



Magazine
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SHIFT



‘SHIFT’

“As we approach the end of a decade, it is clear that our world has been through tumultuous changes. ‘SHIFT’ intends to capture that, considering the transformation of situations and perspectives that have culminated in innumerable events. From fashion to technology, we are continuously navigating shifts as they converge and generate responses on both a personal and political level. The following articles present a series of insightful contemplations and criticisms along the theme of ‘SHIFT’, condemning the present, reflecting on the past and preempting the future of our university and beyond.

A common theme throughout this edition is that the decisions we make can span far beyond our immediate environment, more now than ever before. Whether this is via our choices as a consumer or through the power of protest, we have an impact. As the next generation, we have a duty to educate ourselves about the challenges facing us so we may inspire and control a shift of our own.

While uncertainty is inevitable, a shift is never final and will always present the opportunity for growth and progression.

We are very proud to say that 100% of the content in this magazine - writing, art, and photography - is sourced from UCL students. Thank you to all the writers, editors, artists and photographers who helped us put the magazine together!

We hope you enjoy reading the 724th issue of Pi Magazine.”

**- Kinzah Khan & Eleanor Lee
Pi Magazine, Editors-in-Chief 2019-20**

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'This photograph resulted from a seeming mistake. Through a failure to roll the film, three separate moments became superimposed onto one another, morphing into one. Doing so captured a shift in perception, position and time' - Stan Majewski, UCL Photography Society



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*spelling rectified from print edition. Apologies for this error.

Term 1 RoundUp: News to Know

UCL Launches Smoke-Free Scheme

Think of a university in London. Chances are that 'clean air' isn't the phrase that pops into your head. But UCL is aiming to achieve just that with the introduction of its smoke-free policy. Implemented on the 23rd September, the scheme builds on UCL's existing policies, which includes a ban on smoking, possession of lit cigarettes, and e-cigarettes in areas occupied by UCL staff, students, and visitors, as well as in UCL vehicles.

The new scheme goes further, extending the area where smoking is prohibited to all of UCL, including outdoor spaces. This means that Malet Place, Foster Court, the Main Quad, South Quad, and the Wilkins Terrace are now 'smoke-free zones'. Previously, people were allowed to smoke right outside of entrances and open windows. Now, smokers must be at least five metres away from buildings before they light up a cigarette. The policy also aims to strengthen existing support for staff and students at UCL who want to quit smoking.

by Tharani Ahillan

Growing Campaigns to End Outsourcing at UCL

Campaigns to bring outsourced UCL staff, such as cleaners, porters and security officers, back in-house have been making headway. The campaigns are organised by two trade unions: the long established, primarily public-sector union, UNISON, which has a recognition agreement with the university, and the smaller IWGB, whose base is made up of independent gig-economy workers. UNISON held a protest in the Main Quad on 17th October, at which workers shared their experiences and UNISON's General Secretary, Dave Prentis, spoke about how the union is winning similar battles across the public sector.

Following the protest, it was announced on 21st October that the university had committed to giving outsourced workers parity of terms with direct employees by August 2021, with the earliest improvement for workers being an increase in their holiday allowance at the end of this year.

After receiving a dismissive response from the university administration (the university has negotiated

only with UNISON) the IWGB campaign '#EndOutsourcingNow' began balloting their members (numbering around 300) on whether to call a strike to demand that outsourcing companies give staff the same rights as UCL's employees. On 6th November, IWGB announced the biggest strike of outsourced workers in the history of UK higher education, after an overwhelming vote in favour of strike action, which took place on 19th November.

by Aliy Faisal

Phineas Bar gets a New Look

For years, Phineas bar has been a staple for UCL students, who regularly flock to it in search of a cheap pint and the famous strawberry toilet. Following its closure in March 2019 for refurbishment, the bar recently reopened with a brand new look, which has evoked a range of responses from students.

Generally, the lighting seems to be an issue for students, who say the bar feels 'institutional' and suggest making it darker. But not all impressions of the new face of Phineas are negative: some like the new chairs, while others appreciate having more space and floors that aren't sticky.

The bar's mascot, Phineas, has also been a source of controversy. During refurbishment, it was discovered that the statue had a historical connection to the Boer War, which prompted the Students' Union to question whether a reminder of British colonialism is suitable for a university that tries to promote diversity and inclusiveness. An online consultation was opened to allow students to express their opinions on the issue.

by Maggie Durovcikova

Extinction Rebellion Protests Continue

Extinction Rebellion (XR), the climate protest group whose aim is to force governments and companies into acting to combat global warming, has been taking over London. A group of UCL students attended the XR Students Rise Up meeting and debate on 11th October, hosted at one of Extinction Rebellion's new camps on Lambeth Council land near Vauxhall station.



Although turnout was low, those present at the meeting were not concerned, remarking that UCL XR is still young and is not yet a cohesive organisation. They agreed that they would need to do more to raise awareness among students. Other XR members were highly positive about the assembly, remarking that it had been “incredibly successful” and that in the past two months they had “managed to facilitate 25 more [university] groups”.

There was substantial presence of both police and community officers, but their actions were limited to simply patrolling the campsite. On 14th October, Metropolitan Police declared that all XR protests in London are illegal. The ban was lifted four days later, but on 6th of November it was ruled unlawful by the high court.

by Tom Cross

UCL Pledges Net Zero Carbon Emissions by 2030

In October, UCL launched a new Sustainability Strategy, announcing that it will divest from fossil fuels by the end of 2019. The Strategy for Sustainable UCL 2019-24 targets a 40% reduction in energy consumption by 2024, when all UCL buildings will be net zero carbon and energy supply will be from renewable sources exclusively.

These targets underpin one of the strategy’s three signature campaigns, ‘Positive Climate.’ This campaign also includes promises to review UCL’s portfolio investments (prioritising funds which have a positive environmental impact), and to ensure catering for events and hospitality is entirely vegetarian.

Among the other six headline commitments, the strategy promises that every student will have the opportunity to study and be involved with sustainability, citing induction programmes centring on sustainability, and a new cross-disciplinary climate change module.

by Joe Kenelm

More Brexit Trouble

On Saturday 19th October, over a million protesters stretched out from Trafalgar Square to the Houses of Parliament to speak out in favour of a People’s Vote on Brexit, in one of the largest demonstrations in British history. Three years after the initial Brexit referendum, the new deal proposed by PM Boris Johnson was the

UK Government’s fourth attempt to formulate the conditions under which Britain’s divorce from the European Union will take place.

As lawmakers voted on the Letwin Amendment in the House of Commons, the rain-soaked protesters on the other side of the Parliament walls had their eyes glued to a large screen, live-streaming the outcome of the vote. The announcement that the amendment had passed by 322 votes to 306 aroused deafening cheering as the chant ‘we demand a People’s Vote’ rippled through the crowd.

The later rejection of this deal has led the EU to grant the government another three-month extension until January 2020 to find a solution to the deadlock. The question of the second referendum will be a key issue in the campaign leading up to the snap election being held on the 12th December.

by Daria Mosolova

Inclusive Curriculum: Establishing a Baseline

The Inclusive Curriculum Project, headed by Dr Cathy Elliott, was run over the summer of 2019 by a diverse group of students from UCL’s Political Science department. Content analysis carried out on a random sample of the School of Public Policy’s reading lists aimed to find out who was not being heard in the scholarship we read.

They found that just 7% of the readings assigned are authored by scholars of colour and a mere 24% are written by female academics. This is neither representative of the general UK population, and even less representative of UCL’s student body.

In recent years there has been a student-led movement for a more inclusive university curriculum. Recognition of how scholarship is dominated by white men is a starting point, but must be justified with empirical evidence as a benchmark to start increasing the diversity of voices we hear.

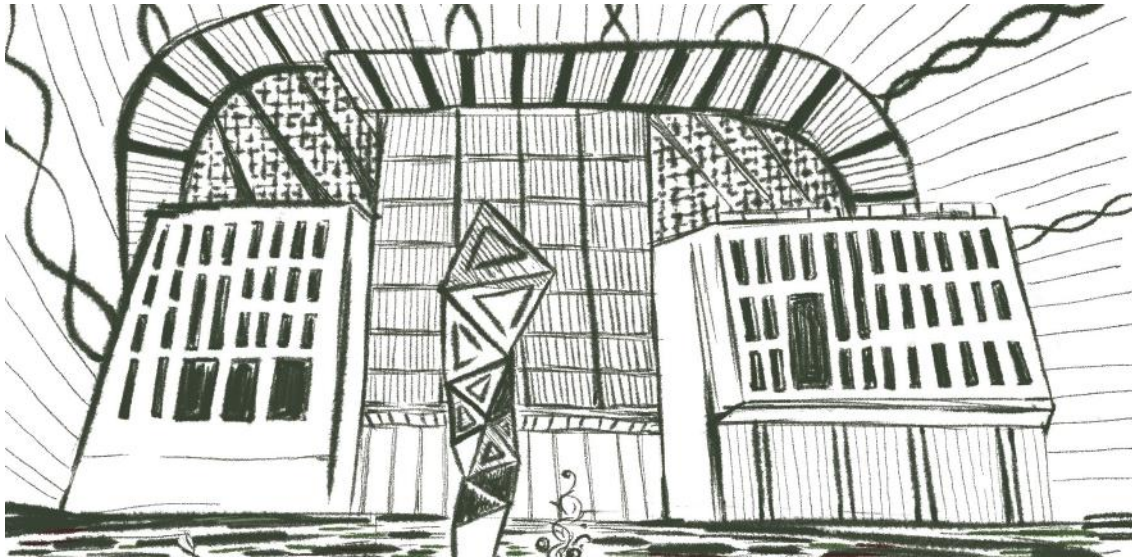
The Inclusive Curriculum researchers will be presenting their findings as part of Decolonising the Curriculum Week 2019 to suggest how more voices can be heard.

by Varun Vassanth

Art by Christelle Troost



Confronting Eugenics: UCL Unveils Introductory Programme for New Students



UCL will be rolling out an interactive, online orientation site for all new students starting from 2020 onwards. The 'Introductory Programme' (IP) aims to familiarise incoming freshers with UCL's history, architecture and icons, instilling a sense of belonging in them.

The website, still in its pilot phase, features four main sections: UCL Origins, Discovery at UCL, Global London, and Future UCL (which is currently a work-in-progress).

The IP is filled with engaging multimedia elements such as a quiz to see if you could be admitted to Oxbridge in the early 19th century, and a comparison between an old photo of the Gustave Tuck Lecture Theatre and its current appearance. Students can also watch academics discuss scientific research or current students talking about their favourite spots on campus.

Four departments have been invited to experience the pilot IP, and students that filled out a form with their feedback may choose to attend the IP feedback workshop, held on 23 October, to discuss their responses in person. The workshop was hosted by the IP's academic lead Dr. Tim Beasley-Murray, programme manager Viki Burnage, senior teaching fellow Dr. Silvia Colaiacomo, and Steve Rowett from digital education. While only a handful of students attended the feedback workshop, there was a productive, intensive two hour long discussion on all aspects of the programme and how it could be improved.

UCL Origins

The feedback survey showed that a majority of students enjoyed the IP as a whole. Many students especially liked its interactive quizzes and interesting content of UCL Origins including the comparison of UCL's architecture to that of Oxbridge and what the differences symbolise. However, workshop attendees and first-year student Stanislava Dimitrova raised the point that a trigger warning should be included in the 'Jeremy Bentham DNA sequencing' video. She described the video to show Bentham's head, the sudden appearance of which Dimitrova found gruesome and shocking.

Discovery at UCL

The Discovery at UCL section attempts to address the mixed legacy of scientific research at UCL, briefly describing ethical violations by various scientists. Artefacts in this section also include the Kathleen Lonsdale Building, the Grant Museum, and two objects that are yet to be decided. However, the page describing ethical violations in scientific research is more sparse in text than other sections. This is especially significant as the history of eugenics is not addressed. This historical link stems from the influence of Francis Galton, the Victorian scientist who coined the term 'eugenics', and Karl Pearson, the influential statistician. Academic lead Tim Beasley-Murray explained that the process of producing this material must be put on hold until the Commission of Inquiry into the History of Eugenics at UCL has concluded its investigation. This should take place by the end of the year.

Beasley-Murray said, “The material we have currently produced is not right, and it’s challenging to address the difficulty of Galton and Pearson’s legacy... Pearson’s valuable contribution to statistics [at UCL] is wrapped up in his racist eugenics view, but this should still be talked about.”

Global London

This was not the only controversial issue surrounding race that the IP is yet to address. Under Global London, the section ‘Black Bloomsbury’ touches on black history at UCL, celebrating the achievements as well as drawing attention to the racism faced by black



students. It also discusses UCL’s initiative of ‘Liberating the Curriculum’ for BAME students and women.

The Committee raised the question “would non-BAME students be interested in the ‘Black Bloomsbury’ content?” Students responded that there would still be some interest. The subsequent discussion between the Committee and students questioned if ‘Black Bloomsbury’ was diverse and inclusive enough. The reaction was mixed: some believed it should remain the way it is, while others felt that black history should be embedded throughout the site, just like women’s contributions were. However, master’s student Innocent Aforlabi-Logoh said: “If the content in ‘Black Bloomsbury’ were spread into other sections and [didn’t] have its own section, then its prominence would go down.”

Other concerns about diversity included the lack of BAME academics in videos, as well as the claim that there should be more LGBTQ+ presence in the IP. Currently, there is none. The IP Committee also said that the visual and hearing accessibility of the website will be improved.

