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It plays a bigger role in our lives than ever before. It's a tool for work and learning – and a portal to virtual worlds of entertainment, intimacy and play. In this issue, introduced by *John Gapper*, we explore our changing relationship to the screen

Cover photograph by Paul Graham



SAMEER RAICHUR

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'Forensic science has had a tough ride over many years. I'd like to keep helping with that'



INVENTORY ANGELA GALLOP, FORENSIC SCIENTIST

Angela Gallop, 70, started her career in 1974 working for the Home Office Forensic Science Service. Now one of the world's most eminent forensic scientists, she was appointed CBE in 2015 for her services to the field. Cases in which she has been involved include the murders of Stephen Lawrence, Damilola Taylor, Rachel Nickell and the banker Roberto Calvi, and the exoneration of the Cardiff Three.

What was your childhood or earliest ambition?

To own a horse.

Private school or state school?

University or straight into work? Headington School in Oxford.

I was very lucky: private school was paid for by a great aunt but I never learnt anything, I never did my homework. I only just got into the sixth form. Then, in the nick of time, I met the most marvellous

botany teacher. I discovered how wonderful it was to know things. She completely rescued me. I did botany at Sheffield and could have stayed on to do a PhD but I decided it would be much more fun to get married. I got a job at Oxford University as a research assistant. I was able to convert that into a research degree.

Who was or still is your mentor?

My brothers - I had five. Professor Sir David Smith, my DPhil supervisor, was a wonderful man. And people I've worked with: Russell Stockdale, who I was married to at the time, also a forensic scientist; Tom Palmer on the financial side; and Chris Gregg, a very talented police investigator and fantastic business partner.

How physically fit are you?

Not very. I get exercise because I'm habitually late - I find myself running for trains or walking very fast.

Ambition or talent: which matters more to success?

Both. But what you need most of all is passion. Being passionate about what I do carries me a long way.

How politically committed are you?

I'm always looking for the party or the person who makes most sense at the time. It switches about.

What would you like to own that you don't currently possess?

A Bentley. I'm very keen on cars. I don't know much about what goes on under the bonnet but I know what I like driving.

What is your biggest extravagance?

Definitely opera. Chocolate comes fairly close behind.

In what place are you happiest?

With my family at the opera.

What ambitions do you still have?

To stop working full-time. Though I still feel as passionate as ever - not just about individual laboratories

or cases but what's happening to forensic science. It's had a tough ride over many years. I would like to keep helping with that.

What drives you on?

A passion for fairness and justice, and the way that science can help achieve those things.

What is the greatest achievement of your life so far?

Setting up and running forensic science laboratories and using them to solve some very difficult cases. It's been quite a journey.

What do you find most irritating in other people?

Negativity. I have this probably very irritating habit of my own of saying: "Don't tell me why we can't, tell me how we can."

If your 20-year-old self could see you now, what would she think?

She wouldn't believe it. When I was 20, I had only just managed to get into university.

Which object that you've lost do you wish you still had?

I don't think there's anything.

What is the greatest challenge of our time?

Social media. It's brilliant for connecting people but it's dreadful when it's used maliciously. It can destroy people's lives.

Do you believe in an afterlife?

To the extent that you remain in the memories of people who've known you - so it's quite time limited.

If you had to rate your satisfaction with your life so far, out of 10, what would you score?

Eight. I am very satisfied professionally. I wish I'd done better in the area of life partners. I've had two husbands, and loved them dearly but, for one reason or another, we didn't last the journey. I'm now with my third partner and very happy but I wish there had been one soulmate for all of my adult life. **FT**

Interview by Hester Lacey. "When the Dogs Don't Bark: A Forensic Scientist's Search for the Truth" by Angela Gallop is published by Hodder on January 9



JOSHUA CHAFFIN

OPENING SHOT

Memories, despair, knickers: how studying abroad shaped me



It was the scent of tear gas that brought me back to Santiago - or rather, the sight of it on recent news reports chronicling the upheaval in the Chilean capital. The protests there are another flashpoint in our age of discontent. Yet for me they are also a reminder of the semester I spent at the University of Chile in Santiago 27 years ago. It turned out to be a formative experience in my life.

I had not planned on Chile for my semester abroad. Like so many other students, I was drawn to Italy and the fuzzy notion of returning to university knowing a few things about churches and paintings and wine. As it happened, my school, Rice University, had a relationship with the University of Chile and so it was easier - and more affordable - to go there.

What a fascinating place to end up. Chile had just completed the handover to civilian rule, although Augusto Pinochet still controlled the military and everyone understood where power resided. The feelings of anxiety and hope were visceral - especially for a child of 1980s America, accustomed to the belief that people were generally good and that being American conveyed an extra layer of protection wherever you went.

Part of the genius of the trip was that our professor, the late Chilean poet Ricardo Yamal, sent us to study at a predominantly leftwing campus while lodging us with families from an emerging middle class, many of whom were sympathetic to Pinochet. By day, we would sit in literature class with Chilean students who had relatives who had "disappeared". I can still see them smoking cigarettes dreamily, ashing in neat piles on their desks as the teacher recited poetry. In anticipation of protests, which were frequent, they would pack bandanas and lemons in their backpacks to counteract the dreaded *lacrimógeno*, or tear gas. We learnt to do the same.

By night, we would eat dinner with families who - even if they did not support Pinochet - could at least explain the yearning for "order" they believed he had satisfied and the fruits of a growing economy his government was now delivering. They tended to live in newly built houses and, if they were lucky, had just received their first telephone line. It was fascinating and confusing and not always pleasant.

The first family I stayed with lived just above what was then regarded as an all-important line of social respectability - and were desperate to cling on. On Saturdays, the father, a slaughterhouse inspector, would wash the family car as if it were a newborn baby. My Chilean "sister" was dating a soldier who was a rabid Pinochetista. I remember accompanying her to visit him and his friends at the dusty staging grounds for the annual military parade, and the glint of the Prussian gorget hanging from his neck. (He used to ask my assistance in persuading her to sleep with him; I could not help.) The mother, meanwhile, was convinced I secretly understood Spanish and was merely pretending

otherwise. One day she unfurled a collection of frilly women's underpants on the dining table and suggested I might like to buy some from her as gifts for my sisters. I told her I would think about it.

Without access to phone or email, I wrote long letters by hand and rejoiced when they were occasionally answered. Without internet, I made do with a single channel on a tiny television that broadcast, almost around the clock, the same bouncy variety show. I read Neruda and learnt to like the Chilean rock band La Ley.

Just about tolerable, my relationship with the host family finally broke down one evening when they invited their uncle - the family intellectual - to dinner to "explain" his theories about my people, the Jews, to me.

'I'm sure today's students enjoy rich study-abroad experiences. But I suspect they are missing something in the age of iPhones'

My next family was as delightful as the first one was disagreeable. They had taken me in not for extra cash but because they thought I might provide some cultural exposure for their children. There are too many nice things to recount about them. My enduring memory is of sitting down to dinner each night as a family, and the extended discussions that gradually unlocked my Spanish. I treasured those evenings and have endeavoured to recreate some semblance of them with my own children, so far with mixed success.

I'm sure today's university students also enjoy rich study-abroad experiences. But I suspect they are missing something in the age of iPhones and social media and streaming video. Can they ever experience the despair - and immersion - that can arise from being truly cut off from home? Can they ever commit themselves to the people and places where they are living without distraction from Facebook or Netflix? Can they come to know and love their hosts and, in turn, be known by them?

One day I was practising the novel sport of jogging in smog-covered Santiago while my Chilean mother pedalled along beside me. I had been agonising about what I would do with my life - something I did not much discuss with my own parents. We stopped for a cigarette break. "What about journalism?" my Chilean mother suggested. Thank you, Gloria. **FT**

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Joshua Chaffin is the FT's New York correspondent.
joshua.chaffin@ft.com **Twitter** @JoshuaChaffin
Simon Kuper is away

Quiz answers The link was the titles of Disney films 1. Frozen 2. Tarzan (Michael Hesse) 3. Usain Bolt (his last solo race) 4. "Oh, what a tangled web we weave" 5. Aladdin Same 6. Coco Chanel 7. Brave New World 8. Fantasia on a Theme by Thomas Tallis 9. Cars 10. The Pillars of Hercules **Picture quiz** Charlie Dimmock + Michael Sheen = Charlife Sheen

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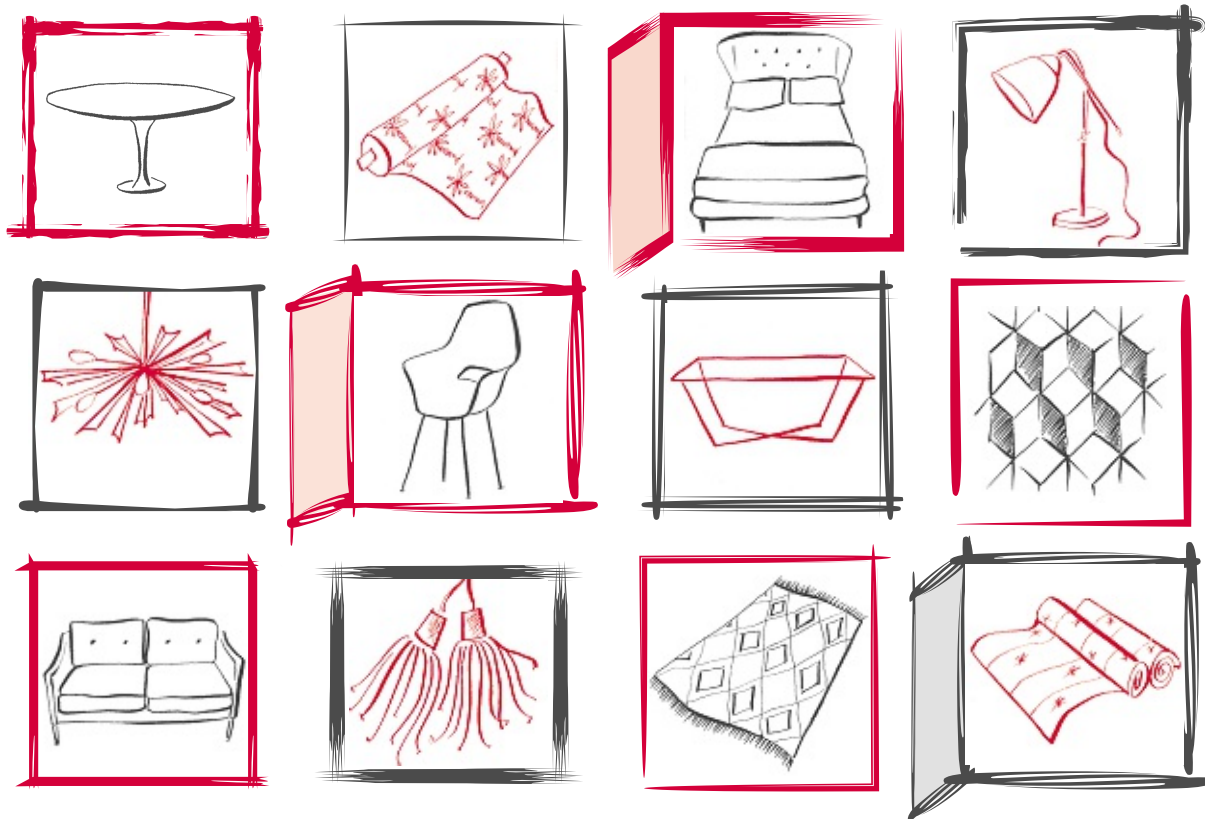
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TECH WORLD NOTES FROM A DIGITAL BUNKER

