Dear Reader,

I am proud to present INK 2013, which, this year, includes a brand new Reviews section. As well as showcasing Plymouth University’s best student fiction and poetry, INK 2013 aims to provide a platform for non-fiction writing and promote Plymouth’s abundant Arts & Culture events.

Plymouth is a place full of memories; it is part of what makes it such an interesting place to live and study. Anyone that comes to the city is faced, almost straight away, with Charles Chuch; a monument to the severe bombings Plymouth suffered in World War Two. It is where the first pilgrims left for America from the Mayflower Steps and the city has a proud naval tradition, still going today.

Plymouth’s important place in the history books is reflected by its place in our memories. The work submitted to INK this year was designed to reflect the presence of memory in all our personal histories and the different forms it can take.

There have been so many who have worked so hard on all aspects of INK and I’d like to take this opportunity to say thankyou. To the students whose beautiful work was submitted, to my team of editors who put up with my ramblings and who went further than I could’ve asked them to. A special thanks goes to Hjördis Harmsen who not only helped us with putting the journal together and its design, but also talked us through the publishing process, asked all the right questions and who worked so hard for us. Also my thanks go to the wonderful staff who provided me with this amazing opportunity to be a part of such a great publication and who helped make this happen more than I think they know: Kathryn Gray, Victoria Joule, Angela Szczepaniak and Lucy Durneen.

Lastly my thanks to you reader, for taking the time to read this edition of INK; I hope you enjoy it as much as we have.

Carmel Anderson
Editor in Chief, INK 2013
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POETRY
Smoky airport skies
greet me again,
and I can almost smell Portugese salt
in the still air.
My new atmosphere approaches
as engines I cannot see drop me from the sky
to heat and rainless country,
second home, dusty roads
‘til I return to quenched England
with its starless nights,
but for now I tread
this thirsty land
and feel alive
in the hot night.
You could be something good
The kind of thing people memorize,
Recite to each other
When they have no words left.
The kind of thing hidden in library books
Before turning them in.
The kind of thing they will say
Over and over
in their heads as they move
through slush—
The slush oceans, the slush rivers
Of congested earth.

A bitten pear lies on your desk
Skin firm but blushing.
I have noted this and more,
Noted the photographs
Taped onto the window,
Photographs of man and dog.
I have seen the thumbed-in shoes,
The yellow coat with its yellow zipper broken
The empty bottle of champagne,
Dried white film coating the bottom like
Broken shells in a salt sleep.

I smashed in your window last night.
Now I lie under your bed,
My hand on its wooden leg,
Squat solid, and still.
The last time you were here,
A man, the man with the dog
Whose picture you keep on your window,
Pressed the mouth of his gun to your lips.
It was your last kiss
And probably your favourite.
At night they come. Caught between places, body dead and mind awake I take the best seat in this house. The familiar tape stuck on repeat, map my life by its mistakes. Worn out, I wait for the show to start. Glimpse of a smile, flutter of lashes, straining for her voice. Gone. Then he’s here with a grimace; a stare. Filling my view as he filled my life; ‘but, I love him’ I scream, undefeated. Cell door slams, shame overwhelming who is that girl? I barely recognise myself. The things you do for love.

Across the family table, unblinking eyes; explanations unneeded warnings unheeded. Can they forgive?

Sunny day caught in the rain; smiles, swings and ice cream sink out of sight. Desolate mind and dead eyes stare down into water. Now her, her I know. Eating lunch in the toilets at school. The tattooed curve of his back. Running tap water. Iris; there. Iris; here? Gone.
I awake with words, 
Implore to someone 
next door ‘Please 
Stop Screaming’. 
Upon my hard slab I turn 
A child bereft. 
A light being, 
Unbearable.

This day my journey is press-pause 
I hear hushed voices call. 
I cannot tell hear, 
this momentary lapse-life, 
this unconditional place.

I want to feel 
A light space. 
Unbound this weight, 
leave my two souls rock solid. 
Then, without heavy heart 
my shoulders are relieved, 
my back is loosened and shaking. 
Ruffle my feathers 
for I, am Swan Lake.
A faded, un-lived memory,  
an unmarked promise, false serenity.

The silenced youth of your generation  
who muted in turn, those  
who abandoned themselves.

They ripped up inherent knowledge,  
used up forgotten pages.  
You ripped them away.

Forget the fight, the freedoms, the height  
of liberty.  
The plague of a probable freedom and  
your state of simple habitual mindlessness,  
it’s ruined me.  
Forget ambition.  
Science is false.  
The coasts of essence once attainable  
are now-forgotten.

I am now, you are then,  
then is passed and now you are near gone.

Fight for your never.
know”, your lips formed distractedly,
when I uttered my ancient assertion.
That trio, syllables summoned so oft
since Norman and Saxon tongues locked.
Their torrid, ill-judged fornications
produced, screeching and wailing,
a half-breed.
This patchwork love-child,
more versatile than any purer cousin,
swiftly dispelled all expectations
by crafting together
tones, dulcet and harsh.

Yet for all these options your breath offered
you could only draw upon two
short sounds,
so indifferent they could have been grunts.
My phrase sown from sincerity
and saturated with vulnerability,
tumbled with unknotted relief.
We stood together under car park trees.

You danced from me in giggling spirals
when Gallic studies ended that day.
Fawnlike, you sent coaxing hands
to ease open my rusty-hinged mouth.
My confession broke forth, inadequate.
You knew
but I don’t think you understood.
Only love looks back through my eyes. 
Colours blur, mixing unfamiliar shadows. 
Remembered smiles radiate across crowds, 
lights beckon the sky to fall. 
Rain devours this place and sound moves the earth. 
We all dance on.
We don’t have sex anymore. There doesn’t seem to be much point. After three and a half years of trying, we finally saw the doctor. We were both to blame; my endometrial lining is too thick and my husband’s sperm count is too low. Divorce seemed inevitable but we just never got around to it. We sleep in different rooms. At night, he watches porn and wanks off to women with surgically enhanced breasts and hair free vaginas. I have never understood why women wax their pubic hair. It makes them look like prepubescent girls, but maybe that’s the appeal.