Suggested Content for Global London

Since the fourth object for the ‘Global London’ theme is currently undecided, the IP Committee invited students to brainstorm with them for a suitable idea. Some initial suggestions they had were: the statues in the Bloomsbury gardens (e.g. Gandhi statue), Czechoslovakia’s first president Tomáš Garrigue Masaryk, or an exploration of how migration shaped UCL and London. Most students in the workshop voted for migration as the fourth piece of content since it fits the broader theme and is still a relevant topic today.

Future UCL

Finally, the ‘Future UCL’ theme is still a work-in-progress. Dr. Beasley-Murray said that the IP Committee hoped to follow up the online orientation with an activity that would engage students once they arrived at UCL. One suggestion put forward in the discussion was a scavenger hunt that would help students become more familiar with UCL’s campus by seeing the objects in real life after having read about it online.

The IP Committee hopes to host another feedback session when the website has been updated, and address the incorporation of eugenics history after the inquiry has concluded.

UCL is shifting towards educating future students about the university’s rich history and culture. New and returning students alike should explore the programme when it is completed to see what they have yet to discover about UCL.

*by Vanessa Tsao
Art by Bella Peng*

A Shift to Sustainability

In 2015, 179 states signed the Paris Agreement, pledging to cut down carbon emissions in an attempt to limit the rise of global temperatures to 1.5 °C. Three years later, the UN's Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) released a special report, estimating that in order to reach the goal, there is an urgent need to cut down the global human-caused emissions of carbon dioxide. The measure takes place relative to the levels recorded in 2010, aiming to cut emissions by 45% by 2030, striving to reach 'net zero' by 2050.

Although the agreement apparently signals an increasing willingness of governments to act on global warming, the world is currently not on track to meet the objectives decided upon in the Agreement. Russia, the world's fourth biggest greenhouse polluter, only ratified the Agreement in 2019, while the US formally started the process to withdraw its commitments to the international community, early in November.

The growing anxiety over the impact of climate change has prompted the emergence of environmental activist groups, such as Extinction Rebellion and School Strike for the Climate movement led by the 16-year-old Swedish environmentalist Greta Thunberg. 2018 saw a series of global demonstrations, where activists put pressure on politicians to prioritise objectives to cut down carbon emissions. With the upcoming elections in both the UK and USA, this rhetoric continues, with activists demanding their voices be heard.

The May 2019 environmental strikes in the UK saw over a million citizens protest political inaction. The protestors won this battle as the UK Government sided with the demonstrators, proclaiming a state of climate emergency. The declaration was voted on, following a motion

tabled by Labour leader Jeremy Corbyn, who claimed it was a 'huge step forward'. Despite Corbyn's positivity, this status does not legally compel the government to act.

In response to the declaration, UCL (among other UK institutions) is adopting new sustainability standards. 2019 was the fourth consecutive year that UCL was awarded a First Class honours status in the People & Planet rankings. It reached 18th place out of 154 universities in the University 'Green' League. Moreover, a reduction of carbon emissions by 14% (relative to 2005) has been achieved through the construction of energy efficient buildings and engagement programmes like the Easter Switch Off, encouraging students to switch off non-essential electrical items before the Easter weekend.

UCL Provost Professor Michael Arthur stated in 2017 that "the student momentum has inspired the Board to collectively consider the repercussions of the climate crisis, and how we urgently need to tackle its various technicalities." Furthermore, UCL's Climate Action Society (CAS) reports increasing student involvement with environmental societies, reflected in CAS's membership purchases increasing from 600 in 2018 to over 800 in 2019. The society's mailing list has now reached over 7000 subscribers from across the UK!

Student opinion appears to be changing as efforts are made by various student bodies to raise awareness about the climate emergency. After attending CAS' flagship event, the Sustainability Symposium in October, Felipe Riquelme – an Energy Systems and Data Analytics MSc student – told Pi: "I do not yet consider myself an environmentalist; I think I need to learn more." Following the Symposium, Riquelme also said he would look into new ways of learning about sustainability and changing some of his habits. Switching to a vegetarian diet was one of the changes he hoped to make.

Aliza Ayaz, founder of CAS, believes these shifting student views on environmentalism can go a long way in changing university policy: "we made it clear that from now on, policies would have to engage student opinion. It should have consultation sessions so we can translate the principles of climate science into powerful campaigns. As a result, we were able to develop the Positive Climate, Wild Bloomsbury and The Loop," Ayaz said referring to the three signature campaigns of the newly released 'Strategy for a Sustainable UCL 2019-2024'. In accordance with the Strategy, the university pledged a campus free from single-use plastic, a 20% reduction of waste per person and net zero carbon emissions by 2030.

The implementation of new environmental schemes on campus comes as a result of a collaborative process between the UCL Board and the students. "Students have been a key part of developing the strate-



gy and many of the ideas have been drawn from this student engagement,” said Richard Jackson, Sustainability Director at UCL, adding that the programme is now moving into an implementation phase with a number of projects already being taken forward. “It is our intention that full implementation plans for all of the Strategy commitments will be drawn up and approval sought from the UCL Sustainability Steering Group, [which is] chaired by Prof Geraint Rees, with staff and student representation,” explained Jackson.

UCL hopes to achieve the target of further reducing energy consumption by 40% by 2024 by focusing on energy efficient building construction, which includes investment in insulation as well as energy efficient equipment on campus. The University’s emphasis on ‘green architecture’ was exemplified in the recently completed Student Centre, which has been awarded the BREEAM Outstanding rating, making it one of 320 buildings in the world to achieve this status.

Alongside this, UCL’s Sustainability Team is looking for ways to source renewable energy, which might include investment in renewable energy schemes such as wind turbines.

According to Jackson, “much of the investment in sustainability initiatives has been integrated into existing budgets and expenditure. For example, the investment in new renewable energy was included in project costs rather than part of a separate ‘sustainability’ budget. The costs of the ‘Ditch the Disposable’ campaign have been included in catering costs.” Finally, Jackson adds that “UCL has also established a sustainability capital budget for investment

in energy efficiency improvements and greening projects.”

The strategy also includes the goal for UCL to become a ‘climate-positive investor’ by reviewing their portfolio investments and prioritising investment in the funds which have a positive environmental impact. Until 2019, UCL held around £16 million in fossil fuel shares, notably in Royal Dutch Shell. The decision to divest entirely from fossil companies was made in October following a seven-year protest campaign by the group Fossil Free UCL.

Unfortunately, UCL’s unwillingness to divest for the past seven years has led to scepticism among



the student population of the university’s approach to sustainability. “I think sustainability tends to be used as a bit of a buzzword by UCL to green-wash itself, and is fuelled by an ulterior motive of expanding the university’s capital. Whilst branding themselves as sustainable, UCL have also held corporate events supporting fossil fuel companies, who are largely the culprits of climate breakdown,” said Ruby Harrop, a Fossil Free UCL campaigner. In other words, there is a long way to go.

Nevertheless, signs of reconciliation have emerged as UCL has started to push sustainability up on its

list of priorities. Jackson confirmed: “We have had a lot of support for the new Strategy. We have been bolder and more ambitious with the commitments which we have set as we [as a society] face some major challenges. We have not encountered any clashes and hope that we can use the Strategy and our commitments as a way to bring together our whole community to find effective solutions.”

Alongside some of the changes made on campus, some UCL societies have extended their reach to the level of national politics. “We meet MPs [and] regularly attend parliamentary sessions to debate momentum on renewables, clean energy and outsourcing vegan supplies. We offer consultation [and] help them organise events in their boroughs, stated Ayaz. Currently, CAS is planning to lead a workshop on integrating climate resilience in urban development at the World Urban Forum in Abu Dhabi in 2020.

Overall, there is a growing trend of involvement in environmental action both on a national level and among university students and staff. With more scientific findings corroborating the current climate crisis and increasing collaboration between UCL’s Board and student body, the university is seizing the opportunity to enable positive change, helping tackle the global climate emergency and making environmental and social sustainability an everyday norm. The shift from an uneducated, unsustainable past is gradually bringing UCL’s community into a new phase, defined by environmental responsibility.

by Daria Mosolova



The World has Shifted, but has Our Mindset?

How many of the world's one-year-old children today have been vaccinated? How many girls in low income countries across the world complete fifth grade? How many people in the world have access to electricity?

These are just a few examples of the questions used by Hans Rosling, author of the critically acclaimed book 'Factfulness', to challenge a wide variety of professionals and the general public. Men and women, ranging from scientists to UN economists, have received those questions in a multiple-choice format to test their knowledge of the condition of modern progress. Shockingly, and quite sadly, the vast majority scored worse than chimpanzees would if they answered randomly. In fact, most participants saw the world in a far more negative state than reality.

Coming back to the questions, 80% of children are vaccinated, 60% of girls in low-income countries complete fifth grade, and 80% of people have some access to electricity. That doesn't sound so bad. Are you surprised? I know I definitely was, together with a large proportion of people who have taken Rosling's test. It is truly astonishing how little we seem to actually know about the current state of the world.

You might be wondering – why does this matter? Isn't it better that we are underestimating rather than

overestimating our global development? In a sense, maybe yes. The overly negative view of the world may serve as a very strong incentive to continue working on and investing in the resolution of issues such as poverty, inequality, or environmental degradation, as their acuteness is stressed. At the same time, however, the ever-present negativity might be mitigating our efforts by spreading a sense of desperation and helplessness. Human beings often possess a simple outlook; when they don't see progress, they lose hope in the process of improvement. Rosling's research sees only 5% of Americans correctly identifying that world poverty has been halved in the past 20 years. 95% believe that it has either remained the same or even doubled. These numbers are extremely alarming: if we believe that charity work and global projects are not contributing to poverty reduction, do we abandon them, thus risking a descent into a pit where we believe that nothing can be done? Of course not! In order to move even further forwards in tackling all kinds of issues and making the world a better place, it is crucial to first see the world in its truest colours. And a good place to start is recognising why we feel so pessimistic about the present and the future, despite overwhelming empirical evidence.

The boom of media, especially in recent years of

social media, has transformed our knowledge and perspective of the world. After all, it has never been easier to stay on track with what is going on in each corner of the world. While this quick and efficient dissemination of information offers great platforms to draw attention to important issues, and is allowing virtually all of us to partake in solving them, it is also a great source of dramatisation and underestimation of achievement. Inherently, news stories sell better when they broadcast something outrageous, alarming or even scary. Creating a sense of panic is what generates the farthest-reaching and fastest-spreading headlines. The incentive to report on something that is sad, something that is only getting worse, and something we should be worried about, is higher than producing a congratulatory article about how we have managed to increase literacy over a span of 20 years. On top of this, Rosling's testing has shown that only 20% of US media members and an astonishing 6% of EU media members were able to pick the correct answer for how many children are vaccinated against measles. This shows that the incentive to depict progress is not only lower, but that reporters themselves are unaware of it taking place. It is no surprise then that readers are blind to much of our global improvements themselves.

Such reporting, full of pessimistic prognoses and worrisome statistics, has naturally seeped into our lives. It is something we were reminded of during school and throughout our childhood. We were consistently shown countries in Africa as examples of poverty, not to mention our parents using the infamous line, "there are children in the world that have nothing to eat and you are going to waste all this food." Subconsciously, in the back of our minds, we have therefore created an image of low income countries as places where children are starving, women are being abused, and there is hardly any water or food, not to mention access to education. While I am not

saying that all of these issues have been eradicated and that poverty is no longer a concern, I do believe that we have curated a very narrow view of low income countries. We are overlooking the fact that, even though a country may struggle with issues surrounding poverty, they may have also accomplished a lot, as many countries in Africa have done so in the past few decades. Indeed, populations are becoming increasingly educated, healthier, and wealthier. This must be acknowledged no matter how small the steps are.

What do these accomplishments look like in numbers? In 1820, only 12% of the world was literate, in 2016, only 14% remained illiterate and this number has steadily decreased by 4-5% every 5 years. Amazing success. While Africa still holds 9 out of 10 deaths by malaria, it has made tremendous progress by almost halving the number of infected people in only 15 years. Access to improved water sources has increased from 76% in 1991 to 91% in 2015.

All of these figures are great examples of achievement, and there are plenty more similar statistics mapping out positive trends. Ultimately, this proves that our collective endeavours are working, and that the world is shifting towards the better. This is exactly the message I'm hoping to streamline – the world has gone through an incredible development in the past 10 years alone, and is constantly improving. Yes, there are still people experiencing extreme poverty, children going to bed hungry, people suffering from serious diseases and yes, it is important to be aware of that. But it is equally necessary to be aware of how far we have managed to come, in order to motivate us in the future. Indeed, the world has shifted and now it is time for our mindsets to adjust as well so that we are able to keep the train of development going.

by Tatiana Škultétyová
Photography by Freya Parkinson



When Knowledge is Lost, What Should We Know?

The Economist recently held its annual essay competition for young people, posing the question of which fundamental changes should be undertaken in the fight against climate change. After a winner was chosen and announced, the magazine conducted an experiment. It fed the same question and a brief description of the writing task into an AI algorithm called GPT-2, which also produced an essay on the topic. The result, which can be found on The Economist's website, is astonishing.

In around 400 words, this 'robot-contester' discussed, elaborated on, and put forth practical solutions to one of the most pressing global issues. Reading the final product is a mind-blowing experience, and the quality of this text hardly resembles what would be expected from a machine. The level of analysis and the depth of criticism are especially astonishing given that we usually accredit these abilities as key discriminators between human and artificial intelligence. When we are done with reading the AI-written essay, we are left with a disturbing question: what will humans be left with once technology is capable of challenging our defining abilities?

