

T
U
R
i
A



While the battle lines between 'high' and 'low' culture were drawn long ago, there has since been a consistent notion that never the two shall (or should) meet. TabloidArtHistory disagrees with this premise.

We feel that instances in which the two are combined warrants celebration, and can be used to highlight the importance of popular culture as a method for contextualizing and framing the art of the past. To put it simply: Art History can be fun. So can an episode of the Simple Life. And, sometimes, these two can intersect more than you might think. This simple observation is perhaps more prescient than ever: there is no denying the link between the visual personas of various cultural figures of today, and the images collected (and bought) from history. Jeff Koons is making Fragonard handbags for Louis V, Kanye is making gold chains from the Bas Reliefs of Ghiberti, and 'Selfie Culture' has entered the Saatchi. So, what better time to celebrate, discuss, and evaluate the relationship between Art History and pop culture?

TabloidArtHistory is exactly that. What started as an in-joke, a trade of images between friends, has evolved into a meditation on the role of art, tabloids, and culture of varying types ('high', 'low', 'pop', and 'celebrity' being but a few examples), and how these things could intersect – all through the medium of comparing photos found in tabloids to some of the best pieces the 'Art Canon' has to offer (but also, fuck the Canon).

Through the account, we have spoken to and met various incredible people, all of whom are working on the kind of projects that make us want to scream (in a good way, not a 'Kim Kardashian losing her diamond earring in the ocean' kind of way). Many of these are young people whose voices are often funneled out of art criticism and scholarship through a variety of socio-political factors (elitism, racism, classism) – this needs to be changed, these voices need to be heard. TAH Vol. I is a testament to the fact that self-started academic scholarship works, and that there is a place for popular culture in art historical discussion. The merging of academic scholarship with popular culture was something we have wanted to do for a long time and which the popularity of the account finally allowed us to achieve: the result is this, TabloidArtHistory Vol. I: a DIY tribute to the Trash of a 00's edition of Hello!, October Magazine, and the (100% non affiliated) annoying little sister of Art Review.

We've tried to incorporate many ideas into Vol. I, from academic pieces to interviews, to creative fiction; TabloidArtHistory is a stitched up landscape of how to interact with art history, popular culture and our role within it. We hope our readers will appreciate the one-month turn around, and the passion and enthusiasm for the project on each page. Our contributors are tremendous; our audience, fabulous - and as for us, we have big plans in store.

Thank you for reading – and [watch this space](#). @TabloidArtHist

Tabloid Art History is a stitched up landscape of how to interact with art history, popular culture and our role within it.



Illustration by Kay Wilson

GUEST EDITOR

@TRUMPPARTHISTORY

It is so wonderful and truly humbling to be writing at you, the beautiful and incredibly smart reader of this great art historical e-magazine. Together, with this, the inaugural issue of *Tabloid Art History e-Magazine*, we will determine the course of art and the world for years to come.

It is so tremendous when people come together about art. I always show artists great respect and will do a wonderful job for you as chief critic. The thing is, I have my own art collection. No one has to tell me what is good art or beautiful art. I know, believe me. Many critics out there, and I hear this all the time from museum patrons, so many critics out there lie. Some say 40% of critics, but I have heard it is as high as 50% to 75% of critics lie. I am honest because I can be, it is beautiful.

Being a critic of art, today, is more important than ever. Art, even the great art of history, is in a crisis, which we all know, we all see it daily. More and more artworks by artists with zero talent and so much stupidity enter our museum collections. Permanently, folks. Permanently. It is just the worst, isn't it? It is terrible, awful. I have seen so many prospectuses for so many exhibitions coming out and it is unbelievable.

Like the Tate Modern, which I love, it is just the best isn't it? The Tate Modern just, when you go in you are just like, wow, it is beautiful, the best. Have you seen it at night? It is tremendous. So many lights. It is not as good as the Met, but it is so nice. Frances Morris is a wonderful director and she has assembled a great group of curators and docents. Frances is a great friend of mine, you know.

Anyways, I was so shocked to learn that the Tate Modern would be hosting an exhibition by Alberto Giacometti. Can you believe this, have you heard? Alberto, Giacometti— he's a sculptor and that is just the worst. Have you seen this garbage? The figuration is just bad. There is so little context in the sculpture of Alberto Giacometti that there is no way we can understand his figures in terms of important issues like form and intersectionality. How the hell are critics supposed to criticize it when there are literally zero good things to say? That is not fair scholarship. Not fair to critics and not fair to you. The Tate Modern is being irresponsible and setting themselves up for a total and com-

plete failure with this exhibition. It is sad, it is really sad, especially since tax payers are the ones who are going to be left paying the bill. I think that is bad. So bad.

If you look at the history of art, which the Tate Modern should do some time, there are so many great artworks. And what you notice, you see I look at the art from all periods. I love all art, I love all artists, and am a great collector. I have so many paintings and many of them are originals. It has to be a million or a million and a half artworks in my collection. The history of art is full of beautiful paintings. Is there other stuff? Sure, but it is not as beautiful. Sculpture is fake art. Collage is almost good art, but it is not even close. Only painting truly and really gets at sublime beauty.

There are so many artists in great need of exploration, much more than Giacometti. Goya is good, and Titian of course, and Renoir. I can make the deals to get these paintings in an exhibition. I can call up the people that own them and we could have an exhibition in the Met tomorrow. Immediately. That is the kind of leadership museum patrons want and deserve. Frances Morris either does not want to do the work (lazy) or is too stupid to know what to do.

Giacometti cannot compete and the Tate Modern is making terrible deals, spending so much money on fake art and you look at what they are planning and just wonder, why? You look at Frances Morris and think maybe she just does not have the stamina to be an arbiter of taste. I have the best taste and I arbiter like nobody else. The Tate Modern needs someone who can make great deals and get tremendously beautiful art in the doors and get people to come and see the art. That's it! That's all there is to it. It is so simple, folks. So simple.

Exhibitions do not show paintings by old masters anymore. Contemporary art is great and diverse and that is something we should all be proud of. I am so proud of it. But if we want to make art great again, we need to go back to the core values of artistic expression. Museum patrons want to see great work, not sad garbage by "artists" nobody has heard of like Giacometti. The Tate Modern needs to get with the program.



ARTS-EMERGENCY.ORG
@MUSEUMDETOX
THEWHITEPUBE.COM
DARDISHI.COM
@ANAMENDIETAUK
ANOTHERGAZE.COM
THIS-GIRL-MAKES.COM
FACEBOOK.COM/SIRENSCOLLECTIVE
I2OCOLLECTIVE.COM
VANDAL.ORG.UK

a (growing) list of organisations working for inclusivity and accessibility in the arts, that you can donate your time, money and/or attention to. If you run one or know one, please let us know by keeping in touch at tabloidarthistory@outlook.com, or via our twitter [@TabloidArtHist](https://twitter.com/TabloidArtHist). We are interested in all forms of individual and group actions, collective, organisations, blogs, press, charities, internet corners.

DON'T BE A TRUMP.

FUND THE ARTS.

12

*Beyoncé, Isabella d'Este and Performing
Female Power*

Megan Wallace

18

Boybands and Ephebe

Claire Heseltine

26

*Reflecting: The Mainstream British Media's
Marginalisation of Grime*

Lamar Ita

35

*Enfrailing' the Feminine Form;
Victorian Aesthetic and Narrative Depictions
of Subjugation*

Jemma Elliott-Israelson

40

*'The Reappearance of the Rose': Instagram
and The Aesthetic of Jean Cocteau*

Sam Love

47

*Code Red: Lucia Pica's Le Rouge Collection
No.1 For Chanel*

Dr Penelope Wickson

50

NEW BIBLICAL VERSES FOR THE SECOND SALOME

Saint Torrente

56

*The Revolutionary Narcissism of Female Self
Appreciation*

Lizzie Mackarel

Beyoncé, Isabella d'Este and Performing Female Power

In 2017, the centrality of social media in our lives and the accompanying pressure to present a digestible image of ourselves means that theorising identity politics has never been more pertinent. Thanks to social media, celebrities now have multiple channels through which to communicate with the wider world, granting them more autonomy from press scrutiny and allowing them control over the values they wish to project. However, this is not solely a phenomenon of the digital age; prominent figures have been manipulating the ways in which they are perceived for centuries. Indeed, Jill Burke asserts that art was used by patrons to shape their relationships with the rest of the world by projecting certain ideas about their status and character.¹ It is worth comparing how social media and commissioned paintings have been successfully used to mediate public image, bearing in mind different intended audiences and functions. Two figures who stand out for astute image control mediated by self-produced images are the 21st century icon Beyoncé and the Renaissance patron Isabella d'Este.

While the Beyoncé has an official Facebook page as well as a Twitter page, it is through her Instagram page that her brand's values are best communicated. Indeed, as the fifth most followed account on the social media site, her posts reach over 98 million followers. There is a general consensus that pop music is about more than the music

itself but rather about the spectacle — a spectacle within which the performer can transgress social norms, for example through exaggerated dress or outspoken sexuality, onstage or in music videos.² However, Beyoncé's Instagram posts are designed to grant her fans a glimpse into her extraordinary life via pictures of her family, of red carpet events, of hours spent in the studio, and therefore allow fans to feel they are experiencing a vision of Beyoncé the woman (albeit in a highly performative way), rather than Beyoncé the stage persona or icon.³ Indeed, there are overarching trends in what Beyoncé posts, for example, images which underscore her role as a wife and mother; highlighting the more 'respectable' facets of her feminine identity. However, the majority of images are far from candid, and tend to display the singer in glamorous clothing which emphasise her beauty and wealth - two of the ultimate ideals of 21st century society. If her onstage personas of Yoncé and Sasha Fierce, as well as her alignment with Feminism, are set to attract controversy; her Instagram account appears to adhere to normative ideals of femininity in order to mitigate this.

We can see something similar at play in a Titian portrait commissioned by Isabella d'Este (1534-6) where, despite being in her sixties at the time it was painted, she appears youthful and in adherence with the contemporary standards of beauty.⁴ The artist depicts her in a sumptuous gown embroidered

with fur, silk and velvet which emphasise her wealth. Her direct stare suggests a forceful personality, an impression which is mediated by the suggestion of a slightly upturned mouth. We might want to consider why a woman like Isabella d'Este, a gifted stateswoman, would request that she be portrayed in a light which stresses her former beauty, ignoring her other numerous achievements.⁵ However; it is precisely because she had attained other achievements that she should wish to embrace visual imagery that projected an idea of her as a beautiful and passive ideal. By depicting herself as a girlish and beautiful she not only creates an image of a 'weaker', less experienced self for circulation but displays to the court a willingness to conform to such ideals, rather than seek the powerful role or have herself depicted in the bold fashion displayed in, for example, images of her brother, Alfonso d'Este.

However, such an idealised portrait could also pose a threat to her carefully constructed image. Elizabeth Cropper compares fig. 1 to a portrait by Parmigianino of an unnamed sitter whose depiction echoes that of Isabella in dress, beauty and facial expression. She goes on to suggest that the latter painting is one in which the sitter has been chosen exclusively for her beauty and that, accordingly, her identity is of little consequence. Such a painting is not a portrait at all but rather an object for the visual enjoyment of men, especially when one considers

the sexual availability which came to be associated with artist models.⁶ Cropper's alignment of the anonymous Parmigianino model and the illustrious Isabella d'Este, suggests how depictions of idealised beauty eroded the individuality of the sitter and dissolved distinctions of rank between women. While women felt under pressure to adhere to the standards of beauty of the day, especially given that external beauty was seen as a sign of internal morality and piety, it was precisely the beautification of their image in portraiture which endangered them of being associated with a looser morality and lower social classes.