I haven’t touched myself since the diagnoses. My vagina has betrayed me.

AT THE END OF THE ROAD, TURN LEFT.

My boss recommended we try counselling, after I came on to him at last year’s Christmas party. He took me into his office and gave me a glass of water. I thought he wanted to fuck me on his desk like in the porn movies my husband watches. I began to panic that I hadn’t shaved my legs. I burst into tears. Awkwardly, he patted me on the shoulder. There, there. He explained that he and his wife were having problems last year and had contacted Relate for counselling. He dug out some leaflets from his desk drawer. I thanked him and hurried out of the room. I got a new job in January.

AT THE TRAFFIC LIGHTS, TURN RIGHT.

In our first counselling session, we were told we needed to find some common ground. For so long, we had been preoccupied with making babies and then for so long afterwards, we had been preoccupied with not making babies. We had nothing to talk about anymore. That afternoon, we went to the local animal rescue centre and bought a five year old English Bull Terrier. She developed a tumour in her brain and had to be put down. We grieved together, and buried her together in the back garden and that night, we held hands on the sofa, before going to our separate beds in our separate rooms and back to our separate lives.

We tried again.

AT THE ROUNDBABOUT, TAKE THE FIRST LEFT.

In the back of the car, Lilibeth Luckystar, Daisy Duke, and Lucy Lu La Belle are howling. They don’t like long journeys. I turn the radio up louder and the music soothes them. In the rear view mirror, I watch them settle back down, their noses touching each other’s ass holes.

TAKE THE NEXT RIGHT.

You missed the turning, you were supposed to turn right.

AT THE NEXT POSSIBLE OPPORTUNITY, MAKE A U-TURN.

Do you want me to drive? He pulls over and we swap seats. I adjust the head rest and bring the chair closer to the pedals. The leather seat has moulded to his body shape, so it takes me a while to get comfortable. The seat is warm and familiar. It smells of Pedigree Chum, nappy sacks and KFC.

AT THE ROUNDBABOUT, TAKE THE SECOND RIGHT.

26,000 dogs compete in Crufts each year, but only one of them receives the Best in Show. This most prestigious prize has been awarded for the past 79 years. There have been 40 breeds that have been awarded the Best in Show title; the Cocker Spaniel has won the most frequently, with seven wins.

Two years ago, we entered Lilibeth Luckystar. She won Best in Breed and Best in Show. Daisy Duke came second in the Agility and Obedience categories.
The year after that, Lilibeth Luckystar once again won Best in Show, amongst other awards. Daisy Duke won Best in Breed and Lucy Lu La Belle came third for Agility and Obedience.

I framed their rosettes and hung them up in the hallway. Soon, there were too many, so I moved them into the spare room. We wouldn’t be needing it.

IN 100 YARDS, JOIN THE MOTORWAY.

For the past year, we have been preparing for this day. From Monday to Thursday, I take the dogs for a walk at 7am, shower and go to work. At 5.10pm I take the dogs into the garden and practise their agility and obedience until he gets home at 8.20pm. We eat our microwave meals on our laps. At 10pm, all three dogs are groomed. I brush Lilibeth Luckystar one hundred times. He brushes Daisy Duke one hundred times. We have to pin Lucy Lu La Belle down because she thinks the brush is food. Sometimes, his hand accidentally touches mine.

From Thursday to Saturday, he gets up at 7am and walks the dogs.

On Sundays, I visit my mother and bring back cold roast chicken wrapped in BacoFoil.

TAKE THE FORTH EXIT.

The dogs sleep with me in my bed. When they have bad dreams, I whisper softly in their ears. I’d like to know what they dream about. Do they dream of me? Sometimes, they whimper in their sleep. I stroke them until they are still and quiet once more. Lucy Lu La Belle likes to cuddle me. Her head nestles between my breasts and my nipples ache. In the spare room, my husband snores.

CONTINUE FOR 800 YARDS.

Sometimes, I catch him looking at me, like I look at my dogs. I want to touch him and then he looks away and the moment is gone.

YOU HAVE REACHED YOUR FINAL DESTINATION.
As I watched the walls of the surrounding apartment buildings rush upwards around me, I hoped I would not make too much of a mess on the pavement. I thought it would be a fast way to die. Nobody ever told me that everything seems to go into slow motion. Nobody ever told me that I might have time to regret it. The feeling of wanting, of needing to die is nowhere near as awful as realizing that you are going to hit the ground, and there is nothing you can do about it. I tried to block out the flashes of the windows. William blazed across the inside of my eyelids as I waited for the impact.

* 

I opened my eyes, squinting in the darkness. I tried to turn my head to see where I was, but I could not move. I felt heavy; something was wrong. Death should not be this painful. A flood of emotions poured through me. Disappointment. I was alive. I had survived. I should be glad to be given this second chance, but I could not understand. Why should I be alive? Why should it be my heart that is beating? I chose to die. Will didn’t. He should be here, not me. The thought made me sick.

* 

I awoke to bright sunlight streaming through the windows and Will’s face so close to mine that we were almost nose-to-nose. His dark eyes crinkled at the corners as he smiled at me.

“Morning, beautiful,” he chirped. He always was a morning person. “I have to get to the office early today.”

I grumbled something unintelligible and grabbed his wrist, pulling him back into bed and snuggling into his warmth. He held me close for a second, before squirming away to readjust his tie. I watched as he examined his hair in the mirror, then came to kneel down beside me. “I’m sorry I have to go. You know I’d stay if I had the choice. You know we need the money. Come on, you should be getting up too. You don’t want to be late.”

He kissed me, assured me that he would see me later, then left for work. I heard the front door close and I slumped back on my pillow.