If it consoles you a bit, judges of the actual 'Open Future' youth essay competition reviewed the AI-Essay with the same parameters applied to the human candi-

dates, and awarded it a much lower score. Hopefully that will console you a bit. Indeed, most judges rejected the essay due to lack of originality, poor construction of arguments, an excessive amount of rhetorical questions, and an imbalanced structure. Unfortunately, this only means that the matter is much more serious than it appears. If we have reached a point where we hope to find proof of the inferiority of AI's performance, it only implies that we have - consciously or not - entered into a competition with technology, where our upper-hand is no longer guaranteed. Human beings are facing one of the greatest collective challenges that we have ever encountered: finding our place in reality.

We have always assumed our superiority, claiming that this position is derived from our predominance in 'knowing.' The capacity to rationalise the world and the universe according to what we deem to be 'true' is dependent on our ability to obtain, dissect, and make sense of knowledge. Galileo Galilei, most famously, opposed the Christian vision of the Earth being located at the centre of the universe. For many, this was a crucial and revolutionary discovery, yet the Church tried to suppress it. This is precisely because it would have radically changed our self-understanding. In short, our species would no longer be at the centre of everything, but just

an additional outcome of creation. If this revelation marked a heavy blow to human consciousness, the consequences were still relatively contained. It was thanks to Galileo and his human capacities that this dramatic revision of understanding took place. It was a triumph of the human mind, and it confirmed the role of our species as the great orderer of all things. What the 21st century's AI revolution means is that our supposed superiority as knowledge-possessing and rational champions might soon be lost.

In his '21 Lessons for the 21st Century,' Yuval Harari writes, 'if we invest too much in developing AI and too little in developing hu-



man consciousness, the very sophisticated artificial intelligence of computers might only serve to empower the natural stupidity (sic) of humans.' It is a bold claim, but, as unpalatable as it might seem, it points in the right direction. Human consciousness is, ultimately, what we all rely on when it comes to making sense of the world around us. Our organisation and engagement with society is based on what we think we are and what we perceive we are capable of.

Already, in the 5th century BC, Greek philosopher Protagoras was somehow anticipating Harari's thoughts when he claimed that 'of all things the measure is Man, of

the things that are, that they are, and of the things that are not, that they are not.' We build social structures, moral codes, economies, religions and much more on the (nearly dogmatic) assumption that we are legitimised in doing so. We believe to possess, by virtue of our superior perceptive capacities, the right to order the world according to our image. While this has been accepted as truth for much of the past, this idea of infallibility has increasingly come under scrutiny over the past decades.

Returning to the topic of climate change, we feel responsible for the planet we inhabit and how we treat it. This is largely because we place

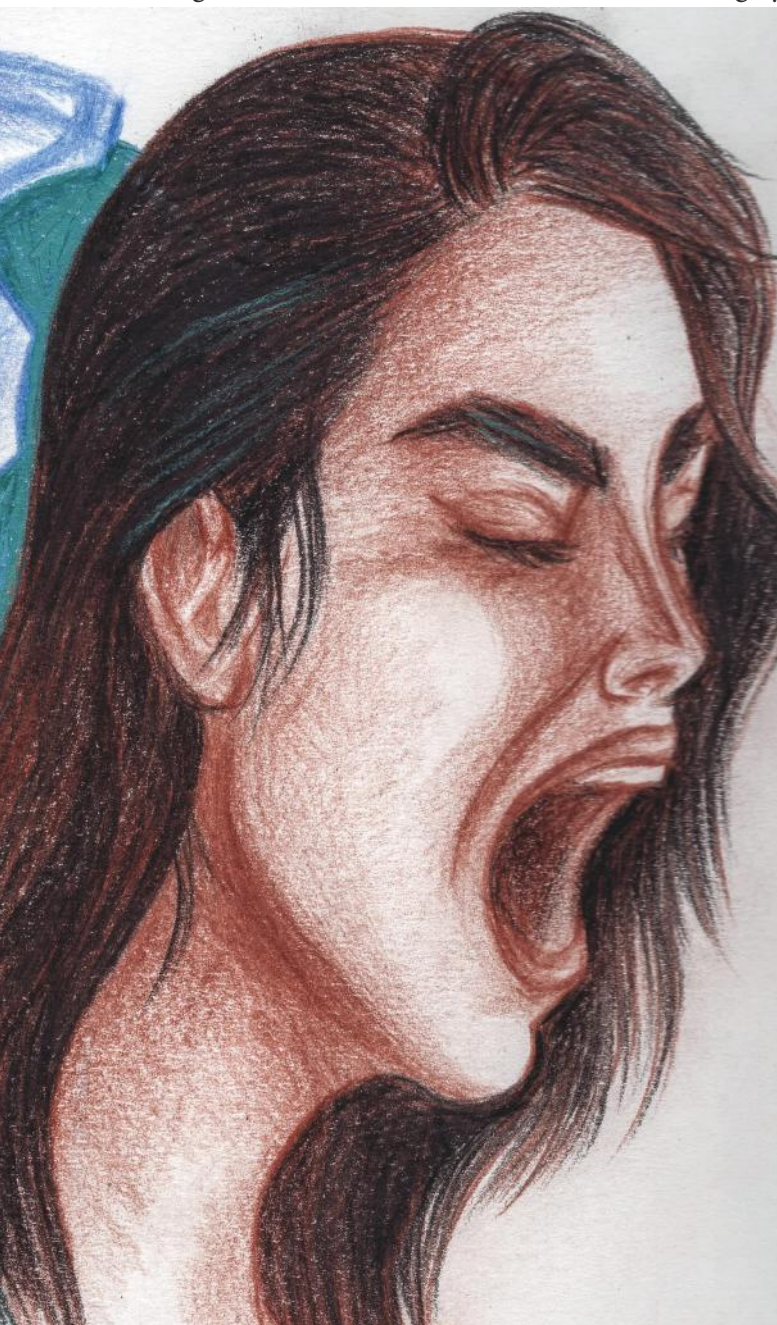
ourselves in such a high position, bearing responsibility for its survival. Vegans and vegetarians commonly argue that we sit at the top of a hierarchy, constructed by us, and therefore have the innate ability to make ethical choices. As a result, we have the power to be proactive and should make it our duty to do so. These and other environmentally-oriented ideas are rooted in a special way of making sense of our species. Arguments like these would lose ground under their feet if humans were to forfeit their current standing, and were instead

"Human beings are facing one of the greatest collective challenges our species has ever encountered: finding our place in reality."

shifted to the position of a passive bystander. Have dogs ever been responsible for the deeds of their masters? Their masters were, for sure.

So, in light of incipient change, we should ask who is going to be the master, and why. We should prioritise re-discovery of what being human actually means. Who are we? What are we here for? If algorithms are already arguing and 'thinking' the same way we do (even if, at least currently, with inferior results), then we should pause for a moment and seriously consider what we are useful for. After Galileo, the (Western) world was forced to undertake a similar project, and settled for a knowledge-based conception of humanity, in which science and rationality triumphed. We cannot rely on these assumptions anymore. If humanity is going to be lost, we should start looking for ways in which to guide it out of this maze.

**by Niccolò Fantini
Art by Olivia Bessant**



Is Russia Finally Waking up to Climate Change?

The belated ratification of the Paris Climate Agreement might signal a welcome shift in Russia's environmental policy. With warming happening 2.5 times faster in Russia than elsewhere, wildfires ravaging Siberia this summer, and melting Arctic ice releasing carbon locked in the permafrost even faster than predicted, the world's fourth most polluting nation is aching for change. Better late than never, right?

The decision to ratify has been met with scepticism, and some fear that this is simply a new, greener façade for business to keep going as usual. The countries that endorse the Paris climate accord are permitted to set their own targets. Russia has pledged to reduce emissions to 25-30% below 1990 levels by 2030. However, in 2017, Russia's emissions were 32% lower than in 1990, meaning that Russia can actually continue polluting on a grand scale whilst still meeting its targets. Government regulation of emissions, carbon quotas and carbon taxes initially proposed by the Ministry of Economic Development as potential ways of implementing the Paris agreement have all been rejected by officials, who instead propose relying on "voluntary measures".

"Tragic predictions are becoming a reality," says Michael Yulkin, director of the Environmental Investment Centre. "They do not plan and never did plan to really do anything about it, and do not understand why they should".

'Project Ecology', which launched last year with the professed goal of improving environmental protection by 2024 on ten fronts, is the most comprehensive document to date outlining environmental strategy. Not unlike Russia's ratification of the Paris Agreement, Project Ecology sets non-binding goals that contain loopholes, allowing practices to remain the same. For instance, as Alexei Yaroshenko of Greenpeace Russia suspects, the lack of a universal measure for wildfire damage means that targets outlined in the document can appear to be met if the measuring system is tweaked. The project has been branded "pointless" by experts, and even the Minister of Natural Resources and the Environment admitted that it was "prepared in a hurry".

Consistent malpractice is perpetuated by the lack of transparency or industry accountability that plagues attempts to tackle environmental problems in Russia. No open access environmental database exists since the trade secret protection law allows com-

panies not to disclose information about emissions. Furthermore, as Sofia Villo's analysis of Russia's major oil producer reveals, environmental illiteracy is systemic among senior management and the lack of fiscal incentives to abide by environmental regulations provides no impetus for this to change. Putin himself has previously denied that global warming is caused by humans, and according to Dmitry Peskov, Kremlin Press Secretary, his position remains unchanged, despite Russia's ratification of the Paris climate accord.

It is, admittedly, inconvenient to believe in anthropogenic climate change when Russia's economy

"They do not plan and never did plan to really do anything about it, and do not understand why they should."

and geopolitical capital rely heavily on polluting industries, which are set to profit from the very warming they have engendered. In 2018, a container ship crossed the Arctic sea for the first time in history due to a record low in sea ice levels. Seeing not a warning, but an opportunity, Putin subsequently announced a 6-year plan to boost shipping traffic by 80 million tons on what has been dubbed the "Northern Sea Route". The route shortens the distance between Europe and East Asia by 10-15 days compared to traditional shipping routes via the Suez Canal. As China's natural gas consumption is projected to triple between 2018-2050, Russia is looking at a lucrative opportunity to consolidate its place among competitors in the Arctic.

This summer, Vostok Coal, which aims to supply 19 million tons of coal to transport along the route by 2024, built the Chaika and Severny coal terminals in Maduza Bay. The bay was a protected territory until the boundary of the Arctic National Park was redrawn by the federal government to facilitate the project. This came after Vostok Coal was fined 600 million rubles (£7.3 million) as a result of an environmental audit uncovering its illegal mining practices that endanger the vulnerable Arctic tundra.

Nevertheless, there are some tell-tale signs that Russia is feeling somewhat challenged by international climate efforts, which helps to explain why the Paris Agreement has finally been agreed to. Some of

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Russia's largest companies lost up to one third of their international investors last year, driven by 'greener demand.' Enel Russia, the biggest foreign-owned utilities company operating in the country, is responding to the challenge with divestment, recently selling its biggest coal-burning power station, Reftinskaya. The sale reduces its revenues and installed generation capacity in the short term, but its improved ESG score increases the company's valuation. Enel is also rapidly investing in Russian renewable energy, which is projected to constitute 45% of the company's earnings within 5 years.

The extremely negative portrayal of Extinction Rebellion and Greta Thunberg by state media may betray a fear of Russians' growing eco-consciousness. Commentator Mikhail Leontiev has called Greta "a sick girl who is as stupid as she is naïve...the prophet of a new totalitarian wave, which is something like radical Islam for the post-Christian West". After Vasily Vlasov, deputy of the State Duma invited the young eco-activist to come and speak, TASS, the state news agency, swiftly revoked the invitation, noting that he did not have the authority to extend it in the first place.

Encouragingly, Vlasov is one of many rebellious voices both in and out of the Russian government, as Russian universities and independent news agencies are almost unanimously critical of the current state of environmental policy. It seems that the "new totalitarian wave" is lapping at Putin's heels.

by Lizzy Nidz

Art by Jennifer Oguguo



Humanising the Refugee Crisis: How Tutoring a Syrian Refugee Has Shifted my Worldview

When I signed up to the non-profit organisation ‘Opportutoring’ at UCL, a service providing English lessons for refugees via Skype, I did not anticipate the personal lessons I would take away from the experience. I was paired with a Syrian refugee living in Turkey, and within a couple of weeks I realised how oblivious I had been to the human implications of the Refugee Crisis: it had become just another ‘intellectual issue’ to be debated, without a human face.

Despite having grown up in different countries and cultures, our lessons allowed me to recognise the similarities between us. We navigate the world with a similar value system, based on beliefs rooted in equality, and a desire to make the world a more compassionate place. We spent our lessons talking and writing about our favourite books and movies, about our family lives and cultures. We developed his language skills, continually discovering common ground between us. The time I spent with him began to humanise the refugee crisis for me. Often, the impersonal debates around refugees present them as a ‘problem’, an ‘issue’ to be debated, as an ‘Other’ to us.

Then, about four months into our lessons, he told me that Syrian rights were being revoked in Turkey. Under this new policy, he would be sent back to Syria immediately if he was caught outside of the city that he initially registered in. He had been living in Turkey for five years and had built a life for himself. Within two months of Syrian rights being revoked, he was forced to return to the town he had registered in. What shocked me most was how quickly a life can be uprooted, without justification, explanation or consideration of the real-life ramifications for individuals.