Indeed, there exists a similar tension in Beyoncé's self-representation. While a career within the public eye is, at least for women, partly dependent upon adhering to contemporary standards of beauty and perceived 'sex appeal', she has been fiercely criticised for being overly provocative.⁷ While similar criticism of female celebrities is commonplace, in Beyoncé case it is often used as an excuse to invalidate her cultural importance as a public feminist figure — most notably by bell hooks who criticised Beyoncé as being complicit in the imperialist, capitalist system of patriarchy and of continuing myths about the heightened sexual availability of women of colour.⁸ However, such policing of

Beyoncé's image and sexuality is nothing but a replication of patriarchal limitations upon female sexuality and, in the case of many media outlets, putting pressure on Beyoncé to conceal her body stems from a desire for her to conceal her difference. The fact that she does not bow to such pressure is integral to the images of power and strength which the Beyoncé brand projects. Take a concert picture from the Formation Tour, similar to one posted on her Instagram in July 2016. She stands, clothed in a red, form-fitting leather leotard, one hand grasping a microphone. Red is a colour traditionally associated with excessive female sexuality and this, coupled with the garment's cut, make her wardrobe choice provocative by traditional standards. However, this sexuality is not passive or weak but is, rather, coded as active and strong — her solid grip on the microphone shows that she is in control, and primed for action, the exaggerated shoulder details of her outfit mimics the broad shoulders which in men (and in the fashion of the 1980s) are often taken to suggest power. Her self-possessed gaze suggests composure and was often projected in large format on a screen onstage during the tour. With the projection of her face surveying the crowds, Beyoncé subverts the all-consuming male gaze: even while she is on display, the spectator feels

uncomfortable, under inspection by her gaze. Beyoncé is not a passive body to be consumed and her concert outfits typically hyper-emphasise areas of her body (her legs or hair for example) so as to take control of the process of sexualisation, in a form of resistance against objectification.⁹

While Beyoncé navigates the misogyny attracted by female beauty and sexuality by coding the feminine as strong and advocating the worth and value of her body, Isabella d'Este seeks at all costs to appear to reconcile with pre-established conceptions of ideal femininity. For example, in *The Triumph of the Virtues* (Mantegna, 1502), we can see how Isabella justifies and promotes beliefs which deviated from her feminine role by tying them into established ideas about her gender. It depicts a marsh, enclosed by a tall fence, governed by the Vices who are portrayed as monstrous beings. Idleness is chased away by Minerva who also intervenes to prevent Diana, the goddess of chastity from being pursued by a centaur symbolising tawdry sexual desire. The marchesa adopts a didactic, illustrative treatment of the theme, showing the possible outcomes of when vigilance is relaxed and the mind becomes victim to laziness, jealousy and sensuality.¹⁰ There is writing in Latin, Greek and Hebrew (all scholarly languages) which advise on

how to behave virtuously. As women were taught to aspire to virtuous conduct, Isabella d'Este is linking learning (here, the ability to read the advice in the three scholarly languages) with the feminine ideals of piety and morality.¹¹ Therefore, her more 'masculine' interest in learning and classical knowledge which establishes her as being distinguished for her sex is coded as non-threatening to the social order because it shown to be an aid to attaining certain ideals of femininity.

Somewhat like Isabella invoking the Ancient World in *The Triumph of the Virtues*, Beyoncé invokes Renaissance painting and classical mythology in the recent pregnancy photos released on her website and Instagram. One such image, posted on her Instagram on the 1st of February 2017, is worth particular mention. The singer kneels, with her hands on her pregnant stomach, upon an alter of colourful flowers, her face covered by a sheer veil. The saturated colours of the image, coupled with the unusual content and Beyoncé's intense beauty, gives the photo a dreamlike atmosphere. The central position of Beyoncé in the composition, along with her long ringlets of hair and the soft sensuality, appears to be a reference to Botticelli's *The Birth of Venus* (c.1486). By referencing this image, Beyoncé aligns herself with Venus as

an embodiment of female virtue, beauty and love, and in doing so is making a powerful statement about the traditional undervaluation of black femininity and beauty. Furthermore, Beyoncé shows that motherhood can be a facet of female sexuality, that female beauty and sexual expression should continue after becoming a mother — despite what sexist, and in some cases, ageist cultural norms may suggest. Furthermore, this image serves as a visual representation of the achievements of Beyoncé's career. As a black woman and feminist, Beyoncé was positioned by a racist, patriarchal society as an outsider but, through her fame and wealth, has come to be at the very centre and the very peak of this culture. Not only does Beyoncé have mass appeal, but she has the power and relevancy to influence public opinion and change cultural norms.

To conclude, it is clear that Isabella d'Este was highly aware of how she could use images to manipulate the manner in which people perceived her. Considering that women in this period were excluded from being able to participate in the public sphere, and therefore from forging an identity other than that ascribed to them by their fathers or husbands, Isabella d'Este commissioned works in which she could show herself to be embodying certain female virtues or

in which she could neutralise any possible suspicions about her conduct or character. The quantity and quality of the patronage of Isabella helped her to establish herself as an 'exceptional' and 'unique' woman who rose above the constraints of her sex. At least, this is an image that art historical discourse has traditionally promulgated and which Isabella herself appears to have been invested in.¹² Beyoncé contrastingly, serves as an example to other women and often actively helps other women. While her role in contemporary feminism is hotly contested amongst academics, Beyoncé serves as an example of how to live as an emancipated woman and self-defining feminist and how to navigate the contradictions and tensions which arise from working towards personal success and gender inequality within a capitalist sphere. The everyday feminism of Beyoncé celebrates black femininity, motherhood and sisterhood in ways which contemporary culture often does not provide a space for and, in this way, is unequivocally empowering. Through images which code her body as powerful, beautiful and divine, Beyoncé retaliates against discriminatory representations of black women and establishes herself as the Venus at the peak of western culture.



Illustration by Chloe Esslemont

F O O T N O T E S :

1. Burke, Jill, *Changing Patrons: Social Identity and the Visual Arts in Renaissance Florence* (Pennsylvania: Penn State Press, 2004)
2. Trier-Bieniek, Adrienne (ed), *The Beyonce Effect* (Jefferson: McFarland & Company, Inc., 2016) p111
3. Trier-Bieniek, Adrienne (ed), *The Beyonce Effect* (Jefferson: McFarland & Company, Inc., 2016) p113
4. Johnson, Geraldine, *Renaissance Art: A Very Short Introduction* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005) p84
5. Cockram, Sarah D P, Isabella d'Este and Francesco Gonzaga: *Power Sharing at the Italian Renaissance Court* (London: Routledge, 2013) p196
6. Cropper, Elizabeth 'The Beauty of Women: Problems in the Rhetoric of Renaissance Portraiture' in *Rewriting the Renaissance: The Discourses of Sexual Difference in Early Modern Europe*, Margaret W Ferguson, Maureen Quilligan and Nancy Vickers (eds) (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1986)
7. Trier-Bieniek, Adrienne (ed), *The Beyonce Effect* (Jefferson: McFarland & Company, Inc., 2016) p59
8. hooks, bell, *Black Looks: Race and Representation* (New York: Routledge, 2015) (preface)
9. Trier-Bieniek, Adrienne (ed), *The Beyonce Effect* (Jefferson: McFarland & Company, Inc., 2016) p56
10. Boorsch, Suzanna and Martineau, Jane, *Andrea Mantegna* (London: Thames and Hudson, 1992)
11. King, Catherine 'Did Women Patrons have a Renaissance?' *Art and Visual Culture | 100-1600: Medieval to Renaissance* ed Kim Woods (London: Tate, 2013)
12. Cockram, Sarah D P, Isabella d'Este and Francesco Gonzaga: *Power Sharing at the Italian Renaissance Court* p 195

B I B L I O G R A P H Y :

1. Boorsch, Suzanna and Martineau, Jane, *Andrea Mantegna* (London: Thames and Hudson, 1992).
2. Burke, Jill, *Changing Patrons: Social Identity and the Visual Arts in Renaissance Florence* (Pennsylvania: Penn State Press, 2004).
3. Cockram, Sarah D P, Isabella d'Este and Francesco Gonzaga: *Power Sharing at the Italian Renaissance Court* (London: Routledge, 2013).
4. Cropper, Elizabeth 'The Beauty of Women: Problems in the Rhetoric of Renaissance Portraiture' in *Rewriting the Renaissance: The Discourses of Sexual Difference in Early Modern Europe*, Margaret W Ferguson, Maureen Quilligan and Nancy Vickers (eds) (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1986).
5. hooks, bell, *Black Looks: Race and Representation* (New York: Routledge, 2015).
6. Johnson, Geraldine, *Renaissance Art: A Very Short Introduction* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005).
7. King, Catherine 'Did Women Patrons have a Renaissance?' *Art and Visual Culture | 100-1600: Medieval to Renaissance* ed Kim Woods (London: Tate, 2013).
8. Trier-Bieniek, Adrienne (ed), *The Beyonce Effect* (Jefferson: McFarland & Company, Inc., 2016).

Boybands and Ephebe

Depictions of the ephebe, a youth caught in the transition from puberty to Greek civic manhood, dominated images of Greek culture and desire throughout the periods now known as the Archaic and Classical, and remain the defining images of Greek art in Western understanding. In Ancient Greece, youth and beauty were key elements in the value of *kalokagathia* – that to look good was, literally, to be good.¹ Obvious parallels to this can be found in contemporary celebrity culture – the worshiping of figures based on a cultivated outward image of wholesomeness and beauty. This dynamic is crystallised in those most modern ephebes: boybands.

The images produced of these pop groups are some of the most deliberately manicured and cultivated of our time and owe much to the precedents set for Western male beauty by their Greek forebears. This is seen particularly in figures of the High Classical period (home of the infamous Aphrodite nude), and in the work of Praxiteles, which placed an emphasis on lithe youthful figures, with lighter musculature than the athletic victory statues of the 5th century BC. The soft modelling lines and

distinctive S-curve posture of his work can be compared with Harry Styles' 2016 photoshoot for 'Another Man' magazine.² These images share the same gentle effeminacy, playing deliberately upon the age and ambiguous gendering of their subjects to create a desirable representation in art. Like Praxiteles' 'Leaning Faun', these images play a kind of joke on the viewer – providing an object of intense sexual desire by denying a straightforward image of masculinity and playing on elements of gay culture, both then and now. Another example of this type is Troye Sivan's photoshoot with Billboard³ where his eyes and lashes are strongly picked out as they were on bronze statues of Greek youths which were given inset crystal eyes and separate metal eyelashes, still surviving on the Riace bronzes.

Scholars often discuss the 'cult of beauty'⁴ in Greece, even describing it as a Youth and Beauty culture, centred around those values which are shown most keenly in the kouros type of the Archaic period of the 7th and 6th centuries BC. As funerary monuments, these nude youths were incredibly important cultural monuments, heroizing the dead not with a straightforward

by Claire Heselbine

portrait, but with a *sema* (sign) of their most desirable qualities, those most worth remembering. The focus on pure beauty can be seen best preserved in the Kroisos kouros, with finely curled hair, full lips, and athletic body, 'immortalised as they would have appeared in the palaestra'.⁵ The question in response to this is: can we view modern society as a Youth and Beauty culture on this same level? I wouldn't categorize it as such, as it is not in the Greek sense so tied with nobility and the complex relationship of the Greek civic body with the elite classes after their experiences with oligarchy and democracy. Nonetheless, it is undeniable that modern culture is still influenced by the art of this culture and that the particular masculinity of the *ephebe* and its appeal are still exploited in the marketing of young male artists, but now to appeal predominantly to young women rather than to the male gaze of the Greek citizen body which were the audience for these public and votive sculptures of young men. The aims and effects of this *ephebe*-type in both cultures must be examined more closely.

In the development of Greek sculpture, models of archaic manhood such as the muscular

nudes of Kleobis and Biton in Delphi – bearing more resemblance to Dwayne 'the Rock' Johnson than any member of noughties boy bands – gave way in the 5th century BC to a more lithe and androgynous form that shaped the western ideal of male beauty. One defining feature of the *ephebe*, both then and now, is their separation from any potent sexuality. In archaic and classical sculpture this is manifest particularly in the treatment of the genitalia; male statues are given shrunken phalluses as symbols of their self-control and restraint in sexual matters, with many of the *kouros* type also showing evidence of male grooming in the shaping of their pubic hair (seen most clearly on the Isches and Kritios *kouros*). This clean cut and controlled image of the masculine youth sees many of its values reflected in the publicity materials of 21st century boy bands, as with the Vamps posing in matching white tees against a highly filtered background of an English country village, their faces barely out of puberty. This pattern, also seen in the marketing of One Direction in the early noughties, is limiting any indicators of male sexuality in favour of appeal to a young female fan base.