BY TIM BRADSHAW IN LONDON

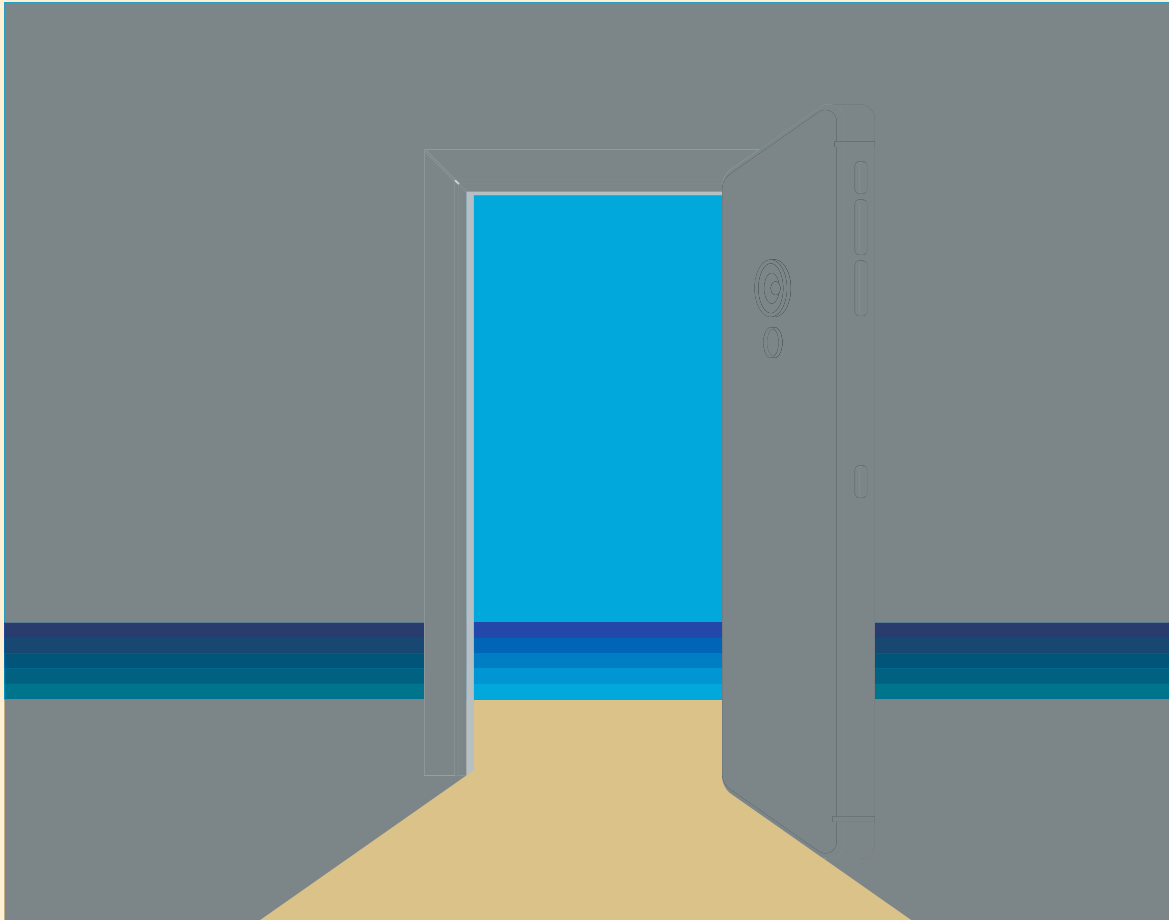


ILLUSTRATION BY PÂTE

The new VR: stepping inside the screen

The 2010s will be remembered as the decade that screens invaded every part of our lives. In the next 10 years, we will see every part of our lives recreated inside the screen.

Virtual - and augmented - reality, powered by ever-more sophisticated smartphone cameras and ultra-realistic computer graphics, means that we will soon be able to step into a digital world that replicates ourselves and our offline environment in remarkable detail.

Those already fretting about smartphone addiction will find that prospect unnerving. But millions of us have already started on this journey. Anyone who has designed their own cartoon avatar in Snapchat's Bitmoji or Apple's Memoji has set foot in a new virtual reality.

Digital puppets were once the preserve of Hollywood. When the *Lord of the Rings* trilogy was released in the early 2000s, a sizeable chunk of its \$281m budget went towards turning actor Andy Serkis into Gollum - a breakthrough moment for motion-capture technology. Now, every smartphone's selfie camera can become a motion-capture rig, mapping the subtlest changes in our facial expressions onto our digital doppelgängers.

In the two decades since *LOTR*, New Zealand-based Weta, the visual-effects studio behind Gollum, has progressed from monsters to creating disarmingly realistic digital people, such as Will Smith's younger clone in *Gemini Man*. Using the same technology, film-makers are re-animating James Dean, who died 60 years ago. A CGI version of Dean has been cast in a new movie, *Finding Jack*, due out later this year.

Despite the backing of Dean's estate, Hollywood stars such as Chris Evans and Elijah Wood have

balked at bringing actors back from the dead. But this *Black Mirror* plotline is quickly coming to life. "Some people find a lot of this creepy. When I started investing in this space, people thought I was insane," Cyan Banister, a venture capitalist at Founders Fund, told the Virtual Beings Summit in San Francisco last year. "But I think this is the future we are going to live in - and it's not so far off."

It is not just ourselves but our surroundings that are being digitally cloned. Apps such as Ubiquity6's Display.land allow real-world objects to be scanned into the virtual world in photo-realistic 3D, simply by walking around them with a smartphone camera. Epic Games, the company behind *Fortnite*, has invested in a series of technologies that will make it easy for other developers to incorporate lifelike people and places into their apps and games. At the same Virtual Beings Summit, Epic's chief technology officer Kim Libreri

predicted: "In the next 10 years, the virtual world and the real world will merge into one. You won't really be able to tell the difference."

VR headsets have won few fans so far but by the end of the decade, new wearable devices, including smart glasses, may make immersive technologies more widely accessible. In the meantime, headsets such as Oculus Quest give us a peek into the "mirrorworld".

The latest Quest app from VR developer Tender Claws is called *The Under Presents*. Part multiplayer video game, part immersive theatre, it is inspired by productions where actors and audience mingle together, such as Punchdrunk's *Sleep No More* or a Secret Cinema performance. For a limited time period, instead of the wooden "AIs" that typically inhabit video games, several of

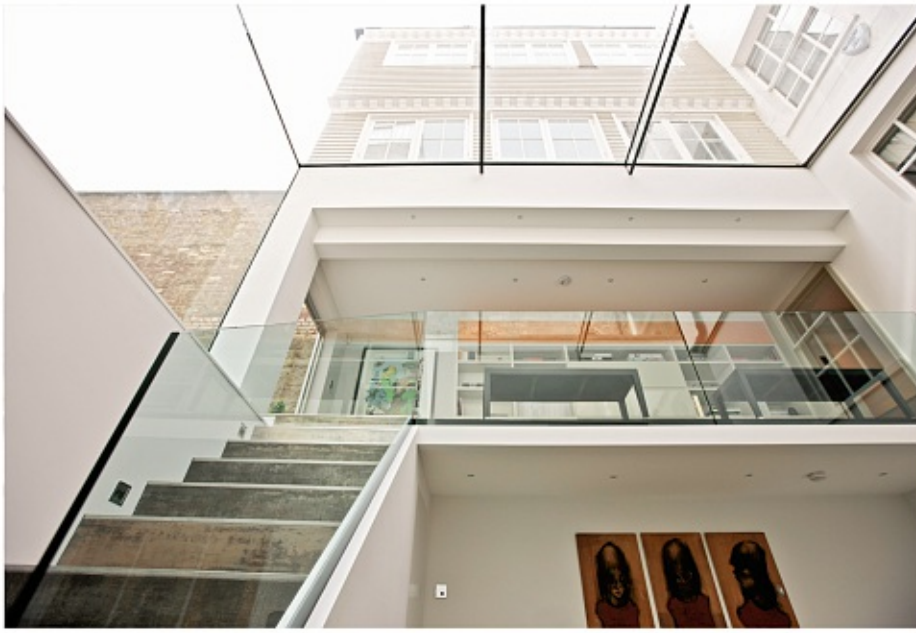
The *Black Mirror* plotline of bringing people 'back from the dead' is quickly coming to life

the characters lurking around *The Under*, an otherworldly cabaret bar, are being played by real actors. Improv artists, puppeteers and dancers were recruited by the developer.

The concept has never been tried before - in part because setting up and running a motion-capture studio for each character for months on end would be too expensive. In *The Under Presents*, each actor uses an Oculus Quest just like the players. Its motion-sensing headset and controllers capture mannerisms and gestures to bring its mysterious masked characters to life. "With just hands and heads tracked, you can be pretty expressive," says Danny Cannizzaro, co-founder of Tender Claws.

If the experts are right, over the next few years "virtual reality" will come to mean more than just a pair of unwieldy goggles. Instead of asking whether we are using our screens too much, in another decade the big question might be - which version of reality do we prefer? **FT**

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Tim Bradshaw is the FT's global tech correspondent



Screen time

With cinema, TV, phones and games all vying for our attention, the screen has become an integral part of 21st-century life. How did we get here – and do screens augment our reality or diminish it? *John Gapper* introduces a photography special issue

“I do not know whether a philosopher has ever dreamed of a company engaged in the home delivery of sensory reality,” wrote the French poet and essayist Paul Valéry in 1928. He was intrigued by the idea: “It will be wonderfully pleasant to be able to transform at will an empty hour, an interminable evening, an endless Sunday, into an enchantment, an expression of tenderness, a flight of the spirit.”

Home delivery of sensory reality is now engaging many companies, from Walt Disney to Netflix and ByteDance, the Chinese parent of the 15-second video platform TikTok. High-definition images will soon appear as holograms or pictures on virtual-reality spectacles. For now, most are displayed on flat screens large and small – cinemas, televisions, tablets and phones.

Two moments stick in my mind from a decade of the human love affair with screens. One is Steve Jobs’ 2010 appearance at an Apple event in California to launch the iPad, his follow-up to the most influential gadget since the television, the iPhone. The set was almost bare apart from a leather sofa that Jobs sat on halfway through his talk, theatrically holding the device.

The memorable aspect of his pose was that Jobs was not merely

showing off a new product; he was portraying a new way of life. The primary form of home entertainment would transform from the family gathered round one television to each member holding a tablet. As they reached out to touch their own flickering panes of glass, the images would obey them.

A tablet revolution did not happen: 10 years later, the television still holds pride of place in most living rooms, with more pixels packed into bigger screens. For those millennials who have ditched the TV altogether, the multipurpose laptop seems to be the viewing mechanism of choice. Aircraft passengers will sometimes prop iPads on tray tables, preferring their own downloads to the films on the screens in front of them. Instead of conquering, tablets have added to the plethora of devices.

The second moment was in August this year, watching on my iPhone a live stream of Tyler “Ninja” Blevins, a champion Fortnite player, making a move from the games-streaming platform Twitch to Microsoft’s Mixer. Microsoft was harnessing Blevins’ celebrity by getting him to play the game, with its quirky celebration dances, in front of devoted admirers on Mixer.



Villa Mazzacorati, Bologna, 2015. Photograph by Hiroshi Sugimoto

COURTESY OF THE ARTIST AND MARIAN GOODMAN GALLERY

‘Please, please don’t look at it on a phone,’ Martin Scorsese implored viewers of *The Irishman*, starring a de-aged Robert De Niro

A live crowd gathered in a studio to cheer him in person as he fluently navigated the game’s challenges. On my phone, I watched these people watching him as he fought distant rivals on a computer screen, with the stream of comments bubbling to the side of the action. A hall of mirrors reflected the celebrity whose job description would have been inexplicable until now.

Walt Disney first captured the emotional power of figures projected on to a big screen at more than 12 frames per second. At the premiere of *Snow White* in Los Angeles in 1937, the audience wept audibly at the scene where the Seven Dwarfs discover the poisoned princess. Getting attached to a Fortnite player may be eccentric, but *Snow White* did not even exist in real life.

Musing on the growth of celebrity in his 2016 book *Wonderland*, Steven Johnson writes of the technology’s “ability to distort reality, making it impossible for us not to see things that are empirically not there. At 12 frames per second, with synchronised sound and close-ups, it is almost impossible for human beings not to form emotional connections with people on screen.”

The big screen is uniquely powerful. Eve Arnold’s portraits of Marilyn Monroe on the set of *The Misfits* in 1960 (p18) show her glamour but cannot convey the full impact of seeing her walk and talk on screen. Hiroshi Sugimoto’s film-length exposures of the screens in classic cinemas (see left, also p16), radiating their otherworldly light, express the way the audience is transfixed and transported.

As screens have multiplied, so have the famous. “Any man today can lay claim to being filmed,” wrote the German philosopher Walter Benjamin in his 1935 essay “The Work of Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction”. “Thus the distinction between author and public is about to lose its basic character.” The smartphone camera has turned his prediction into reality.

What would Benjamin have made of TikTok, the app on which teenagers lip-sync and dance to the same tunes, often competing to make mini-dramas that fit the rules of the latest viral meme? One study calls the TikTok form “intensified play [in which] videos are squeezed to the 15-second timeline, moving faster and more theatrically” than other user-generated videos.

“Please, please don’t look at it on a phone,” Martin Scorsese implored viewers of *The Irishman*, his recent film starring an artificially de-aged Robert De Niro, as if streaming on Netflix were an auteur’s gamble with an irresponsible audience. But most teenagers spend more time playing around in portrait mode, Instagramming or sending emojis than sitting spellbound in cinemas.

Playing on screens can be addictive. One study of US adolescents found that those spending the least amount of time on devices such as phones were happiest, while intense users were sadder, less satisfied with their lives and suffered lower self-esteem. “Sometimes, I think that I am no good at all,” was one test statement with which too many agreed.

That is the opposite of Valéry’s predicted enchantment or Benjamin’s view of cinema that “burst this vision-world asunder by the dynamite of the tenth of a second so that now, in the midst of its far-flung ruins and debris, we calmly and adventurously go travelling. With the close-up, space expands; with slow-motion, movement is extended.” He believed screens liberated us.