In following the news coverage I was appalled that the policy change had evoked so little outrage. It became apparent to me that the Western world has be-

come so desensitised to the erosion of rights that the real-life consequences of such legislation are largely overlooked. How can two people, who navigate the world in such similar ways, can be valued so differently by virtue of their birthplace? It seems starkly

"How can two people who navigate the world in such similar ways be valued so differently by virtue of their birthplace? It seems starkly unjust to me."

unjust to me. Engaging with his struggle to live an ordinary life, while refugee voices are systematically silenced has fundamentally shifted my worldview.

The week of the policy change, he wrote a paragraph for me on the experience of living as a refugee. I wanted to provide a platform for his story in this article:

“Do you think there is a best place to live? Which kind of places do you think are the best to settle down in?”

Many people, when they are looking for the best place to live in, whether when retiring, going to school or looking for a fresh start, think about many factors which can impact their choice.

Some of these factors are: the size of the city, the climate, the culture and the outdoor life. Of course these factors are important when making the decision, but as always there is an exception.

The exception is people who have no other choice but to leave their home. People who are looking to stay alive. People who are looking for protection against death for themselves and their children, and from the crazy decisions of people who decided the war against other countries.

Syrian refugees don't care where they go after leaving their homes: escaping this dirty, crazy war, which has stolen their safety.

Syrian refugees don't care about the size of the city or town, the economy of that new place or even the climate...etc. They only care about safety. But what is happening is they discover that there is no place that provides what they need!

At the beginning of the crisis, many countries demonstrated their willingness to host refugees, encouraging Syrian refugees to think about leaving their homes and businesses to experience different ways of life in the hope of finding a new safe life.

But when they moved they discovered it was fake, most of the governments and people especially the nationalists stood against refugees and raised their voices to restrict the movement of refugees.

In Turkey, the government created a new rule last month asking Syrian refugees to go back to the cities where they registered when they came from Syria at the beginning. The cities are the southern cities of Turkey. Those poor (and small cities) can't provide for all of these Syrian refugees for sure, which in turn means there is no option but to go back to Syria.

All people are equal and should have the same rights. They should have the right to move and to live in places where they think could pro-



vide them with a better life. Being a refugee is not a crime, the crime is what refugees' face. The crime is this world, which is losing its humanity.

Since refugees didn't choose this crisis, everyone has to fight to protect them until they are able to go back to their land and live safely again."

The harsh reality of the refugee crisis has become apparent to me. It has heightened my awareness of my own privilege and the incredible strength of refugees in the face of adversity. But most importantly, tutoring has shown me the power in small acts of kindness. Contemporary problems can often feel insurmountable and many individuals feel powerless to facilitate real change. However, when we take the time to support others we breakdown the narrative that individual actions can't make a difference. For me, this experience has highlighted that, as a society, we need to adjust the way we look at refugees. We need a shift from viewing them as a collective, to seeing them as individuals.

To name them, is to acknowledge them. And I name my friend, Kamal - a man who believes, 'all people are equal and should have the same rights.'

by Lara Andrews

Photography by Isabella Tjalve

FoodTech Champions

Environmental awareness has grown exponentially since the 2015 Paris Climate Agreements. Each year, we become increasingly aware of a particular pressing issue. 2018 was the year of plastics, as images of beaches inundated the web, demonstrating the extent of our societies' waste disposal inefficacy. In 2019, we watched the heart breaking destruction of the Amazon rainforest.

What we fail to acknowledge is that the catalyst for both deforestation and waste is our model of consumption, in particular, the way we eat. Food systems contribute 21–37% of global greenhouse gas emission through the cumulative footprint of agriculture, transportation, and the retail industry. While each year we become more aware of the climate crisis, every day we participate in prolonging a destructive form of consumption. Climate targets are extended, natural disasters are on the rise and pollution peaks in major cities. In short, stagnation seems to prevail. While the EU's ban on Single Use Plastics is an example of political momentum, it lacks the transformative approach required. We have never been more aware of our own footprint, and yet we have never been more wasteful and sedentary in our approach to food.

How did we get here?

Our current model of agriculture grew out of a programme undertaken almost 70 years ago in Mexico. The project aimed to eliminate hunger by increasing food production — something it achieved through the heavy application of chemical fertilisers and agro-chemicals.

Numerous problems have resulted from this farming method, with danger to human health from pesticides, an industry in need of large quantities of oil and gas, and an unequal concentration of yields leading to unprecedented malnutrition and food waste.

We are trapped in a system where at least one third of all produced food is never eaten. Globally, 820 million people are undernourished and over 650 million people are obese. Arable land and ecosystems are disappearing and deforestation is at an all-time high. As the population grows to 10 billion by 2050 and environmental emergencies intensify, so does the risk of a food crisis.

Emerging technologies are offering tools to challenge

this outdated mode of production and consumption. FoodTech companies are transforming the food system and putting sustainability at the heart of this shift.

Agriculture Technology: Vertical Farming

New Jersey based Aerofarms is the champion of vertical farming, an agricultural method that grows crops layer by layer inside warehouses. This allows growers to use control factors such as data analysis, aeroponics, and high efficiency LED lighting, making the technique 400 times more productive per square foot than conventional agriculture.

Vertical farming has the potential to shift our approach to food production, due to its energy efficiency. Cultivation can take place all year-round and farms can operate in cities. Ultimately, this reduces emissions from transport and water use, while removing the need for pesticides.

Specialising in baby greens and herbs, Aerofarms sells its products to restaurants, schools, and multinationals. However, it is just one leader in a fast-growing global market. Closer to home, Waitrose's Ocado recently invested £17m in Jones Food, a vertical farm in Scunthorpe, in an effort to reduce the ecological footprint of its fruit and vegetables sales. Additionally, Growing Underground, a 7,000 square foot farm located 100 metres beneath Clapham High Street in London, provides salad to Marks & Spencer and Planet Organic.

One of agriculture's key challenges is how the two most precious resources — land and water — are conserved. Vertical farming offers the key to efficiency: with more consumer awareness and reduced energy costs, it is set to become a key player in agricultural sustainability.

Food Service: Too Good to Go

Too Good to Go has transformed the idea of online food services in an attempt to fight food waste. The concept is simple – on a Gumtree-like app, restaurants, hotels and supermarkets offer their leftovers at a reduced price. People can then collect a meal that would otherwise be thrown out. Too Good To Go is fighting a significant problem, with 1.9 million tonnes of food wasted each year in the UK alone. It is now present in

fourteen European countries and has 32,215 partners, growing by the day.

As an alternative to the now ubiquitous UberEats and Deliveroo, this app empowers consumers to tackle waste, and reminds us that food should not be seen as an unlimited commodity.

Food Science: Clean Meat

Deforestation rates in the Amazon are surging, largely due to our appetite for meat. In Brazil, the rainforest is being cleared to make way for soya to feed cattle. The ecological footprint of livestock production is enormous, representing 14.5% of total anthropogenic greenhouse gas emissions.

While the transition to a plant-based diet is on the rise, meat production and consumption increases every year. Aside from population growth, this comes from a growing middle class in many parts of the world, where meat has remained a luxury. Global meat production is set to double by 2050.

JUST Meat is exploring the potential of cultured meat, providing an alternative approach to production. They respect the sustainability objectives, human health, and animal welfare. The product is different to plant-based meat substitutes: cultured meat comes from in vitro cultivated animal cells. These grow on a plant-based nutrient recipe, essentially creating meat without any meat.

Although this still awaits governmental approval to become commercially available, it has the potential to reduce ecosystem destruction and end the slaughter of millions of animals.

Retail: Blockchain in supply chains

The last of these four technologies is particularly powerful, in that it could encourage ethical and sustainable production, transportation, and retail of food. The Blockchain is a series of fixed records of data with no central managing authority, bound together in a secure and entirely transparent system.

Provenance is a tech company based in Hackney, London, that provides a Blockchain software service to over 200 producers and retailers in the food and drinks industry. For example, its pilot project, in collaboration with Unilever and Sainsbury's, increased the transparency of a tea supply chain, from small-scale farmers in Malawi to supermarkets in the UK. In this framework, each 'block' of data corresponds to an individual or organisation — the collector, processor, or salesperson for example. These blocks are then tied together by the 'chain' — the journey of the tea from ground to cup.

In a sector that lacks transparency, this is an effective



way of ensuring that food has been produced in line with environmental objectives and human rights. French multinational Carrefour allows customers to scan a QR code on any product, taking them to a display of the Blockchain. This places the tools needed to check the origin and quality of a product in the consumer's hands.

Defining the Way We Approach Sustainability

Business as usual in the agriculture and food sector has ended. Unprecedented consumer awareness of climate change and environmental degradation has led to pressure on companies to become more responsible. However, the resulting multinationals' sustainability strategies have for the most part been limited to plastic straw bans and recycling endorsements. Poor progress considering the extent of our carbon footprint. The difference with FoodTech is that it does not adapt what already exists. It rethinks it. If a start-up decides to fight plastic pollution, it does not ban their use by 2025. It finds a way to avoid using the material altogether.

The aforementioned solutions show a determination to solve deep-rooted problems. Most of all, they encourage respect for nature, in an epoch where we can often forget the interdependencies between human existence and the natural environment.

"Every product has a story" is Provenance's motto. Let us take a more attentive approach to the way we consider food, and to the technological innovations being developed every day. An entrenched pessimism and fear of collapse will not produce the solutions needed to shape environmental sustainability.

**by Barnabé Colin
Photography by Freya Parkinson**



Solo

'Taken in the mountains surrounding the picturesque Lago di Garda in Italy. The clouds part momentarily to reveal a solitary figure looking over the vast expanse below' - Stan Majewski, UCL Photography Society



Pi X UCL PhotoSoc Competition

Mental Health in Retrospect

In the summer of 2019, UCL founded its own Institute of Mental Health. Shortly after, the NHS launched the 'Every Mind Matters' campaign. Though it may seem like a recent phenomenon, the history of mental health traces back to the earliest civilisations, often featuring the stark mistreatment and misunderstanding of patients. Fortunately, as our awareness of mental health has increased, significant progress has been made in understanding and treating it. However, there is a considerable way to go.

Mental illnesses were historically attributed to physiological problems and treated accordingly. Indeed, one of the earliest forms of surgery, 'trepanation' — a procedure in which a hole is made in the skull of a living person — is theorised to have been an ancient

the first to publish works against the persecution of witches in his 1563 book 'De Praestigiis Daemonum.' It is said to have been the first to use the term 'mentally ill' when describing those accused of witchcraft. 21st century physicians have now matched the symptoms shown by these 'witches' to neurological disorders, such as hysteria and epilepsy.

This widespread stigma informed the violent treatment of the mentally ill during the Middle Ages. Aiming to isolate those affected from the rest of society, this period saw a shift in responsibility of care from families to the newly built asylums. London's Bethlem asylum, better known as Bedlam, was one of the first, founded in 1247. Brutal 'treatments' were inflicted on patients, including hydrotherapy and the employment



This illustration is inspired by the short story "The Yellow Wallpaper" written by Charlotte Perkins Gilman. Gilman was a strong supporter of improving mental health awareness. She said "The Yellow Wallpaper" was "not intended to drive people crazy, but to save people from being driven crazy."

treatment for mental illnesses, at that time credited to evil spirits. Mesopotamian and Egyptian papyri detail what was later termed 'hysteria' by the Greeks: a mental illness caused by a 'wandering womb' preventing normal organ function. This was treated through use of attractive pleasant smells, and repulsive unpleasant ones to relocate the womb to the correct position. Prominent Greek physician, Hippocrates, attributed mental disorders to an imbalance in the four humours in the body: yellow bile, black bile, blood, and phlegm, corrected through bloodletting and purging. This theory remained part of mainstream science up until the 19th century, and was undoubtedly a stepping stone towards our current understanding of mental health.

By the 13th century, mentally ill people had begun to be persecuted as witches: they were forced to confess, then brutally punished through hanging or burning. Dutch physician, Johann Weyer, was one of

of mechanical restraints, such as straight jackets and manacles. As popularity increased and asylums filled up, these were techniques intended to control rather than to treat. Such asylums were common up until the turn of the 19th century, when George III's 'insanity' increased interest in mental illness. UCL itself played a large role in revolutionising the treatment of the mentally ill at this time: the Professor of Psychiatry, John Conolly, was instrumental in overturning the use of mechanical restraints in 1830. Later in the 19th century, Acts of Parliament were passed to improve conditions in asylums.

In the late 19th and early 20th century, physicians began to abandon the somatic view of mental illness due to increasing awareness of the psychology behind it. 20th century neurologist Sigmund Freud founded psychoanalysis, of which the core idea is that of the unconscious. Josef Breuer, Freud's mentor, shaped

these pivotal ideas through the introduction of ‘talking therapy.’ Through therapy, Breuer and Freud were able to match up stories and dreams told by Anna O, Breuer’s patient, with her physical symptoms, aiming to bring unconscious trauma into consciousness. Her gradual recovery marked a turning point in the understanding and treatment of mental illness, laying the foundation for Freud’s later theories. One such idea was that repressed trauma from childhood events is manifested as neuroses, buried in the unconscious mind. The treatment was to therefore make some of the unconscious conscious, so that a solution could be found. His techniques greatly influenced the development of modern forms of therapy, such as Cognitive Behavioural Therapy (CBT), which aims to help the patient understand their thought patterns. Though Freud’s ideas are controversial to many, there is no question that he shone a spotlight on mental health issues. The effects of this surge of interest in psychology was notable too at UCL, which became one of the first English universities to set up a psychological laboratory. In 1901, the British Psychological Society was founded.

