



**WORK
OF
ART**

ISSUE 06

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Stanisław Drzewiecki

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PICASSO THE MINOTAUR

When you think of Picasso, you think of the love-it-or-hate-it cubist paintings on large canvases. Your first association is probably not "Picasso the graphic artist," "Picasso the illustrator". Picasso is overdone and obvious. However, on the 12th of October a new Picasso exhibition opened at the National Museum, and it aims to show you something you wouldn't expect.

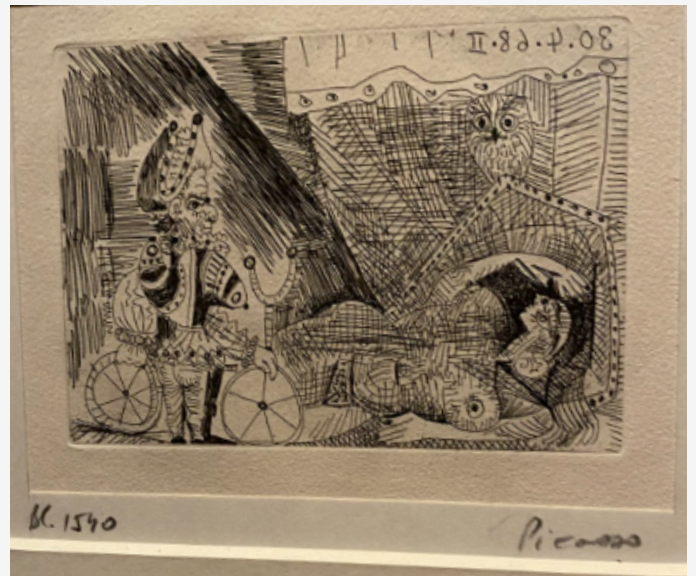
The first weekend was a success, I'm happy to report! On Saturday the weather seemed to have warmed up deliberately to please the museum-goers. Once I passed the crowd going up the stairs, I had to stand in line to get in. When I finally did, my expectations were positively subverted.

I had expected large cubist paintings borrowed from famous foreign museums - Les Femmes d'Alger, The Weeping Woman or Man with a Guitar. What I actually saw was a collection of lithographs spanning several rooms, as well as some drawings and ceramic pieces. As was typical for artists of the time, Picasso went through extensive technical training, but chose to paint his figures abstracted. In the lithographs we can see the interplay between the various styles he used and played with - in some pieces he uses several styles at once - one figure may be abstracted, the other stylised but more realistic, and the background full of squiggle-lined shading and indistinct forms.



A whole room was dedicated to a series of lithographs depicting his muse in a Polish cloak. The cloak's story? In 1948 Picasso had come to Poland for the World Congress of Intellectuals in Defence of Peace, a Soviet-organised event with a very grandiose name.

When the Soviets, eager to include him in their propaganda, had sent their men to his seaside home, where he was living in self-imposed exile, to convince him to participate in the congress, Picasso told them he wanted to go for a swim. They followed him down to the beach, and the artist eventually agreed, but one challenge remained for the Communists: he had no passport whatsoever. Desperate times called for desperate measures, so the Soviets resorted to flying him there on a military plane.