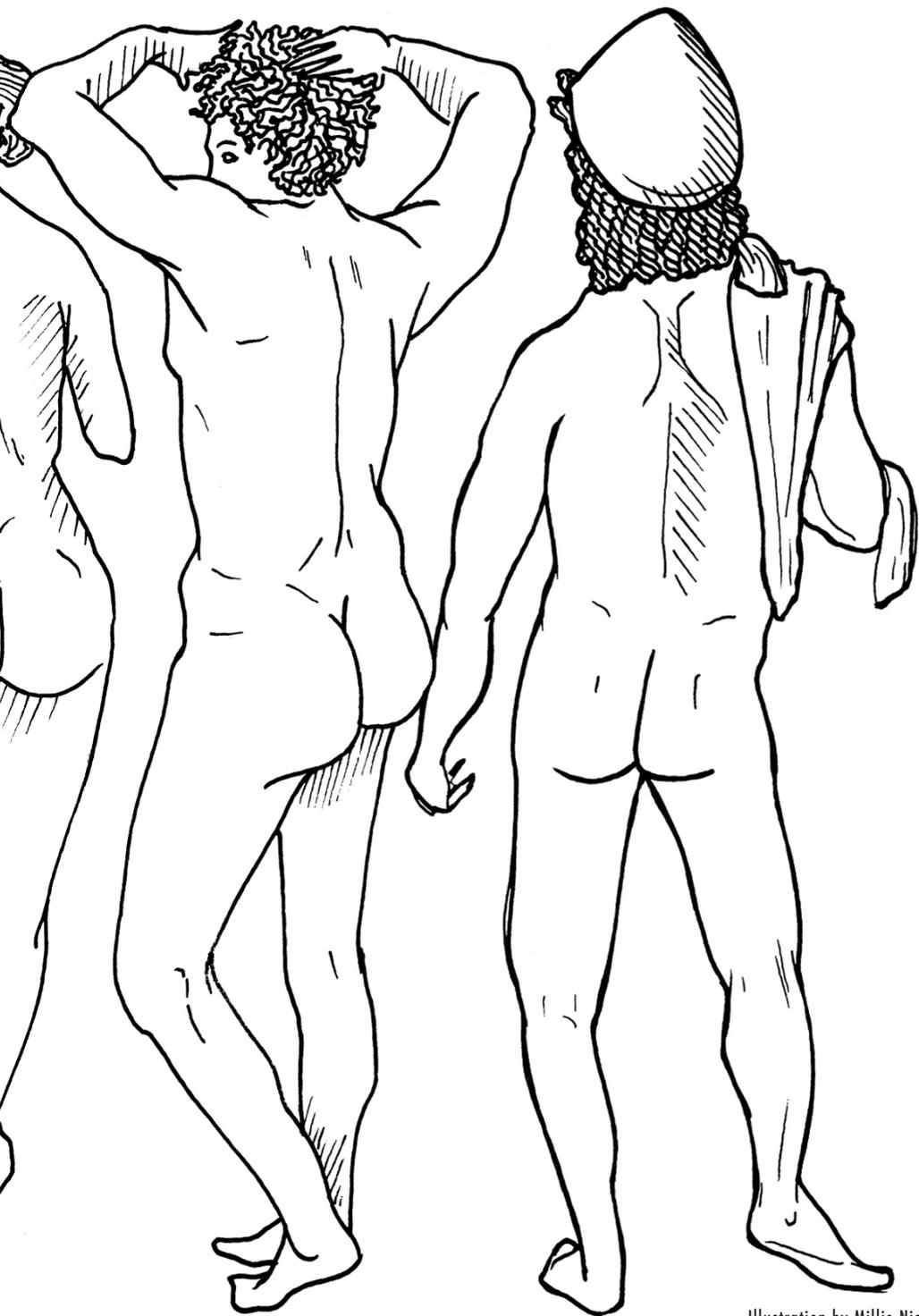


Illustration by Millie Nice

Here, the same usage of iconography of the ephebe diverges in its intended effect. In Classical Greece, the ephebe was an object of homosexual desire; the sculptors, majority of patrons, and civic audience were male, male beauty was made for male consumption, whereas the boybands of contemporary culture are marketed to girls in adolescence.

The difference in the gaze these images are produced for is not the only variation between ancient and modern uses of the ephebe; in Greek sculpture the ephebe was overwhelmingly depicted in the nude, with the 'costume' ⁶ of nudity having very different connotations in these images and in celebrity nude photoshoots of the modern era. While today a nude photoshoot is almost always considered erotic, and within the context

of boybands often seems deliberately so, with a classic example being Take That's 'Do What U Like' video ⁷ and more recently The Wanted's feature with *Cosmopolitan*. ⁸ In the latter, the posing and imagery is clearly provocative, with strategically placed tea towels and newspapers and the men standing in pseudo-chaste poses (more like the Cnidian Aphrodite than any male subject in sculpture) that draw more attention to their undressed state than projecting an impression of modesty. This overt eroticism stands in stark contrast to the elevating effect of classical nudity, widely used to heroize male warriors or to create a divine connection. In Archaic and Classical sculpture, men are shown naked in the costume of a hero or a god, elevating them above the mortal plane and showing their carefully cultivated athleticism

and beauty. The modes of representation must also be considered; sculptures were incredibly high status objects, costing a significant sum, reported in the case of Diogeiton to be enough to feed a family of four for five years, ⁹ while boybands, and thus their marketing material, are often considered 'low culture'.

Additionally, the modern ephebe faces a problem that none of the Greek sculptures mentioned above will ever do; that of aging. One Direction, the perennial, paramount boy band, proved this problem with the repetitive Daily Mail articles on their new tattoos and explorations in recreational drugs, and their girlfriend's pregnancy scares. Thus, these youths began to move away from the wholesome curated image of the ephebe and into a more complicated

F O O T N O T E S :

1. Hurwit. 2007. "The Human Figure in Early Greek Sculpture and Vase Painting." In *The Cambridge Companion to Archaic Greece*, by Shapiro, 274. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
2. Vandepierre. A/W16. "Oh Boy! Harry Styles." *Another Man*. London.
3. Galdo, Julia. 2015. Troye Sivan: The Billboard Shoot. United States, 19th November.
4. Winwood. 2016. "The Cult of Beauty in Ancient Greece and Modern Media." *Battler Columns*, April.

image of manhood. Can we still class Zayn and Harry as ephebes? There is much about them that seems to maintain an inner softness characteristic of such a definition. Harry proves that his image remains unthreatening in its masculinity with his recent explosion in popularity with queer women, as demonstrated in the tweets of Ruby Tandoh and others. To categorise Zayn as an ephebe is complicated by the additional problem of how modern culture frames race. White masculinity is far more easily depicted as 'pure' and unthreatening in contemporary iconography, whereas men of colour are often associated with more dangerous and threatening stereotypes of masculine behaviour; due to the ingrained racial profiling of modern media. Nonetheless, both men seem to maintain a kind of innocence despite their

age and various body art, a key element of the ephebe's charm, and often (though Harry more often) play with homoerotic imagery in their art and self-presentation in a way characteristic of the Greek image of the youth.

The power of imagery of the ephebe in modern culture comes from the apparent separation of these young men from sexuality, creating a palatable form of masculinity that is 'safe' for the young women who make up much of their fan base. In this way, an inherently Greek 'type' finds relevance and popularity in contemporary culture, with the iconography and ethical qualities of the ephebe present throughout the boyband culture of the noughties and more recent years. The irony is that the ephebe in Greece, while an elevated image, above sexuality and the model of male

self-control, was an object of the male gaze and, particularly in the work of Praxiteles as discussed above, was fundamentally homoerotic. This type, now innate within Western culture, thus has become shaped within modern heteronormative culture for entirely different motivations than those original sculptures. The qualities of youth and beauty remain widely desirable, and make up much of the appeal of the ephebe, but now the dynamic has changed from an approving older male gaze regarding a beautiful youth, to young women projecting upwards on these older ephebes. The youth of the ephebe allows young girls to relate to the men marketed to them, and their beauty makes them the source of almost universal envy and desire.

5. Ridgway, 1993.
6. Berger. 1972. *Ways of Seeing*. London: Penguin Books Ltd.
7. *Do What U Like*. Directed by Barratt and Smith. Performed by Take That, 1991.
8. The Wanted, interview by Goddard. 2011. *Cosmo talks dating with The Wanted* (15th December).
9. Morris. 1994. "Everyman's Grave." In *Athenian Identity and Civic Ideology*, by Boegehold and Scafuro, 74. Baltimore: John Hopkins University Press.

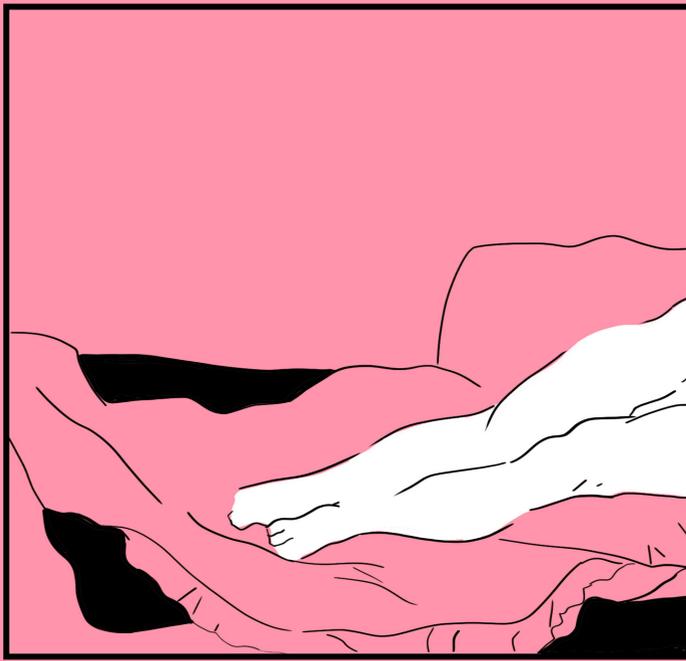


Illustration by Kay Wilson



Reflecting: The Mainstream British Media's Marginalisation of Grime

Grime. A genre typified by propulsive electronic production played at a tempo of roughly 140 beats per minute, aggressively delivered rapped vocals (very often in the form of repeated refrains) and an aesthetic that perfectly embodies the black British youth of the past 15 years or so. The love I have for this genre personally is incalculable; I did not care about any form of music until I heard *Wot Do U Call It?* by Wiley at the tender age of 12. My unwavering interest in this form and the scene led me to become passionate about all the other music I actively consume now, from R&B to experimental metal; so I am indebted to grime.

It goes without saying that not everyone shares this same enthrallment with what is, in my opinion, Britain's greatest musical export. Grime has come under fire on countless occasions, from every echelon of the British establishment. The focus of this particular piece, though, is the agenda that I know the mainstream British media has against my most beloved genre. Since its inception, grime has had a strained relationship with the mainstream media. It has been portrayed as nothing more than musical barbarism and has been excluded from the likes of award ceremonies, talk shows and musical magazines. Throughout much of my teenage life, seeing a grime video by a grime artist on a music television channel that wasn't Channel U/AKA was essentially the real-life equivalent of Ash Ketchum winning the League in the Pokémon anime: it just didn't happen (but I always kept my eyes and ears open in case it did). The effect of this exclusion can be seen pretty plainly in sales figures. The former golden boy of grime, Dizzee Rascal, released *Boy In Da Corner*, one of the most acclaimed debuts in British history in 2003. Sales figures for the album were fantastic too (by 2004, it had sold 250,000 copies the world over) but he didn't see a number one single until he put out *Dance Wiv Me*, an unashamedly commercial collaboration with Calvin Harris, five years later in 2008. The same exclusion of sounds forged primarily by members of the black British community is nothing new, however. The mainstream British media has a decorated history of distancing and antagonising non-white communities, one such example being *Our Jamaican Problem*, a short film published by

Pathé in the mid 1950's, which looked at the "problems" caused by the influx of black migrants coming from nations that had their infrastructures flailed by the cruel mace that is British occupation. When I asked her of her experiences with music, film and television while growing up in the 1980s, my mother said "it was like watching a theatre production that I had no part in", a sentiment echoed by many people of colour in the older generation. Even when it comes to reporting some of the most serious affairs, the meticulous fact checking that goes into talking about those affiliated with other music scenes is absent. A prime example and a pathway to explore this issue is how *The Guardian*, a news platform often praised for being "liberal" and "progressive", reported the incarceration of Brandon Jolie, better known to some as "Maniac" in 2009. Jolie had been convicted of conspiracy to murder; he arranged for an associate to murder his then pregnant ex-girlfriend. This is indisputably a deplorable act, but the inaccurate reporting of the affair is particularly noteworthy to me. *The Guardian* referred to Jolie as a "would-be rapper", but he was not a rapper at all - all my time being interested in grime music, the only time that I have ever heard what I believe is his voice, is in the form of short sampled clips on his instrumentals - because the artist called Maniac is, to my knowledge, exclusively a producer of music (having made tracks for Wiley, Durrty Goodz and other stalwarts in the scene) and not a rapper, an MC or a vocalist of any kind. Simply with some rudimentary fact-checking, the journalist behind this would have realised this. Then again, perhaps it is possible that the writer was totally cognizant of their faux pas and deliberately included it, in an attempt to garner clicks and sell papers, to play on the racist preconceptions of members of white society that view "rappers" as savage participants of a black craft. In looking at this issue, I thought it would make sense to speak to a few of my friends, some of the young movers and shakers in the grime scene right now, to find out what they thought and how they feel about the marginalisation of grime by the mainstream media.