* 

I was on my lunch break when I received the call. A hurried voice told me Will had been in an accident. He had been hit by a car, and I should come quickly. I made my excuses at work and left to cross town to the hospital. I was too late. A solemn looking doctor told me they had done everything they could, but he had lost too much blood. I mumbled something about needing some air, located the stairs at the end of a corridor and started to climb. I never really gave much thought to what I was doing; I just kept going up and up, until I found myself on the roof. Before I could stop myself, I ran to the edge and let gravity take me.
Almost a decade ago you bristled with excitement when a Christmas shopping expedition was suggested. In moments you were prepared – orange jumper, handbag and enough energy to light a street of Christmas trees.

Together we snuck with the air of agents around Ikea’s mazes; our mission to uncover presents for Mum in her presence. For a thirteen-year-old girl, shopping had never been so exciting. You supported my imagination as usual and propelled the exhilaration of our game to the checkout. Mum knew obviously what we were doing and you knew that she knew, but you left me exultant and ignorant, so when the day came that mum received her star dish and you weren’t there to give it to her I could tell of our adventure and how we’d fooled her.

Our last phone call. I exclaimed for hours about the gifts my pocket money had bought, the Christmas lights I’d lit my room with and my results from school. You listened and responded to each utterance with the delight of a child waking up on Christmas morning.
had been planning it for years. My first trip, on my own, no parents, no sisters or brother – great! My adventure to THE CORNER SHOP. It looks the same, but as I get closer I can see that time has caught up with it. Sad and alone it stands. My grubby hand held my hot and sweaty ten pence piece. I had earned it tidying my bedroom. I held it so hard it could have melted into my palm. The ‘R Whites…Lemonade’ sign – still here from the 70s – discoloured, peeling. Red paint flakes off the old window frames, now encased in metal grid coverings – makes it harder to peer through the dusty windows. Out I skipped in my shiny patent shoes. I was excited as I entered my Aladdin’s cave. Ring a ding ding, went the bell, announcing my arrival. Ancient stickers still stand proudly in place, like battered Army Generals, gone hard and brittle from age. They wear their medals with honour: Marathon bars, Smiths crisps, Double Dips and Fish and Chips. I open the door and tentatively walk in. I hear it. Ring a ding ding. Same bell. The familiar tinkle comforts me instantly. My joy is short lived. I furtively glance about; the shop is jaded and faded; dirty windows and shelves – once shiny and full, now half bare and dull. I spent ages selecting my penny sweet selection, carefully placing every treasure into the little white paper bag. Rows of fruit salads, Catherine wheels, sweet cigarettes, sherbet dabs, cola cubes and banana chews – long gone. My mission was complete. I ambled home, savouring each one slowly and with pride. Now – a little melancholy Indian man sits behind a glass screen. Above his head, the words: “Pos Offi e”.

I
The old man slumps in his dilapidated armchair, hands resting peacefully upon his plump belly. A thickly knitted jumper adorned in languid fashion; one sleeve absent-mindedly rolled almost to the top of the arm, the other not quite reaching the furrowed skin of his wrist. His visage is set in such a tiresome way, perfectly reflecting his slumberous pose – eyes barely open, face drooped with prolonged lethargy. Upon the floor a small boy no older than four or five capers around with a toy spitfire, replicating the sounds of the whining engine with childlike naivety.

The old man traces the path of the model through tired emerald green eyes, following every loop and dive, his consciousness slipping into a deeper and deeper reverie. The gentle hum envelops him, absorbing his mind into a heavy stupor – the humming of the plane ever-present. A deafening crescendo of hellish noise fills the air; a squadron of spitfires soar overhead; the incessant mechanical drone lingers long after their omniscient presence transpires. The tranquillity of the armchair abruptly evaporates out of actuality, in its place – the anarchy of chaos. The mismatched jumper – exchanged for standard issue army uniform, both sleeves pulled down to their full extent. Sea spray spits spitefully into young emerald eyes, eyes no longer tired and weary but racked with terror and worry. The young man wipes the sting from his lids, gazes upon the colossal scene of immeasurable pandemonium, struggling to apprehend the scale of the situation. Landing craft lies strewn along the vast beach like discarded metallic seashells; turrets ominously leer from hilltops, showering the beach with venomous bullets; bodies morbidly scattered on the shoreline, the sea stained deathly crimson. Nefarious visions lie ahead, but the young man’s craft splashes onwards. Bullets whistle past, clamour against the metal of the boat, slice through the unrelenting sea, plummet into the chest of a comrade letting out a piercing scream that shakes the most resolute of valour to his knees. Cacophonous sound of mechanical humming fills the air once more as immense shapes soar overhead. Flashes of bullets ensue from the towers, a resilient attempt to destroy an aircraft.

The amalgamation of sound is deafening. Motorized shrieks seek to drown out human screams. Suddenly, bullets impact upon a plane; the wings engulfed in roaring flames. The inferno spirals downwards on an indomitable path towards the man with emerald green eyes. The wreckage tumbles closer and closer. Men jump overboard to safety. He remains still – a perverse wave of ataxia – paralysed in a floating coffin. The blaze nears. Impact is imminent. Death has arrived.

A jolt – the skewed sleeves burst back to life, confronted no longer with impending combustion but a prodding in his gut. He faces the grinning features of his young grandson, giggling as he pokes his grandpas big balloon belly. Safe and sound in the tattered armchair, relieved; the old man smiles warmly, scoops up his enthusiastic grandson and places him upon his knee. Old and young laugh, recollections of horror fading fast. The model plane lies tossed on the floor.
Finding out that I was adopted was just the start of a journey that has led me here. Discovering why you had not searched for me was almost a relief. I had always rightly believed only death would have kept us apart. Learning that you had not given me up, but had fought to keep me was a comfort. Uncovering the truth about the price you paid filled me with anger toward those who stole your freedom. Understanding that you were robbed by the Briarwood asylum forced me to go there, if only to comprehend, just a little, how it was for you. Your only crime was being an unmarried mother. Maybe one visit would be enough, to make a memory of you.