What went wrong? Perhaps nothing did and every aspect of lives, good and bad, has been digitised. From Monroe’s glamour and the intimate texting captured by Jeff Mermelstein on the streets of New York (p28), to Twitter trolling and the jealousy of watching others lead happier lives on Instagram, all experiences are on display. Like Narcissus by the pool, we cannot help staring at our reflection. **FT**

John Gapper is an FT columnist

Hooray for Sandalwood

Sameer Raichur documents the movie-going madness that greets the release of Kannada films in south-west India

The pomp and fanfare accompanying the first showing of a Kannada movie release can rival a festival. Coconuts and pumpkins lie broken at the bottom of the screen, as if to appease the gods of film. Promotion teams distribute confetti, flowers and sweets among the audience.

The predominantly male viewers' devotion to the stars of these "Sandalwood" movies - produced in the Kannada language widely spoken in Karnataka, south-west India - is hysterical and performative. They dance in front of the screen, whistling in approval as their superheroes deliver hackneyed dialogue and inflict righteous violence on armies of adversaries with their bare hands. Young and old are united in celebrating an event that they have anticipated for months. Women, meanwhile, are "encouraged" to seat themselves in the "family" section in the balcony.

The first shows are inevitably full: remarkable for a space that can seat up to 1,000 people. Traditionally, the male lead visits important theatres before the screening, sometimes as early as 6.30am. Huge garlanded effigies of the stars - often larger than the theatres - are erected. Security guards are hired and police often kept on standby. The spectacle seems surreal to those who haven't experienced it but, after their acting careers, these movie idols often go on to become wildly successful politicians and have been known to change the destinies of entire states. And it all begins here - on the silver screen. ▶

Sameer Raichur is a photographer based in Bangalore





Previous page: ecstatic fans celebrating a new release. This page, clockwise from top right: a woman in the stalls, where male fans traditionally sit; a poster (left) of the late Kannada actor Raj Kumar, in the kitchen of the Santosh Theatre, Bangalore; watching a key scene in the 2019 film 'Geetha'; a promotional effigy of actor Shiva Rajkumar, a member of the 'first family' of Kannada cinema; an initial glimpse of a star on screen, just before celebrations begin



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Richard Robinson, Brighton Science Festival

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Topics from February: Science of Happiness, Magic Maths, The Earth Issue, and Discover Dogs.

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Film fantasy

Fascinated by the relationship between time and photography, *Hiroshi Sugimoto* smuggled a large-format camera into an old cinema to capture an entire film in a single frame

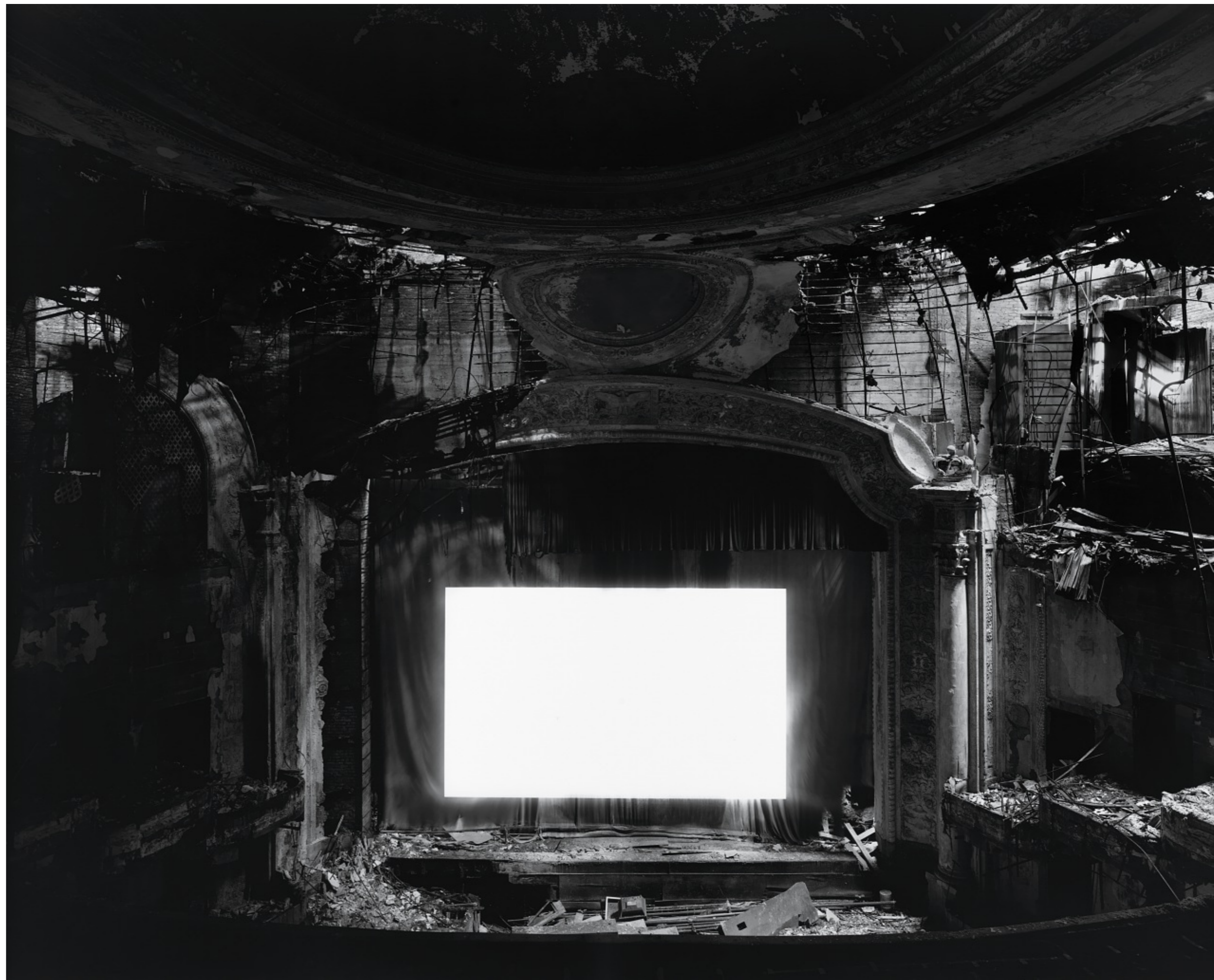
I began my *Theaters* series in 1976. It never crossed my mind that I'd still be working on it 40 years later. I was thinking a great deal about the invention of photography at the time. A photograph fixes dead reality in the form of an afterimage. But when you are shown a series of those same afterimages, dead reality seems to come back to life – that's what a movie is. To watch a two-hour movie is simply to look at 172,800 photographic afterimages. Since the birth of civilisation, the human race has been fascinated by the idea of resurrection. I wanted to photograph a movie, with all its appearance of life and motion, in order to stop it again.

The movie theatre I first selected was St Marks Cinema in Manhattan's East Village. It was a run-down place that cost a dollar to get into and had a far-from-vigilant

staff. I successfully smuggled in a large-format camera and stealthily set it up. The lens was a Schneider 165mm. The exposure time was the full length of the film. The subject was roughly 170,000 photographs.

I have no recollection of what the movie was but, when I turned on the darkroom light, I realised that my inner vision had been externalised on to film exactly as I had imagined it. The image was something that neither existed in the real world nor was it anything that I had seen. So who had seen it, then? My answer: it was what the camera saw. It was the afterimage of a great accumulation of afterimages. The excess of light was illuminating the darkness of ignorance. **FT**

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Hiroshi Sugimoto is a photographer based in New York and Tokyo



Paramount Theatre, Newark, 2015



C I N E M A

Desert hearts

Magnum photographer Eve Arnold's behind-the-scenes shots of John Huston's 1961 Western *The Misfits* capture the emotional fragility of its troubled stars. *Josh Lustig* on an ill-fated shoot

A deep vein of sadness runs through Eve Arnold's photographs from the set of *The Misfits*, John Huston's 1961 movie set in the wide-open spaces of the Nevada desert. The film is a story of expectations, broken dreams and failed relationships - and it echoes what was happening to its key players off screen.

Within 18 months of shooting, two of its stars, Clark Gable and Marilyn Monroe - both symbols of Hollywood's Golden Age - would be dead. Monroe struggled with addiction and depression throughout filming, checking herself into rehab midway through production. Her marriage to the film's screenwriter, Arthur Miller, was falling apart. Huston was often drunk on set, reportedly falling asleep during filming, and was as interested in spending time in ▶



Above: Marilyn Monroe with co-star Montgomery Clift on the set of *The Misfits*. Like Monroe, Clift had addiction problems; she later described him as 'the only person I know who is in even worse shape than I am'. He would die of a heart attack in 1966.
Facing page: Monroe and co-star Eli Wallach. Eve Arnold observed that she was very tactile during the shoot: 'When you look back, it seems like a cry for help... just a need for human, physical contact'



Left: Monroe being given a neck massage by her husband, Arthur Miller, who wrote the screenplay of *The Misfits*. Eve Arnold said: 'This was Miller's Valentine to Marilyn [...] The marriage was already over but what he had wanted to do with it was give her a gift. And he did, I think'
 Below: the only non-studio portrait Monroe allowed Arnold to take of her
 Bottom: Clark Gable on set. Monroe was devastated by his death, 10 days after filming wrapped. She told Arnold how, while growing up in an orphanage, she would imagine Gable bringing her and the other children crayons and colouring books. Arnold said: 'She adored him'



◀ Nevada's casinos as he was in shooting the movie. Such was the backdrop to Arnold's tender, intimate on-set photographs.

Arnold was the first female member of Magnum Photos, joining the agency in 1951. A year later, she met and photographed Monroe for the first time. Unlike many photographers who spent time with Monroe, Arnold was rooted firmly in documentary and photojournalism. Her pared-down shoot with Marlene Dietrich for *Esquire* was what initially drew the attention of Monroe.

In a 1987 interview, Arnold recalled that when the two first met (at a party held coincidentally for Huston), Monroe said to her: "If you did that well with Marlene, can you imagine what you could do with me?" It marked the beginning of a friendship and working relationship that lasted 10 years, culminating in the two months Arnold spent with her on set for *The Misfits*.

Arnold's photographs are striking for the way she captures these legends of the silver screen as lonely, troubled individuals. She strips away their movie stardom and reveals them as fragile, vulnerable. Even when photographed together, everyone seems to inhabit their own world, disconnected from one another, lost in the desert. **FT**

Josh Lustig is deputy photography editor of *FT Weekend Magazine*



CINEMA

– Geoff Dyer

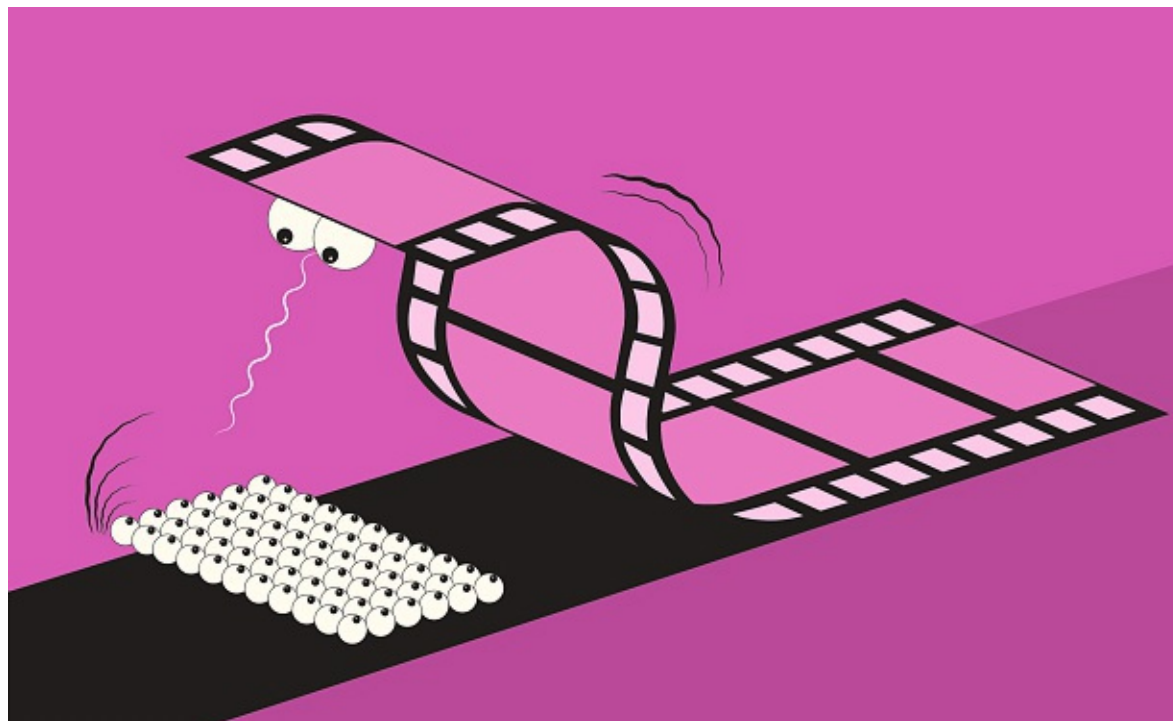


ILLUSTRATION BY MATTHIAS SEIFARTH

Todd Haynes' new film *Dark Waters* is based on the true story of an attorney persuaded to take up the legal cudgels on behalf of a farmer in West Virginia whose herd has been depleted by mysterious illnesses and deaths. As Robert Bilott immerses himself in the case, he learns that the chemical giant DuPont has been exposing its workers to deadly levels of contamination, resulting in cancer and birth defects in their children. It's even poisoning the water supply.