Despite these leaps forwards, one form of particularly controversial treatment reached peak popularity during the 1940s and 1950s: electroshock therapy. This stemmed from the idea that certain disorders were antagonistic to epilepsy, and thus could be cured by the induction of seizures. Electroshock therapy frequently resulted in memory loss and brain damage, rarely yielding significant improvements in condition. This was prescribed overwhelmingly to women and vulnerable people, often without their consent. Following vilification in popular media, the treatment has been refined to electroconvulsive therapy, which is still—controversially—administered today.

In 1951, a new drug for tuberculosis called Isoniazid was given to patients in New York. Unexpectedly, there was a shift in the mood on the ward, from gloomy to cheerful. Only three years later, a patient with high blood pressure was prescribed Reserpine, leading to equally astounding lethargy and depression. This trend continued nationally, with suicidal patients being administered ECT to alleviate the terrible symptoms caused by the drug. These events were to change psychiatry forever. By the 1960s, scientists had discovered neurotransmitters, chemicals that carry signals between neurons. It was found that Isoniazid, the drug that improved the mood of patients, increased levels of the neurotransmitter, serotonin, while Reserpine did the opposite.

This discovery led to the development of the chemical imbalance theory,² proposing that depression was

due to a lack of serotonin in the brain. A new class of serotonin enhancing drugs called Selective Serotonin Reuptake Inhibitors (SSRIs) was created. The first and most famous of these drugs was Prozac, developed in 1974 and released some 10 years later. Drugs like Paxil and Zoloft were approved in the following decade, primarily to treat depression, anxiety, OCD, and PTSD. Practically all the drugs for mental illness used today work by regulating neurotransmitter levels. Similarities between the chemical imbalance theory and the humorism of the Ancient Greeks are certainly telling. But since then, advances in neuroscience have provided new outlets to explore.

The picture of mental illness is far more complex than we once thought. Since the 1970s, experiments testing the chemical imbalance theory have been consistently unreliable in showing a correlation between neurotransmitter levels and various forms of mental illness. In the 1980s, neuroplasticity, the idea that the brain is a constantly changing structure, revolutionised neuroscience and provided a new avenue for research. It has been proposed that SSRIs are so effective because they can improve neuroplasticity, possibly by increasing levels of Brain-Derived Neurotrophic Factor (BDNF), a chemical promoting the production of neurons in the brain.

Though there has been a vast improvement on historical practices, there is some concern that these drugs have become overused, with a simple prescription being an easy way to fix a complex problem. It’s clear that mental health issues can arise from emotionally stressful situations. Other approaches to treatment, such as counselling and Cognitive Behavioural Therapy, are emphasised as being equally important.

Despite this progress, there is still a long way to go in terms of removing the stigma around treating and talking about mental health. Research has also shown clear but complex intersectional racial and gender differences in the risk of developing mental health problems, and the likelihood of seeking and receiving treatment. Institutions such as UCL have a responsibility to provide better support to its students, who are often placed under immense psychological stress from all areas of life.

If you’d like to talk to someone in confidence about your mental health, UCL’s Student Support and Well-being team offer counselling sessions. Alternatively, there are many online services, including the Samaritans, NHS Choices’ Moodzone, and Students Against Depression.

**by Rebecca Daly and Matthew Bazley
Art by Hsin Liu***



**Spelling rectified from print edition. Apologies for this error*

Lingerie Wars: Victoria's Secret vs. Savage X Fenty

Glamorous. Iconic. Unattainable. These are some of the words that spring to mind when you hear the name Victoria's Secret. Perfectly sculpted bodies clad in skimpy sequined two pieces; flamboyant angel wings, legs that go on forever and heaps of lip gloss. A lingerie empire, Victoria's Secret invented fashion shows as we know them; star-studded spectacles designed to entertain. A sartorial masterpiece, the Victoria's Secret show is a pop-concert-cum-lingerie-extravaganza exhibiting a phantasmagorical display of feathered wings, diamond bras and fake tan. Top-tier musicians perform goddess-like amongst the strutting supermodels. Since 1995, it has been lighting up our screens annually; it dominates our Instagram feeds, #Trends on Twitter, and prompts various opinion pieces in national publications. This year however, the show was cancelled.

What happened? What has constituted the demise of the most powerful lingerie brand in the world? Well, #MeToo happened. #TimesUp happened. And, miraculously, women found their voices in a new way. Between 2016 and 2018, discourses about body positivity started to take over and checking your privilege became the new pink. Intersectional feminism was embraced by brands who recognised that inclusivity and diversity were hugely important in running a successful business.

Consumers started asking more from their favourite brands. And what did they want? Representation, representation, representation.

In the last three years, body-positive clothing brands and influencers started taking over Instagram, representing a shift which culminated in Cosmopolitan deciding to have plus-size model Tess Holliday as their cover girl. In these two years, Victoria's Secret's market share in the US dropped from 33% to 24% - in direct correlation, it seems, with the societal change that sees body positivity and inclusive representation as an important aspect of a brand's popularity.

Whilst other brands became consciously more diverse, Victoria's Secret kept rigidly to their tried and tested formula. Sex sells. Beautiful thin women wearing sexy lingerie sells. Why bother changing? When asked in a Vogue interview how the 'atmosphere' at the show 'has changed in the wake of #MeToo', Ed Razek (Chief Marketing Officer) claimed that Victoria's Secret 'didn't have changes to make', addressing this change in the following statement:

"I think we address the way the market is shifting on a constant basis [...] we attempted to do a television special for plus-sizes [in 2000]. No one had any interest in it. Still don't."

When asked whether the VS show should include transgender

models, Razek responded, "no, I don't think we should... Because the show is a fantasy."

And here's the crux. The real reason the iconic brand is in decline: they are marketing a 'fantasy' to real women. They have chosen the most aesthetically 'perfect' supermodels they can find; doused them in oil, fake tan, and copious amounts of make up before strutting seductively to top of the chart's bops. It really is the idealistic dream of the male gaze put into action. And for years it worked. But recently, women have been more vocal about the importance of representing their lived reality. The reality of being a size 14, being pregnant or bloated. The reality of being transgender.

All of this makes a lot of sense when we look at the brand's origins. Victoria's Secret was invented by Roy Raymond in 1977, after an uncomfortable experience shopping for lingerie with his wife. His vision was simple: create a lingerie shop where men felt comfortable.

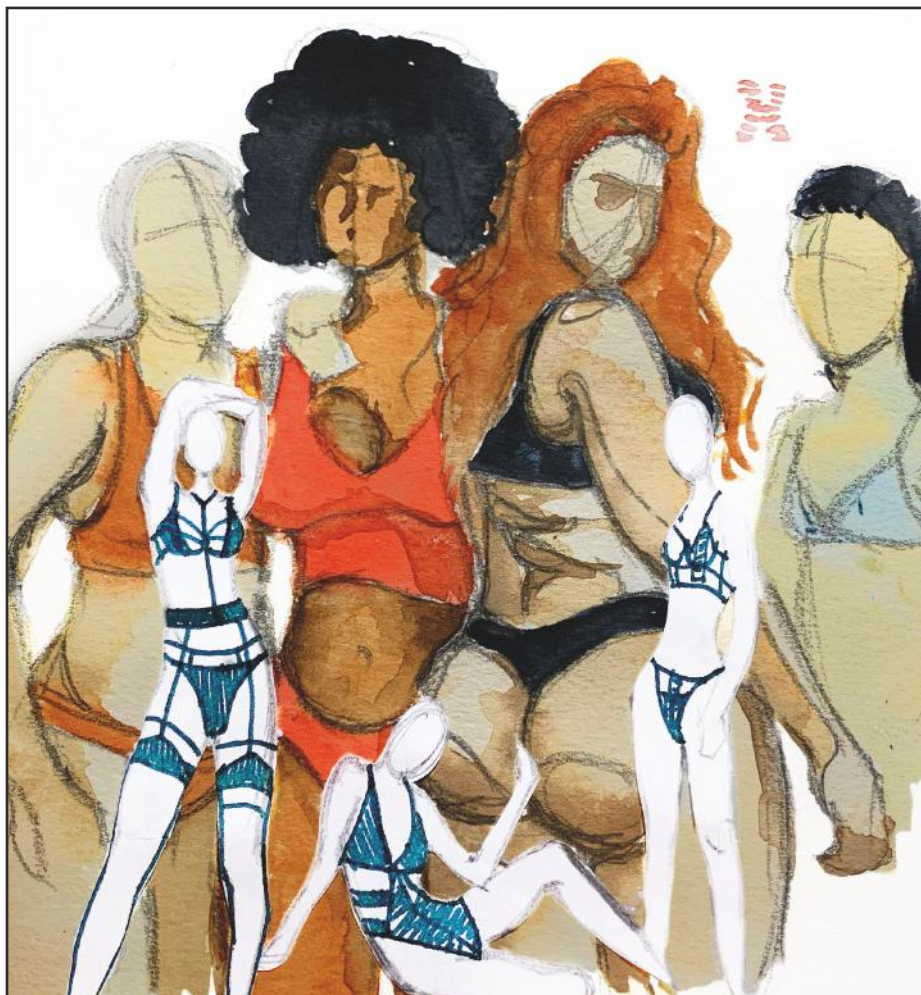
Raymond based the name on the Victorian era in England, which was famed for keeping sexual desires hidden beneath the lacy veils of custom. In other words, the concept was based on the idea of keeping things hidden; all conceived from the male perspective. It was not about representing reality; the awkwardness of getting a bra fitted, the disenchantment with your own saggy bits in the mirror,

the frustration of not being able to find items that fit at every part of your menstrual cycle. It was about turning the male fantasy of virginal yet highly sexualised ‘angels’ into a reality – even if it was just for a 42-minute entertainment special.

Although Victoria’s Secret has come a long way since then, its roots still remain. No matter how much they dress it up with savvy marketing about empowerment, its targeted audience is limited to the men who gawk at ‘angels’ in million-dollar diamond bras, or the women who effortlessly identify with the models. As Ed Razek said, “we market who we sell to, and we don’t market to the whole world.” Their target market doesn’t include plus-size women or transwomen. Otherwise – and it really is as simple as this – they would be more open about inclusivity. As *Vogue* points out, “in many ways, the discussion around Victoria’s Secret is not about who it’s letting in, but who it’s still keeping out.”

This is where Savage X Fenty comes in. Rihanna’s new lingerie collection is all about feeling comfortable in your own skin. Her fashion show was a refreshing demonstration of the beauty of all body types, with transgender and heavily pregnant models performing alongside the likes of ex-Victoria Secret angel Cara Delevingne. In doing this, the show attracted an audience beyond the parameters of the fashion world’s stylists and journalists; it attracted ordinary women.

Rihanna’s show doesn’t just represent different body sizes and gender orientations. It showcases a different kind of modelling to that of the Victoria’s Secret show. Instead of walking one by one down the runway, Rihanna’s models dance in sync with each other, curving their bodies in ways that highlight functionality and flexibility, as well as



sexiness and beauty. It is quite clear that, to its core, Savage X Fenty is all about portraying the uninhibited, unfiltered modern woman.

Savage X Fenty represents a new wave of lingerie branding – one that is committed to raising all women up as opposed to ‘empowering’ some and neglecting others. It also represents the immense cultural shift that has taken place within the last few years. The question is, can Victoria’s Secret keep up?

It seems that the societal ideal for a sexy woman has changed a lot since the golden age of the noughties, which idolised chiselled abs and lusciously long legs above all else. But Savage X Fenty’s resounding success (as well as Victoria’s Secret’s brief demise) illustrates how society-at-large is looking for a different model of ‘sexy’: one defined by individuality. And so, perhaps the answer is not for the two brands to compete with each other, but for them both to find their own

ways of making all women feel included; whatever their size, skin colour, gender identity or sexuality.

The fact that Savage X Fenty’s appearance on the lingerie scene has prompted Victoria’s Secret to reconsider their stance on including plus size or trans models is already a step in the right direction. Does Savage X Fenty really have the power to help Victoria’s Secret evolve and embrace a different style of Fashion Show? Potentially. Only time will tell. But if the seismic shift in lingerie marketing is anything to go by, Victoria’s Secret may well come back stronger than ever and ready to embrace body positivity in a striking new way. Here’s to hoping.

by Hannah Connolly
Art by Kezhu Wang

Can Fast Fashion Make Way for Sustainable Style?

After a tiresome day of reading in the library, or procrastinating in bed when you should have been studying, nothing is more enjoyable than the instant gratification you feel from ‘retail therapy’. While this happiness may be satisfying, the subsequent hunger for the latest trends has slowly but surely created a ‘throw-away culture’: a world of buying more and spending less... a world of fast fashion.

Fast fashion first began to bloom in the 90s, with brands such as Zara producing items at a much faster rate than ever before. This quick turnover allowed consumers to get their hands on a continuous cycle of trend-led pieces all year round at bargain prices. Fast fashion does sound ideal! However, displacing the traditional ‘just make-do and mend’ with the modern ‘just buy another dress’ attitude has come at a price: the environment.

