. The man's eyes snap onto me and Adam, like he hadn't seen us before. He stretches his lips left and right over his teeth.

Take me back to the village.

Seth is rolling up the window. What's that, mate?

Take me back to the village, mate.

Sorry— the man's fingers

are still hooked over the glass, caught in the gap between pane and frame—

Take me back to the village.

You take care—

Take me back to the village.

Have a good night—

Take me back to the village.

Right then—

Take me back to the village—

Bye—

Seth slams on the accelerator. The car kicks forward and the man is gone and the window snaps shut, and Adam and I twist in our seats and stare back into the night and the gathering gloom, man-in-the-road lit red and burning in the tail-light glow.

I pull Seth's coat tighter about me. I'm glad the boys are here. I'm glad I'm here

in the car with them, their soft strong warm bodies beside me. The radio wakes up and someone croons something bright and old, and I think we feel better. I think we all feel better.

I rub my nose. There's a mark on the back of my wrist like a burn.

Two

This is the only bar in Penrith. The walls are papered in silver fleur-de-lis and the chairs are made of pink fur. The men at the bar have red cheeks and thick fingers and they're all wearing the same shirt. I pay £4 for a double gin and tonic, imagine that. £4 for a double gin and tonic. The boys are crammed in a booth below a mirror by the door. Seth is sat crooked, long limbs ill-fitted to the pink fur furniture. Adam's stirring his drink with a cocktail umbrella and smiling at everyone who comes in the door.

THIS IS NICE.

WHAT?

I said, THIS IS NICE.

RIGHT.

The music is quite loud, in the only bar in Penrith. We don't stay long; it's not fair, if we stay long. Seth can't drink, can't drink and drive, not on these roads. Everyone knows someone who knows someone who's died, out here. These roads are lethal half-cut. These roads are lethal sober.

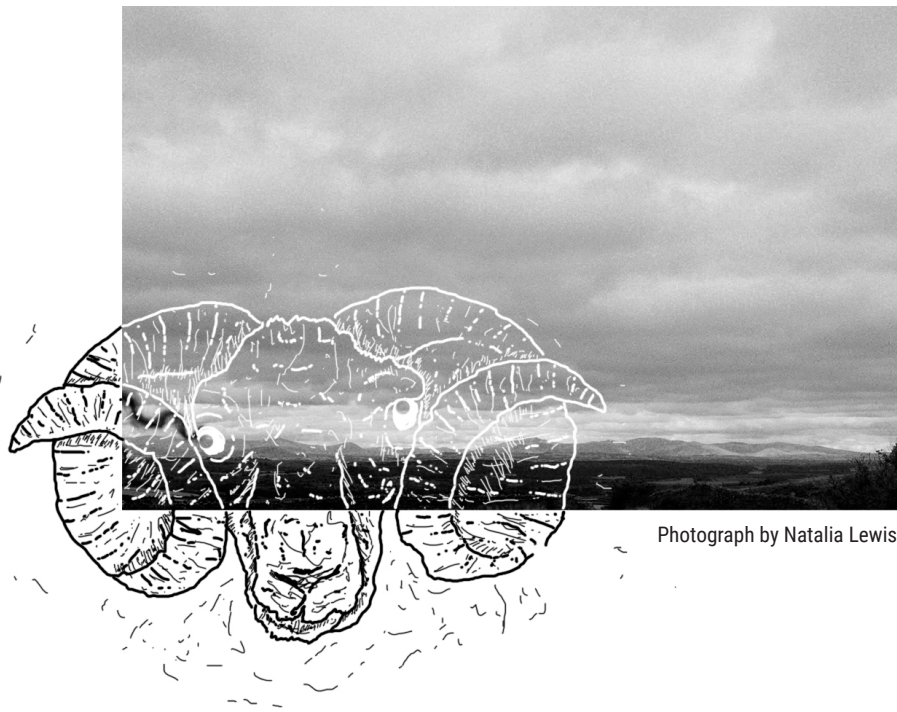
You alright, Seth asks me, as we spin back through the night not long later. Why wouldn't I be? He nods at the burn on the back of my wrist. What happened?

I don't know. Does it hurt? No, I say. No, not really. Must've caught it cooking.