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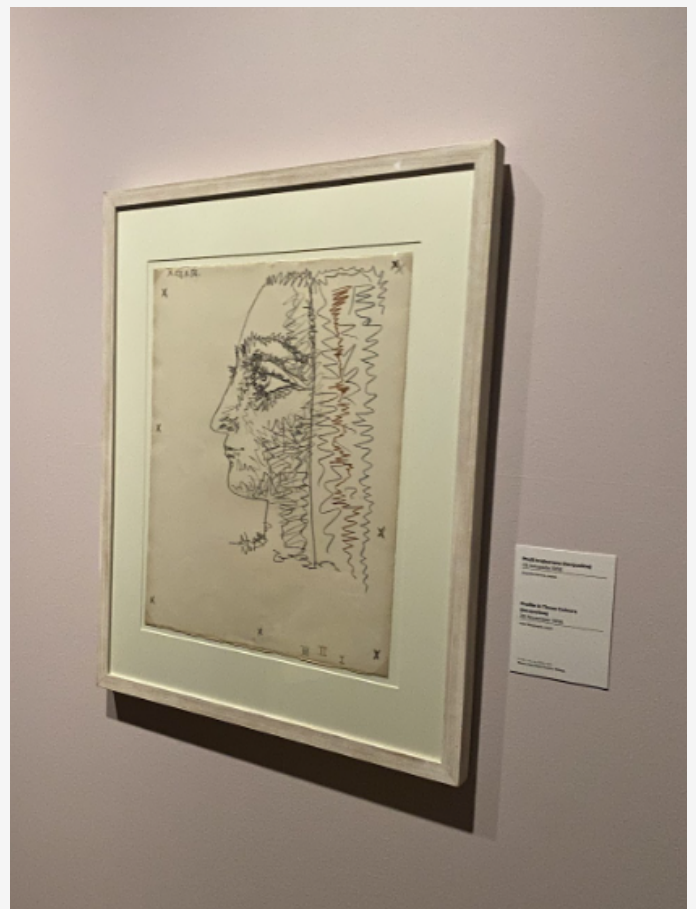
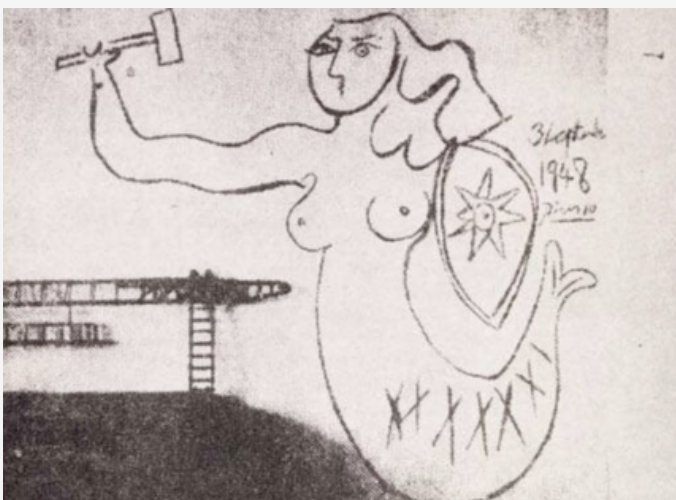
EWA RACZKOWSKA

The visit was a sensation. He was shown around by Soviet delegations, and when they took him to the construction site of Koło district apartment buildings, he drew a mermaid with a hammer on the wall of one of the flats. It became so renowned that the irritated owners painted over it, tired of the curious visitors. Also while in Poland, Picasso bought an embroidered Polish folk coat and gave it to his wife, Françoise Gilot, and proceeded to create enough versions of it to fill a room.



What do Picasso and mythological labyrinths have in common? His classical-inspired pieces, including several illustrations for published books, also made an appearance at the exhibition. Artists have historically drawn from the classical tradition, but Picasso's approach seems to have been unique: out of all the mythical characters, he identified most with the Minotaur. Considering his rocky personal history with people close to him, particularly women, it's quite telling. But hey, at least he was self-aware?

If you live in Warsaw and have some time, I certainly advise you to pay Picasso a visit. Whether you love him, hate him, or don't know what to think of him, this may just change your mind, or at least show you a side of him you haven't seen before. As for myself, I know I'll be going again. It closes on the 14th of January 2024; there's more than ample time for visits and revisits.



THE HESITANT FIANCÉE AS A PROTEST TO “BE A LADY”



"The Hesitant Fiancée", Auguste Toulmouche, 1866

In 1866, Auguste Toulmouche, a French artist, depicted a scene of a bride-to-be getting ready for her marriage. There are three other women present in the parlor room with her but the viewer's attention is focused on the woman in the center of the painting, striking with her solemn expression up for interpretation. It would be no surprise if the painting portrays an arranged marriage, which was common at that time. Yet, Auguste's depiction of the women's negative stance towards that arrangement was untraditional at the time of its inception. As primarily evident in his title "The hesitant fiancée", the girl is reluctant about her fate. She stands as a symbol of rebellion. A symbol of agitated women who are stripped of their personal choices and have 'had enough', thus left with nothing to say but an ignorant direct stare that speaks louder than any words of annoyance. The arranged marriage stands for any other societal pressures of womanhood that appear in women's realities from an early age- to which they are hopeless.

When analyzing the piece, and its relevance to modern life, it reminded me of an especially effective manifesto of the psyche of a woman posted by the *Girls. Girls. Girls.* Magazine, where Cynthia Nixon, an American actor recorded the words of Camille Rainville in a poem about the negating expectations towards women.

"Be a Lady They Said" was first published in the „Writings of a Furious Woman“ in 2017.

"Be a lady they said. Don't talk too loud. Don't talk too much. Don't take up space. Don't sit like that. Don't stand like that. Don't be intimidating. Why are you so miserable? Don't be a bitch. Don't be so bossy. Don't be assertive. Don't overreact. Don't be so emotional. Don't cry. Don't yell. Don't swear. Be passive. Be obedient. Endure the pain. Be pleasing. Don't complain."