There’s a shortcut to Briarwood I am told, through the woods. I go even though I am nervous. Woods, like any other woods, that burst with life in summer. Twigs crack beneath my feet and the sun filters through the high boughs of the trees. It’s beautiful and quiet, except for the birds singing a symphony. There’s a path to follow, well-worn; the shortcut to the asylum or maybe an escape route out in the distant past. Under cover of the trees, who bore witness to all manner of acts and never tell, I walk toward my destination. Where will it lead me? The road to nowhere or the road to hell? I come to the end of the path and face a chapel, empty, boarded up, decorated with graffiti. Behind the chapel is consecrated ground where good Briarwood patients were laid to rest, not far from a spot where ladies of the night were said to frequent in days gone by.

Turn right here, for the lover of nature, this is a sight to behold. It’s wild and untamed as countryside should be, and the ROAD CLOSED signs are obscured by the hawthorn and tangled ivy, but here is the majestic sight of Briarwood lunatic asylum, twenty years closed and derelict. Sooty red brick and Victorian splendour are reminiscent of something from the blitz. The four sided clock tower, rising up from the skeleton of burnt roof joists tells the time no more. The water tower, like some monster dominates, looking sinister to me – why, I cannot say. Even flaming June and summer days cannot conceal the inherent ugliness. A dirty secret of mind blowing proportions, hiding behind trees. Vast
workhouse-like buildings, four storeys high; even now in ruins it's forbidding and intimidating.

There's houses here, some grand, some basic, on and on the buildings seem to never end. Whitewashed, crumbling, faded, rotten wood and twisted metal. Pieces of wall lay where they have fallen, broken from the buildings, but still papered in cheerful print or daubed in graffiti, 'Davey, 21st November 1974 In Jesus I look for salvation', I wonder if Davey ever found it.

The trees and bushes have taken up residence in these blasted buildings. The bindweed, brambles and dog roses now paper the walls and curtain the windows. A mansion-like building stands like an open doll's house, showing faded pink and blue rooms. The mother and baby home I suspect. Why? The colours maybe? No, just a hunch really. Where children once stayed the ugliness is less painful to the eye.

DANGER! UNSTABLE STRUCTURE! KEEP OUT! PRIVATE! 24 HOUR SECURITY ON SITE! I doubt the last one - it's easy to get in. Is it dangerous? Probably. Wasn't it always? Definitely. Threatened by the living, now only rotten joists and lost souls put me at risk - that's a chance I can take. There are wonderful trees, limes, willows and oaks, left to their own devices, trying to soften this scarred and damaged village of folly. As I slip through the fence into the main courtyard, the atmosphere changes. The cool breeze becomes still and a heavy, stifling air surrounds me. I sense strongly that this place is crowded, infested almost. It's here, a presence, but more than that, it's alive with something, the air is buzzing with energy.

I go where my feet take me. The massive buildings leave me awestruck; the ugliness takes my breath away. Window after window smashed and splintered; gaping doorways, rusted fire escapes, archways that lead to nowhere. The smells assault my nose - damp, decay and rot. My eyes pick out the finer details - a broken wheelchair, a little wooden figure used by artists, now an amputee of arms and legs, an old rusted spin dryer - a salvage yard dream. One building pulls me in like a magnet, still standing, doors and windows long forgotten. It's dry and cool inside, my echoing footsteps and scurrying noises make me jump and adrenaline floods my veins. Mice? Rats? It's too dark, shadows move in the gloomy corners. A stairwell ascends directly ahead; dust balls float in the air. I swear I can hear them, faint laughter, shouts, screams, a clanking piano, constant noise.

There's a tree growing across the stairwell, why would it want to do that? Not much light or rain here for a tree. It wants to stop me climbing those stairs. I can hear music. I strain my ears to pick up the tune. 'Bye bye Miss American Pie' - I sing along in my head. You're not going up there, are you? Yes I am. Layers of peeling paint, damp dripping off the ceiling onto metal stairs, gradually rusting and distorting. As I climb, I look down. Old, torn nets stretch across the stairwell, 'safety nets' yes that's good, that's wise. If I scream would I be heard? Yes, by thousands that's for sure.

I reach the top floor, no damp here but dry and dusty, and trapped humidity makes it hard to breathe. I look up, there's a massive hole in the roof, I can see in to the attic, and beyond to blue sky and those fish scale clouds. There's a crow on the roof, I'm so close to the sky, I feel dizzy and hold the handrail to steady myself. I may have found what I am looking for.

There's a room up ahead. It must have been a single room because the others had rows of holes in the walls where curtains round the beds had once existed. Dormitories they were called, rows of metal beds, stiff white sheets, scratchy grey blankets, and nasty flowered curtains, never quite long enough to reach all the way round. A bedside table, scratched and stained, a flimsy chest of draws, a suitcase under the bed, get well cards, if you were lucky, pictures drawn in occupational therapy stuck to the wall above the metal bedstead. A creaking bed with the solid
block mattress covered in a rubber sheet where sleep would elude you
inght after night, listening to the crying and shouting, the swearing and
the ranting, the muttering of the disturbed and the distressed, waiting for
the magic pills to send them into oblivion.

I go in without hesitation. A private room, not a padded cell, but the
door frame shows where sturdy locks once lived. No doubt the absent
door had a little viewing window; I am surprised to see seven white
doves nesting here. They panic at my arrival and flap about, leaving
through the hole in the roof. A mural of sunflowers adorns the walls.
Green stalks, yellow petals, brown centres, very simple, almost childish,
abstract, not much detail. ‘She only had three colours of paint,’ a voice
in my head tells me; I shivered, no she had four, there’s red paint on the
wall as well. ‘SHUT UP!’ I scream at myself.

The anger boils inside me, burning like acid. Why did you keep her
here? How many? How many did you cover up, lie about, tell them they
were ill? Come on, how many? Why?
A flock of starlings flew over my head above the roof; this was her room,
I know it. How long was she here? Did it feel like home? Did she
watch the seasons change from this window, snow in December, cherry
blossom in May, setting sun in August, falling leaves in October, or did
she turn her back on the window and face the wall? There is a shoe in
the corner of the room, a man’s shoe, a brogue, scuffed and worn with
no shoelace.