Dark Waters is a serious film with an important message. Part of this is a refusal to treat us to one of those redemptive, raise-the-flag-on-Iwo messages that enable us to leave the cinema in the comforting knowledge that any dents in the American chassis have been so thoroughly beaten out that it looks as good as new.

Haynes emphasised this in a Q&A in which he spoke about his "body of work" and referred fondly to parts of that body in the third-person ("a Todd Haynes film"). This kind of affable self-regard is at odds with the wrenching conflicts endured by Bilott, a partner in a law firm that normally makes its money *defending* chemical companies. Haynes is an OK filmmaker for whom style routinely

covers up a lack of substance. That style tends to be borrowed or recycled. *Carol*, his earlier film, was so saturated in the lyrical colour photography of Saul Leiter it seemed, at times, like a moving retrospective that succeeded in leaving one entirely unmoved.

Recognising where the borrowing comes from in *Dark Waters* is a shaping part of the audience experience. It begins with a re-framing of the opening of *Jaws*: carefree youngsters swimming at night, unaware of the menace lurking beneath the surface. After that, everything unfolds in a more muted visual key, drawing on the architecture of paranoia deployed to influential effect in the 1970s in films such as Alan J Pakula's *All the President's Men*.

Was there a time when multistorey car parks were just places to park? Was it possible, pre-Pakula/Watergate, to park in one of these places without feeling either that you were about to meet Deep Throat or to hand over a case of cash for a kilo of blow?

The low clearance plays a part, enhancing the stretch of wide-angle perspective. To paraphrase what Don DeLillo wrote of the desert: the parking garage fits the screen, the parking garage *is* the screen. Since nothing in the world is more boring



"Paranoid style" now connotes a set of visual conventions that have seeped into the filmic water table'

than parking, it's sort of fun to have routine anxiety - where did I leave my car? What did I do with my ticket? - inflected by the existential dread of getting whacked. Ditto the way that the tyres of American cars squeal guiltily as you exit safely with nothing more incriminating than a plastic bottle of Fiji water on the back seat.

So we can all identify with Bilott as he hesitates to turn the ignition key, fearing that he might get blown to bits. The moment is, as it were, set-designed to ignite further tension in the audience. To paraphrase that old line about paranoia: just because a scene

is integral doesn't mean it's not gratuitous too.

Coined by Richard Hofstadter in 1964, the phrase "paranoid style" referred to "a force in politics". It now connotes a set of visual conventions that have seeped into the filmic water table itself. The same austere dank aesthetic underwrites Scott Z Burns' 2019 film *The Report*, detailing the attempts of investigator Daniel Jones to allow the light of public scrutiny into the dark edifice of the CIA's programme of enhanced interrogation (aka torture).

Both films feature terrific performances, by Adam Driver (as Jones) and Mark Ruffalo (as Bilott), but how often do you see a movie where the acting is less than amazing? While Driver - mainly seen walking and typing - looks pretty much the same as he does in Noah Baumbach's latest film *Marriage Story*, Ruffalo undergoes a physical transformation that renders him unrecognisable: a quasi-necessary ordeal for any actor seeking ultimate recognition.

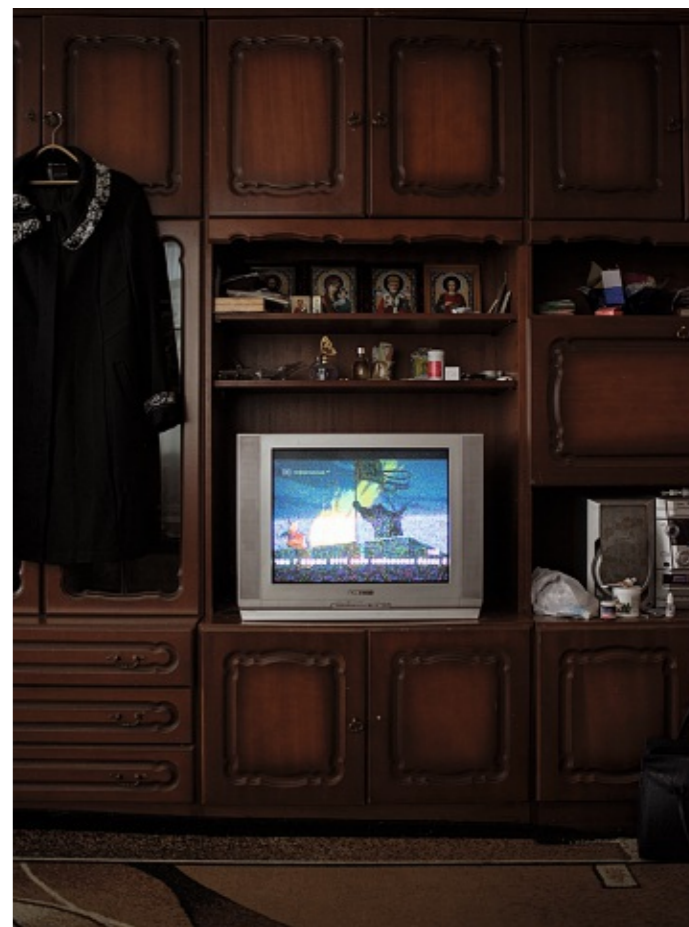
But subtler changes are also at work on the cast, one of which is at odds with the totalising aesthetic of muddy brooding. The years Bilott spends wading through reservoirs of evidence place a huge burden on his marriage. Either due to this strain or, by implication, the toxic water, his wife (Anne Hathaway) looked, to this viewer, as if she was changing into *Michael Jackson* - the mid-life Jacko, that is, who had himself induced physical changes to his complexion, nose and hair.

Photos from the recent documentary *Leaving Neverland* showed Jackson enjoying quite ordinary visits to the suburban homes of the kids he was allegedly abusing. In *Dark Waters*, the sight of him fully transitioning into domestic life in Cincinnati assumes the character of what Roland Barthes called the punctum: an accidental detail that transforms an entire picture. Once noted, this metamorphosis becomes the compelling and tacit subject of the film. There's an unintended and serious message here. Try as we might, do everything we can to cover it up, comedy will out. **FT**

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Geoff Dyer's book "Zona", about Andrei Tarkovsky's film "Stalker", is published by Canongate

Viewing power

Christopher Nunn was in Ukraine when Russian troops took control of Crimea in 2014. The photographer explains how TVs became 'weapons of information warfare' in people's living rooms



I photographed these television sets between 2014-18 in eastern Ukraine, in friends' homes, hospitals, schools, military bases, hotels, shops and cafés. From the start of the conflict in February 2014, when Russian troops took control of Ukraine's Crimean region, it was clear, as with any modern crisis, that propaganda played a major role in fuelling division among citizens. In Ukraine-controlled villages, Russian state television was often the main (or only) source of information for many, particularly the poor and elderly. These little boxes were weapons of information warfare in people's living rooms.

I was interested in the spaces where people received news and the conflict caused from a domestic level. I shot them vertically so there was less peripheral information. Small details around the frame sometimes reveal on which side of the conflict the image was taken, or hint at the owners' political, religious and social standing. The surroundings were often dated, a relic of old Ukraine, and the picture on the screen was sometimes the only thing that rooted it to our time. But a lot of the time, the TVs were off. The relentless, numbing stream of information was too much. After a while, nothing seemed to change. **FT**

Christopher Nunn is a photographer based in Huddersfield



Tuned in

Paul Graham on why he turned away from television's 'charmless hypnotism' to focus instead on the 'living, breathing, sentient' people beside him

It's hard to remember the time before mobile phones took over our lives. We are now so addicted to the little screen that we forget how we were once equally transfixed by the glow from a cathode ray tube. These images were taken haphazardly over a period of a few years in the 1990s, wherever I found myself sitting with friends and family, watching television together. I'm not much of a one for strategically organising "shoots", so everything was natural, just as and where. They were taken as far afield as Japan (Yuko and Ryo) and as near as my own living room (Cathy).

Being a photographer who prefers to work directly with life, I loved the notion of refusing to look at the programming we were proffered through the airwaves but instead to decline its charmless hypnotism and look at the living, breathing, sentient being right next to you. To refuse the supposed "entertainment" and choose life, no matter how placid and quiet on the surface, is clearly a deliberate act. It's one I hope will not go unnoticed, as our attention is ever more splintered in this media-saturated age. ▶

.....
Paul Graham is a photographer based in New York City



'Yuko, Kyoto' (1992)



'Ryo, Tokyo' (1994)



'Yuki, London' (1994)



'Jack, Bradford' (1989)

WHAT IS AVAXHOME?

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18 years of seamless operation and our users' satisfaction

All languages

Brand new content

One site



AVXLIVE **ICU**

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We have everything for all of your needs. Just open <https://avxlive.icu>

TELEVISION

– Olivia Laing

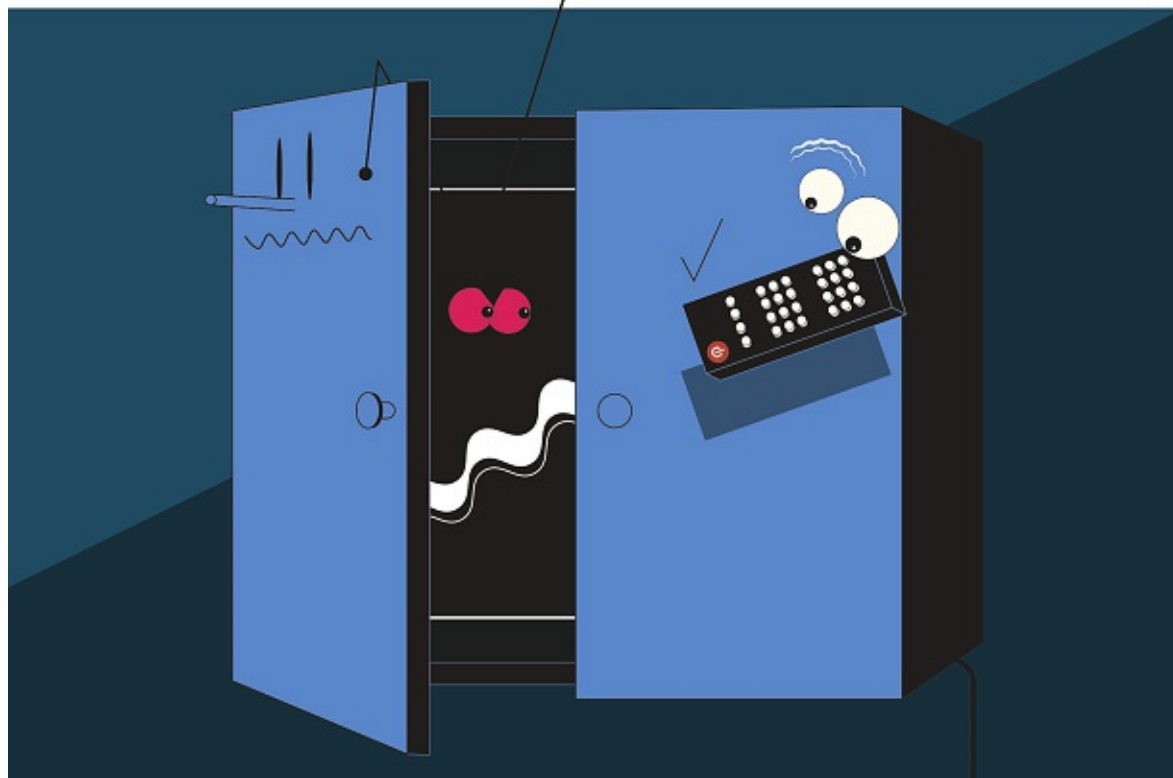


ILLUSTRATION BY MATTHIAS SEIFARTH

I got my first television at the age of 41. It lives in a cupboard, like a dangerous animal, not because I'm snobby about its pleasures but because I'm still weirdly fearful of its power. I grew up in an anti-TV household, subject to endless prohibitions (*Neighbours* was permissible, *Home and Away* beyond the pale). One of my strongest memories of my grandfather is of him watching *Countdown* from behind a crisply upheld Telegraph, muttering when challenged that he admired Carol Vorderman's mathematical mind. A bookish family, we regarded television as sinister and possibly contaminating. My sister was the only apostate, finding ingenious ways to sneak nocturnal viewings despite my mother confiscating the fuse (she's now a TV agent).

The trouble back then was that television was nothing like as enjoyable as a book. With a book, the reader is active and all-powerful, animating their own imaginative universe, choosing when to enter or leave. The page is something you dive through and vanish into another place. By contrast, television felt overbearing and invasive, flooding at me through ears and eyes. By the time I hit my

twenties, I was truly a Luddite, a dropout environmentalist at odds with the late 20th century, living on road protests, in caravans and squats, where the pinnacle of technology might be a battery-powered radio. Television, we thought in our Orwellian way, was designed to subdue and misinform, perpetuating what we hadn't yet started to call fake news.