The expectations society places on women range from their behavior to looks and are expressed in a way that parallels the manner in which these passing comments are made: bluntly and without consideration. Every sentence contradicts its preceding one, forming a swiftly crafted trap that stifles the listener's attempt to devise a solution as each new obligation arises. The manifesto proves there is no one definition of 'being a lady' as you will not impress. You will never satisfy.

The woman depicted by Toulmouche is isolated from the scene. She sits comfortably in a position of respite and inactivity. Her face shows vindication, exhaustion, she does not respond to the sentimentality of the figures surrounding her. Those girls demonstrate the naivety that comes with girlhood. Perhaps, they still need to realize the problem of conforming to what society expects from you. In this context, they believe that marriage is their dream. Women are compelled to separate who they truly are from who others want them to be.

I found her piercing stare to incorporate the drain of women throughout the centuries. The emptiness we feel recognizing society wants us to;

„Be nothing. Be less than nothing."



Left: Cynthia Nixon

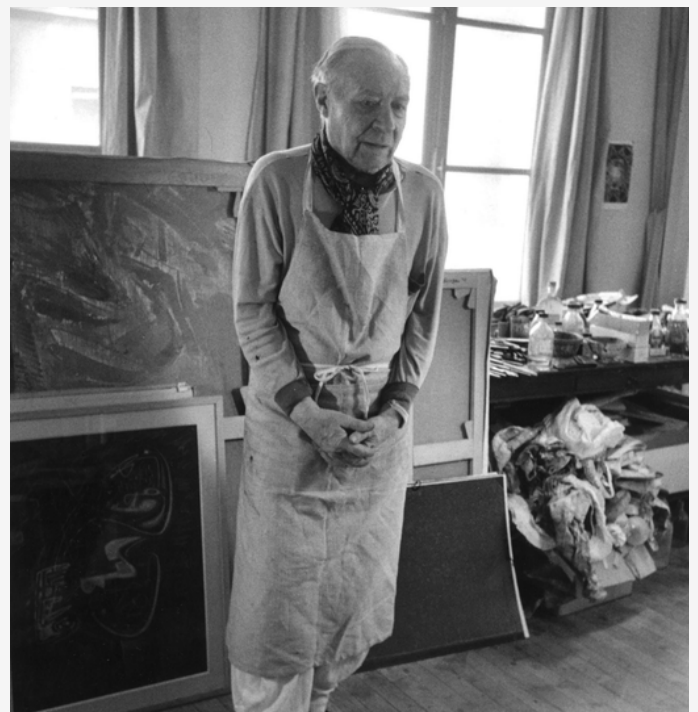
HOW DOES THE PAINTING "BIRTH OF BIRDS 1925" DEPICT BOTH ANDRÉ MASSON'S LIFE AND HIS ASSOCIATION WITH SURREALISM?



André Masson, originally from North of Paris, influenced his art by a special blend of creative and personal elements. He changed his early exposure to non-conformist concepts when his mother, a teacher who was also a passionate supporter of his creative pursuits, gave him uncommon and thought-provoking books to start him on his quest as an artist. This led to his large interest and investigation of surrealism.

In the early 1920s a key player in the Surrealist movement, André Breton saw Masson's creative potential. Breton was attracted by Masson's early paintings because they showed signs of a fundamental tenet of surrealism — automatism, a method of creating art that is impulsive and unplanned. Breton was impressed and extended an invitation to Masson to take part in other Surrealist activities. Within the pages of various magazines, Masson explored erotic themes, creating works that often exuded a violent and surreal vision, and providing a unique perspective on the suspension of the self. What refers to his capacity to transcend conventional depictions and enter a space where the lines separating distinct identities are blurred or crossed.

André Masson skillfully managed the complexity of the early 20th century by incorporating the turbulent political backdrop of his period into his works. As a moving example of this strategy, "The Birth of Birds" captures the turmoil and carnage of World War I in its creative story. The artwork's chaotic composition mirrors the external world's turmoil during this period, highlighting the artist's profound connection with the surrounding chaos. Moreover, Masson did fight in World War I, experiencing an extended period of speechlessness as a result. His artwork's dreamy atmosphere and abstract shapes reflect this silence. Furthermore, these components stand for his internal psychological anguish, and his attempt to communicate his feelings and experiences following the horror of the war. The birds in the painting serve as a symbol of Masson's desire to escape the earthly chaos and constraints. They symbolize a need for safety away from the turbulent outside world. The way the feminine shape is portrayed may explore the concept of sexuality as desire—not always in a beneficial manner, but as something to be sought after. This might involve looking at the complexity and paradoxes present in human desire, as well as the act of desiring itself. The body becomes a tool for conveying the severe psychological impacts of wartime trauma, going beyond simple physicality to symbolize the turbulent interaction between chaotic beyond circumstances and inside wants.