The World Wide Fund for Nature (WWF) has stated that just one t-shirt takes 2700 litres of water to produce, the equivalent to over three years of drinking water for a single person. With over 150 billion new garments being produced each year, and global clothing production rapidly increasing, it goes without saying that the demand for clothes is having a harmful effect on our environment. The fast fashion industry is actually a greater contributor to the climate crisis than the aeronautical and shipping industries combined. It is responsible for 10% of our global carbon footprint and, according to The United Nations Environmental Programme, fast fashion could make up 25% of the world’s carbon budget by 2050. It is equally accountable for water pollution: EKOenergy warns that textile dyeing is the second biggest polluter of clean water on our planet, after agriculture: when washed in domestic washing machines, polyester garments shed microfibers that eventually add to the increasing levels of plastic in our oceans. Additionally, the fast-paced nature of the industry naturally results in millions of unused and discarded clothes, resulting in mass waste. Designer Stella McCartney, a pioneer in introducing sustainable fashion practices to her brand, has pointed out that “only 1% of used clothing is recycled”: the rest is sent straight to landfills. Having digested all of

this, it is incredibly surprising that, despite the surge in climate change protests, the fast fashion industry has not received anywhere near as much attention or backlash.

There is also a human side to the debate. Have you ever noticed that online stores lack transparency over the production of their fast fashion garments? Where are they made? Who are they made by? NYC’s Fair Fashion Centre revealed that one in six humans work in the fashion industry: most are women in developing countries, working for 14-16 hours a day in dangerous conditions, receiving less than half of the living wage. In 2016, a shocking report emerged from the Asia Floor Wage Alliance, revealing that female H&M factory employees in Cambodia and India were being fired if they were found to be pregnant. Years have gone by, yet we still hear reports of child slavery from the age of two, sexual harassment in the workplace, and no regard for workers’ wellbeing. Meanwhile, managers continue to prohibit the creation of trade unions, leaving workers unable to defend their rights to this very day.

Have any of these cases resulted in a change in society’s attitudes to fast fashion? Has the now highly-discussed climate crisis potentially begun to turn heads on the matter of sustainable shopping? Wanting to investigate these questions further, I decided to interview UCL students about their shopping habits and opinions on the matter. Chatting to peers, I discovered that many were unable to even define fast fashion. However, I noticed that after explaining the industry and all its implications, respondents such as Architecture student, Shannon, felt “compelled to shop more ethically” and to research fast fashion further. Despite the blunt acknowledgement that it is not ‘trendy’ to shop sustainably, there was widespread optimistic belief that, through greater awareness, sustainable shopping would one day become the norm.

Indeed, the highstreet has already witnessed some important shifts towards environmental sustainability. Stella McCartney has frequently scrutinised the “incredibly wasteful” industry, boasting several achievements in eco-fashion. As a member of the Sustainable

Apparel Collection, McCartney has set an example by using eco-friendly materials, such as recycled polyester, and devising water and waste reduction strategies. Her company has set an approved science-based target to reduce greenhouse gas emissions, as well as a 2020 deadline for the elimination of hazardous chemicals within their production line. McCartney's pioneering focus on sustainability provides hope that a monumental shift in the world of fashion is in fact within reach. In some ways that hope could already be turning into a reality: it was noticeable that during this year's seasonal Fashion Weeks, sustainability was at the forefront of the catwalks. Maria Cornejo, founder of 'Zero + Maria Cornejo,' (Cornejo's brand committed to responsibly designed clothes) sent out an important message that "small shifts make big waves." Trends move from runways straight to wardrobes: top designers making vital sustainable changes in fashion can in turn encourage a drastic shift on the high street.

Menswear brands are also playing their part in re-defining eco-friendly luxury, one suit at a time. Back in 2007, designer Tom Ford advocated how "true luxury comes from being able to enjoy beautiful things that haven't had a destructive impact on the planet or on other people." He pledged with confidence that clothes with a conscience would one day become "the ultimate status symbol." Ten years later, his commitment to humanitarian standards and Italian craftsmanship were universally recognised by the fashion industry. He was awarded the Green Carpet Fashion Award for Best International Designer Supporting

"Made in Italy". The shift is also carrying into footwear: earlier this year Hugo Boss launched a range of vegan men's shoes, made from a natural material consisting of pineapple leaf fibres called 'Pinatex.' The shoes are then sold to customers in a recyclable and biodegradable paper box.

Actions are also being taken in certain countries: over summer, Sweden refused to endorse or participate in Fashion Week, citing concerns surrounding sustainability as their main reason. The Swedish Fashion Council's CEO questioned the place of fashion shows, in a century where sustainability is now "fashion's biggest focus". Stockholm is the first to take a stand in this way, and hopefully it won't be the last.

So how can you make your stand?

By taking small steps that can lead to a bigger difference. This includes fuelling debate about the topic amongst friends and family, or thinking twice before walking into Primark. Explore the numerous charity shops and vintage stores scattered throughout London, or online second-hand shops, such as Depop, to give unwanted clothes a home. Try clothes-swapping with friends, or tailoring unloved items in your wardrobe to give them a new lease of life. Refuse to make unnecessary purchases, reduce the amount of waste from your wardrobe, repair damaged items, and if all else fails... recycle!

Together we can shift our world from fast fashion to sustainable shopping.

by Deepali Foster

Photography by Pietro Sambuy



The Culture of Protest

2019 has been a remarkable year for global protest. Citizens from all over the world have banded together and taken to the streets, protesting in a variety of ways. They share one objective: raising public awareness of the injustices that have been overlooked by those in positions of power. At the end of October, roughly one million protestors swarmed the streets of London, supporting the People's Vote campaign. They aimed to pressure the British government to put Brexit back to the people for a 'final say'. The march occurred just days after Extinction Rebellion (XR) protests were officially prohibited by UK police. In Hong Kong, protestors have been embroiled in a series of often violent clashes with authorities as they fight for democracy, and the protests in Brazil are a familiar sight. Protest has always been a part of our lives, our culture, and an expression of what it means to be a part of a democratic society. The latest wave of organised civil resistance across the globe has marked a shift, one that is not just measured through the sheer numbers of participants, but through the popularisation of protests.

When one thinks about 'protest' today, the most obvious example that comes to mind is the series of demonstrations organised by Extinction Rebellion. The most recent 'Autumn Uprising' consisted of 14 days of protests which debilitated parts of Central London for days on end, with the London Underground, Trafalgar Square and Big Ben all affected. Another organisation, with Greta Thunberg at the helm, is the Youth Climate Strikes which has dramatically increased in significance and popularity across the world. The most recent school climate strikes in September involved adults and trade union members as well, indicative of how people of

all ages and backgrounds are steadily engaging in regular protest. Such political action is a recurring theme throughout history. Think: the Campaign for Nuclear Disarmament, Anti-Vietnam War marches and the Civil Rights Movement in America. Protest has always been a part of the fabric of our society and its culture.

Yet, 2019 seems different; civil disobedience is in the air, and it's more mainstream than ever. Protesters are no longer defined as the outcasts of society. In Britain, XR is an inter-generational movement, with older people noticeably bolstering its ranks. Previously, the lens that captured images of protests would have focused on what society deems as the 'extra-ordinary'. It zoomed in on young, long-haired individuals, who became known as 'hippies'. This term was popularised in 1969, following the counter-culture festival Woodstock, with bandana-clad, peace-loving attendees donning luminescent tie-dyed clothing.

Throughout history, parts of the right-wing press have deemed those who participate in protests as 'not like us' – 'us' being the rest of society. In stark contrast, the sheer normalcy of those taking part in XR's most recent protests across Britain is noticeable. Media coverage has illustrated that many are unassuming 'ordinary' people. Their clothes, shoes and hairstyles are conventional. Their signs and messages are simple to understand, and their demands increasingly represent the views of large sections of society. The global climate conversation has become front-page news, and the protesters with it.

How radical is this shift? Those heavily involved in XR, which is notoriously non-hierarchical in its organisation, admit to the fact that as a movement it has a problem of representation. Is it too white? Is it too middle-class? How representative are its views? Coverage of the school climate strikes showed a sea of white faces, and this was undoubtedly similar at the People's Vote March in London. Lack of representation leads to certain communities experiencing a sense of disenchantment and disconnection with the protesters and their demands, just as many felt disengaged with the 'hippies' of Woodstock.

Perhaps even more important are the controversial tactics of protest being adopted by XR, such as the rebels being purposely arrested. The glamorisation of arrest does not sit well with some, and for good reason. In the face of increasing austerity, many people in society simply cannot risk the possibility of arrest, needing to hold down jobs and support families. Such examples make clear that in order for these protests to be successful, cultural barriers need to be broken down, with voices being given to those who are excluded from the current



dialogue.

Everybody knows that Brexit protests have escalated almost in parallel with the Extinction Rebellion protests. Nostalgia runs richly on both sides of Britain's EU dispute, but those feelings have been far from useless. Brexit has breathed some life into British art, and many high-profile artists have thrown gauntlets into the ring. Banksy's sealed immigration gate that was installed at the Royal Academy's Summer Exhibition this year is only one example of a collection of the world-famous artist's Brexit pieces. But is there not a little irony in the fact this piece, revolving around a political issue the whole country must face and produced by an artist known for street art, could only be seen by those who paid the entry fee of £18 at the "big, fat, stuffy, old, pompous institution" (Damien Hirst). This kind of expense is nothing more than a shift away from accessibility. It could also suggest that consumer culture has come to dominate the artistic product, having inched itself toward sterilising the power of cultural protest. More and more British artists and gallery owners have decided to open doors on the continent, an odd pro-EU protest that is more circumstantial than ideological. Earlier this year, Jonathan Jones wrote in the *Guardian* of a "British art world comprehensively plugged into Europe"; for an artistic culture so deeply rooted in Europe, it's nothing short of a sign of its ineffectiveness that the bastions of protest have decided to start leaving. Doom and gloom are the boldest colours in the Brexit palette; whatever methods culture chooses to resist the advance of the political machine, art as a means of protest may have lost its potency.

Following this shift over UK borders, we see that civil disobedience emerged in different permutations in 2019. In France, where White Cube has recently opened its doors, *les gilet jaunes* have embraced the cultural resonance of the high-viz vest as an emblem for their grassroots movement for economic justice. In Brazil, where the world is on fire, the bulk of protest unsurprisingly orbits Jair Bolsonaro's ascendancy to leadership and his disregard for indigenous culture and the climate emergency. The pulse of the Brazilian artistic community in particular has begun to beat with force against this denial. Antonio Oba's rural tradition-inspired, and highly controversial performances which provoked enough death threats to force him to flee the country, is characteristic of an artistic culture reactive enough to ensure its resistance doesn't go unheard. The launch of a generation of bold performance artists to the forefront of the nation's scene has coincided with other dynamic and practical methods of approach: ar-



tistic initiatives have become popular and widespread. Labverde, an art immersion program which brings artists and creators together to reflect on landscapes and nature in the Amazon, was held this August. This demonstrates a movement toward scientific-cultural cohesion that aims to create a stronger, more resilient base for protest against the environmental negligence of the Bolsonaro government.

Statement-making artists protesting against the new regime and its wilful negligence in the face of the climate crisis might be as much a cause as it is a result of a shift in national outlook. In the wake of the mass violation of the Amazon Rainforest, the Brazilian art world is giving sharper focus to indigenous artists and conservation projects. This year, the NGO Thydêwá brought the project *Arte Eletrônica Indígena*, which seeks to encourage people to engage with indigenous Brazilian art, to The Royal Academy. Though destructive units of governments such as Bolsonaro's grind on, there is reason to hope that cultural protest can become efficient enough to make a difference.

A shift toward a more international and properly representative culture of protest may be the key to a stronger defence against government atrocities and negligence. Whilst it is clear that recent protests certainly differ in many ways from those seen throughout history, in reality, there is little shift towards a progressive, representative movement. It seems certain that in this day and age, that would indicate a true 'shift' in the culture of protest.

by Jamie Singleton & Chloe Rossington
Photography by Pietro Sambuy

Our Consumption of Culture

The way we interact with the world is changing. Technology has altered how we communicate with one another, and how we share stories. There has been a shift in the way we listen, see and understand music, art, and film.

Consumption of Music

If Stairway to Heaven was released today, would you listen to it? Could you make it through the 52 second intro?

Research has shown that since the mid-80's the song intro has reduced from 20 seconds to around 5 seconds. Due to the rise of music streaming services we have more choice, but we are also more impatient. Studies suggest that our attention span has reduced from 12 seconds to 8.5 seconds from 2000 to 2015, ironically implying that humans now have a shorter attention span than goldfish, who lose attention at 9 seconds.

In the '60s, '70s and '80s music wasn't so widely available; people held album listening parties and eagerly awaited new releases. There were subcultures linked to styles of music, including the punks and the New Romantics. Today, streaming services use a pay-per-play economic model, creating more of an incentive to frequently release shorter songs. Songs such as The Beatles' 'Hey Jude' and The Eagles' 'Hotel California' are both over six minutes long and do not fit into this 'replay' model. Arguably some of the biggest hits of their time, it is disheartening to imagine that they may not succeed if they were released in today's musical climate.

The playlist and the shuffle button have worked to diversify our listening habits. You can now explore music from all over the world. From funk to jazz to orchestral and

pop music, everything is right at our fingertips. However, is this at the expense of the album and its rich history? Albums today have become miscellaneous orders of hits rather than carefully curated journeys, and the shuffle button ensures we don't listen to them in the order they were intended. Iconic albums such as The Velvet Underground's 'The Velvet Underground and Nico' or Pink Floyd's 'Dark Side of the Moon' were created as a transcendental experience for fans who would spend hours listening to the vinyl albums. Playlists constructed by digital platforms create the illusion of personally curated content, but stem from a



computer algorithm rather than the hard work of those in the industry.