I leave, back down stairs; you’ve seen it now, you have your memory, you
can go. Just one more thing, round the front of this building I saw flowers
growing. I go outside and the fresh air feels like heaven in my lungs; I
pick big daisies, some dog roses and poppies but they lose their petals
when I touch them, so I collect them in my hands. I brought a crystal; I
take it from my pocket, it’s a citrine crystal, bright yellow and sparkling.
I go back in and lay these things on the stairs to show I was there and for
her. As I walk away it starts to rain, and a white cloud had gathered that
looked like an angel to me.
Take a walk with me, if you would, along a winter-caught lane. The lane is long. Wicked winter wind runs rings around you sending an unwilling army of un-dead leaves, two months too frail for war, up against your ruby red waterproof protector. The winding path glistens with nature’s natural decor; tree carcasses stripped bare, only a thin layer of frozen water covers their naked outstretched arms. Strong-willed evergreen shrubbery remains the only natural barrier against the wind, protecting the chilling pavement from the season. Still, the tarmac’s sparkle is outmatched only by the verge’s frost spangled blades, once green and free, waiting again for spring’s soft, warm embrace.

The road is long. The temperature biting but that is no match for you and your Gramps. Your wellies, half the size of his and spotty in pattern, squeak in reciprocated excitement at the chance to run and crunch in the frozen undergrowth, no thought to the destruction of nature’s frosty artwork. You yourself are filled with the delight of winter and the opportunity to be with your only granddad; the best granddad in the whole world in your eyes with his persistently cheerful smile, rosy cheeks and caring nature. The destination does not matter yet remains exhilarating due to the promise of ice-cream as a reward for our trails. His large gloved hand protects your own and a feeling of safety wards away any worries that dare enter your hat-wrapped head as the dark creeps in, turning the exposed extended arms into horrid claws. As the aging sun retires behind the glistening hills, tired after yet another day-long battle to defrost the world, you feel comforted and secure. You and your Gramps against the world.
I was waiting for an appointment with my mathematics tutor on a March evening. I have always despised maths; it’s never been more than gibberish to me, a bizarre language that boasts no meaning whatsoever. I was five minutes early, so I stood at the foot of my tutor’s road, immersing myself in Radiohead’s seventh studio album, In Rainbows, which was playing on my iPod. Track six merged into seven and I had no idea that this song, Reckoner, was going to become so important to me. Daylight dwindled and was replaced by the mysterious night. The windows in the house opposite mirrored me as I stood there, captivated. A creature idly crept by; bright, indulgent, bemused eyes firmly transfixed upon me, the feline perhaps acting as a reminder for my purpose in being there. I must have appeared ridiculous, clinging on to the mere morsels of time that remained, willing for it to stand still for just another five minutes before I had to face the horror of Pythagoras and his mind-numbingly dull theory. This meditative state brought on by the song seemed to erase the relevance of the tutor session, the crashing cymbal driven percussion, teasing into a guitar riff that still causes my soul to stir, was all that was relevant. I knew that a part of me had changed, some part of my life was going to be different from now on and as a fifteen year old boy this was a rather frightening concept to grasp; yet the song was choking me, taking away my ability to check the time and realise that I was fifteen minutes late for the session. Time didn’t matter and maths certainly didn’t either. The fluidity and almost forgiving nature of the song bred a sense of carelessness. I stood there no longer waiting, but reflecting. ‘Reckoner // Take me with you.’ Sitting on the curb, I confirmed the irrelevance of maths and waved a white flag to my education in recompense for discovering a far greater work of art.

I did not attend the class. Instead, I sat at the foot of the road on the cold stone for an hour until my father collected me. As I sit now listening to the very same song, my foot taps to the drum beat, my fingers trace the guitar riff - all I can think of is that evening and what it taught me - if there is ever a more pleasing activity on offer than learning age old equations, always go with the former.
REVIEWS
SPAGHETTI WESTERN SERIES:  
A BULLET FOR THE GENERAL (1966)

2nd February 2013  
Peninsula Arts, Jill Craigie Cinema, University of Plymouth

Review by Rory LeBoutillier

The release of Quentin Tarantino’s highly anticipated Django Unchained renewed great interest in the Western genre. Tarantino’s film pays homage to classic 1960’s films and Peninsula Arts recognised this by screening the original Django alongside the highly stylised A Bullet For The General. The latter follows the Zapata, an important revolutionary army during the Mexican Revolution, exemplifying the political struggles that left many natives in a state of poverty.

A Bullet For The General tells the story of El Chuncho (Gian Maria Volonté), the leader of a Mexican bandit gang who forms an unlikely partnership with Bill ‘Niño’ Tate (Lou Castles), an unnerved, sophisticated American on the run from the U.S government. The bandits ambush a train carrying Mexican soldiers and conflict between the two ensues; the gang dispose of the armed soldiers, with a lengthy gunfight that lacks the extremities of violence and realism typical of other recent film releases.

Spaghetti Westerns today hold a special place amongst the generation who grew up watching them, as well as attaining a cult following. However, the 1970’s saw Hollywood fail to renew the genre, and since then the strength of the Western film has declined. A Bullet For The General represents the Spaghetti Western at its peak, and at just over two hours long the film still sustains the excitement, intrigue and grit that made the Spaghetti Western a classic genre of the 1960’s. The English subtitles (the film is in Italian/Spanish) enhance the film rather than hinder it.

Jill Craigie Cinema boasts a pleasant and enjoyable experience; the seats are comfortable, and the compact room provides an excellent view from any position within the cinema. The quality of the projected film was emphasised by the removal of film trailers and lengthy advertisements. The Jill Craigie Cinema is available to the general public, as well as students, consistently running film series’ such as the Spaghetti Western, and representing all film genres to offer a rich and varied selection.