IMMERSIVE EXHIBITION

From October 12 to December 10, 2023, in the National Opera in Warsaw you can admire an extraordinary exhibition. The London collective Marshmallow Laser Feast (MLF) created a show titled "Evolver" in cooperation with the patron BMW Art Club. MFL is one of Europe's leading creators of immersive exhibitions. British artists collaborate with, among others, the Barbican Art Center, the Royal Shakespeare Company and musicians like Miley Cyrus and U2. The patron of the BMW exhibition assumes that art is the future and that imagination and creativity are the driving force for the development of all areas of life. The London MLF created a spectacle in which modern technology blurs the boundaries between science and art and expands our way of experiencing the world. Artists from MLF, using aesthetic, scientific, visual and sound effects, created a virtual reality of a beautiful universe that appeals to our senses and emotions. The immersive nature of the exhibition means that you are not merely an observer but are taken into a space where the only thing that exists is the narrative that surrounds you and compels you to experience deep emotions, such as empathy. The creators of this exhibition were inspired by the convergence of science and art. They intended to merge science and art to explore the complex processes essential to life. They aimed to underline the connection with scientific accuracy and artistic and emotional depth in art. The basis of their work were meditation techniques. They also took into account, for example, breathing exercises. The immersive exhibition is intended to force us to reflect on human's place in the universe and within nature.

Outstanding artists from various fields of culture and different areas of the world participated in the creation of this exhibition. They included the legendary film director -Terrence Malick; RadioHead guitarist - Jonny Greenwood and famous musicians like Howard Skempton and Jon Hopkins. The voice of Cate Blanchett (winner of two Oscars) guides us through the entire exhibition. She reads a text by the renowned poet Daisy Lafarge and there is also VR in the exhibition. They utilize cutting-edge VR technology to demonstrate the ten minute meditation and the complex multi-dimensional projection. In such great company we go along the path of oxygen traveling through the overwhelming and astonishing ecosystem of the human body. The images that are contained in the photographs of MLF artists are in fact not ordinary works of nature. In terms of colors and shapes, they are perfectly reminiscent of human works, but this time created by nature.

All stimuli: visual, auditory and spiritual experiences create an extraordinary work of art within ourselves. One of the creators of MLF put it extremely accurately, deeply and poetically: "If you could explore yourself, you would discover that just beneath your skin you are a branching being made of rivers, whirlpools and waves visible in the tides of existence. The world flows to you, and you flow to the world"