We stop on the bridge above the river, watching mist pool beneath the arches in the light of the moon. Adam stays in the car; leans forward and snaps the door



Photograph by Ollie Lansdell



Photograph by Natalia Lewis

shut behind us. I watch him twirl the heating dial.

Seth is before me on the bridge, half lost to the water vapour. We don't talk, only look at the moon. There's a burn on the back of Seth's neck, too.

I tell him later, when we're back, sat cross legged on the floor in front of the fire. I take his hand and press

his fingers to the pink skin at the nape of his neck. It flickers rose and amber in the firelight.

Maybe you're allergic to something, says Adam. Adam is curled in the armchair like a cat. I nod and lift his glass of wine from his hand and drink.

We drift, all three of us, into weird sleep. I dream

about the man-in-the-road. I half-wake, on the sofa in the middle in between the boys, and I think one of them is him and I start and try to move, but my limbs are heavy like logs, and I fall asleep again as dawn creeps into the room.

In the morning we drink coffee bleary-eyed in the garden, laundry on the line snapping about our heads like gulls. The sky is grey and bright and full of thunder. Seth cooks breakfast, and we eat outside, watching late bees burrow into the thistles.

We walk to the river. We stuff rucksacks with towels and Tupperware and the last bottle of wine and traipse, lazy, over the hillocks and mounds and twisting grass. Seth leaves a trail of paper-and-ash in the air behind him, and Adam takes pictures, camera clicking like a fat black beetle.

The river chatters and roars away at our feet. I toss a

blanket over the ground, where the grass gives way to crumbling sandstone, reaching flat beneath the bed of the river. There are whispering flowers in the long grass. Soft brome, sweet-grass, timothy, cow parsley, and skinny rye-grass, too. We lie, we three, our faces to the sky. We should swim, I say to the air. Definitely. That's Adam. In a bit. Seth. He rolls onto his side and pulls his shirt over his head. The burn looks worse in the daylight. It marks his neck, his ribs, his spine, like something is growing, under his skin. I press a finger, absent, against his taut, pink flesh. Underneath, it looks almost green.

We swim. The water is cold, rolling down off the fells into the valley, kissing the rocks and moss and stones. We half-drown, I think. Adam hurls himself off the bank twenty times. We skip stones and race each other back and forth through the current. Later, Seth slips his arms under Adam's and they

stretch toward me, weird-limbed, four-armed. I reach out and out and out and tangle my fingers in Seth's, Adam twisting in the space between us. How long have we been here? I don't know. Seth grins like a wolf over Adam's shoulder and twists his ankle round mine to pull me under.

Chicken? He's still grinning.

I am, but I don't tell him. I grin back.

Wait.

Let go. Seth, twisting his fingers out of mine.

I can't.

What?

I try and twist my leg away beneath the water. There's something wrong. I try to lift my hand and Seth's comes with it.

His burns have spread down his arms. They look

bad. They look sick. I feel one burst against my palm.

If Seth cries out, I don't hear him. I don't hear anything at all. Between us Adam tries to move but he can't. I can see his lip trembling. We watch, all three as Seth's wrists flower.

We try to break apart. I try to lift my feet. There is something in my heels, rooting me to the riverbed. There is something in my throat, too. I can feel Adam, caught between us. I can feel Seth's skin where he is pressed against mine, wet and slippery. I can feel his skin moving.

New buds break from beneath our burns, sharp and green, fast and glossy. I remember the bees, burrowing into the thistles. I remember the sound of them, fat and heavy. I can hear the new buds burrowing, too. Adam twitches. His body is heavy. I close my eyes.

I'm standing in the river.

It's three o'clock in the afternoon, and I'm standing in the river. I'm standing in the deep water in the river. It's three o'clock in the afternoon and I'm standing in the deep water in the river.

I think about the boys, and their long boy-limbs. Kings or gods or fairies or something, white-eyed and unaware. Adam's shutter clicks endlessly in my head. Seth's

headlamps disappear over the moor.

The last thing — I look at the shore and I think I see the man-in-the-road there, for a second. But it's not him. Of course it's not him. It's just our blanket and our wine bottle and our jumpers, pell-mell and waiting, waiting where we left them in the long grass.