A Bullet For The General is full of action and suspense, and ends with a truly thrilling climax. With Quentin Tarantino breathing new life into the genre, it has given moviegoers an incentive to watch films that built foundations of many action/adventure, sci-fi, and fantasy films. El Chuncho’s parting words aptly sum up the ideals of the revolution, ‘don’t buy bread with that money, hombre! Buy dynamite! Dynamite!’.
JAMES EDEN’S FORMATIVE AND ULA DAJERLING’S DARK MATERIALISM

Both: 26th January – 28th March 2013
Plymouth Arts Centre, Looe Street, Plymouth

Review by Jessica Holliland

Formative and Dark Materialism are two engaging exhibitions that tie together beautifully through embodiments and suggestive ideas that surround new life, impermanent death, visual flux and the demands of a quiet involvement from the viewer.

James Eden is a celebrated contemporary artist and graduate of Plymouth University, who is now based in London. His collaborative short film Burst was awarded the Jerwood Drawing Prize in 2010. Formative is a constructed body of work within Plymouth Arts Centre and has been curated as part of a programme to coincide with Dajerling’s Dark Materialism; you can find Eden’s unique drawings displayed around the Arts Centre. Eden carries through the ideas of visual flux, re-creation, form and impermanence with his atmospheric and ephemeral drawings, but it is his video drawing pieces which are the triumphs of his exhibition.

Fluid Crust: After the Earth is a visual masterpiece that demonstrates the birth of beauty through the degradation and destruction of a simpler object. There is an aesthetic fascination with the material qualities that it presents to the viewer, whilst visually projecting an other-worldliness. It stands alone as a creative work but also as a curatorial choice to mirror Dajerling’s work; Fluid Crust: After the Earth is the star of James Eden’s Formative collection and something to be experienced if you have the chance.

Dajerling’s exhibition space is elegantly lit with golden light that softens and warms the large pieces of alien-like black material that she works
with. A pendulous, oversized chunk of what appears to be coal swirls in a sentient manner over a small naked bulb, casting shadows over the wall and ceiling as it sways. Its motions feel more ominous and confusing with no source clearly responsible for its movement.

A small, low table shines golden as it imperceptibly and organically evolves into its next form, quietly suggesting the natural evolution of the abject and the richness of potential change. Atop tall, minimalist plinths loiter bubbling and bent sculptures no bigger than loaves of bread; each one simultaneously repels and attracts you with its frozen motion that appears as if it could bubble back into volcanic action at any second.

The series of photographic images show many more of these deceptive creations and allow the viewer to study the works in more depth from a distanced perspective. Each photograph shows something different with the forms finding recognisable shapes and visual plays, ranging from a Greek chariot in motion, to a broken doll. They are all full of movement and potential energy, forcing the viewer to ask themselves whether the sculpture is growing or decomposing.

Dajerling’s work consistently blurs death and birth, inanimate and sentient. Her approach questions our preconceptions about complex ideas such as deformity, as well as simple assumptions we make about colour and materials.

The two exhibitions are unique and infinitely viewable in their own right, with each addressing a very individual visual aesthetic that the viewer can’t help but engage with. Whilst they exist in their own personal creative sphere, they are also silently and persuasively working together through the suggestions of destruction and rebirth, form remaking form, and the quiet strength of the ever changing evolution of earth, form and creation. This is a well curated and interesting conceptual joining of artists who both come from very different geographical, materialistic and visual fields to create a thought-provoking and intellectually exciting experience.
As the power of the contemporary art world begins to shift to the East, two artists from the region came to Plymouth to explore the very notion of dispersals in language, geography, and culture, and the complexities that arise from it. The facets of difference which separate cultures can be great, but the bringing together of paintings by Milenko Prvacki and Ian Woo, through a partnership between Plymouth University and Singapore’s LaSalle University, aimed to consider how art could reflect this and perhaps even overcome it.

From the nation of Singapore, Prvacki and Woo bring an interesting discourse in regards to the perceived lack of a distinct artistic identity in East Asia, in the contemporary era. Their work embraces this, freeing it from the constraints of Western perception and allows them to explore an international language; the vernacular of a place playing host to the streams of difference running through it as paint on a brush.

The paintings in the exhibition, momentous in size, although not in a compensatory sense, allow space for exposing the detail and complex, fragmentary composition of both artists’ work. Ian Woo’s pieces in particular display an explosive use of colour – glimpses of objects and places layered on top of each other, growing and expanding until resembling something akin to the surface of a rock or crystal. The viewer may be overwhelmed by the sight of the first layer, or alternatively revel in the visual joy of watching it grow further and further. As the painting threatens to break through the surface of the canvas, more languages congregate and collide with one another.

The marrying of these artists works effectively - this is clear upon entering the large space – as Prvacki’s work compliments Woo’s in its relative tranquillity. Indiscernible objects carry the same anamorphic quality, floating below and above one another in the same body of water, Prvacki’s brush capturing the process as they rise… or sink. The inclusion of the paintings’ titles float amongst them, bringing to light the ambiguous nature of language and meaning, and allowing the viewer to consider the fragile nature of the connections that man creates with the world around us, whether it is in Plymouth or Singapore.
THE RESISTANCE SERIES: THE RELUCTANT REVOLUTIONARY

11th February 2013
Peninsula Arts, Jill Cragie Cinema, University of Plymouth

Review by Alex Shipman

Any audience will find Sean McAllister’s documentary into a country marred by social and political unrest insightful, entrancing and chilling. The Yorkshire filmmaker bravely plunges into a depraved 21st century Yemen and follows the life of local tour operator Kais, as he struggles to secure the welfare of his family. With tourism rendered practically impossible, Kais has very little income and his shortcomings aptly characterise the country’s dire state of affairs. Employing dark humour throughout, McAllister presents us with a rare window through which we can watch events unfold.