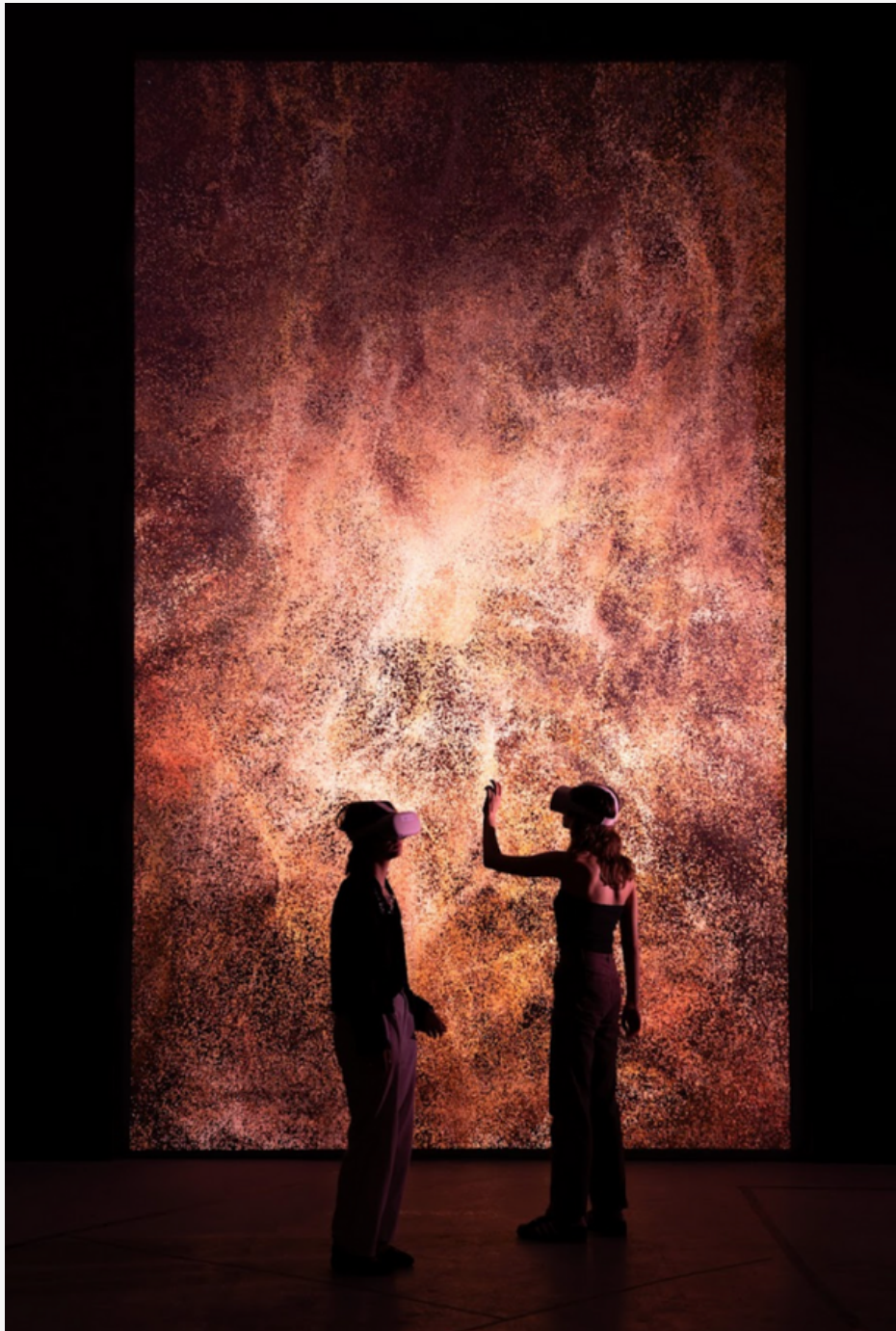
The London collective Marshmallow Laser Feast created a show that consists of three parts. The first part is a relaxation room. The second is the meditation room, which is an introduction to the third, last part of the exhibition. In the second part of the exhibition, within twenty minutes, we have the opportunity to watch a VR session against the background of a monumental video projection. The third part titled "Evolver" is the end of the exhibition. It is a gallery with digital works by MLF artists, where you can also view additional texts and videos that make us reflect even more deeply on what we have seen.

The "Evolver" project shows, in the form of a multimedia exhibition the sense of how technology can expand the possibilities of artists. This project connects the macrocosm with the microcosm of the human body. In this exhibition, the link is the human breath, shown and experienced in a way that we have not seen before.



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Photos from the exhibition:



„HOW THE 18TH CENTURY COURT HAS SHAPED/INFLUENCED TODAY'S RED CARPET”

"What you wear, how you move, and who you meet all tell a story." This is a sentence that welcomes you into Kensington Palace, one of the most exciting fashion exhibitions in London. „Crown to couture” takes you through the World of the Georgian Royal Court in the 18th century, demonstrating its impact on the high fashion of today.

In the past, your appearance, manners, and dress said all about you. How people viewed you could have a huge impact on your future career. Today the red carpet is the most important global stage for fashion, culture, and politics. Each segment of the exhibition shows the resemblance of fashion traditions that have formed over the years.

When walking into the exhibition we are presented with the most important rule of the red carpet: come as the most fabulous version of yourself. As we learn later on, this also applied to the Georgian court. Women of the time took up to six hours to get ready before any major event (eg. balls or courtly dinners) – their bodies were powdered from head to toe by servants, makeup and wigs were used, etc. It was very common for women to invite guests to watch the whole process. Now we can get the same experience, by watching multiple ‘behind the scenes’ videos, in which the process of getting ready for a big event by celebrities is being shown to the whole world, step by step.

Arriving, and making a big entrance was, and still is, one of the most important parts of presenting yourself to the media and paparazzi. The example shown in the exhibition is a memorable appearance made by Billy Porter, who was carried in on the arms of six gold-clad shirtless men at the 2019 Met Gala – “Sun of God”, which is a great modern example of this fashion cardinal rule.

This exhibition is extremely special because we can take a closer look at the astoundingly gorgeous looks from the Met Gala, worn by some of the most known celebrities. Starting from Billie Eilish and the silver suit of Timothee Chalamet, through Lizzo and her flute, and ending on the iconic creation recently presented on the red carpet, by the one and only, Blake Lively with her dress representing the Empire State Building, which later on transformed into the Statue of Liberty, and many more.

We can take a closer look at the process of making a gown, what designers want to express by their creations. What really caught my eye was how visible it was what they were trying to say. You couldn't interpret it in your own way, because everything was clear and understandable.

Another great aspect is that the rooms are placed in a perfect order such that each stage has its own dedicated room and description. We can dive into the world of celebrities and 18th century nobility.