Consumption of Art

Imagine the Mona Lisa is in front of you. What is the first thing you do: gasp in disbelief or stare into her eyes searching for secrets? Nope. You've probably already got your phone out, after battling through the crowd, and snapped a couple of pictures. In modern society, it seems that no-one truly sees anymore. Seeing and contemplating art has often been replaced by documenting it. One way this worrying trend is being tackled is with "Slow Art Day". Established in 2008 and increasing in popularity, its mantra is to "help more people discover for themselves the joy of looking at and loving art". Globally, galleries ask participants to look at five works for ten minutes. Afterwards, they are brought together as a group to share their thoughts. Slow Art Day teaches us to take our time, to contemplate, and appreciate art.

Another trend Slow Art Day addresses is the rise of photography. There is no doubt that images capturing works of art and exhibitions, are valued editions to Instagram feeds. At a time where galleries and museums are eager to attract more visitors, and hence more money, one can see why larger institutions would push for exhibitions that look brilliant in pictures. A recent example is Olafur Eliasson's exhibition at the Tate Modern. There are endless online pictures of individuals recreating the exhibition's poster. One of the installations uses the outline of visitors to create a triple and multicoloured shadow upon the gallery wall. Undoubtedly a credible and aesthetic piece of art in itself, I cannot help but wonder whether the posters wanted to spark the idea of a perfect photo opportunity for viewers.

All that is left to ask is whether art has lost meaning. Has the transmission of feelings from the work of art

to the eye been blocked by the technological screen? I hope not.

Consumption of Film

The quiet murmurings of detractors were previously silenced amidst the uproar of anticipation for Marvel's final 'Avengers' movie, *Endgame*, which became the highest-grossing film of all time. Inevitably, the antithesis of this acclaim, and of Marvel films, has broken through. The backlash from New Hollywood directors like Martin Scorsese and Francis Ford Coppola, now resounds. This provides us with an insight into how the film industry shifts to suit audience consumption.

The rebuttal of the directors has been noteworthy. Scorsese's comment that the Marvel movies are "theme park" spectacles has been one of the most standout quotes, as it goes against the usual veneration of the films. What's even more controversial is that he's probably right. This may seem like yet another reiteration of the same old battle between the commercial and the artistic, but

Scorsese raises a huge point.

With Marvel movies, we can expect the same formula. The cinematic landscape of franchises has become akin to a factory that keeps on producing the same commodity for expectant clientele. Sure, there's some variety. *Black Panther* and *Captain Marvel* are constant points of reference that showcase the progressiveness of Marvel Studios, with the former being nominated for Best Picture at the Academy Awards. But does one movie in ten suddenly erase the recurring formula?

Can we compare the psychological complexity of a film like Coppola's *Apocalypse Now* to Marvel's *Captain America: The Winter Soldier*? We should not pretend that these two were made for the same purposes. The former is based on Joseph Conrad's *Heart of Darkness* and conveys the horror of the Vietnam war. The latter is a sequel adapted from Marvel Comics, following the eponymous hero uncovering a conspiracy. It is important to recognise that Marvel films are commercial products meant to satisfy large audiences.

They do this with outstanding success. Frankly, the movies are fun. They're escapist fantasy. A breath of relief for audiences amidst dreary realism and heavy-handed works. Just like the Westerns of the 20th century, Marvel films serve the selfsame purpose of entertainment and spectacle. The Disney pedigree of 'PG' has helped this by making Marvel movies into mainstream family entertainment.

But what would happen if a Marvel film tried to be like *Apocalypse Now*, or even *The Irishman*? Perhaps that's what *Black Panther* did, and what *Infinity War* tried to do, but the latter is balanced by light-hearted scenes written by comedy-writers, who have to appease the child-friendly label.

The counter-attack of artists to-



wards this phenomenon may consequently seem like a clash between the masses and the elite, but cinema has always been a paradoxical machine that encourages artistic exuberance yet produces films in cycles. Inevitably, this production is swayed by the fluctuating forces of audience demand. Classics come rarely, not cyclically. Consumption of film products like Marvel movies might eventually end in accordance with a shift in reception.

In all spheres of culture, there has been a gradual shift, engendered and compounded by the increasing presence of technology in our lives. How and what we consume is drastically different from our parents. Whilst change is inevitable, the digital revolution has accelerated the evolution of human habits. Whether these cultural changes are negative or positive, only time will tell. One thing we do know is that the prospects of a changing cultural landscape are bittersweet and feelings of nostalgia and desire for identity are ever increasing.

by Kirese Narinesingh & Olivia Olphin & Laura Toms
Art by Viky Klein & Tori Simpson



A Decade in Review

2010: The Year of Social Media

The beginning of the decade promised huge cultural change that was immediately cemented by Kathryn Bigelow's 'Best Director' win at the Oscars; making her the first and only woman to win the award. We should remember this year as the one in which social media started gaining traction: Instagram, Pinterest and Quora launched. If only to reinforce Facebook's growing profile, *The Social Network* was released, which portrayed the origins of the social media site. What would we do without social media? Its power was demonstrated in the coverage of the 2010 Haiti Earthquake that devastated the Caribbean island. It helped to export information across the globe and gave victims a voice by compensating for any lack of coverage from media organisations.

2011: The Year of Expansion

In the year that saw the global population reach seven billion, it seemed everything was getting bigger and better, including the exhibitions. With the shocking and untimely death of Alexander McQueen in 2010, the posthumous exhibition of his works 'Savage Beauty' was shown at the Metropolitan Museum of Art in 2011. The legacy of this exhibition still lives with us. By the end of its run, 650,000 people had seen the show, heralding the birth of the big fashion exhibit, and pencilling the Met Gala firmly into everyone's calendars. This year also saw the most watched royal wedding. An estimated two billion tuned in to see Prince William and Kate Middleton tie the knot.

2012: The Year to Inspire a Generation

This year brought the Olympics to Britain's shores. National pride was at an all-time high and the country felt open and inclusive as it welcomed countries from all around the world to compete. Super Saturday was a highpoint with Greg Rutherford, Jessica Ennis and Mo Farah all winning their respective golds in the same night. People even talked to each other on the tube! The film director Danny Boyle orchestrated one of the most memorable opening ceremonies of all time, celebrating all that it means to be British. The UK finished 3rd in the medal table, showing that though the Nation may be little, it is fierce.

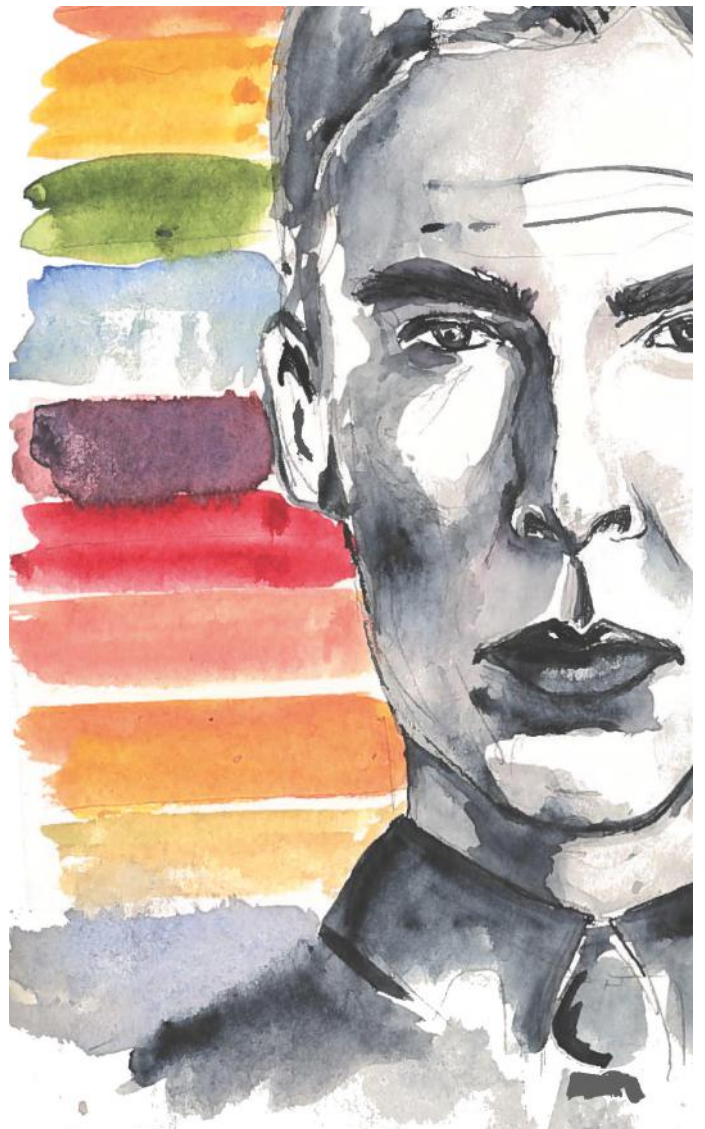
2013: The Year of Female Empowerment

The year that gave us Robin Thicke's 'Blurred Lines' was thankfully also the year that gave us endless doses

of female power. With the songs of Katy Perry, Miley Cyrus and Lorde blasting from every radio, Beyoncé's iconic Superbowl performance was the cherry on top of what was a great year for female artists. Leather-clad, fearless and choreographed to perfection, Beyoncé's performance taught us to be proud, confident and strong.

2014: The Year to Reclaim Our PRIDE

Although the vote in favour of gay marriage was passed in 2013, the first marriage in England and Wales took place on the 29th of March 2014. This was a huge leap towards the acceptance and awareness of the LGBTQ+ community and their plight for equal rights. In the same year films such as *Pride* and *The Imitation Game* were released, showing a mainstream interest and acceptance of LGBTQ+ stories.



*“The BackPages”***2015: The Year of Rebirth**

It's the middle of the decade and Caitlyn Jenner has won Glamour's "Woman of the Year Award," a decision that incited controversy, owing to her status as a wealthy transgender woman. In spite of detractors' comments, this was a turning point for transgender activism, as media representation in mass culture enabled more visibility and awareness. In film, the Star Wars sequel trilogy began with a bang: *The Force Awakens* was a critical and commercial success, revitalizing Star Wars for a new generation. On the stage, *Hamilton* made its debut, becoming a hugely successful surprise hit. Who would've thought that rapping about American history could have been so riveting?

2016: The Year the World Turned Upside Down

What a year. Brexit. Trump. It seemed like the world had been turned upside down and violently shaken. Whilst the world seemed to be splitting in half, culture would be the glue to keep it together. Take Grayson Perry's Brexit vases: having asked the public to send in images of things that mattered to them, he dedicated one vase to those sent by leavers and the other remainers. The result? They looked pretty much the same. Both showed teapots, the NHS, families by the sea but most importantly pubs. The year wasn't all doom and gloom either. After all, it gave us the gift of Boaty Mcboatface and with that, faith was restored.

2017: The Year Women Were Silent No Longer

This was the year that broke

one of the biggest stories of our generation. The Weinstein scandal was the catalyst that set the fire under the #MeToo movement. Women were coming forward in solidarity against male abuse and setting boundaries of consent in the workplace and in everyday life. TV shows reflected this shift, with *Fleabag* becoming popular, and the cult hit *The Handmaid's Tale* gripping viewers. In the same year *Get Out* became a cultural phenomenon and deftly examined race relations and conflicts in American society.

**2018: The Year of Progress**

This was a year filled to the brim with the most progressive cultural events. Considering that more than 80 years ago King Edward had to abdicate to marry Wallis Simpson, the marriage of Prince Harry and Meghan Markle cements a huge shift in socio-cultural values, though her status as the first mixed-race woman still garners waves of harassment. At the Oscars, *Black Panther* became the first superhero movie nominated for Best Picture, marking the moment when Marvel showed its potential for serious artistic, philosophical messages. Not all change is positive, as David Attenborough's groundbreaking documentary 'Drowning in Plastic' displayed. There was clearly a

breakdown of the horrific impact of human negligence on our environment. Despite this bleak reality, the documentary was a necessary wake-up call to the climate emergency that has engendered recent climate activism.

2019: The Year of Endings

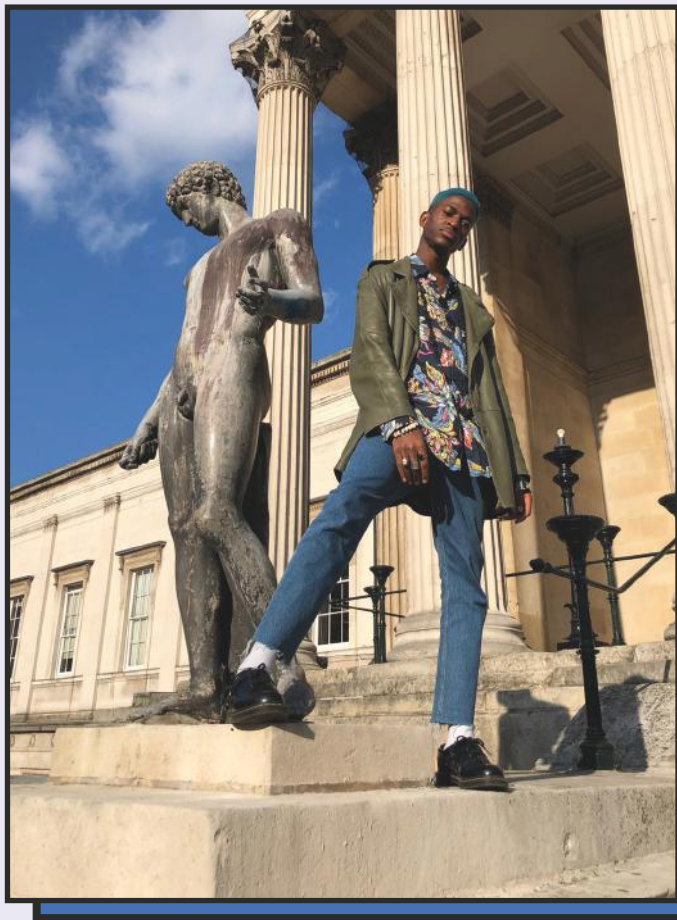
What a year: *Game of Thrones* ended its decade-long run with a bang (or a whimper?). Either way, its bittersweet, divisive end will probably never sit well with its hard-core fans, who have learned the hard way that there are no happy endings. Then again, isn't that the best way to be remembered in TV history, as one of the most controversial endings of all time? *Avengers: Endgame* marked the culmination of the era of Avengers films. The film beat *Avatar* to become the highest-grossing film of all time. It was a perfectly well-rendered tribute to the core Avengers team, ending with a note of satisfaction: much to the delight of fans, *Captain America* finally goes home.