The central location of the film and the revolution is called Change Square, situated in the middle of the city. Described light-heartedly by McAllister as the ‘Arabic Glastonbury’, the viewer may manage a smile as the filmmaker chews on the local drug derivative of the Khat plant. Kais can be seen chewing the plant repeatedly throughout the film as the drug allows him to briefly escape the harsh reality of his homeland. The comparison between Change Square and a festival is made more fitting by the music and chanting that echoes across the city, along with the overwhelming want for peace.

In a place riddled with violence and constant threats from a tyrannical regime, it is clear that the citizens’ desperation for change does not have a specific agenda. Kais contemplates the potential benefits of a functioning democracy, and frantically seeks freedom from the present condition. The form of escape sees many willing to stand with bare torsos in the face of an assault rifle, with no fear of death. The victory following the excursion of President Ali Abdullah Saleh ensures freedom and the end of his 33 year tyrannical rule.

Helped somewhat by the inexpensive camera that is used, the film captures the necessary realism. It also enables McAllister to film inconspicuously as a larger camera would arouse suspicions immediately. As it is positioned close to his waist at the most dangerous of times, tension is built and this is important in forming an unbreakable connection with the audience.

The introduction to the Change Square enables the audience to observe the contrasting personalities of Kais and McAllister. Kais, the all too wise Easterner cautiously leads the less informed McAllister so that he does not draw too much attention to the camera. Kais displays restraint, realizing the danger of the situation in contrary to the Brit who voices the thoughts of the viewer, despite being in a live war zone. Civilians camp along the streets, welcoming the camera in order to send their message to anyone living outside the foreboding that clouds Yemen. Change Square is subject to gunfire ordered by the Government and one’s sympathies become largely invested when the shaky camera
shows men, women and children who have been seriously injured, in many cases fatally. McAllister learns from Kais that he is believed to be a journalist. The audience is then invited to the confines of his room as he considers the possibility that he may be captured. Whilst the threat is very real, the inclusion of this scene adds a captivating quality to the picture.

The Reluctant Revolutionary is a moving production. Wobbly camera work and images of tragedy install a sense of bitter realism. Any audience should watch on in sheer shock as McAllister courageously yet somewhat brazenly waltzes through an Eastern hell with his camera shooting from the hip.

PIGEON THEATRE’S
THE SMELL OF ENVY

13th February 2013
Peninsula Arts, Roland Levinsky Building, University of Plymouth

Review by Tom Rowland

Theatre that stinks; an experience odourlessly left lingering on those lucky enough to catch a whiff of Pigeon Theatre’s pongy performance The Smell of Envy. This immersive, intimate and experimental (lecture) performance invites its audiences to reflect on the ‘smell of yesterday’. The Pigeon Theatre Company, a Manchester and Leeds-based group, founded in 2001, use non-traditional spaces and unconventional social engagement to create innovative theatre.

I was greeted with a generous glass of smoked whiskey sours, my senses were immediately tantalised as they recreated aromas of a bar cabinet. We were handed out various numbered vials to be opened and inhaled at potent points during the performance: Spring 1994: White musk (for men), the flat in the Elephant and Castle (smell no. 48); Summer 1965: Potato peelings and soap, my mother’s kitchen (smell no. 217); October 1956: Printer’s ink, the old house with the linoleum floor (smell no. 18). The auditorium was pumped with fragrances and cooking demonstrations took place; an industrial power fan also assisted a truly immersive experience. We were invited to fill out short questionnaires to contribute our own memories and smell associations, this was engaging and interesting especially to hear some of the fellow audience’s interpretations selected and relayed by Peter Kennedy, (anonymously of course).

During the entirety of The Smell of Envy we are invited to consider whether it really matters that the limbic system of the cerebral cortex plays an important role in the consolidation of information from
The Smell of Envy

A (LECTURE) THEATRE PERFORMANCE FOR THOSE OF YOU WHO LOVE THE SMELL OF YESTERDAY...

the memory. Apparently, it is where emotions, triggered by smell, occur before articulation and occur by neuron association; the remembering of a life event or emotion attached to it occurs through the hippocampus of the medial temporal lobe. The jargon didn’t stop here: recreating the mind’s processes, the ‘synapses of the retina to the fallamos’ is put to use. As digital theatre, using a monitor display embedded into the front of the worktop downstage set, we are presented with placards held under a mounted camera by Graham Seaton. The placards translate these theories into action; various photographs, maps and symbols (images of associations contributing to brain stimulation and spatial memory) are shown externalised, illustrating neuron processes, making things slightly clearer.

However, a second screen, again mounted into the worktop on stage left pageants pages of Power Point slides, and determines that the bombardment and abundance of scientific terms has of course been satirical. Technical stage manager Kamini Patel speeds through complex diagrams and terminology; through the Posterior Incorporal, Anterior Temporal, Superior, Perivale and Entorhinal cortex; the performers attempting to verbalise them, lecturing beyond comprehension. It is complete gobbledygook, aurally and purposefully a load of guff. A reflection or suggestion that sometimes it is simply nice to reflect and be taken back by smell induced memory, other times not so nice, but always emotional.

Ultimately we are left to contemplate the claim that perhaps science has no more entitlement to the truth than art, that memory is no more scientist than artist. Our memories are not possessions, but mental constructions of signifiers created by the demands of present recollection. This is an informative, but mostly reflective and poignant piece, brought to you by a lab technician, curator and magician, artist and sceptic, optimistic and liar; it is a multimedia-rich and interactive piece with a light-hearted approach to science, that simultaneously tickles pink and plucks at the heartstrings.
True to the Pigeon Theatre’s Artistic Director, ‘performer, not actress’, Anna Fenemore, we are presented with the entertaining character accounts and memories connected with specific smells, combining them with reasoning, and with cognitive science. Depictive, dramatic narratives merge with learned experience; a jargon fuelled and illustrated diagrammatic lecture attempts to put some reasoning behind why we recall and construct our memories from scent. An intimate achievement that is both refreshing and nostalgic, stimulating its audiences’ amygdalae.