But even in childhood there were moments when television thrilled or steadied me. My parents were divorced, and the ritual of watching *The A-Team* and *Blind Date*, later *Bergerac*, at my dad's flat in Bethnal Green on Saturday nights gave a stability to what was otherwise a disorientating, shipwrecked time. As teenagers, my sister and I watched hungrily for glimpses of the bands we loved, rejoicing when Darlene in *Roseanne* went, as we did, to see Daisy Chainsaw, and losing our minds with joy when the riot grrrl band Huggy Bear appeared on the late-night chat show *The Word*, bellowing, "This is happening without your permission!" and protesting at a sexist interview before being thrown bodily from the studio. So something real could happen: the same gleeful, anarchic feeling as




In concentrated bouts, the small screen has an unmatched capacity for infiltrating the subconscious

when lesbians invaded *The Six O'Clock News* in 1988 to protest against the homophobic Section 28.

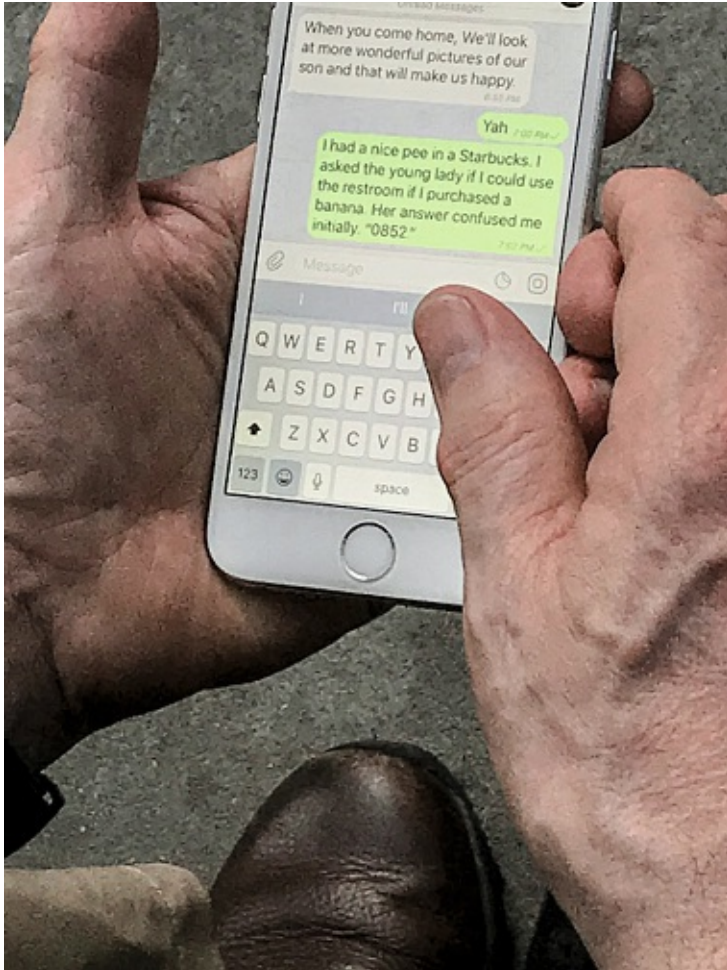
The internet has fundamentally disrupted the old economies of attention. Settling down to watch television now feels like an oasis of concentration after a day spent buzzing rapaciously through email and social media. I still hate the feeling of being at the mercy of a narrative, gratification delayed for months or years at a time, so I mostly watch old shows, their arcs long since resolved. Liberated from the tyranny of plot, I can wallow in

dialogue and incidental detail. Over the past two years, I've worked my way for the second or third time through *Brideshead Revisited* and *Tinker Tailor Soldier Spy*, the original nicotine-stained 1979 version, with a cardiganed Alec Guinness as the chilly George Smiley and piercing theme music by Geoffrey Burgon. I put a screenshot of Smiley on Twitter, and for a day my messages were full of friends asking the pervasive, undermining question of the show: "How's Ann?" After that, I ran again through the entirety of *Inspector Morse* and *Lewis* (more perfect theme music), followed by *Game of Thrones* and culminating in all nine seasons of *Seinfeld*, the most soothing antidote to Brexit turmoil and election anxiety yet invented.

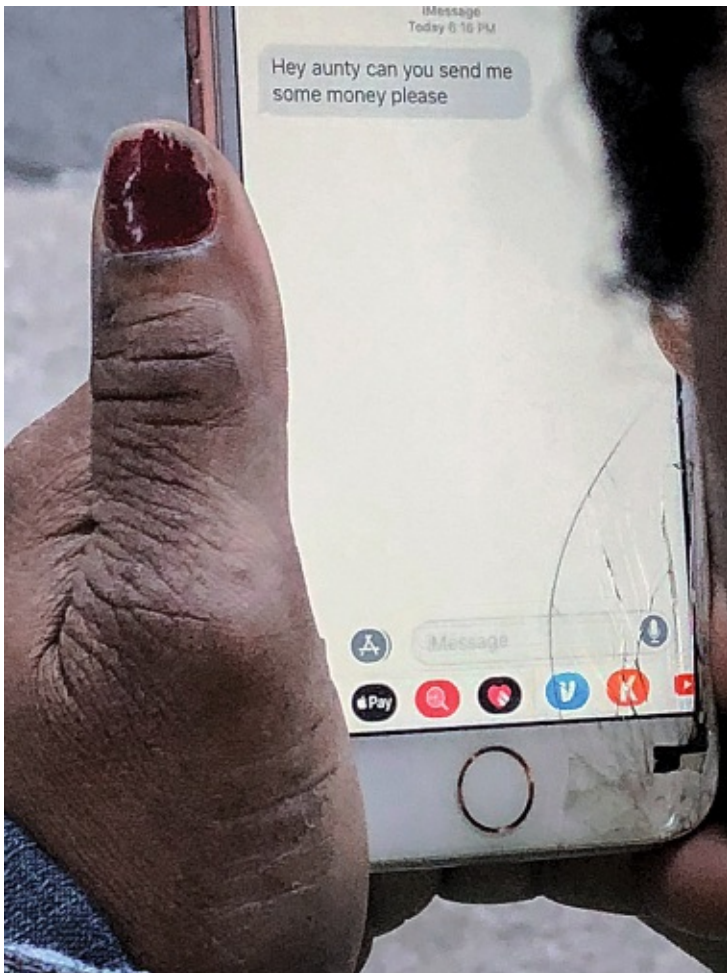
Watched like this, in concentrated bouts, the small screen has an unmatched capacity for infiltrating the subconscious. I feasted on *Game of Thrones* over a few dense January weeks, while I was struggling with a book. During that time, I dreamed entirely inside the show, dark medieval dreams of fighting and swift travel over snow. It was a relief to step so conclusively outside of my own head, to let the book untangle itself while I was occupied with bears and swords. Years before, I had to stop watching *The Sopranos* after a prostitute was beaten to death in real-time, blow by agonising blow. I started being frightened to walk up the stairs of my flat, the world inside the screen infusing and darkening my own. Now, pushing the television back into its cupboard each night is a way of acknowledging this eerie, insinuating power.

In the 1970s, the writer John Cheever used to run around his house in Ossining yelling "Poldark! Poldark!" before every episode, which is exactly how I feel about the shows I love. The older I get, the more pathetically reassuring I find it to watch George and Jerry in their booth at the coffee shop, kvetching about girls. Morse will never not play Wagner, Sebastian is always doomed. *Seinfeld*! *Seinfeld*! I used to hate this totalitarian aspect of television, but in this unstable century, I find it more soothing than any book. 

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Olivia Laing's collected essays, "Funny Weather", will be published in April



Every
text
tells
a story



His subjects remain anonymous but *Jeff Mermelstein's* photographs of their text messages tell us a great deal about the human condition

My photographs of text messages are a kind of street photography that pulls away from the tradition of rendering faces, gestures and incident. Instead of standing in front, I stand behind and make pictures of our words. My camera is an iPhone and that helps me blend into it all. People remain anonymous as I open up a door to our inner thoughts and feelings. The messages on these screens touch upon the range of our current human condition, from the mundane to the absurd and all the surprising and sometimes vulnerable layers in between. **FT**

Jeff Mermelstein is a photographer based in Brooklyn. These photographs are from his new book to be published in August 2020 (MACK books)

Who am I now?



17th May 2014



8th July 2014, (#itsjustdifferent)

Through a series of fictionalised makeovers, *Amalia Ulman* created a powerful Instagram performance that shows how women are fetishised online

“Excellences & Perfections” was a scripted performance I did on Instagram from April to September 2014. It showed the evolution of a young woman living in Los Angeles. I adopted three personas in turn: first, cute Tumblr-loving ingénue; next, a basic sugar baby who’s into streetwear; and finally, a post-rehab wellness freak. Because it was an experimental format, I stuck to clichés that the audience would recognise. I decided to keep the story simple.

I had been online for many years when I started the artwork. As a young woman, I was very aware that the internet was not a fun, beautiful playground. I knew how easy it was to get attention through objectification alone. So after many years of having worked on being genderless and invisible, I decided to use the way women are fetishised online as a way of telling a story.

At the time I was doing a lot of work online, and years before that I had posed in my own photographs. So I just combined the two. But I hated the world of performance art: I was an autistic girl hiding behind a screen, not an extrovert dying to get on stage. It was a very scary thing for me to do, but I felt compelled to do it.

I’m proud of how reckless I am in my work. As a teenager I was interested in movements like Dada, punk, cyberpunk, ►



13th September 2014



1st June 2014



8th August 2014



24th August 2014

PHOTOGRAPHS COURTESY ARCADIA MISSA LONDON



27th August 2014

I gained thousands of new Instagram followers. But I never cared about numbers – I was only satisfied that the experiment was going to plan

◀ Arte Povera and the anti-fascist art movements. These influences are there if you look closely.

I was born a woman: that's the life I've experienced so far, and I try to talk about what I know. But I feel that femininity has never come naturally to me. For years I've felt that I had to "perform" a role in my everyday life just to fit in. So this project was an extension of that in a way.

By the conclusion of the performance in September 2014, I had gained thousands of new followers on Instagram. I didn't find that thrilling – I never really cared about the numbers. I was only satisfied that the experiment was going according to plan.

I think Instagram popularity, when it comes to images of women, depends on where you are in the world. It seemed that in the US the formula, for a while, was to have a huge ass with surreal Brazilian butt-lift proportions. Ultimately, though, I don't think social media has changed much since 2014. People still like being lied to.

When I revealed that my Instagram character was a creation, some of my followers were angry. A lot had left sexist comments on my profile. The work was holding up a mirror and they didn't like what they saw. But that was the point: media is deceptive. When things become images, they become fiction. **FT**

.....
Amalia Ulman is an Argentine/Spanish artist. She is making her first feature film, "El Planeta", a dark comedy about eviction



10th September 2014

MOBILE PHONES

– Rebecca Watson



ILLUSTRATION BY MATTHIAS SEIFARTH

This summer, I bought a new phone. It arrived just before I went on holiday. One beautiful Greek morning, the phone's alarm, which I had optimistically set the night before, woke me up. I silenced its electronic trills and went back to sleep. When I woke again, I went to grab the phone, certain I had shoved it under my pillow, but it wasn't there. I seized the pillow, sure it would appear underneath like some conjuror's trick – one moment not under the cup, the next there – only for the phone to soar out of the pillowcase and bellyflop on to the tiled floor.

The delay after dropping it, before I faced the damage, was vertiginous. Like the pause before giving a speech, I leant into it, extending it, as if it could go on for ever. Then, taking a breath, I picked my phone up.

It had smashed, inevitably. iPhone screens are impossibly, pointlessly delicate. Its newness and utility vanished on impact. It was no longer a device, it was an object. I felt foolish to be bothered by something suddenly so slight.

I am of a generation whose digital psyche grew early. Aged 11, I would

go home after school and bag my spot at the family computer, waiting for the internet to dial up so I could chat on MSN messenger to the same friends I had said goodbye to hours earlier. By 13, I had Facebook. Those times at the computer after school had a check-in, check-out process. I was either online, or offline. Once, after a misdeed I won't write about here, my parents banned me from Facebook for several months. Then, I was unerringly offline. Now, I am off Facebook out of choice.

But that sense of being timed out seems impossible to recreate. It's harder to control screen time now. Rather than sharing one computer with my allocated hour of use, now I have different, unlimited relationships with varying screens. Having a smartphone is a constant online: a constant assumption that I will be nearby, that I will respond to notifications, that urgent – or considered to be urgent – matters will receive a reply within hours. I play the game, because I too make the same assumption of others.

I'm not dependent. I can step away. Yet the little pull at my stomach when I saw my broken screen wasn't just monetary grief at the unknown price it would take to



'I'm not dependent. I can step away. Yet the little pull at my stomach when I saw my broken screen wasn't just monetary grief'

fix it. A sense of immediacy, of connectedness had been taken.