VICKY GROUT

PHOTOGRAPHER



Lamar Ita: *Do you agree that the mainstream British media excludes grime music?*

Vicky Grout: Yes, and no. I think that the mainstream media tends to exploit grime music, and tends to kind of use it as a buzzword, and apply it to any black urban artist because it gets them clicks, but fails to support these artists properly.

LI: *What do you think causes the bias against grime?*

VG: White supremacy, in a nutshell, and basically black stereotyping. If these grime artists were white, this wouldn't be the case. There tends to be this stereotype that grime artists

are violent and savage, but that is a symptom of society and not what causes these things.

LI: *Any examples that you have seen personally of grime being victimised by the mainstream media?*

VG: When Skepta had a show at Ally Pally and someone from the Evening Standard was there doing a review, they were basically saying it wasn't very good, it was all a mess, the songs kept stopping and starting. If they knew anything about soundsystem culture, they would know that they were reloads. And that's the exploitation side, and the fact they're still trying to portray as, like, a bad thing,

as if it wasn't a success, which it clearly was. They're quick to use Skepta's face on the cover of a magazine yet they write a bad review of his show simply because they don't get it. Another example I can think of, is that Giggs review in the NME, someone reviewed his album [Landlord] and was saying "it's all good, it's all great and then towards the end, there was one part where he talks about rape, where he says he's gonna rape a girl and blah blah blah". He thought the line was "man rapes her", but the line was "man rates her" and if he knew anything about the culture, then he would know that that's a thing that people say, but because he's not familiar with the language, he

simply assumed. He didn't even think to double check the lyric with someone else, he just heard it and thought "okay, this is what I expect from a black man, so I'm gonna write it." It's very bad.

LI: What do you think can be done by people in the scene to help improve the situation?

VG: I don't know if it's anything for people in the scene to do! It's not to do with them, it's the people outside of the scene looking in, and the people that think they have a valid opinion when they don't. I think if you're going to talk on something, you need to educate yourself on the matter, and not just talk about it for the sake of it, because everyone's talking about it, which is what a big part of the media is doing.

LI: Any other thoughts about the issue?

VG: Just to further my previous point, I think it's important that the people that talk about these matters, and on the genre as a whole, need to be educated, and know what they're talking about before they make a comment, because one slight misjudgement of what someone says just further reinforces the stereotype of black men, and therefore of grime artists.

Vicky Grout - Photographer:
<http://instagram.com/vickygrout>

Photo: Alex Williams

“Time and learning are the only things that are gonna get us through, and we're seeing it mature, to another level where people are starting to respect it and respect the artists within it.”

Scully

Lamar Ita: Do you agree that the mainstream British media excludes grime music?

Scully: Definitely, definitely. I feel like it's been way more excluded in the past, and they've tried to diminish it as a culture, as a genre, as something of worth, but definitely in recent years, we've seen it in a new light and people have started to respect it more. They've begun to show it in a correct manner and take it more seriously.

LI: What do you think causes the bias against grime?

S: It's a subculture that is from the working class primarily, who are always gonna be demonised, particularly by right wing media but all media. It's roots are in African and Caribbean culture, so there's gonna be some racial demonisation too. They're gonna be looking at it in a way like "some poor black kids make this, it's not worth much, it's just noise". And also, I guess just because it's new as well, and the older generation is never gonna understand the newer generation's way of doing things.

LI: Any examples that you have seen personally of grime being victimised by the mainstream media?

S: Some of the interviews that I've seen, and the way grime has been covered in reviews. The way they look at black music within the Guardian and the NME, which are publications that are usually respectable as well, but the way they discuss

SCULLY



things such as grime is always in a way that is condescending. People don't look at grime as an art form yet, which is disgusting because all music is a form of art. There is so much music I don't like, but I will never say it's not art. Every form of music is a form of artistic expression and should all be valued in the same way.

LI: What do you think can be done by people in the scene to help improve the situation?

S: Be articulate. Be willing to explain. Even within your music. When you look at artists like Kano, or even to the extent of Skepta and the success he had with the Mercury [Music

Prize], these are artists that have expressed sentiment in an eloquent manner within their music. That helps them to be respected, the message in their music has people thinking "oh, this artist has deeper thoughts than whatever we (the media) say there is". So definitely be articulate, be honest and carry yourself in a mature way as well. If someone disagrees with you, you don't always have to be like "I'll punch you up bruv", there's other ways of communicating with people. You can be like "yo, I'm gonna intellectually par you, my g, take time."

LI: Any other thoughts about the issue?

S: So many, man! It [grime] is excluded, it's misunderstood, it's infantile in its inception, there's so many factors to it. Time and learning are the only things that are gonna get us through, and we're seeing it mature, to another level where people are starting to respect it and respect the artists within it. We will see it, and we're gonna see it in our lifetime, so I don't know what else we can do other than be patient.

**Scully - Radio Host
Reprezent Radio:
<https://twitter.com/isthatscully>**

Photo: Alex Douglas
@blaowphotography

“Every form of music is a form of artistic expression and should all be valued in the same way.”

LUKE WARM

PRODUCER/DJ NTN



Lamar Ita: *Do you agree that the mainstream British media excludes grime music?*

Luke Warm: I feel the modern middle class society which rules over most of the mainstream media in Britain is definitely frightened of the subjects dealt with, and emotions evoked in, a lot of urban music. Unfortunately, grime isn't the only genre that receives this treatment. Music is a very powerful thing and the media, which is also very powerful, is aware of that, hence the need to block out what doesn't suit their agendas.

LI: *What do you think causes the bias against grime?*

LW: I believe it stems from an ingrained prejudice and anti-youth culture, and also a distorted perception that kids who sell drugs can cause more damage to our communities and society than the corporations that sell guns to the majority of the world, politicians that care little for the unprivileged and

bankers that take home bonuses with no regards to their impact on the global economy.

LI: *Any examples that you have seen personally of grime being victimised by the mainstream media?*

LW: Obviously, the first thing to come to mind would be a tabloid's (I can't remember which one) review of Skepta's show at Alexandra Palace, which was just hilarious to be honest. It shows a basic misunderstanding of the culture. Another case of victimisation would be in Giggs' early days when he stopped getting exposure from literally every mainstream radio station because of Trident's offen-

sive against him without any evidence.

LI: *What do you think can be done by people in the scene to help improve the situation?*

LW: For the scene to continue to grow and flourish in the way it has in recent years, I believe social media has to be dominated, and used as the main platform for sharing music and self-promotion. Independence is key.

Luke Warm - Resident Producer/DJ of South London crew NTN
<https://m.soundcloud.com/lukewarmer>

“It stems from an ingrained prejudice and anti-youth culture.”

“It is evidence of the integrity of the sound, concrete evidence that this scene is not about to be uprooted, by bad journalism, record labels that just don't "get" it, or even by more tangible threats outside the realms of media”

In more recent times, there is definitely an underlying but still evident misunderstanding manner that seems to prevent the mainstream media from affording grime the respect it deserves. Skepta's performance of his hit Shutdown at the Brit Awards this year makes for a notable testament of this. While admittedly his energy on stage was somewhat off (I am by no means slandering his iconic dancing, by the way), his performance was further marred by shoddy censorship. The man is a seasoned veteran, not just in the grime scene but in the realms of Britain's music pantheon more generally. He has played both sold out dates at Alexandra Palace and Brixton Academy, yet, he wasn't even able to perform without being diluted, despite the fact his performance took place after watershed. In spite of all this devilry that the mainstream media has been subjecting the grime scene to for all these years, this aforementioned success of grime's key players right now is not invalidated. The fact that a British style of music which at its core is so distant from the conventions of the sanitised pop we are bombarded with every time the television is turned on has blossomed in a country where the expressions of working class people (particularly working class people of colour) are so often stifled fills me with the utmost pride. It is evidence of the integrity of the sound, concrete evidence that this scene is not about to be uprooted, by bad journalism, record labels that just don't "get" it, or even by more tangible threats outside the realms of media, like Form 696. Grime is a juggernaut, and as such, is not close to being halted anytime soon.

Words and Interviews by Lamar Ita
M.I.C @micantifa





Henry Mercer Graves on Ophelia

***'The woman is perfected
Her dead
Body wears the smile of accomplishment'***

The subjugation of the white female body in Victorian society was a process created predominantly by the heterosexual white male. This process worked to debilitate the white female body in a variety of ways. These means could include physically constraining costumes, prescribed domesticated roles and the perpetuation of an embodied aesthetic of illness. In his *Symphonies in White* painted between 1862 and 1867, the American-born, London-based white painter James McNeill Whistler depicted the body of the female in various states of 'enfrailment', fragility and infantilism. When looked at collectively, the corporeal progression of the women depicted shows a clear decline in the agency and strength of the female figures.

The paintings manifest an evolution from free-standing woman in *Symphony in White No. 1* (1862), to a leaning lady depicted in *Symphony in White No. 2* (1864) to two reclining supplicants in *Symphony in White No. 3* (1865-67). This gradual subjection of the female body pictorially culminates in the white Pre-Raphaelite painter Sir John Everett Millais' *Ophelia* (1851-52, P4). The haunting and affecting image shows the full yoking of the female, as the tragic heroine's innocence, agency and life is crushed by her male oppressors. Here, she lies not reclined and not resting, but dead. She is drowned purportedly by her own volition, but in reality by the weight of her male tyrants.

The works in question date from 1851-1867, a period marked by the rise of British Imperial, Nationalist, and Colonial mindsets. Indeed, the cultural theorist and academic Richard Dyer presents a view of racism in society as an architecture that permeates every aspect of both black and white lives. His work on the representation of white bodies in Western art, presents the white body as a carefully controlled white creation. In the narrative of western art history, white people have had superior access to the tools to control their images and identities compared to the equivalent potential access for marginalised races.¹ Dyer's notion of white supremacy in society can be applied to the discussion of the depiction of the fragile, infantile and unempowered white woman.

Dyer's 'architecture of racism' can be also be transferred into a theory of the 'misogynistic architecture' in Victorian society. The representation of the white female body lies in the "narrative structural positions, rhetorical tropes, and habits of perception" exercised when studying Western art.² This discussion uses the term 'enfrailment' to denote the systematic mechanism of male oppression through the modelling of the female body as weak, ill and incapable in Victorian artwork. Such 'enfrailment' can be seen as a key factor in the discussion of both Whistler and Millais' works. Pre-Raphaelitism was a practical and theoretical approach to painting established by Dante Gabriel Rossetti, William Holman Hunt and John Everett Millais in 1848. These artists expressed

Enfrailing' the Feminine Form;

the paramount importance of genuinely expressed ideas and truths, as well as the attentive study and representation of nature.³ An emphasis was placed on creating sympathetic and emotionally charged images by removing the conventionality of academic style from painting.⁴

Whistler's Aestheticism is often thought of as the descendant of Pre-Raphaelitism.⁵ It was not only a movement in visual culture, but also one that was regarded by its proponents as a way of life, encompassing dress, literature, interior design, personal comportment, rhetoric and the affectation of specific social milieu.⁶ Walter Pater's essay *Renaissance* states that, "A counted number of pulses only is given to us of a variegated, dramatic life. How may we see in them all that is to be seen in them by the finest senses?"⁷ The emphasis on seeing was the model for the Aesthetic approach to life, in the sense that seeing should be a harmonious and beautiful experience.