**IDA KAR: BOHEMIAN PHOTOGRAPHER. PORTRAITS OF ARTISTS FROM PARIS, LONDON AND ST IVES**

26th January - 13th April 2013
Plymouth City Museum and Art Gallery, North Hill, Plymouth

Review by Sarah Bowman

Ida Kar (1908-74) is a key and influential figure in the history of establishing photography as a celebrated and accepted form of fine art. The subjects of her photographs were some of the most acclaimed artists and writers of Europe and Russia throughout the 1950s and 1960s. The exhibition at the Plymouth City Museum and Art Gallery captures figures such as Man Ray, John Piper, Alberto Giacometti and George Braque.
Kar was born in Russia and educated in Paris. She was introduced to many writers and artists during her education, one of whom was German surrealist painter and photographer Heinrich Heidersberfer. Heidersberfer worked with Kar to help produce experimental photographs, and instigated her fascination with photography. Several years later, after Kar married in 1944, she moved to London with her husband; writer, artist and advocate of the avant-garde, Victor Musgrave.

While in London they found themselves at the heart of a bohemian literary and artistic social scene, and it was this extravagant life style that inevitably influenced and inspired Kar’s incredible photographic work. With few permanent ties and an involvement with musical, artistic and literary pursuits, Kar was surrounded by a creative and unconventional lifestyle, thus inspiring her energetic and visually captivating talent for photography.

The exhibition focuses on the documentary phase of her career, exhibiting work from her time in Paris, London and St Ives. Drawn from the Ida Kar Archive, the exhibition includes 40 framed prints of her flawless black and white portraits, each of which portray a fascinating insight into the post war lives of her subjects. Kar photographed well-established artists in their studios in preparation for her solo exhibition Forty Artists from London to Paris.

Two rather striking photographs from this category are Georges Braque; Modern bromide print, Paris (1960) and André Breton; Modern bromide print, Paris (1960). Both photographs were captured using a Rolleiflex camera, from which Kar has produced a pair of beautifully alluring medium format photos. The stunning portrait of Georges Braque, surrounded by a cluttered and busy workplace made up of tools and abstract paintings, uses geometric and solid lines of each canvas. This combination creates a powerful documentary portrait, in addition to the soft lighting cast across the photograph from the right hand side.

The calming effect produced is contrasted with the chaos of the studio, and results in a busy and intriguing image.

The second of these two photographs frames André Breton sat at a table surrounded by papers, paintings, sculptures and household items, creating a busy and personal insight into his working life. This cluttered scene creates the sense that Breton is part of his work, combing the two in a framed photograph. Furthermore, the lighting enhances the visual array of tones, improves the quality of the image and magnifies the main subject. It appears that Kar has established relationships with each of the subjects shown in the exhibition, enabling her to capture some visually interesting and revealing photographs about the artists and their work.

Furthermore, some of Kar’s photographs have been accompanied at the exhibition by her subjects’ own work. For example, the photographs of John Piper, Bryan Wynter and Terry Frost are each partnered with displays of their artwork. This beautiful combination of photographs and paintings successfully illustrates Kar’s essential influence, encouraging and working towards the social acceptance of photography as a fine art. Kar’s beautiful and captivating exhibition at the Plymouth City Museum and Art Gallery creates an interesting and engaging display of compelling photographs from renowned and picturesque locations across Europe and Russia. The wonderful display of photographic work is enhanced by some of the most recognised and established figures of Bohemian art.
Twelfth Night is beautifully bittersweet; boxing, tap dancing and fishnet stockings are interwoven to form a classic tale of mistaken identity and forbidden love. Propeller, an all-male Shakespeare Company, engage with Shakespeare’s plays by mixing a modern physical aesthetic with a rigorous approach to the text, updating the original comedy for a modern audience.

Shakespeare’s lyricisms are stripped back to reveal the harshness behind the poetry and the comedy. The director Edward Hall explores the balance between tragedy and comedy during a scene in which a practical joke is played on Malvolio, who ends up blindfolded, taunted and locked in a cellar whilst wearing a leather thong. Using Viola’s line ‘I am not what I am’ as their starting point, Propeller play on a tragic case of mistaken identity. Hall focuses on the idea of a façade; nothing in the play is as it seems. This gave the production a deliciously sinister undertone, emphasised by the masked chorus, who lingered silently in the background, watching the performance from the side of the stage. The concept of being in love with someone that you can’t have is explored with comedic consequences and exaggerated by the all-male cast.

Propeller is influenced by film, music, animation and mask work. The chorus were made up of masked cast members; they were the revellers at the party, Feste’s followers and half remembered ghosts from past events, partially hidden behind the stage curtain, perched on cabinets that moved around the stage, creating seamless scene changes. They produced sound effects using glasses filled with water, and even whistled to make the birdsong in Malvolio’s garden. Instruments brought the play to life, as well as perfectly aiding the dramatic tension between comedy and tragedy. Hall joked that although being able to sing is not a strict requirement for the cast, each member has to be able to ‘make some sort of noise’. Everyone brings their own skill set. Where Liam O’Brien sings and plays guitar as Feste, Finn Hanlon tap dances
as his character Maria. This not only brings Shakespeare up to date, but showcases each actor’s individual skill, making Propeller a goldmine bursting with both individual and collective talent.

The all-male casting brought Shakespeare back to its roots for a modern audience, and Viola, played by Joseph Chance, was able to make the audience forget that the actor was a man masquerading as a woman; not an easy task. Propeller achieved the comedic balance perfectly whilst retaining believability, particularly in the case of the extravagant Olivia, played by Ben Allen. The directors already have a person in mind when they select a part for an actor. Ben was chosen for Olivia’s part as they share the same flamboyant, peacockish character.

The importance of balancing tragedy with comedy is something that is made clear to the audience. With Malvolio dressed in yellow stockings, fishnets and a leather thong, Propeller has turned Shakespeare into a loud, raucous party. Through the cast’s ability to have just as much fun as the audience, theatregoers leave with a sense of elation and a renewed love for Shakespeare.