The exhibition at Kensington Palace takes us through the captivating history of the Georgian Royal Court while simultaneously capturing the influence this epoch has had on modern-day fashion. The rooms create a comprehensive, chronological guide through the different trends and eras, and paint a beautiful picture of the artistry of garment-making throughout the years. „Crown to Couture” is available in Kensington Palace in London between April 5th and October 29th 2023.





FASHION SHOW COMING ALIVE

With another Paris Fashion Week come new and surprising innovations. Japanese fashion designer Jun Takahashi cast a hauntingly enchanting atmosphere onto his Undercover Spring/Summer 2024 "Deep Mist" collection. Takahashi, whose label is appropriately called Undercover, showcased his designs in a windowless, underground car park in Paris that had been stripped to raw concrete, with sepia-tone lighting and shattered and lit chandeliers lying on the floor wrapped in tulle. Every seat housed a graphic scarf with folklore illustrations, defining the collection with a haunting energy. The atmosphere was set by the music, from Wim Wenders's 1987 movie, "Wings of Desire" about two angels who can hear what humans living in Berlin are saying and thinking. They hear their distress from living in a city divided by the Wall and which still felt the damage of the Second World War and therefore offer comfort and hope to those people.

The models who opened the show wore mesh-covered suiting pinned with roses and gemstones. Printed jackets and T-shirts had a pre-faded look, followed by shiny formal attire decorated with sparkling spider designs. Undercover's hoodies had yellow netting, paired with polka-dotted fabrics. Beyond that, some ensembles featured human profiles elegantly imprinted on ruffled material gracing midi skirts paired with understated tops. These pieces seamlessly bridged the gap between fashion and art, as if paintings had come to life, adorning the models with vibrant, multi-coloured prints that breathed vitality into the collection. For those seeking a blend of sophistication and drama, the collection offered casual co-ords with knee-length pants, complete with sheer materials that added a touch of mystique. But what shocked the visitors the most were the three last looks.

While the majority of the Undercover SS24 show at Paris Fashion Week took place in bright light, the final few minutes were spent in a gloomy setting. As the lights dimmed, models emerged, walking slowly and gently down the runway to avoid disturbing the flowering gardens buzzing inside each of the short ball gowns. Their transparent skirts doubled as terrariums, holding real garden flowers and lively butterflies that danced around. Thanks to the thought out play of light allowed the viewers to observe the movement inside the dresses without seeing the exact colour of the butterflies emphasising the mysterious feeling of the collection. The Japanese designer used white, yellow, and black see-through textiles to wrap each of the terrariums. Meanwhile, pink, white, and yellow flowers filled the sealed glass pots.

The show powerfully conveyed feelings of confinement in the world, accentuated by the designer's personal losses, suggesting it may have been a tribute. However, art's role as a liberating force became apparent, especially when, in the face of loss, new and innovative designs emerged. While the collections of Balmain, Marni, and Undercover were marked by vivid hues and floral designs, Takahashi's unique approach set him apart. He preserved the enigmatic essence of longing and showcased it unfiltered, evident in the veils and the luminous terrariums of the finale dresses. The background score, inspired by a German film about comforting angels, harmonised with the outfits, offering an ethereal escape from this season's usual fare.



GET OFF WORK

With the rise of social media, the focus on ambition and constant work, disregarding individual health, popularly known as the “hustle culture,” has reflected on society. Thus, resulting in workaholism being a frequent topic in recent art. There were two fashion collections on this subject during the Milan and London Fashion Week, both of which gained lots of attention. Beate Karlsson for AVAVAV put out an unfinished collection titled “No Time to Design, No Time to Explain”, as well as the Spring/Summer 2024 Marknull collection titled “Get Off Work.”

For her most recent collection for AVAVAV – “No Time to Design, No Time to Explain” Beate Karlsson organized an iconic show, where everything seemed to go wrong. The brand seemed unorganized and chaotic since the ensembles were unfinished, the clothing had instructions on what to change, for example, a backless shirt with the words “Add back”, and the models were speeding carelessly down the runway, similarly to employees rushing to meetings. Karlsson is known for commenting on problems she experiences in or observes during her life; showing them off during her shows with a humorous and ironic twist. In this particular collection, she brought attention to the massive workload brought about with fashion week. The pressure of having to create on a tight schedule and work together with hundreds of people for weeks to arrange an hour-long runway show, undoubtedly, takes its toll on everyone involved. “No Time to Design, No Time to Explain” might be the collection society needs, as a reminder to take a break, and relax every once in a while.