Recent scholarship has shown Whistler's *Symphonies* in *White No. 1*, to be shackled by political baggage, as it has been linked with Wilkie Collin's *The Woman in White*.*⁸ The painting points to the Victorian fascination with the "spectacularized, white, female body" insinuating that literary and artistic cultures were very much

enmeshed.⁹ This fact has immediate ramifications on the socio-cultural reading of this work. To be associated with the text, whether intentional on the part of Whistler or not, leads to a corruption of literary influence, potentially indicating political contamination of the purely aesthetic work. The conflation of the cultural architecture surrounding gendered behaviour and characterization suggests an embedded rhetoric of male dominance which shines through Whistler's *Symphonies*. When combined with the formal elements—the white muslin dress, the white draped curtain, and the whiteness of the woman's face—we can perceive an attempt by Whistler to experiment with modernist aesthetics.¹⁰ White as the ideal colour for modernism can be problematic, as it infers that white is the 'default' tone, due to its inherent purity, neutrality and beauty. These associations relate to Christian theological theories according to which white is a marker of virginity and purity. This no doubt resonated with Victorian viewers, as it still does with modern viewers. With the aforementioned connotations embedded in the image, this free-standing woman seems to lose her agency. Her frailty and innocence, and thus her naiveté and incapacity to act freely are shown through the de-colouring of costume and skin, as well as through her

Victorian Aesthetic and Narrative

Depictions of Subjugation

By Jemma Elliott-Israelson

stance. She seems ambivalent, not knowing where to turn, how to pose, or how to emote concretely. She stands liminally, as if awaiting instruction from her male creator and domineer: The extreme pallor and specific bodily formation of the female subject in *Symphony in White No. 2* further exacerbate these themes. Here, several formal aspects can be noted in order to delineate the increasing sense of male heterosexual dominance in this series. There is an impending sense of sickness in this figure. She can no longer stand freely, but rather leans on the mantle piece, confined to her domestic sphere. Her face is purely white, while her reflection in the mirror is muddled and dark. The corporeal progression of indisposition is further seen in *Symphony in White No. 3*.

Here, two female figures recline in languid postures.*¹¹ The postures reflect the increasing subjection of the figures to the male gaze. Several formal aspects of this painting inform and support the issues of aestheticism, politics, submission and captivity of the female in the domestic sphere. The basis for this discussion is the "conventional idea of art as a transformation of living matter into inanimate form".¹² The visual depiction of these females in white must be explored in reference to the notion of the 'dead'

female body. Aestheticizing illness contributes to the sentimentalization, and sanitation of female sensuality often construing mental illness as 'female malady'.¹³ It should be noted that the 19th century diagnoses of 'Hysteria' was commonly used to address almost every type of female 'malady' including sexual frustration, depression, anxiety or a more than usual desire to entre the public sphere. Freud explains that Hysterias' symptoms could include: "petit mal and disorders in the nature of tic, chronic vomiting and anorexia, carried to the pitch of rejection of all nourishment, various forms of disturbance of vision, constantly recurrent visual hallucinations".¹⁴ It can only be asserted that the architecture of misogyny in Victorian Britain utilized hysteria as a means of both explaining the psychological and physical reactions of extreme subjugation and creating a form of subjugation which manifested itself physically. With this in mind, Michel Foucault's summation that there is a 'residue' left on supposedly sexually cleansed images and texts becomes relevant.¹⁵ This residue can help to uncover the power struggles which lie at the centre of control and oppression.¹⁶ The Symphonies in White present the viewer with a fundamental dilemma as we attempt to decipher the "visual signifiers of illness" which allude to its normalization as a

convention of femininity.¹⁷ This convention is directly tied to Foucault's dissection of the mechanism of control and oppression. Foucault's 'mechanisms' of societal control tie in with institutionalized central powers, such as the church, government, or in this case the pater familias. They function in this way due to their depiction of liminality between life and death.¹⁸ The lived experiences of Victorian women are reflective of an internalized aesthetic of illness and incapability as they were restricted largely to the indoors and wore constraining corsetry which encumbered the consumption of adequate amounts of food and easy movement.*¹⁹ The women depicted in the Symphonies function as pictorial foils for "masculine usurpation of activity, productivity, creativity and health".²⁰ John Evertt Millais' Ophelia is presented to the viewer as a pale white body being drowned in a muddy river; palms open in a gesture of submission.²¹ She provides the quintessential image of the "consumptive ill woman, supportive to the conventional notions of the transitory nature of beauty, femininity as virginal, vulnerable, ideal and tainted".²² The depiction is indeed supportive to a patriarchal and colonial society. The systematic enfrailment of women, as reiterated and enforced in Victorian visual culture, served to strengthen the power of the male

spectator, artist and patron. This representation of death places her squarely in the middle of the contending sides of femininity, these being the fallen woman and the innocent supplicant.²³ The innocence and supplication alluded to in the work are shown in the graceful, passive, and objectively beautiful visual portrayal.

In many ways the precedent for modern media was set by these types of images, with fashion and beauty advertisements featuring increasingly sickly looking models to sell their brand such as the 2006 Prada Spring/Summer ad (P5) featuring Sasha Pivovarovna. Her posture is reminiscent of Symphony in White No.3, while her pallor and the bleached colour palette of the photograph are reminiscent of the entire series. From standing free in the centre of the room, to lying dead in muddied waters subsumed by male dominance, these images demonstrate the levelled process of subjugation of the female corpus as a method of control, objectification and petrification and demonstrate the legacy that Victorian imagery has produced on modern media culture.

F O O T N O T E S :

1. Richard Dyer, *White*, London: Routledge, 1997, xiii.
2. Richard Dyer, *White*, 12.
3. Luke, Herrmann, *Nineteenth century British painting*. London: Giles de la Mare, 2000, 237
4. *Ibid.*
5. Elizabeth Prettejohn, *After the Pre-Raphaelites: art and aestheticism in Victorian England*, New Brunswick, NJ.: Rutgers University Press, 1999, 1.
6. *Ibid.*
7. Walter Pater ed. D.L Hill, *The Renaissance: Studies in Art and Poetry*, d. D.L Hill, Berkley& London: University of California Press, 1893, ed. 1980, 188.
8. Rachel Teukolsky, "White girls: avant-gardism and advertising after 1860", in *Victorian Studies*, 51 (3), 2009.
9. 422. * a serial novel published between 1859-60 in *All the Year Round*.
10. *Ibid.*
11. Rachel Teukolsky, "White girls: avant-gardism and advertising after 1860", 422. *The sitters are Jo and Milly Jones, the former who appears in the previous two symphonies was Whistler's mistress.
12. Elisabeth Bronfen, *Over her Dead Body: Death, Femininity and the Aesthetic*. Manchester, UK: Manchester University Press, 1992, 111.
13. Kimberly Rhodes, *Ophelia and Victorian visual culture: representing body politics in the nineteenth century*, 18.
14. Josef Breuer and Sigmund Freud, *On The Psychical Mechanism of Hysterical Phenomena*, *The Standard Edition of the Complete Psychological Works of Sigmund Freud*, Volume II (1893-1895): *Studies on Hysteria*, 1893, 3.
15. Kimberly Rhodes, 18.
16. *Ibid.* 33.
17. *Ibid.* 170.
18. Sally Mitchell, *Daily life in Victorian England*, Conn: Greenwood Press, 139. *Indeed many of the fashions such as outrageously sized hooped skirts could not be put on or taken off without aid. The woman could literally not clothe herself—let alone go about her day without physical help.
19. Elisabeth Bronfen, *Over her Dead Body: Death, Femininity and the Aesthetic*, Manchester, 173.
20. Michelle Elizabeth Tusan, "Inventing the New Woman: Print Culture and Identity Politics During the Fin-de-siècle: 1997 Vanarsdel Prize", *Victorian Periodicals Review* 31 (2), Research Society for Victorian Periodicals: 1998, 169.
*As a point of comparison to the extreme frailty of Ophelia's body and societal meaning, the 'New Woman' of the 1890's offers an extreme counter point. The *Woman's Herald* wrote in Aug. 1893 that "woman suddenly appeared on the scene in man's activities, as a sort of new creation, and demands a share in the struggles, the responsibilities and the honours of the world, in which, until now, she has been a cipher." The new woman wore culottes, rode bicycles, demanded the vote and engaged in outdoor exercise.
21. All these gender inappropriate behaviors contributed to what the male dominating class saw as a threat of the creation of a dystopic society.
22. Elisabeth Bronfen, 170.
23. *Ibid.*

W O R K S :

1. Breuer Josef and Sigmund Freud, *On The Psychical Mechanism of Hysterical Phenomena*, *The Standard Edition of the Complete Psychological Works of Sigmund Freud*, Volume II (1893-1895): *Studies on Hysteria*, 1893,
2. Bronfen, Elisabeth.. *Over her dead body: death, femininity and the aesthetic*. Manchester, UK: Manchester University Press, 1992.
3. Dyer Richard, *White*, London: Routledge, 1997, xiii.
4. Luke, Herrmann, *Nineteenth century British painting*. London: Giles de la Mare, 2000.
5. Mitchell, Sally, *Daily life in Victorian England*. Westport, Conn: Greenwood Press, 1996.
6. Prettejohn Elizabeth, *After the Pre-Raphaelites: art and aestheticism in Victorian England*, New Brunswick, NJ.: Rutgers University Press, 1999.
7. Pater Walter , D.L Hill (ed) *The Renaissance: Studies in Art and Poetry*, d. D.L Hill, Berkley& London: University of California Press, 1893, ed. 1980
8. Rhodes, Kimberly. *Ophelia and Victorian visual culture: representing body politics in the nineteenth century*. Aldershot, England: Ashgate, 2008.
9. Teukolsky Rachel, "White girls: avant-gardism and advertising after 1860", in *Victorian Studies*, 51 (3), 2009.
10. Tusan Michelle Elizabeth, "Inventing the New Woman: Print Culture and Identity Politics During the Fin-de-siècle: 1997 Vanarsdel Prize", *Victorian Periodicals Review* 31 (2), Research Society for Victorian Periodicals: 1998.

'The Reappearance of the Rose' : Instagram and the Aesthetic of Jean Cocteau

When Pierre Chanel wrote in Jean Cocteau and the French Scene that Cocteau's style, with its 'deceptive, free, quick, airy grace... [was] so inimitable that he has had no followers',¹ he unwittingly proves the outmodedness of the book to a contemporary reader. For now more than ever; perhaps, one is likely to encounter glimpses of this quick, airy grace, and far more likely to do so while scrolling through Instagram than strolling through a gallery. Spearheaded by a new generation of illustrators and interior designers whose work is disseminated largely through the social media platform, the pervasive influence of Cocteau's distinctive aesthetic, its economy of line and its pursuit of classical ideals of youth and beauty, merits an examination of both the work itself and why these seemingly conservative artistic goals have retained (or perhaps regained) their importance for Instagram's overwhelmingly millennial audience.