The Spanish novelist Javier Marías writes on a typewriter. He doesn't use the internet and communicates by letter. In *Dark Back of Time*, which I read on the same holiday, glass splinters from my iPhone mixing with sand in my bag, Marías writes about lacking the "journalistic inclination" to scavenge online in order to find out more about something or someone. He is satisfied that he needn't know.

It's a wistful idea – something he gets away with by being an acclaimed writer who was born in 1951. I was born more than 40 years later. But his writing, which winds sentences across pages, dancing like the mind from one thing to the next until you forget where you began, reminds me of a digital mindset.

I found myself on my phone recently with a tremor of dread that came from something I'd read 20 seconds earlier, without being able to remember its source. In order to locate it, I had to retrace my steps, flipping back between apps until I worked it out. A Maríasian moment, yet one he will never have experienced. I think of that now when phones are criticised, when younger generations are dismissed for being too absorbed in their internet worlds. We are criticising old behaviours seen in new guises, not the tools themselves. Data didn't exploit itself on Facebook, people did.

I often think of my phone flippantly. It's not my phone, but my bloody phone. My bloody phone that runs out of battery too quickly, that reminds me of people's birthdays who I haven't seen in years, however many times I change the settings. At times when I'm anxious, I feel my phone like a weight. It's a portal to infinite misreadings. But the anxiety remains, with or without a phone. It fills the nearest cracks. The connection a phone gives me: the particular online humour, the ability to talk to friends and make new ones, the writerly whimsy of curating a social media profile, of being in control of small worlds that you can disappear from entirely at the click of a lock button – all that far outweighs what it can antagonise.

There was a strange relief that came a little after I had sent my phone tumbling. The gashes on its screen made it difficult to read, so it sat at the bottom of my bag. That had always been the plan – I was on holiday after all – but suddenly it was enforced. I didn't have to push my phone away; it had done it itself. But when I got it fixed on my return, relief arrived then too. I had my bloody phone back. **FT**

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Rebecca Watson is assistant arts editor at the FT. Her novel 'little scratch' is published in July



G A M I N G

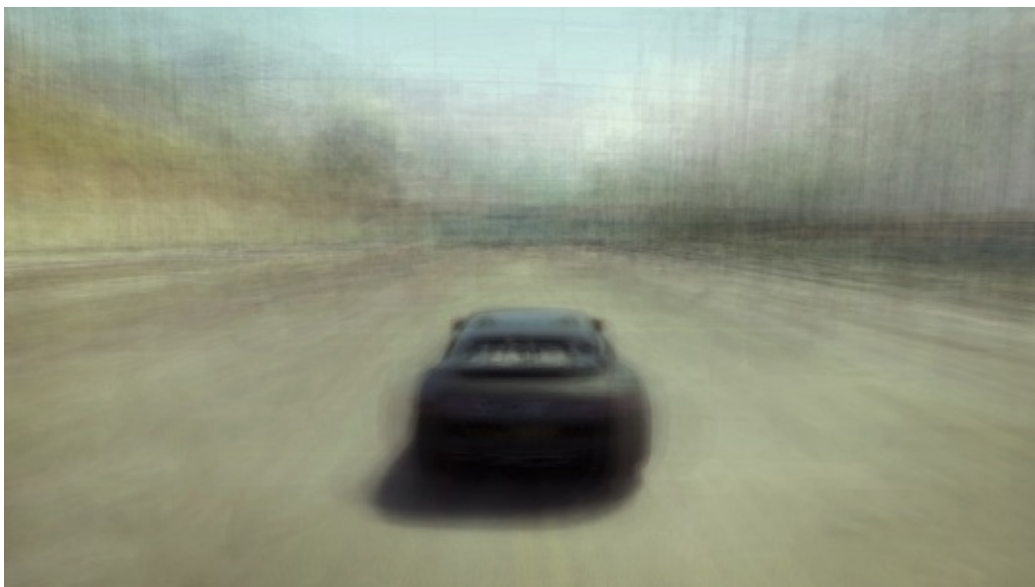
Playing around

From documenting arcade gatherings in the 1980s to creating political avatars today, gaming has long fired the imagination of artists. *Marco De Mutis* reports on the evolution of video games and what it tells us about culture



Ira Nowinski, 'Casino Arcade Santa Cruz, California', 1982

Facing page: Sibylle Fendt, young gamer at a 48-hour LAN party in Berlin, from *No Sleep Before I Die*, 2005



From top: Claire Hentschker, 'Avatar Above The Sea' and 'Driver On The Highway' from *GTA Image Average Series*, 2017

The video-game screen is a special kind of screen. It acts like a mirror in a hall of mirrors, distorting and transforming us. But it's also a portal. On the other side of the screen, we become avatars: we can explore digital landscapes, stare at pixel-perfect computer-generated sunsets and take selfies of our in-game selves. The screen is both a window and door between the two worlds in which the gamer lives.

Video games became a dominant cultural force in the late 1970s, with *Space Invaders* and later *Pac-Man* populating the screens of arcade parlours. These arcades, with their coin-operated machines, created new spaces for people to gather, laying the foundations for a gaming subculture with its own terms and norms. The documentary photographer Ira Nowinski captured these spaces and their inhabitants in the San Francisco Bay Area in his series *Bay Area Video Arcades* from 1981-82. It was a time when multiplayer games were still played in a shared physical space, before they became virtual and networked.

The 1990s saw the rise of so-called LAN parties, where hundreds of enthusiasts set up local networks of computers in order to spend days gaming together. In 2005, the German photographer Sibylle Fendt documented one party in Berlin over the course of two nights in her series *No Sleep Before I Die*. It shows an alternative social space at a time when internet accessibility was not what it is now, and when today's competitive and co-operative multiplayer games were beginning to emerge.

Since then, the game screen has become ubiquitous, mutating in dimension and resolution and taking over the intimate space of our pockets as well as the public space of the street. In his project *Kinshasa vs Akihabara* (2011), Giovanni Fredi photographed video-game players in the Democratic Republic of the Congo and Japan, juxtaposing two very different gaming cultures. In Kinshasa, he found well-established gaming communities in poor settlements, despite erratic electricity. "Someone had found a way to power a console with a home-made generator or by connecting to a lamppost in the street (hacking the system, so to speak)," he writes. "[These ►



Name: Choi Seang Rak
 Born: 1971
 Occupation: Academic
 Location: Seoul, South Korea
 Average hours per week in-game: 8
 Avatar name: Uroo Ahs
 Avatar created: 2004
 Game played: *Lineage II*
 Server name: Fehyshar
 Game style: Dwarf warsmith
 Character level: 59
 Special abilities: craft weapons, whirlwind in battle

Robbie Cooper, *Alter Ego*, 2003-06



Angela Washko, a still from *The Council on Gender Sensitivity and Behavioral Awareness in World of Warcraft*, 2012



Roc Herms, 'Mission Row Police Station, Los Santos', from *Study of Perspective*, GTA V (2015)



Kent Sheely, '#1: Capa', *World War II Redux*, 2009

NORMANDY, FRANCE. JUNE 6TH, 1944. AMERICAN TROOPS LANDING ON OMAHA BEACH. D-DAY. ROBERT CAPA INTERNATIONAL CENTER OF PHOTOGRAPHY/MAGNUM PHOTOS

◀ kids] invented their own arcades: improvised, built with wood and truck tarpaulins scattered among the labyrinthine alleys.”

In Tokyo, Fredi photographed players with handheld consoles. Gathered around WiFi hotspots they are, in his words, “alone together”, networked yet isolated. In this way, the game screen divides and unites us, negotiating separation and intimacy. It shapes new forms of togetherness - and of isolation.

Gamers have multiple identities. With the rise of photorealistic computer graphics, they are increasingly able to control and adapt the digital versions of themselves. Robbie Cooper’s *Alter Ego* series (2003-06) shows screenshots of 3D avatars and photographs of their human counterparts side by side. The distance between the two suggests the emotional possibilities opened up by games, which allow people to redefine themselves and live out their aspirations in a virtual realm.

In order to portray the world of a game from the inside, some artists and photographers are abandoning their cameras altogether in favour of screenshotting. In *The Council on Gender Sensitivity and Behavioral Awareness in World of Warcraft* (2012), Angela Washko explores issues of sexism, inclusion and diversity in the online communities of *World of Warcraft*, the multiplayer role-playing game that has millions of active participants around the world. Instead of following the objectives of the game, the artist engaged other players in discussions about how their virtual communities address women and how they respond to the word “feminism”.

Aided by today’s photorealistic game graphics, artists have also started documenting their in-game avatars making political statements, with results that are increasingly indistinguishable from photographs of the “real” physical world. Playing the game *Grand Theft Auto V*, Roc Herms re-enacts Ai Weiwei’s photography series *Study of Perspective* (1995-2003), in which the Chinese artist gave the middle finger to landmarks including the Eiffel Tower, St Mark’s Cathedral and Tiananmen Square, all shot from his ▶



Giovanni Fredi, stills from *Kinshasa Vs Akihabara*, 2011

'The game screen divides
and unites us, negotiating
separation and intimacy.
It shapes new forms of
togetherness - and isolation'

◀ point of view so that his arm dominates the foreground. Herms' images do the same, seen from the point of view of his *Grand Theft Auto* avatar. Using this universal sign of political rebellion, the artist takes aim at symbols of power such as the American flag in the Los Angeles-inspired city of the game.

Some artists have even modified video games, opening up the files and changing the code to shape their visual elements and restage iconic photographs, as in Kent Sheely's *World War II Redux* (2009), which uses elements from the game *Day of Defeat 2*. Sheely carefully recreates iconic images from the second world war, including Robert Capa's photograph of the Omaha beach landing on D-Day.

The uncanny similarity between the two not only reveals the high quality of the graphics being developed by the games industry but also reminds us of its close connection to the military. Early video games were created by moonlighting developers in labs focused on US military projects. Conflict-simulation games are used to train soldiers, and military drones are operated remotely, through a distance that becomes scarily close to the simulated killing of fictional game characters.

Today, as in the arcades of the 1970s, gaming is both an active and a spectator sport. Live streaming and YouTube videos document players' progress and millions of people watch others gaming on online platforms such as Twitch. In Claire Hentschker's *GTA Image Average Series* (2017), she aggregates and combines hours of footage of gameplay taken from YouTube, turning it into romantic, layered portraits.

We have moved from one side of the screen to the other, and seen communities of gamers separated and brought closer together. It's hard to predict where games will take us next but it's already becoming difficult to draw the line between the two sides of the screen. **FT**

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Marco De Mutiis is digital curator at Fotomuseum Winterthur, Switzerland; fotomuseum.ch

GAMING

– Tom Faber



ILLUSTRATION BY MATTHIAS SEIFARTH

was eight when I first tried to make myself in a video game. I was playing *The Sims* and, despite contending with blocky hairstyles and painful 1990s fashions, was thrilled by my first creation: myself as a young adult, a digital projection 12 years into the future.

My adult life turned out to be rather boring. *The Sims* tends to funnel players into a generic suburban existence – I got an office job, a partner and a couple of friends who were soon avoiding me. At eight, I was role playing an Ikea catalogue version of an adult life. But when I got bored, I'd start again, trying on possible futures like outfits. Twenty years later, I have long outgrown *The Sims* but I still find that in every game I play, I make some version of myself.

While television and films offer passive narrative experiences, in games your actions change the story – making you both storyteller and spectator. This offers a unique depth of immersion, further enhanced in games where you customise your character.

The digital proxy is known as an avatar, a word drawn from the Hindu term for the physical incarnation of a god in the mortal

realm. This derivation hints at the power virtual worlds offer; here, anyone can be omnipotent.

At 14, when I bought *World of Warcraft*, I was at the most confusing point in my life; unhappy with the way I looked and unsure why I didn't fit in at school. I fell deeply into this online role-playing game, which, at its prime, had 12 million subscribers. With my first character, Ptolemy the gnome mage, I was no longer trying to depict myself accurately, as in *The Sims*. Instead, I projected a version of myself that was free of adolescent burdens. Ptolemy was powerful, self-assured and, most importantly, had an expansive social group who appreciated him for his wit and kindness. I started a guild of heroes that numbered 300 members, who I (mostly) treated with benevolence. When something major happened in my real life, my guild-mates would be the first to hear about it.

In my later teens, I was feeling a little better about myself and switched from my clumsy gnome to an elegant elven priestess (male gamers have a historic fascination with role-playing female characters). When my social life



'When my social life finally kicked into gear, I left *World of Warcraft* behind. But I brought from it a new-found confidence'

finally kicked into gear, I left the game behind. But I brought from it a new-found confidence and perhaps other transferable skills: multitasking, conflict resolution, potion making...


As I grew up, games grew with me. Sprawling, open-world adventures unfurled as technology allowed, revelling in dense lore and questions of morality. Today, the characters I create don't always resemble me but I recognise that each embodies some aspect of

myself. Even when voyages take me to wastelands decimated by nuclear winter or the furthest reaches of the galaxy, my digital self is unable to leave my real self behind.