Another collection, on the topic of workaholism that went viral in mass media was the SS24 Marknull collection designed by Tim Shi. The show “Get Off Work,” was meant to represent the magical moment of relief, when an employee goes home, changes out of their work uniform, and is once again their true self. The clothing was made to be expressive and capture the artist's identity as a person, rather than a designer. The clothes were created from garments that would be considered work attire, such as suits or leather bags, made into comfortable and eye-catching sets. It highlighted the work-life balance and aimed at reminding people that it must exist.

Due to the rise in popularity of hustle culture, artists have made it their goal to eliminate workaholism.

Reminding people to create a healthy work environment through eye-catching collections is their specialty, which was clear during the 2023 fashion weeks spring-summer-2024 collections.

AVAVAV SS24:



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Marknull SS24:



ANALYSIS OF THE CONCEPT OF IDENTITY AND OTHERNESS IN STEVE CUTTS' ANIMATION "HAPPINESS": HOW CONSUMERISM INFLUENCES OUR IDENTITY AND SOCIETY

Scan the QR code to watch Steve Cutts' animation "Happiness":



Steve Cutts' 2017 animation "Happiness" comments on the consumer society and the connection between identity and consumerism. People are symbolically rats competing for success and social position, which is determined by possessing material goods, thus participating in the "rat race."

Throughout the video, we observe how consumptionism affects identity. In figures 1 & 2, all rodents go towards happiness - no one has a unique identity. This presents how through advertising, as Gregory Franz stated in *Consumerism, Conformity, and Uncritical Thinking in America*, consumerism does not "encourage (us) to create our own (...) identity". Instead, people's "only task is to aspire towards the corporate image that has been created for (them)". This is shown in figure 1, where all animals wear the same coats and backpacks. Franz explains this when saying, "we all (...) wear a similar sweater to fit in with the crowd", which illustrates people's need for a sense of belonging and conformity that is achieved through consumption. However, to have means to buy products, humans "get trapped" at white-collar jobs, which they don't like, staying in the "rat race" (figure 3).

Figure 1: Rats following the same path in life and all wearing the same coats and backpacks to fit in.



Figure 2: Rats idly following a path in a labyrinth to find happiness through buying new products.

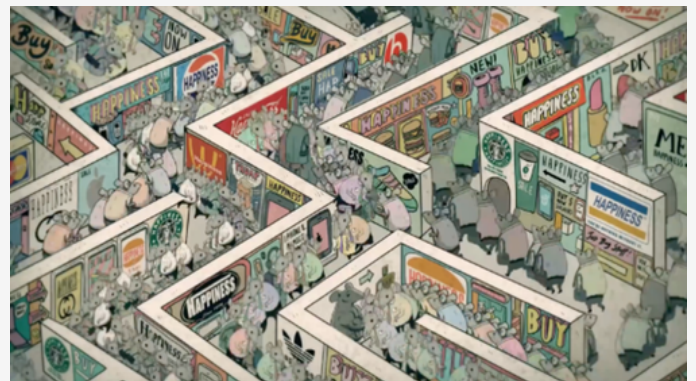


Figure 3: Rats getting trapped at white collar jobs in order to have the means to buy new products.



Moreover, in figure 4 and 5 there is a rat who has bought many products, thus achieving "happiness". When he goes out of the shop, he sees hundreds of others waiting for another store to open.

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Therefore, he forgets about what he had just bought and what others are going to have. The rodent wants more not only because he compared himself to others. In A binge-consuming culture: The effect of consumerism on social interactions in western societies, Stefano Passini adds to the analysis of consumerism: the market that wants the consumer to buy more and makes "the new (an) already old (product)".

There are also references to popular culture. Namely, in figure 6 a rat consumed a "happiness" prescription drug, after which the rodent travels to an imaginary world, where the Disneyland castle is. Disneyland is considered to be a "place of dreams" for children, thus symbolizing consumerism's gaiety, when it is actually a site of a permanent sale of cheap products and a kitsch experience for families. This illustrates how, through advertising, the idea of experiencing happy moments is the same to us (in this case, the experience in Disneyland), though it might not be worth the money.



A representation of the "other", who lives on society's peripheries, is the taxi driver in figure 7, who has a military uniform and a mohawk. It is a reference to the protagonist of the 1976 movie "Taxi Driver". In it, Travis Bickle rejects the traditional consumer society and becomes a self-proclaimed vigilante. This shows that it is possible not to participate in the rat race, but you will become the "other", like Bickle. The music used, Bizet's "Habanera" has an accented upbeat in the middle of the bar, rhythmic phrases, similar consonant melodies, and a stable character. This creates a sense of repeated phrases, which highlight life's mundanity.