To understand the reappearance of Cocteau's style, it is necessary to briefly chart its appearance in the first place. Chanel was right at the time, at least, to note the initial lack of stylistically similar artists, and Cocteau's work has often been dismissed as an aberration in twentieth century art insofar as it conformed to the conventions of no recognisable movement.² What little criticism has focused on his graphic art has tended to emphasise, unflatteringly, his proximity

to Picasso³ in explaining his interest in the possibilities of line drawing and an aesthetic of simplicity. It has equally been explained away by characterising Cocteau as a meeting point of various artistic doctrines that recurred throughout his lifetime, from the essentially symbolist leanings that dominated the art scene of his youth⁴ to the modernism of Picasso and the Europe-wide 'return to order' (of which Cocteau was a vocal proponent) that called for a new classicism in the arts in response to the horrors of the First World War.⁵ While all of this did undoubtedly inform Cocteau's aesthetic, these comparisons also define him as something he was not- that is, a fine artist, and a minor one at that. Rather, and perhaps fittingly for an artist almost universally classified as an unrepentant narcissist, it is to Cocteau's own writings one can turn to better trace the emergence of the style. His Paris Album, dedicated to chronicling his formative years, dedicates whole chapters to the aesthetic experience of fashion, the circus, and the skating rink, and the earliest expression of awe at an artwork comes as he describes seeing 'an exquisite caricature by Cappiello', poster artist and caricaturist, who 'apart from achieving perfect likeness his Japanese pencil endowed actresses with the beauty of flora or fauna, tigers or orchids'.⁶ Such biographical anecdotes attest far more to his sometimes-noted enthusiasm for 'minor arts'⁷ than

By Sam Love



●●●●● 02-UK ☰

09:45

80% 🔋



Instagram



🔒 Cocteau



25 likes

Cocteau

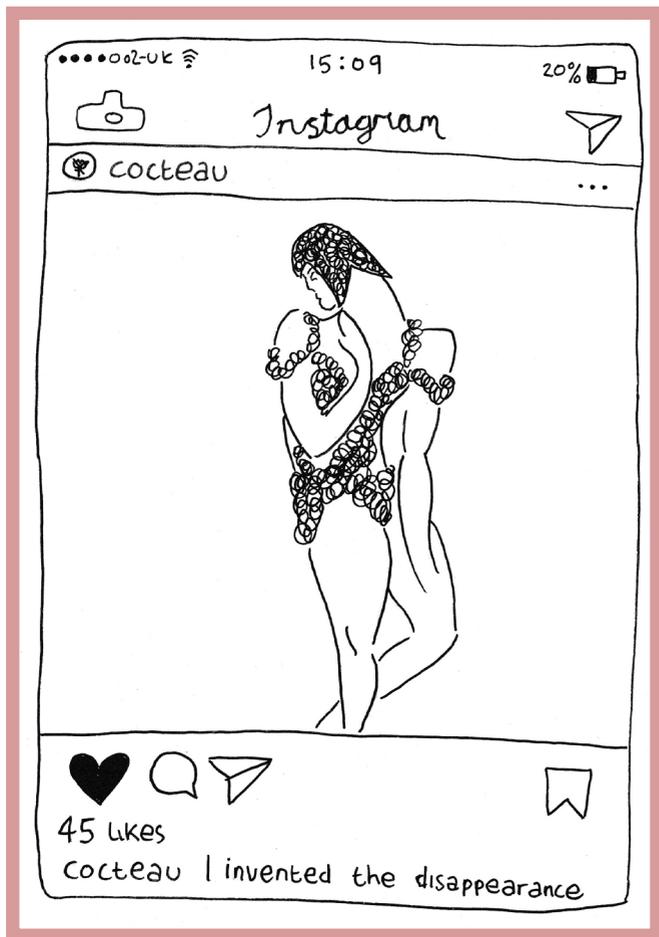
his dubious placing in the canon of fine art, and as such his aesthetic itself - already drawing on the ephemera of the everyday - does not seem as alien to a democratised social platform such as Instagram as it may first appear.

If this provides an explanation it does not provide a reason - for either Cocteau arriving at this aesthetic or for popular designers such as Luke Edward Hall, Robin Lucas, or Wayne Pate rediscovering it in the twenty-first century. Cocteau's appreciation of the beauty of the ephemerally glimpsed, as an artwork lost in an endless newsfeed of images is today, does not merely have its roots in the everyday but integrates into it too, as 'things whose end is contemplation and appreciation... [and] reward even the most casual notice'.⁸ Another common criticism of Cocteau's work (and illustration in general, relegated to the so-called minor arts despite its current flourishing online on social media platforms) views this as a shortcoming on Cocteau's part, arguing the work has no depth and is too concerned with the superficial, unfashionable quality of pure beauty. There is certainly some truth in this assertion. One could study Cocteau's most recognisable contribution to graphic art - the Orphic profile of handsome young men, simply and beautifully rendered in a

handful of lines and endlessly reiterated throughout his career - and one's understanding of its meaning and purpose is unlikely to change greatly from the first second to the last minute of looking. It is beautiful, we find it attractive - it is, simply, nice to look at. As already noted, this was unfashionable during Cocteau's lifetime, the age of Duchamp and Dada, when a revolt against beauty was an affirmation of one's avant-garde glamour⁹ and is perhaps more unfashionable today. Worth quoting at some length on this matter is Donald Kuspit's *The End of Art*, an impassioned tirade sustained for nearly two hundred pages against what Kuspit believes to be the rise of 'anti-aesthetic' or 'post-aesthetic' art under postmodernism. Whether or not one agrees with Kuspit that what seems like the finalisation of a shift towards the conceptual over (to borrow from Duchamp) the retinal amounts to the end of art itself (it almost certainly doesn't), his argument in favour of reversing this sea-change remains remarkably convincing in places. "High art", he suggests, becomes increasingly incomprehensible and elitist the further it moves from the democratising principle of beauty, and fails to speak to any but the privileged gallery-going few.¹⁰ He finds something particularly ugly in the ideology he perceives in contemporary art's attempts to look more

and more like real life - such works 'fail to realise that beauty is the ultimate protest against ugliness... the inability to imagine beauty is a sign of the creative inadequacy of post-aesthetic modern art'.¹¹ At his most scathing, Kuspit presents us with a vision of an art world in which 'the work of art becomes a bully pulpit, and the artist tries to bully the spectator into believing what the artist believes. He becomes a self-righteous bully preaching to us (or rather at us) about what we already know - the ugliness and injustice of the world'.¹² It is, admittedly, hard not to feel a little vicious satisfaction reading this. But moreover, in its implications it suggests a compelling line of argument as to why Cocteau's aesthetic is currently exercising the influence it is online. If 'post-aesthetic' works do fail to speak to the vast majority of their viewers in any meaningful way, it is therefore left to the pursuit of beauty to fill this void.

The irony is, of course, that the conservatism inherent in this dressing-down of contemporary art should theoretically be entirely at odds with the fast-food consumption of images Instagram permits, which threatens to trivialise art. But there is nothing trivial about it. In one of the more comprehensive, if slightly eccentric, assessments of Cocteau's style- Lydia Crowson's *The Esthetic of Jean Cocteau*- the



FOOTNOTES :

1. Chanel, Pierre. "A Thousand Flashes of Genius." Jean Cocteau and the French Scene. New York: Abbeville, 1984, 112
2. Crowson, Lydia. The Esthetic of Jean Cocteau. Hanover: Published for the U of New Hampshire by the UP of New England, 1978, 1
3. Ziolkowski, Theodore. Classicism of the Twenties: Art, Music, and Literature. Chicago: U of Chicago, 2015, 95
4. Winegarten, Renee. "In Pursuit of Cocteau." The American Scholar 58.3 (1989), 436
5. Ziolkowski, Classicism, 1
6. Cocteau, Jean. Paris Album: 1900-1914. London: Comet, 1987, 35
7. Crowson, The Esthetic, 19
8. Gass, William H. "The Baby or the Boticelli." Finding a Form. Champaign: Dalkey Archive, 2009, 291-2
9. Danto, Arthur Coleman. The Abuse of Beauty: Aesthetics and the Concept of Art. Chicago Ill.: Open Court, 2006, 48
10. Kuspit, Donald B. The End of Art. Cambridge, UK: Cambridge UP, 2008, 2
11. Ibid, 31
12. Ibid, 37
13. Crowson, The Esthetic, 3
14. Ibid, 110-11
15. Ibid, 172-3
16. Cocteau, Paris Album, 39
17. Ibid, 29
18. Cocteau, Jean. A Call to Order. New York: Haskell House, 1974, 194

WORKS :

1. Chanel, Pierre. "A Thousand Flashes of Genius." Jean Cocteau and the French Scene. New York: Abbeville, 1984
2. Cocteau, Jean. A Call to Order. New York: Haskell House, 1974
3. Cocteau, Jean. Paris Album: 1900-1914. London: Comet, 1987
4. Crowson, Lydia. The Esthetic of Jean Cocteau. Hanover: Published for the U of New Hampshire by the UP of New England, 1978
5. Danto, Arthur Coleman. The Abuse of Beauty: Aesthetics and the Concept of Art. Chicago Ill.: Open Court, 2006
6. Gass, William H. "The Baby or the Boticelli." Finding a Form. Champaign: Dalkey Archive, 2009
7. Kuspit, Donald B. The End of Art. Cambridge, UK: Cambridge UP, 2008
8. Winegarten, Renee. "In Pursuit of Cocteau." The American Scholar 58.3 (1989)
9. Ziolkowski, Theodore. Classicism of the Twenties: Art, Music, and Literature. Chicago: U of Chicago, 2015

creation of images that are widely available and immediately appealing takes on its own philosophical grandeur. Tackling what she acknowledges to be one of the more surprising facets of Cocteau's writings, his obsessive revisiting of Nietzschean thought,¹³ Crowson's Cocteau becomes a tragically heroic figure, coming face to face with the void and attempting to protect us against it through creating art that provides 'a sort of communal experience which momentarily frees the individual from solitude and from the burdens of his daily life'.¹⁴ Cocteau's art 'represented neither a proud defiance of the absurd nor deep joy in spite of it, but whistling in the dark to combat fear',¹⁵ we are told, and there is something both seductive and compelling in this understanding of what his art means for its viewers. It is certainly an understanding that is invited by the aesthetic of Cocteau and his followers too. Littered once more throughout his autobiographical writings we find pointers as to how Cocteau understood art: 'I hope to be read by people who remain children in spite of everything', he tells us, 'but alas, the people who wish to live as warmly protected in this credulous fairyland as in their mother's womb are hurt by our never-wracking age, with its fidgety untidiness, twitching lights...' ¹⁶ Here we see the two states to which Cocteau wished to escape - the pre-modern, and that of the child, both suggested by his style. Its sculptural neoclassicism attests to the former, and remains prom-

inent in the appearances of Orpheus, St Sebastian, and the like in Luke Edward Hall's work. As for providing an escape into childhood, one needs to look a little closer. The simplicity of the aesthetic is an obvious indicator; but on a deeper level Cocteau's aesthetic arguably encourages its viewer to inhabit both the enchanted gaze of the child and the longing gaze of the nostalgic adult. Cocteau's reminiscences of his own childhood detail how 'children watch grown-ups, by means of bribes, on all fours, behind kitchen doors and on the stairs, with eyes that accept nothing expect poetic intensity',¹⁷ and the airy, idealised nature of his work suggests this viewpoint of mysterious stolen glimpses. Cocteau's aesthetic transports the viewer; albeit briefly, to a world that retains its magic through the transience of the moment it suggests and through its resistance to being comprehended on any level beyond that of its beautiful surface. Simultaneously, this same brevity, coupled with the sparseness of the detail, suggests the gaze of memory, selectively remembering fleeting moments and idealising that which lies beyond reach. It is no mistake, then, that Cocteau's aesthetic should reappear on Instagram today. His horror of the 'untidiness' of modern life could scarcely seem more relevant, and the return to the classical past that marked the art of the interwar period was built on a similar instinctive desire for beauty in the face of a paralysing uncertainty brought about not only by

the horror of violence but by the economic and political insecurity of the period. These concerns, it barely seems worth noting, are of course menacingly prescient to a young, contemporary audience viewing art in the age of Trump, Brexit, and the fallout of the Iraq War, and devastating austerity policies. Not only was Cocteau's art thus never the property of "high art", and so at home in the democratised world of fleeting images Instagram represents, but the driving forces behind its aesthetic - a longing for simplicity, safety, and beauty - have either always been present beyond the art world or have become deeply important again, providing brief moments of solace and clarity.

Perhaps Cocteau himself puts it best. 'I invented the disappearance of the skyscraper and the reappearance of the rose. This was misunderstood as meaning a return to the rose. Exactly the opposite',¹⁸ he told his audience at the Collège de France in 1923. Typical of Cocteau, the remark prizes beauty over clarity, but it seems to suggest that the rose - the symbol of eternal beauty, juxtaposed with the vulgarity of everyday modern life of the skyscraper - never disappeared, and is never as static as a reliance on a classical past would suggest. And thus, it has reappeared today, speaking to a new audience, utilising a new platform, and - to use Crowson's image - whistling the same tune in a new darkness.



Code Red: Lucia Pica's Le Rouge Collection No.1 For Chanel

The current spring make-up collection at Chanel includes Code – a compact powder blusher made up of four squares that form a grid of pale pink, red coral, soft brown and beige. The grid is stamped with the words 'Coco Code' that are modelled on the pristine surface to form a delicate, shallow relief. This reminds the user that although Gabrielle 'Coco' Chanel died in the previous century, her presence is inscribed in every item manufactured by, what is by now, far more than a couture house, but a global brand. Yet 'Code' may seem like an unusual name for a blusher, bringing with it more than an nod to science and technology as opposed to the femininity and seduction with which such a product is usually associated due to its ability to replicate the natural flush of the cheeks and the rush of blood to the lips that occurs during sexual arousal. On the other hand, the title 'Code' might function as a self-reflexive acknowledgement that all aspects of Chanel's make-up collection are rooted in signification. Even the most rudimentary of semiotic readings recognises the screaming messages relating to consumption, status and taste that are uttered by Chanel suits, handbags, shoes and scarves.