2020: The Year to Come

As we move forward into the '20s who knows what the next decade has in store for us. Will this be our generation's roaring '20s? With a rising feeling of anxiety and dwindling faith in democracy, we can guarantee one thing and one thing only: as culture is inspired and grows during turbulent times, we can be assured the next decade will be the most fruitful to date.

**by Olivia Olphin &
Kirese Narinesingh &
Laura Toms
Art by Sara Engardt**

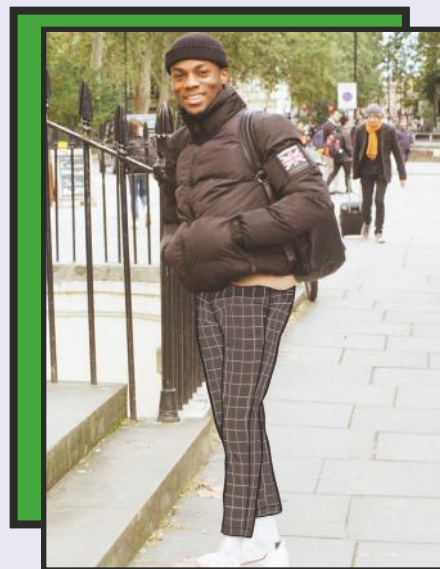
Style on Campus



"It's my accessories that are the most symbolic to me. As an international student I take great pride in wearing rings that are hand crafted from my home in Nigeria. Just as memorabilia hold memories, the stones I wear hold meaning. For example, this is Agate, which is the stone representing opening your soul. This is Opal which is my birthstone."

The blue afro?

"I went to a secondary school in Nigeria where we were forced to cut our hair below an eighth of an inch, which is as close as you can get to skin without it being skin. Since hair is such a staple of self-expression, it's unsurprising that everyone who attended that school developed a complex relationship with their hair. After I graduated, the freedom was amazing, I never wanted to cut my hair again and I embraced my 1970s afro. You see, dealing with the trauma of an institution governing something as personal as hairstyle sets the precedent for me doing something a little unconventional."



"I'm from Trinidad and Tobago, so we don't get to wear clothes like this, because it's a bit weird. So I like to try new things."



"I think about once a year, I go through a brown phase. Maybe it coincides with my love for '70s music, I'm really into '70s rock, guitar music. When I start listening to those records again, that's when I bring out those brown clothes."



"I was late, so I was like, let's just take out my basics. It's like a usual '70s, punk kind of look. I DIY-d this necklace some time ago, I stuck some safety pins into this and thought, that was a mood."



Where did the inspiration for your outfit today come from?

"Anything that wasn't in the wash. Anything that's comfortable and I can sleep in."



"I always wear these clothes. I'm from Russia, so it's a grunge style. I listen to a lot of techno."

"I like to look a bit like Avril Lavigne, like early 2000s stuff, things that used to be tacky. I can't skate, obviously."



"I feel like I'm inspired by all the decades – but I particularly love the transition between the '20s and then the later shifts in fashion. I'm very into the whole 'midi-dresses' and 'midi-skirts' look, the high-necks, and the balance between pieces that are feminine but also showcase a bold side, something that used to be associated with masculine clothes only."

How did your love of style come about?

"My mum – she's always been put-together, always likes to look good in order to feel ready for the day. I think that's definitely been passed on to me. We still get ready together in the mornings sometimes! She's taught me how to do my make-up, and in turn I've taught her a lot about fashion as I'm the one who's more up-to-date with the latest trends – so it's quite nice that it works both ways."



by Lifestyle Writers

Photography by Enerzaya Gundalai

Art by Christelle Troost

Science Roundup

Physics

Last month saw an exciting discovery surrounding exoplanet K2-18b, made by astronomers at UCL using data from NASA's Hubble Space Telescope. K2-18b is now the first planet outside of our solar system on which the presence of water vapour has been detected, with surface temperatures conducive to liquid water. Though exposed to significantly more radiation, and with far higher surface gravity than Earth, this planet theoretically could have life on it.

by Callum Limbrick

Chemistry

Carbon capture technology is gathering force, with MIT's engineers recently developing a new way to remove carbon dioxide from the air using charged electrochemical plates. Last year, the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change essentially said that some form of carbon capture technology would be required to maintain any hope of keeping warming under 1.5 °C. This is the space to watch in environmental research.

by Dhruv Krishna

Technology

Deepfakes are a form of artificial intelligence where video content can be produced and manipulated to make it seem like events that did not occur, in fact, did. Given the numerous issues surrounding deepfakes, combating their spread is becoming increasingly vital. Not only responsible for dangerous misinformation, use of this technology also affects public trust in AI. Big internet companies are attempting to combat this by contributing to deepfake detection research. In September, Google released a database of 3000 deepfakes, aiming to add to the growing data to help develop synthetic video detection methods. Facebook recently launched its Deepfake Detection Challenge.

by Sabina-Maria Mitroi,
Vice President of UCL Technology Society

Drug Discovery

Just the third Tuberculosis (TB) drug to be developed in 40 years, Pretomanid has recently been approved by the US FDA. It was developed by the non-profit TB Alliance to help treat multi-resistant tuberculosis. This is particularly exciting news because drug resistant TB has now been identified on every continent. It seems, however, that access to the drug will be a big challenge for translating the research and results of the trial into effective patient care.

by Tharani Ahillan

Psychiatry

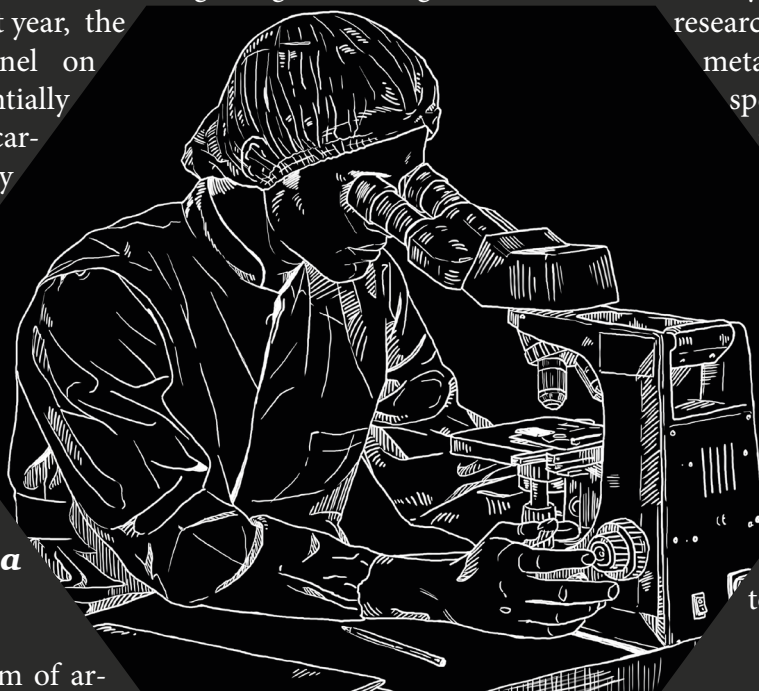
The search for biomarkers to aid diagnosis and treatment of psychiatric disorders has recently had great success. A new study, conducted by a Brazilian research team, found that certain metabolites in the blood were specific to patients with bipolar disorder, whilst others were seen only in patients with schizophrenia. These two disorders have overlapping symptoms and can sometimes be difficult to distinguish, making this a potentially invaluable future diagnostic tool.

by Ahmed Al-Shihabi

Environment

Teleconnections occur when changes in the atmosphere in one place can affect the weather over a 1000 miles away. Research has found that the El Niño-Southern Oscillation had a significant influence on rainfall during the Indian summer monsoon. These results have implications for farming in areas that rely on big weather events, and it is hoped that studies such as these can help predict weather patterns in the future. With climate change contributing to increasingly erratic weather patterns such as these, understanding climate change is more important now than ever before.

by Charles Constant
Art by Viky Klein



Opinions from the Editors

Russia's Interference in Western Politics – Now a Problem in the UK too?

Allegations have emerged of a report examining Russian influence on the UK's 2016 EU referendum and 2017 General Election. The accusations have allegedly previously been suppressed by PM Boris Johnson. Critics have condemned the government for delaying the report's publication until after the General Election on 12 December, with Labour and the SNP accusing the Conservatives of attempting to downplay Russian influence on British politics. The report was finalised in March but only sent to the PM mid-October. It examines various allegations of Russian involvement in British political affairs, including espionage and subversion drawing on information from sources such as MI5 and MI6.

This case further reminds us to keep a watchful and critical eye at all times on the actions of the Conservatives regarding Brexit, and serves as another example of Russian interference in Western politics – we don't need to be reminded of the scandals surrounding the influence Russia had in the 2016 US presidential election.

by Zoe West-Taylor

Has the Student Centre Changed Our Campus for the Better?

Since its opening in February, the Student Centre has become a very popular location on campus – so popular, in fact, that it is almost impossible to find a seat in it.

Architecturally stunning, this modern construction offers a wonderful contrast to the other, more traditional buildings on campus. Its presence fits in extraordinarily with UCL's key value of diversity, which now has a physical representation in the university's design.

Moreover, the Student Centre allows for greater choice of where to hang out on campus. Slightly rowdier than the library though not as noisy as the cafes, this space offers a perfect choice to those looking for a happy medium.

Finally, with an 'Outstanding' BREEAM rating, indicating high sustainability measures, the Student Centre demonstrates UCL's commitment to environmentalism and student well-being. This gives each and every

one of us a reason to be proud of our university.

In short, even if it is not everybody's study space or social location of preference, it is safe to say that the Student Centre has already had an overwhelmingly positive contribution to our campus. Hopefully, it will continue to do so for years to come.

by Izzi Zawartka

A Prickly Issue

Rory Stewart has spoken of "things that matter an enormous amount to our civilisation, to our society, and our hearts — like," he declared from the despatch box, "a hedgehog."

His thirteen minute address to the small animal was hailed by the Deputy Speaker as "one of the best speeches I have ever heard in this House." It was timely, too. In the last twenty years, the hedgehog population has halved, an estimated 97% decline from the 1950s.

The hedgehog inhabits liminal land, not nature reserves. It demands a very specific environmental question: can we protect not only through isolation, but cohabitation? Can we render our habitat fit for the hedgehog?

One way of achieving this is the creation of small gaps in hedges, walls, and fences to allow the animals free passage.

I have another suggestion for Mr Stewart. All roads should be raised a matter of inches from the ground. As 100,000 hedgehogs are killed annually on our roads, this will lead to a steady increase in the hedgehog population. It will also facilitate greater ease of roaming for the little creatures; and the project (extensive, I grant) will be a wonderful means of job-creation in these beleaguered times.

In retrospect, I fear also for the foxes. Let us make it an elevation of a meter or so.

Actually, why stop there? We could continue, hoisting ourselves high into the sky — obscure, far above the clouds.

We will leave the hedgehog to the earth, to nose the cowslip, mallow, and meadow-sweet.

by Joe Kenelm

Photography by Yuval Caspi



A Defence for Change and the Power it Requires

In an essay for The New York Times' 'Modern Love' column, Anne Leary — writer and partner of actor Denis Leary — reflected on her marriage. She wrote: "when we met, we were too young and inexperienced to know that people don't change who they are, only how they play and act with others."

Sitting on a damp park bench in Gordon Square, I thought to myself, how can this be true? I concluded that I cannot accept the hardened notion that I will never change. Perhaps this is because I find myself actively and consistently trying to alter aspects of my conduct in order to be the best person possible.

When my dad died a few years ago I felt a foundational pillar of my identity crumble. The shift was beyond tears — it was visceral, a pain in my heart, a lurch in my stomach. My whole outlook on life changed. Career goals felt vain while love for my family grew stronger. My desire to learn about death and spirituality, specifically how I can live each day with gratitude became a new focus of my life.

So, no, I cannot accept the notion that people do not change. Such a view is comforting, something we tell ourselves as we re-tread paths of destruction and harm. However, while acknowledging that this isn't the case might be jarring, there is something powerful in harnessing our ability to change.

We owe it to ourselves to try.

by Noah Eckstein

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Special thanks to Assistant Editor, Vanessa Tsao, and to UCL Photography Society!

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Student protest in Santiago, Chile

'This photo was taken in June 2019, in a student riot fighting against the government's education policies. Student-led protests, such as this one, have been taking place for years. Thanks to their movement, massive insurrectional riots that have been occurring all across Chile in the past 3 weeks.' - Pietro Sambuy, UCL Photography Society



'When lightning strikes, all focus shifts from the proverbial. As man's most impressive constructions are rendered insignificant, then may we remember the overriding power of nature.' - Danielle Sargeant, UCL Photography Society



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