When the rodent travels to the imaginary world, the music changes to Edvard Grieg's "Morning Mood", which has a faster tempo and the notes are in a higher-pitch harmony than "Habanera", showing that what happens is more positive and interesting. The melody is legato and pentatonic, consisting of five notes, making the piece dreamy. When the rodent flies to the Disney castle, there is a crescendo, illustrating the place's "heavenliness".

POLA JANCEWICZ

Figure 4: A rat achieving "happiness" because he has bought a plethora of new products.



Figure 5: The same rat as in figure 4 forgets about all the products he has bought, when he sees other rats waiting for another shop to open.

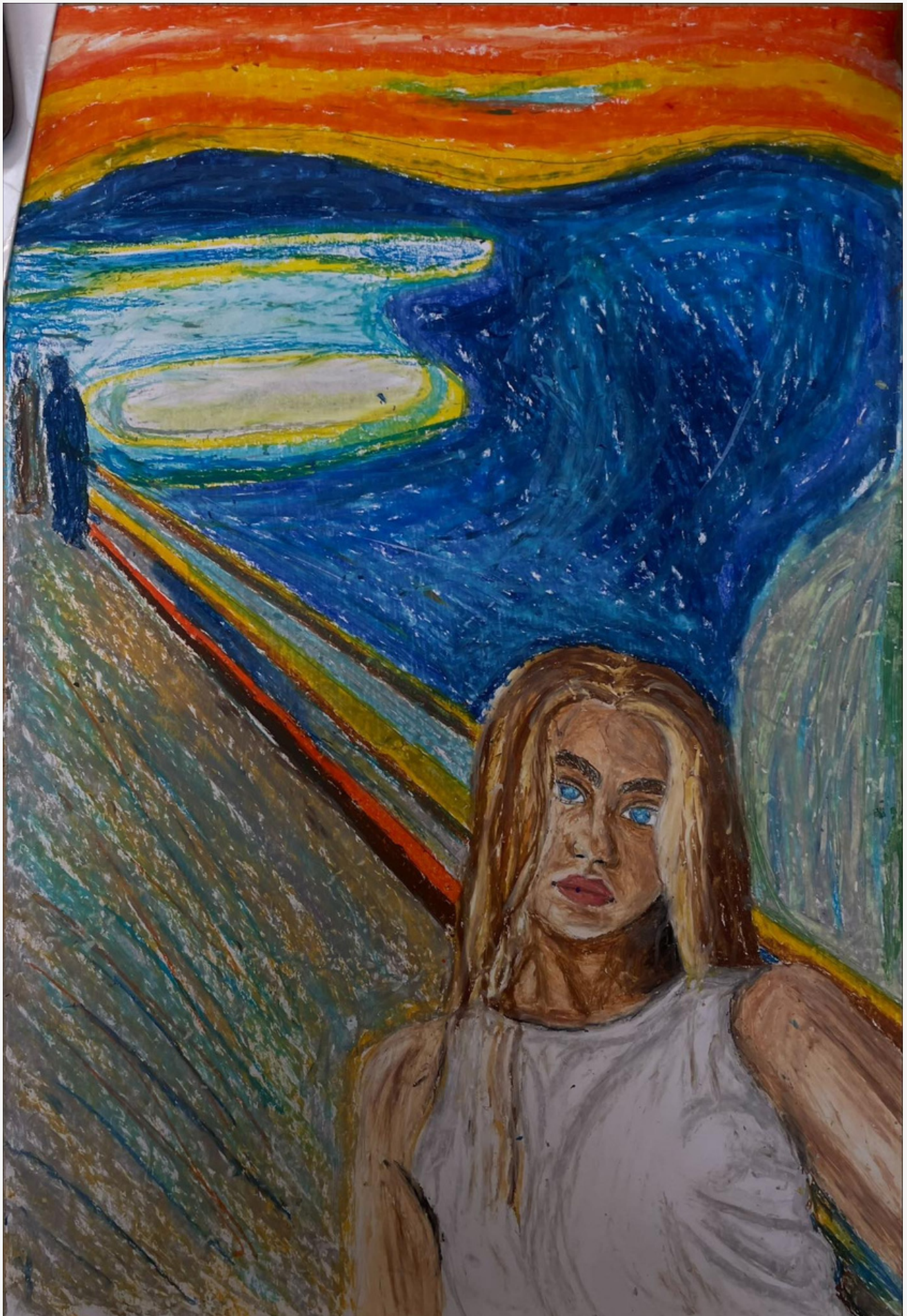


Figure 6: The rat travels to an imaginary world, after consuming a prescription drug.



Figure 7: In the bottom left corner, we see the "other" - a taxi driver, who is a reference to the 1976 movie.





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MIKOŁAJ MARCHELEK