Yet the case of makeup is more complex and relies on sophisticated knowledge of Chanel's biography and milieu for its semiotic power to be fully grasped: Rouge Coco is a set of lipsticks named after the people who played an important role in her life whilst the lipsticks

belonging to the Rouge Allure collection are named according to the adjectives that encapsulate her history. Titles such as Enigmatique and Adrienne hover suggestively, detached from the referent to which they are clearly supposed to relate, their relationship to the product entirely reliant on the knowledge of the consumer to make the connection and generate signification. Yet it is precisely this semiotic ambiguity which belongs to these objects with their allusively codified names that makes them so desirable as Roland Barthes explains in relation to other icons attached to the house: 'a detached term (a pocket, a flower; a scarf, a piece of jewellery) holds the power of signification, a truth, that is not only analytical but poetic'. Given Chanel's predilection for symbolic meaning to be attached to everything that she created – the camellia for example referenced exoticism after her reading of Alexandre Dumas's *La Dame aux Camellias*, whilst chains and quilting referred to the world of the military and horse racing to which she was exposed in the very early years of her career as a couturier – it is hard to deny the self-reflexivity present in the blusher entitled Code, a codification that points to a wider system of codification at play in the makeup collections. Certainly, the official publicity which belongs to the blusher invites us to interpret what it calls 'the colour codes of Chanel'.

So what exactly are the 'Chanel Colour Codes'? In order to establish what these might be it

is necessary to turn to Chanel's biography as the house colours of black, white and beige were strongly associated with the childhood sadness that tortured her but also propelled her forward due to an innate sense of survival and need to escape the threat of a life of tedium and drudgery as an orphan. Monochrome was inspired by the simple uniforms that she saw in the orphanage: chambermaids, servants and nuns all wearing stark black and white. Black was also the colour of mourning and strongly associated with the death of her Mother. This tragic yet decisive event also led to the life-long fixation with the colour red that she allegedly spoke of in her countless anecdotal memoirs in which, according to a recent biographer, she described 'the blood that a sick woman coughed on to white handkerchiefs and an interior which bears some resemblance to the sinister red room where Jane Eyre was incarcerated as a child'. It is significant, therefore that Lucia Pica, Chanel's first ever Global Creative Makeup and Colour Director who was appointed in 2014, called her debut collection Le Rouge Collection No.1.

Pica, a renowned and highly sought-after makeup artist who trained with the enormously influential Charlotte Tilbury, is recognised by her teacher for the knowledge of her art, film and fashion references. It seems unlikely, therefore, that Gabrielle Chanel's sensitivity towards colour and grasp of its ability to generate powerful meaning

would be lost on Pica. Gabrielle Chanel launched her first make-up line in 1924 and is famed for her love of red lipstick which she always wore, asserting 'red is the colour of life, of blood...I love red'. For the designer who embodied strength, daring and unconventional sexuality in the first half of the twentieth century, it is hard to imagine that she would have disapproved of Pica's choice of Kirsten Stewart as the face of the red collection when it was launched in the late summer of 2016.

Pica's invention has extended far beyond lipstick and Le Rouge Collection No.1. included a metallic garnet eyeliner entitled Eros, a red mascara called Sub-versif, a set of eyeshadows called Candeur et Experience as well as lipsticks Profound and Fire. Such names are unremarkable in themselves: makeup has always been associated with seduction and passion; historically, its purpose was to replicate on the face the flushed state of arousal created by increased blood flow to the genitals thus heightening the effect of erotic charge. Yet Pica goes far beyond the traditional use of red which has been limited to lips, cheeks and nails; the red palette has been extended to the eyes to create a far more intense and painterly experience as she explains: 'red means love, and danger and passion but also disruption – it is so strong'. Through the creation of such a provocative yet aesthetically striking collection Pica pays homage to Gabrielle Chanel, whose presence lingers in every cosmetic item, the

By Dr. Penelope Wickson

black packaging of which can be traced back to the original and dramatically modern Bakelite that she first used.

Pica's esteem for art and history is clearly evident in her Instagram mood board which demonstrates the myriad complexity of her creative process and the inspiration she seeks in painting (Vogue even interviewed her whilst she was visiting Tate Modern). Red pigment swirls as a powdery rose coloured blusher crumbles in water and in between the editorial shots of models with swollen ruby pouts dolls sit immaculately in neat vermilion suits. Interspersed amongst the pulsating red floral stems are paintings by Hockney and Cy Twombly, clearly valued for their painterly qualities and the focus on expressive force of colour and texture. Yet most striking of all the images is one of herself in which she poses bust length, in a plain white t-shirt, arms wrapped around her body to reveal a significant burgundy stain, its rich purplish hue enhanced and made beautiful by the red make up that is applied meticulously and sensuously to her eyes, lips and nails.

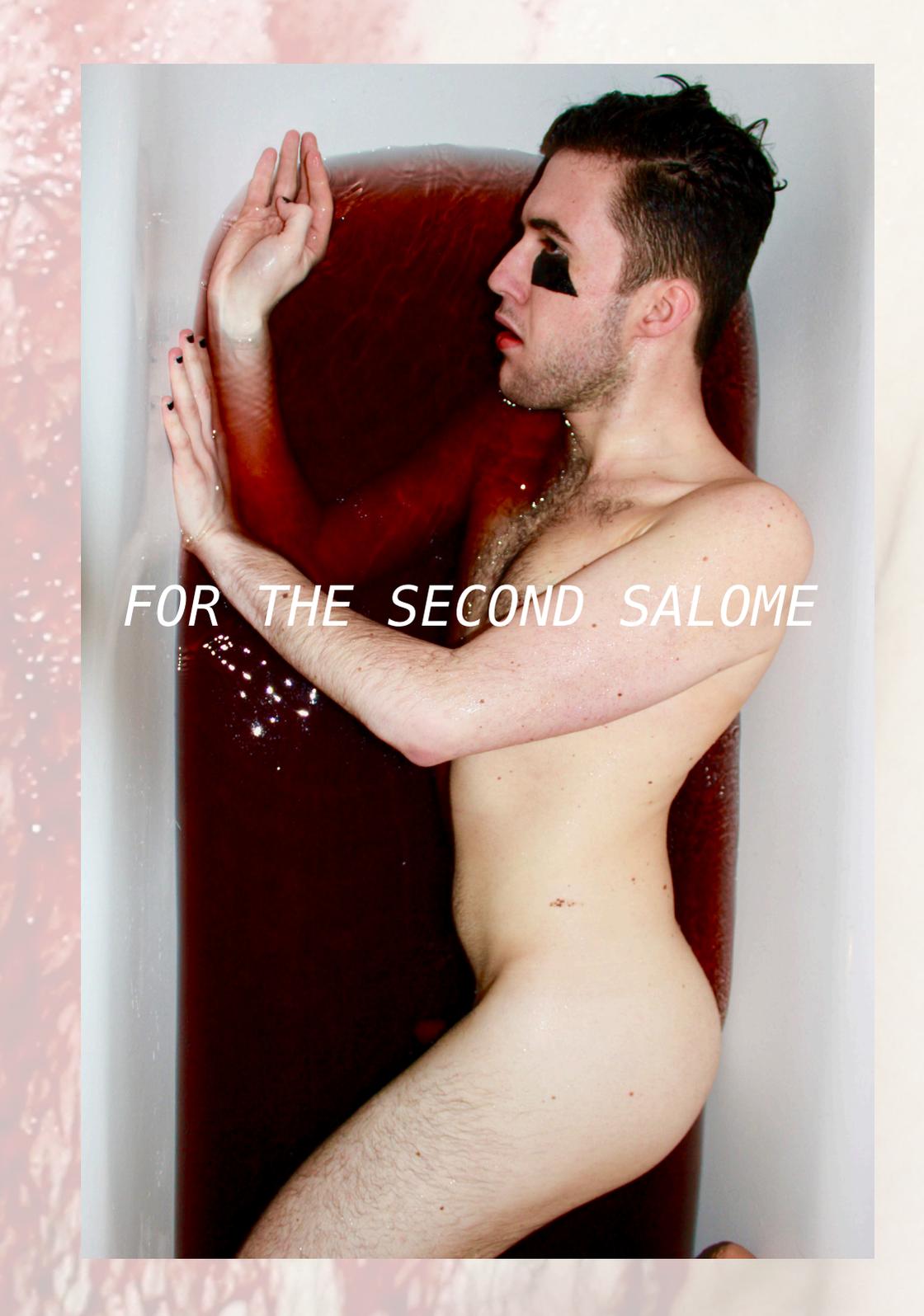
The juxtaposition of this starkly honest and arresting image of bodily flaw with an image of absolute perfection in the form of Pica's beautifully made-up face, her alabaster skin and glacial blue eyes sharply accentuated by the red hues of her lips and eyelids is shocking – particularly in the context of a brand in which perfection is adored and

indeed enshrined. Certainly, the brand of Chanel has, up until now, been entirely dependent upon propagating a sense of an unobtainable ideal in order to generate the much sought after mystique of exclusivity and luxury. However, Pica's creation of the confrontational yet culturally embedded Le Rouge Collection No.1 invites us to de-code with empathy and awareness: not only do we find the body of Chanel's mother and the after-life of Gabrielle Chanel inscribed in every cosmetic item but so we find the burgundy stained body of Lucia Pica.

Image courtesy of the author.



NEW BIBLICAL VERSES

A photograph of a man in a bathtub. He is shirtless and has dramatic black eye makeup. His hands are pressed against the white tub wall. The water is dark red. The text "FOR THE SECOND SALOME" is overlaid in white, italicized font.

FOR THE SECOND SALOME

O SILICONE CONCUBINE, HEIRESS DISOWNED,
DID YOU MIND THAT WE LAUGHED AT YOUR ANGUISH?
RESONATING THROUGH PALACE LIKE TWO GLIDING CYMBALS
HELD BETWEEN FINGER AND THUMB

O SILICONE CONCUBINE, HERE IS THE BAPTIST
SERVED ON A PLATE FOR YOUR FIERCENESS,
THROUGH YOU WE FOUND THE VOCABULARY TO NAME OUR BADDEST
YAS QUEEN; YAS SALOME; AMEN.

SERVING BIBLICAL SEDUCTRESS REALNESS,
SERVING BODY-ODY-ODY, SERVING FACE,
SERVING HIP BEFORE GLORIOUS HIP,
CRACKING AND TWISTING AND JERKING.

AND DANCING IN THE VIOLET AIR,
LIKE A BRONZEN IDOL GLOWING
SASHAY SASHAY SASHAY
DOES SHE IMAGINE WE MELT AWAY?

SALOME, SALOME, A BANQUET IN HEAVEN,
TONIGHT YOU SHOULD DINE ON THE STARS,
MILK THE MOON AND DRINK FROM THE SUN.
THESE ARE THE SYMBOLS YOU'VE HELD HOSTAGE.

FOR IN YOUR DANCE LIES YOUR MISERY
THE HUMAN CONDITION LAID BARE:
"IF I GET BLEACH ON MY TSHIRT;
IMMA LOOK LIKE AN ASSHOLE."

"DADDY SAID I COULD HAVE ANYTHING I WANTED.
HE OFFERED THE JEWELS AND BAUBLES OF HIS KINGDOM,
HE OFFERED THE MOON PRUNED FROM HIS VAULT,
OR A NEW IPHONE TO REPLACE MY CRACKED ONE,"

"BUT I CHOSE HIM, THE BAPTIST, THE SANCTIFIER:
DID HE DIE FOR HIS LAMB AND HIS COUSIN?
DID HE DIE FOR TURNING THE RIVER JORDAN HOLY?
DID HE DIE FOR HAVING 10'000'000 FOLLOWERS?"

RESPLENDENT JENNER, HIGH MOTHER, APOLOGIES,
HOW WERE YOU TO KNOW THAT YOUR RECOMMENDATION,
"KILL THE BAPTIST, MURDER THE BAPTIST;"
WOULD BE THE ONE YOUR DAUGHTER AGREED TO?