This becomes particularly apparent when I'm presented with a moral choice: I find it impossible to be the bad guy. I refuse to cut off the power supply to a remote settlement for personal gain. Though I know the collection of pixels won't truly suffer, I feel painfully responsible for the hardscrabble populations of those frontier towns. Sometimes I wonder if I could learn from the scrupulous morality of my gaming selves. Perhaps this would be easier if in real life, as in games, you were always rewarded for doing the right thing.

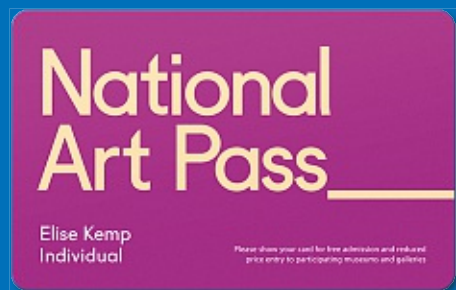
Today, opportunities to create your own character abound: in countless new video games, via Nintendo's Mii avatars and even iPhone's Memojiis. We can use these to experiment on our real selves, to rewrite our scripts. Disabled players of online simulation *Second Life* created virtual ability groups to play sports they never could in reality. Young gamers who are questioning their gender identity experiment on their bodies in the safety of a fantasy world, where their choices aren't judged by society and can be reversed at the press of a button. Most curiously, a report on PlayStation players in Baghdad's gaming cafés found they favoured war games with levels set in Iraq, where they could suspend reality and play as US soldiers "liberating" their hometown.

Of course, games aren't all about self-knowledge. Primarily, they offer fun and escape. Many players log in every day just to solve a few puzzles or shoot baddies. But in every game you also make choices that tell you about yourself.

Creating and controlling a character is a continuous act of self-expression, and nowhere is the border between the self and screen more porous than when playing a game. When you finish playing for the day and turn off the console, in the depthless dark of the screen you only ever see a reflection of yourself. 

Tom Faber writes a gaming column for the FT

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Jancis Robinson Wine

Some resolutions for 2020

Drink more wine.

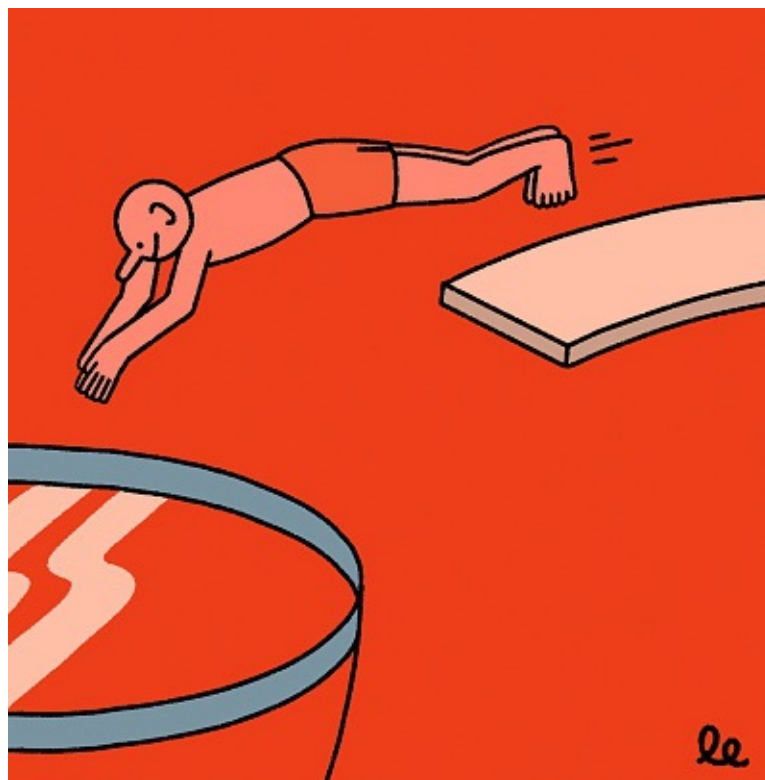
Since I taste many thousands of wines each year, you might think this an impossibility but there is a massive difference between tasting (work) and drinking (pleasure). Like many proud owners of a cellarful of fine wine, I am not emptying it nearly fast enough. We need to ask ourselves which special occasion are we saving it for? When could be better than now? The bottles can always be replaced. Do we really want to go to our cremation leaving so much libation?

Try more natural wines, with an open mind.

As I wrote in June, the natural-wine phenomenon is horribly polarising. And far too many of those who criticise wine calling itself “natural” have tasted hardly any examples. Or tasted a handful and been put off by their perceived faults. I’m a bit more open-minded than this and always delighted when I learn that a “conventional” wine producer is experimenting with new techniques. Bravo Guillaume d’Angerville of Volnay, for instance, who has made his first orange wine at Domaine du Pélican in the Jura. Still, I am guilty of shying away from the off-piste section of a restaurant wine list. I hereby resolve to be more adventurous.

Try to stamp out the term “natural wine”.

The most unfortunate thing about the natural-wine movement is the name, because it suggests that any other wine must be unnatural. I rather like the term I came across recently in Australia: “lo-fi winemaking”. In fact, all but the most industrial producers - those that cluster on the bottom shelves of supermarkets - have been continually reducing their use of agrochemicals in the vineyard and additions in the winery, including the sulphur that many naturalistas abhor. I hope that the two extremes of wine production will continue



As imagined by Leon Edler

to move closer together so that an even greater proportion of wine is well made (it’s already very high). And I pray that all wine producers become aware of their effects on the planet.

Be more aware of true sustainability.

Sustainability is today’s buzzword. In wine, we tend to focus on transitions to organic and

biodynamic viticulture but we need to be much, much more holistic. Not just awareness of how much energy is used in vineyards and cellars but also capturing the carbon dioxide given off by all fermentations, recycling and minimising water use. Waterfootprint.org claims that 109 litres of water are used to produce and deliver a single glass of wine into your hand. This may be



an exaggeration but water shortages in many key wine-producing regions must be a concern. And, like most agricultural workers, vineyard labourers are often itinerant and almost always poorly paid, a fact that we wine lovers tend to skim over. We have to wonder how long “hand-picked” will be regarded as a positive attribute.

Rap knuckles over heavy bottles.

Talking of sustainability, it was rather shocking when Jackson Family Estates, a particularly green international wine producer, conducted a thorough audit of its activities, and found that a good third of its carbon footprint came from the production and

‘I am guilty of shying away from the off-piste section of a wine list. I hereby resolve to be more adventurous’

transportation of glass bottles. The heavier they are, the more wasteful they are. I started a campaign against bodybuilder bottles as long ago as 2006 but they persist, especially in Argentina and parts of southern Europe. Some wine producers even go to the trouble of importing empty bottles that weigh almost a kilo from the other side of the world. Shame on them.

We probably need to face the fact that bottles are an unnecessary luxury for inexpensive wines designed to be drunk young and be more tolerant of alternative packaging.

Be even more sanctimonious over packaging of samples sent to me.

On the same theme, I always prefer those submitting wine samples not to use non-recyclable, annoying, sticky polystyrene packaging. But some shippers go to the trouble of unpacking bottles, which have been carefully packed in one of ▶

◀ the many safe cardboard packages available for wine bottles today, and putting them into polystyrene-lined boxes. Down with them too.

Explore eastern Europe.

So much money has been invested in eastern Europe over the past few years, I really want to catch up with the results.

Ask even more questions.

My FT predecessor Edmund Penning-Rowse taught me never to be ashamed of ignorance. What sound advice.

'So much money has been invested in eastern Europe recently, I really want to catch up with the results'

Write slightly more enthusiastic tasting notes.

My tasting notes tend to be a stream of consciousness aimed at wine drinkers rather than nice quotes that could be of use to those who make and sell wine. But I do realise that a little more gush might not go amiss.

Smile more often.

At tastings, I feel so impelled to taste as many wines as possible that I can look horribly grim. Speaking of which...

Less work, more perk.

A very personal resolution this, but as someone who has declined

many an alluring invitation during my 44 years writing about wine on the basis that I was too busy writing about wine, I think the time has come to depend a bit more on the wonderful team we have amassed at JancisRobinson.com so that I can take advantage of opportunities to travel, taste, dine and enjoy the company of the generally extremely congenial and interesting people who populate the world of wine.

Indeed, I have taken this advice to heart to such an extent that my diary for the first half of this year is already chock-a-block. This is partly because during the two years it took to update the *World Atlas of Wine* for its latest, eighth edition, I wasn't able to leave my desk nearly as often as I would have liked. One "problem" is that the website has such great specialists in Italy, Spain and Germany that I don't have too many excuses to voyage there. But while I am healthy enough to travel at will, I intend to take maximum advantage, while not, of course, ignoring England's wines.

The only fly in this ointment is my carbon footprint. Living on an island - and being short of time - limits the extent to which one is encouraged to explore wine regions by rail, but it would help enormously if rail fares were not almost routinely more expensive than airfares. Can't something be done about this? **FT**

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More columns at ft.com/jancis-robinson

MY ADDRESSES — BARBADOS

STUART RALSTON, CHEF-PATRON



I spent two-and-a-half years as executive chef at the Sandy Lane Hotel in Barbados. Here are my favourite local jaunts on the island:

— **Surfers' Café** by Oistin Bay is a delightful spot for breakfast. Grab one of the tables that hang over the beach and order the grilled *mahi-mahi* seasoned with blackened spices. At night, there's live music.

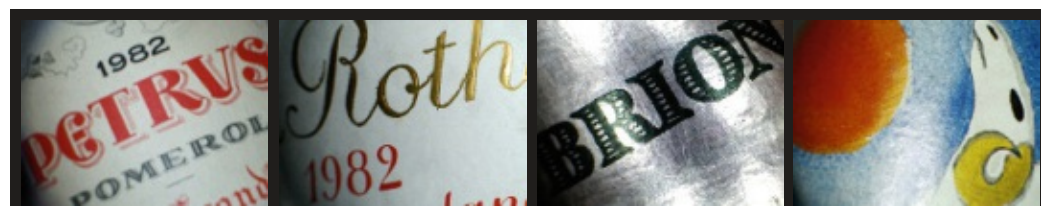
— Head to **Fire Brick Oven** near the Warrens shopping complex for the best pizza (above right) on the island. There's usually a long queue but you can text your order ahead of time.

— For traditional Bajan food, try **The Village Bar** in Lemon Arbour, which only serves local dishes. Think pudding and souse - a popular Saturday lunch on the island. The "pudding" is steamed sweet potato served alongside pickled pork. The macaroni pie and fried flying fish are also popular - but be careful with the hot sauce.

— Every time I'm in Barbados, I go to **Ju Ju's** in Hometown. It's a shack-style bar with just enough room for 20-25 people. Find a table on the beach and feel the water by your feet. Try a fish cutte (a fried fillet on a salt-bread bun) accompanied by a Banks beer for the perfect lazy afternoon.

— If you're in Bridgetown, go to **Lobster Alive** (above left). Scuba divers catch massive lobsters in the Grenadines and these are flown to Barbados in a small private plane. Live lobsters are served with chips and garlic butter. The Sunday lunch, accompanied by live jazz, is super-popular.

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Stuart Ralston is chef-patron at Aizle and Noto in Edinburgh; notoedinburgh.co.uk, aizle.co.uk



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FTWeekend

Restaurants

Tim Hayward



THE SIMONE SEAFOOD PLATTER; THE ROOFTOP RESTAURANT OFFERS MAGICAL VIEWS OF THE CITY

Seabird, London

Many years ago, in a previous life, I used to wear a suit and work at a strange and venal corporation. There was little glamour in the life of a drone but I found one secret retreat. At the end of a day of awfulness I would go to a particularly unfashionable hotel, hop in the lift and emerge into a world of smoked glass, fake gold and sweeping views over the city. The place was revoltingly lugubrious with a grand piano sunk into the floor, playing elevator hits to a clientele of dead-eyed international losers but, for the price of a poorly made martini, I could feel like a master of the universe. It was a kind of magic.

I still love a rooftop restaurant with unreasonable zeal so it is fortunate that Seabird, which I am about to recommend highly, is worthy.

The Hoxton Hotel (confusingly, in Southwark) is a new building that seems, from the outside, to have taken the architectural details of a modest dockside warehouse and stretched them upwards. On the top floor they've placed a room with ridiculously

beautiful views, a smartly ironic modern version of fake gold bling and an astonishingly good seafood restaurant.

It is my eternal curse that I can't handle oysters but I can spot a top-notch raw bar when I see one so I ordered a few razor clams which arrived spanking fresh, sliced into chunks and lightly dressed in something citrusy. They may have wriggled.

This felt like a promising start to a meal, so I followed rapidly with a plate of clams, steamed and served in their own broth. It is common to use coriander as a sprinkled seasoning but, in this case, it was added in sufficient quantity to qualify as a vegetable. This was an education, I freely admit. Who knew that the strangely soapy and overused herb could be so shockingly fresh, so fragrant and fulfilling when applied with even more enthusiasm than usual?

It was clear by this point that the kitchen could not just be trusted with good fish but could perform wonderfully, so I ordered a whole John Dory, quite simply seasoned and grilled. It doesn't sound like much but, trust me, it's a test of fiendish difficulty. John Dory is a big, reassuringly expensive fish with a broad, flat



'I've had John Dory comprehensively buggered up by fine restaurants all over the world. Here though it was... brilliant is too weak a word'

Seabird
The Rooftop,
The Hoxton, Southwark,
40 Blackfriars Road,
London SE1 8PB
020 7903 3050
seabirdlondon.com
Starters £5-£18
Main courses £16-£26

body containing substantial slabs of meat, which I've had comprehensively buggered by fine restaurants all over the world. A second too long on the grill bars and it's like chewing your way through your nan's slipper. Here though, it was... brilliant is too weak a word. There are rare dishes in this business that make one stop, take pause and genuinely question one's life choices. I'm getting older. I cannot live for ever. Do I really want to spend a single one of my remaining meals not eating a perfectly grilled John Dory, dressed with a piquant *mojo verde*, drinking in the gloriously bedizened night-scape of London?

There was a side dish of particular note, of *papas arrugadas*. These are very small potatoes boiled in sea water until everything but a rime of salt has evaporated. They come with a spicy little dipping number but, to be honest, it's superfluous... they need no more than the diamond dusting for perfection.

I think I was ready to call it a day after the fish but then the waiter sidled over, wiggled his moustache and offered a kind of Sophie's choice between Manchego cheesecake and Bola de Berlim... doughnut things pumped full of salted caramel, *crema catalana* and some kind of chocolate-and-hazelnut balm. I was compelled to order both, only regretting that I had to turn down a very pleasant and virtuous sounding lemon granita due to a personal dietary restriction associated with healthy things.

Seabird is so fresh out of its packing that it still smells new. It's obvious that it's been planned, designed and conceptualised down to the last flower arrangement and teaspoon. They have chosen - they would doubtless say "curated" - a great menu and have obviously got all the skills to deliver it well... which really helps but, far, far more important to me, they have somehow managed to achieve proper, old-school rooftop-restaurant magic, straight out of the traps. **FT**

Tim Hayward is winner of the Restaurant Writing Award at the Guild of Food Writers Awards 2019.

tim.hayward@ft.com;

@TimHayward



I'D BE LOST WITHOUT...

Oats

Chef and author *Alex Hely-Hutchinson* loves them so much she opened a restaurant dedicated to porridge – but, she writes, oats are glorious in any guise. Illustration by *Anna Bu Kliewer*

Every morning when I wake up, I crave oats. It might just be habit, but I suspect it has more to do with the nostalgia that they evoke.

I grew up in a big family and the main objective at breakfast was to get us all fed – and fed well. Into the pan the oats would go, with twice as much water and a good pinch of sea salt. The porridge would simmer over a medium heat until it reached the right consistency. Whoever was up would be served, while late arrivals could add a little more water and stir it through over the heat. It was a moment of collective pause before we all headed off in our separate directions.

Over the years, I neglected oats and porridge in favour of pastries, and it wasn't until I moved to Copenhagen for a year that

I rediscovered them. Beginning my day with a bowl of warm oats became vital because, no matter how cold or dark it was, the only way to travel was by bicycle. Here, I began to realise how comforting and sustaining they could be. As before, I often shared my morning sustenance with my housemate – after all, when have you ever made a single portion of porridge?

The Danes understand porridge properly. They use ancient grains, such as spelt and barley, as well as oats, and they tend to top it off with fresh fruit and fragrant Nordic spices. A bowl of grains

'There were couples in New York who lived solely off porridge so as to be able to pay their rent'

might seem like simple fare but the Danes never underestimate it.

There was something slightly different about the oats in Copenhagen – they were coarsely milled, with little done to them in the production process. So I bought myself an oat flaker, proceeded to source oat groats and started milling my own. These were particularly lovely – sweet, nutty and extra-creamy – but my flaker would often pack in, so I had to find oats that I was happy to have pre-flaked.

When I opened 26 Grains, I never anticipated the kind of reaction we would get. There were lovers and haters of porridge, but there were also stories: couples in New York who lived solely off porridge so as to be able to pay their rent; old memories of grandparents eating salty porridge with a good helping of cream; young siblings making plum jams and apple compotes to accompany their oats.

Oats mean more than just porridge, of course. They can make delicious pastry for tarts and pies. In the guise of oatcakes, they make good friends with cheese and black pepper; and they can be wonderfully enjoyable as a crust for fish. They are certainly a wonder food in terms of their nutritional properties and, best of all, they are quick, simple and perfectly delightful as a bowl of porridge. **FT**

Alex Hely-Hutchinson is founder of 26 Grains and Stoney Street in London; 26grains.com

Games



A Round on the Links by James Walton

All the answers here are linked in some way. Once you've spotted the link, any you didn't know the first time around should become easier.

1. The medical condition adhesive capsulitis is more commonly known as what – because of the joint it affects?

2. What long-standing nickname did the Labour MP Stanley Clinton-Davis give to the then Tory minister for aerospace in the early 1970s?

3. In his last solo race, who won bronze in the men's 100m at the 2017 athletics world championships?

4. In a Walter Scott poem, what line precedes, "When first we practise to deceive"?

5. Which David Bowie (above) studio album contains "The Jean Genie" and "Drive-In Saturday"?



6. In 2011, which French fashion designer – and creator of the little black dress – was revealed to have been a Nazi spy during the war?

7. Bernard Marx is the main character in which Aldous Huxley novel?

8. Which Ralph Vaughan Williams work was first performed in

Gloucester cathedral in 1910?

9. What are described as "veteran" if they were made before 1914, and "vintage" if they were made between 1918 and 1930?

10. In the Ancient World, what name was given to the promontories on either side of the straits of Gibraltar?

The Picture Round by James Walton

Who or what do these pictures add up to?



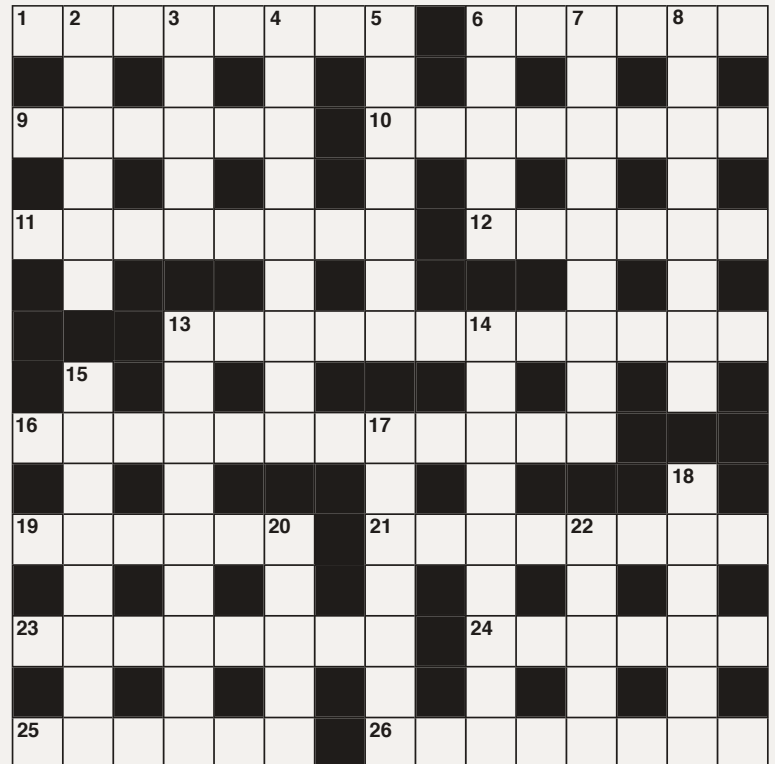
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Answers page 6

The Crossword No 469. Set by Aldhelm



The Across clues are straightforward, while the Down clues are cryptic.

ACROSS

- 1 Senior officers (3, 5)
- 6 Sieve (6)
- 9 Home for swine (6)
- 10 Recuperation (8)
- 11 Dissipate in liquid (8)
- 12 Stupor (6)
- 13 Weak spot (8, 4)
- 16 Backed, guaranteed (12)
- 19 Tension (6)
- 21 Private (8)
- 23 Article's title (8)
- 24 Bear witness (6)
- 25 Justly (6)
- 26 Job with little work (8)

DOWN

- 2 Source of gear that's popular (6)
- 3 Footing bill, initially, for a little relative (5)
- 4 It's handy having wool spun haphazardly (3, 3, 3)
- 5 It's bizarre for the French to go off course when climbing with us up ahead (7)
- 6 Side takes energy, in fact (5)
- 7 Horribly evil one in comparison to monster (9)
- 8 Improved herd with nice changes (8)
- 13 Great leader's strangely relaxed around one (9)
- 14 Consider internet faulty without first character (9)

- 15 Violently hate a man as something detested (8)
- 17 Journalist self identifies in order to have a good effect (7)
- 18 Emperor and king – one is with the Queen (6)
- 20 Vocal is only edited when left out (5)
- 22 Choose ice, mostly, for drinks dispenser (5)

Solution to Crossword No 468





GILLIAN TETT

PARTING SHOT

Democracy still works – but only if we work at it

Ten years ago Seth Flaxman, then a student at the Harvard Kennedy School of Government, became seriously worried about the state of American democracy. At the time, he was in a minority.

The US had just elected its first African-American president and Washington was abuzz with Barack Obama’s promises of hope and change. The country seemed to be overcoming its racist past. The first decade of the 21st century had been imbued with political optimism.

“It was a lonely time to be telling people that our democracy wasn’t working,” says Flaxman, who had become alarmed by low turnout in a number of polls in this period. So much so that when he co-founded a digital platform to make it easier for people to vote, it struggled to gain attention from would-be funders. “I would go to these social enterprise business competitions and lose them all – a lot of people during the Obama era thought that democracy was this thing on autopilot.”

No longer. These days, Flaxman, 34, is one of the darlings of the political funding scene, raising some \$17m – and rising – while working from an achingly trendy warehouse in Brooklyn, filled with other start-ups. His project, Democracy Works, has also become an inadvertent symbol of what is both terrifying and hopeful about America’s political world as it heads for this year’s crucial election – and into the next decade.

On the depressing side of the equation, the fact that the platform was launched at all demonstrates some of the challenges dogging the US system. Most notably, because the country is based on a federal structure that gives states the responsibility to organise votes, its electoral processes tend to be desperately fragmented.

This makes it harder to ensure that everyone has an easy, and fair, chance to vote, not least because voting records are often kept on old-fashioned paper rather than digitally. “Our systems are 18th-century systems and the states are notoriously underfunded, so there is no organisation in this country which has an incentive to help all voters vote in all elections,” explains Flaxman, who says the inspiration to create Democracy Works came in 2010, when he was “walking down the street and saw a sandwich board showing it was time for [local Boston-area] elections – but it was too late to vote”.

Flaxman argues that “low turnout undermines democracy – it creates a power vacuum and a weak [political] immune system”. As a consequence, it has become easier for extremist groups such as the alt-right to have a loud voice – and for them to dominate election campaigns, either by using social-media manipulation or a lot of money (or both).

However, on the optimistic side of the ledger, Flaxman believes that if he, and others, can raise

the participation rate, they might be able to create a healthier climate. “With high participation, it changes incentives for all politicians to be focused on serving the public and not just a slice of voters... and it is harder to have disinformation campaigns work... or change the outcome by just putting in a lot of money.”

Moreover, Democracy Works has already signed up seven million voters who can now use a free online tool called TurboVote to find out

‘We badly need tangible actions and innovations to meet the challenges facing democracy in the west’

where their nearest polling station is, when they need to vote and how to use postal voting systems. Flaxman hopes to raise this total to 10 million next year. A group of tech companies are likely to add their muscle to the cause; indeed, groups such as Snap and Facebook have already been involved in campaigns.

Now, a cynic might point out that 10 million is still a fraction of the 153 million or so Americans who were registered to vote in 2018. Moreover, the people using the site tend to skew towards the young and educated. They are not necessarily part of the poor and minority groups who tend to be most excluded from the democratic process. And it is yet to be shown whether, as Flaxman believes, higher participation rates can truly guard against manipulation and extremism.

However, even if Flaxman’s project is a work in progress, the bigger point is that it is not enough to simply moan about the state of democracy in the western world; we badly need tangible actions and innovations to meet the challenges too. One option is to use technology (as Democracy Works is doing) but there are also more old-fashioned ways to boost civic fabric.

Two years ago, manufacturer Levi Strauss joined forces with fellow clothing company Patagonia and hundreds of other groups to launch a “time to vote” campaign, which gives employees time off on big polling days to cast their ballots. Chip Bergh, CEO of Levi, told the Aspen Institute’s Ideas Festival last summer that he considered this a core “part of corporate responsibility”, and other CEOs, including Dan Schulman of PayPal, have agreed. More educational establishments are jumping aboard too: about 150 colleges have already embraced Democracy Works.

By itself, this will not change the world. But it is one small step in the right direction; and a challenge to all of us to make a resolution this new year to step up and find practical steps to defend democracy – rather than take it for granted or wail about its demise. **FT**

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gillian.tett@ft.com; [@gilliantett](#)



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