DID YOU MIND IT WHEN SHE KISSED HIS PALING FACE?
DID YOU MIND IT WHEN SHE RAN UPSTAIRS TO CRY?
DID YOU MIND IT THAT SHE LOST HER EARRINGS IN THE SEA?
"KIM, THERE ARE PEOPLE THAT ARE DYING."

SHE KNELT IN THE BATH TO CLEAN HIM OFF
HAVING KNOWN BLOOD TO NOT BE SO RED
"DOES IT NORMALLY WEIGH SO HEAVY?"
"DOES IT NORMALLY STAIN THE SKIN?"

THE DOOR SWINGS OPEN, A MAN ENTERS
CAMERA AFFIXED TO HIS HEAD LIKE THE DEVIL
A SILENT FORCE HAD BEEN LISTENING FROM THE OTHER ROOM
AND SHE IS CAPTURED IN THE BLOOD OF THE BAPTIST.

"SO, ALL WE DO IS TAKE A LITTLE OFF THE HIPS,
TAKE THE VARICOSE FROM INDIGO TO PEACH
ENLARGE THE BREASTS, RAISE THE EYES,
AND FASHION A HALO ONTO THE BACK OF HER HEAD"

BUT, THIS WAS PAINTED IN 1452 BY A MILANESE.
WHY WOULD YOU? FOR THE SAKE OF WHOM?
"IF IT'S GOING TO BE POSTED ON ALL HER SOCIALS
SHE CAN'T LOOK SO ... PEDESTRIAN!"

DO YOU THINK KIM EVER COMES ACROSS THE SHOW
LATE AT NIGHT FLICKERING THROUGH THE IDIOT BOX?
MAKES CONTACT WITH HER OWN IMAGE?
MAKES CONTACT? KEEPS UP?

DO YOU THINK KIM SLEEPS AND DREAMS?
DREAMS OF A NEW BIBLE TO REPLACE THE OLD ONE?
WHERE GIRLS LIKE HER AREN'T DEMONISED
BUT EXALTED AS THE EMPRESSES OF A NEW CULTURE?

WORDS BY SAINT TORRENTE
PHOTO BY LUKE JACKSON



The Revolutionary Narcissism of Female Self Appreciation

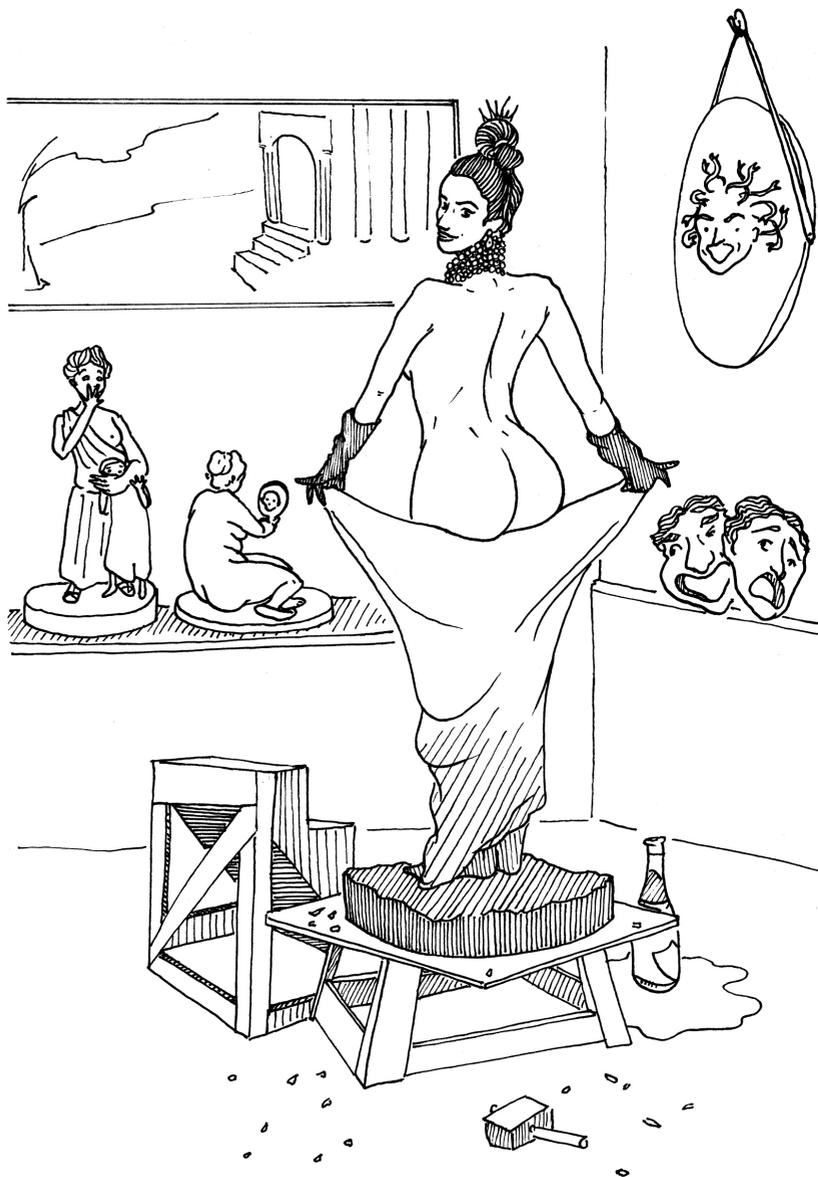


Illustration by Millie Nice

The self-portraits of Elisabeth Vigée-LeBrun have never been widely revered. Criticism often focuses on their perceived narcissism and regressive depictions of professional women – indeed, de Beauvoir writes at length about the problematic nature of Vigée-LeBrun's preoccupation with her own "personhood", and Boime discards much of her work as superficial.¹ While Vigée-LeBrun stood alone among her contemporaries as a female artist dedicated to constant self-depiction, she has spiritual successors in the twenty first century in the forms of Kim Kardashian and Paris Hilton; her work has much in common with the ways in which these female celebrities choose to represent themselves on social media, and the selfie culture that surrounds them is arguably an extension of what Vigée-LeBrun herself pioneered. Such a culture is similarly derided for creating an age of self-involvement and upholding unrealistic standards of female beauty, but the kind of self-appreciation evident in the work of Vigée-LeBrun, Kardashian and Hilton, one that is simultaneously public but does not necessarily ask for external validation, is as subversive now as it was in the eighteenth century.

Much of Vigée-LeBrun's early work is influenced

heavily by the Rococo and it's "fashionable ideal, wherein perpetual youth was libertine and pleasure-loving [...] without guilt or consequence".² Such an aesthetic is similarly employed in the self-portraits of Hilton and Kardashian. While they continuously depict themselves in a variety of different roles, their work is unified by the same focus on youth and simplistic, perhaps material, happiness. LeBrun's work was criticised for a lack of psychological penetration, but this seems to miss the point – it's superficiality was to a degree intended, and the same approach can be found in the carefully curated social channels of reality television stars today. The influence of Vigée-LeBrun, and of the Rococo in a wider sense, is profound, as it created a stylistic template for the growth of the Instagram era, where messaging must be instant, and appearance is what matters most.

This focus on appearance is perhaps most evident in one of Vigée-LeBrun's most famous works, *Self Portrait in a Straw Hat* (1782), in which she appears as "beautiful, a sex object and an immodest woman pleasuring in self-display".³ Open enjoyment of one's physical form as a woman was, and is, taboo, and the contemporary response to the similarly sex positive portraits of Hilton

and Kardashian is often similar to criticism of LeBrun in its insistence that a visual dialectic regarding one's sensuality makes an image inherently narcissistic. For all three women, narcissism and empowerment are interchangeable, and their self-appreciation is a conscious act of subversion. Though generally critical of her work, Boime concedes that there is a spontaneity to Vigée-LeBrun's portraits that gives them potency, and it is this that makes her, as well as Hilton and Kardashian, popular amongst other women - the work is accessible and easily replicated as a tool for their own self-empowerment.

LeBrun's depictions of herself are ultimately multi-faceted, and she appears in later pieces as both a mother and a working artist. *Self Portrait of the Artist* (1786) and *Self Portrait with Julie* (1789), both featuring Vigée-LeBrun with her daughter, are neoclassical in style and much more simplistic than her earlier works. The coexistence of these maternal images with portraits that emphasise both sexual availability and her career as an artist make them progressive in a way they would not be alone. Furthermore, they highlight the individuality of LeBrun's visual persona - before this, there was no tradition of female portraitists depicting themselves maternally, largely over fears that they

would no longer be taken seriously.⁴ Kardashian's own desire to be a mother; a sex object and a businesswoman simultaneously is comparable in this sense. Her reluctance to sacrifice an aspect of her visual identity simply by virtue of having become a mother reflects Vigée-LeBrun's own careful balance of these aspects of her personal life in her work. Indeed, Kardashian's choice to retain control of this portion of her image, rather than surrendering it to a third party (as Marie Antoinette did to Vigée-LeBrun herself), is equally unique in the landscape of modern celebrity culture. By taking ownership of their own maternal identity in their work, both Vigée-LeBrun and Kardashian make an important statement about the fact that motherhood does not have to preclude sexuality.

In many of her Instagram portraits, Hilton chooses to highlight herself as a businesswoman, and this aligns with Vigée-LeBrun's focus on herself as a professional artist, particularly in her work from 1790 onwards. The feminist art historians Pollock and Parker criticise LeBrun for remaining a woman of society while forging her artistic career, believing her to be a tool of the bourgeoisie, and in turn Hilton's success as a businesswoman has been similarly devalued for her continued presence in society circles.⁵ LeBrun's

decision to foreground her careerism in her portraits has been seen as an intentional statement, and thus their shared insistence on depicting themselves in such a fashion can be interpreted as a rebuttal to their critics.⁶ Beyond even this, both LeBrun and Hilton, and perhaps Kardashian to an extent, again choose to highlight their femininity as they work, a choice that seems fundamentally third wave.

Vigée-LeBrun appears in her work as unrepentantly feminine, but equally with a clear sense of agency, and such a description of her work can be easily applied to that of her spiritual successors. Criticism that she conformed to male stereotypes of female beauty is perhaps a retrospective idea constructed by historians who disagreed with her politically, and certainly LeBrun herself considered only her own tastes and “fancy” when styling herself for her works.^{7 8} In contemporary culture, Hilton and especially Kardashian are similarly criticised for their frankness about their sexuality, and moreover their ownership and enjoyment of it in a way that is still seen as vulgar. Ultimately, what Vigée-LeBrun has in common with her twenty first century counterparts is a liberal appreciation for, and re-appropriation of, their own so called narcissism.

FOOTNOTES:

1. Simone de Beauvoir, *The Second Sex*, (Gallimard, 1949), pp 470
2. Renée April Lynch, *Self Portrait by Elisabeth Vigée-LeBrun, 1790*, (Khan Academy, 2013)
3. Mary Sheriff, *The Exceptional Woman*, (University of Chicago Press, 1996), pp 215
4. Kathleen Russo, *Serial Self Portraits in the Work of Elisabeth Vigée-LeBrun* (1996)
5. Rozsika Parker and Griselda Pollock, *Old Mistresses: Women, Ideology and Art*, (Pandora Press, 1981), pp 98
6. Mary Sheriff, “So what are you working on? – Categorising the Exceptional Woman”, in *Singular Women – Writing the Artist*, ed. Kristen Frederickson and Sarah E. Webb, (University of California Press, 2003)
7. Emma Barker, “Gender in Art – Women Artists and the French Academy: Vigée-LeBrun in the 1780s” in *Art and its Histories*, ed. Gillian Perry, Colin Cunningham and Emma Barker, (Yale University Press, 1999)
8. Elisabeth Vigée-LeBrun, *Memoirs of Madame Vigée-LeBrun*, translated by Lionel Strachey, (George Braziller, 1989), pp 22



Art by Imogen Worthington

TAH is:

Elise Bell

Chloe Esslemont

Mayanne Soret

COMMENTS & SUBMISSIONS

tabloidarthistory@outlook.com

THANK YOU TO ALL WHO CONTRIBUTED WORDS,
VISUALS, TIME, AND IDEAS.

SPECIAL THANKS TO CAN'T WIN DON'T TRY FOR
INCLUDING US IN WHOLESAL PIRACY LAST APRIL,
THUS PARTICIPATING IN TAH'S BIRTH.



much love,
[@TabloidArtHist](https://www.instagram.com/TabloidArtHist)

