

ART+CULTURE

# STARRAND

## SARAH HOWE

DEC 2017





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## Hello, People whose free speech may potentially become restricted by KCLSU

When I came to King's just over a year ago, I kept having a look at all the events up for offer. So, while being in one of the global capitals for arts and culture means there is already a huge supply around, it also means that what King's puts together can be even more special. Things like the Culture Hacks or Booker Prize talk with Kazuo Ishiguro come to mind, but many will be particularly familiar with the now passed Humanities festival on 'World Service', though last years theme was on 'Play'. This featured talks with Brian May or Alan Bennett, but my eyes were keenly focused to a poetry talk with Kings' own Ruth Padel and, then, UCL Research Fellow Sarah Howe. In the buildup to studying English Literature at university I'd become quickly invested in Howe's poetry and finding many similarities: from an unclear ancestral history from my Mum's Colombian heritage and having never lived in either of my home countries till I was 17. It gives me great pleasure to have Sarah Howe as our feature in this issue.

Now, with a yearlong partnership with the Entrepreneurship Institute ahead of us, a steadily growing group and huge plans ahead, I hope you enjoy this December issue. Good luck all with your exams, coursework, revision. Merry Christmas and a Happy New Year!



Samuel Antonio Turner  
Head Editor



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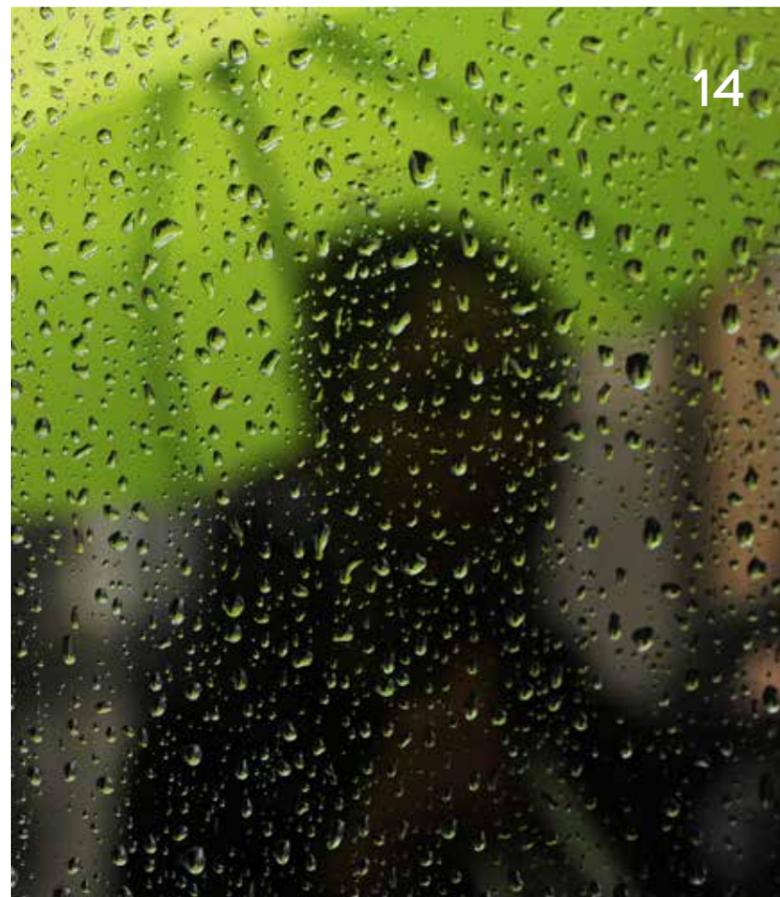
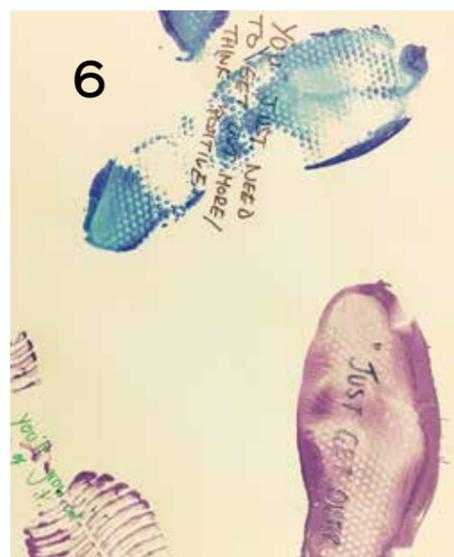
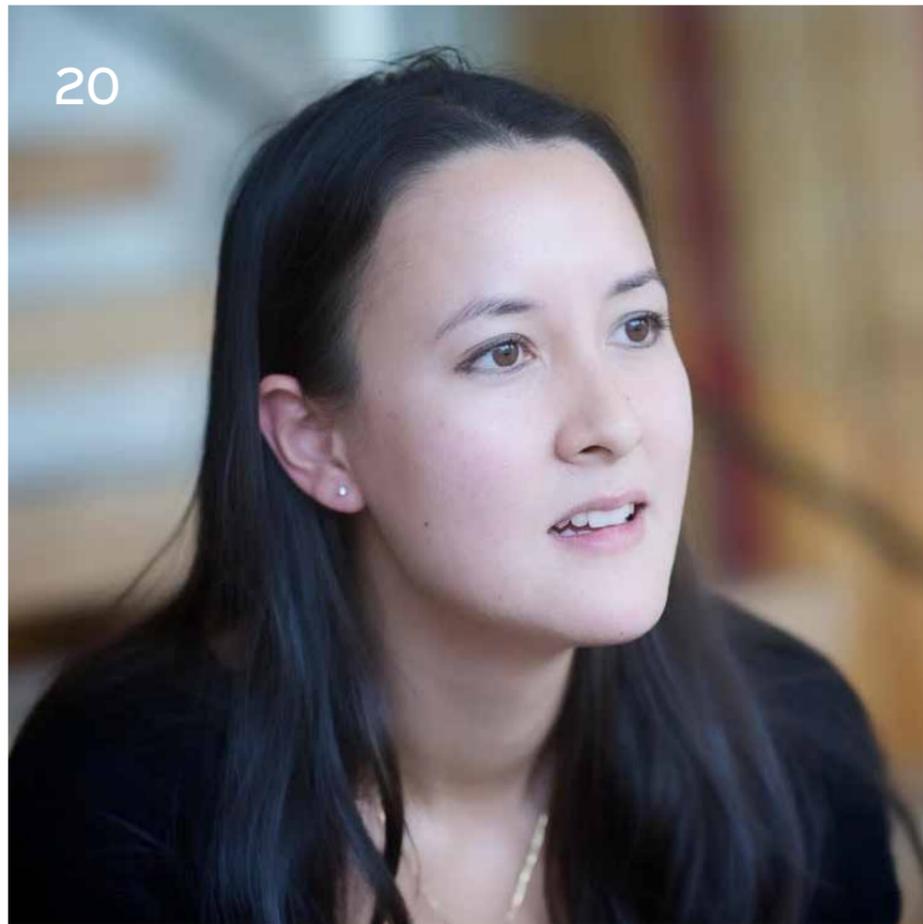
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## Contents

- 6 **Essay**  
Cultural Wellbeing and its different facilitations
- 8 **Film**  
Highlights from the Hong Kong Cinema Festival, a Q&A with Gordon LamKa Tung and opportunities in Film
- 10 **Music**  
An interview with the band *Weaves*' frontwoman and a review of their latest album
- 12 **Photography**  
A selection of photography: abstracts from *Jared Phanco* and city photographs from *Ashton Eleazer*
- 18 **Feature**  
An interview with the T.S. Eliot Prize Winning poet *Sarah Howe*
- 22 **Literature**  
*Painting the Town* and *City Lovesong*
- 24 **Culture Hack!**  
A review of the recent Arts and Society Hack
- 26 **Fine Art**  
The VR game *Museum 2.0* is an initiative supported by The Entrepreneurship Institute to get children into museums and centres for learning



# Wellbeing's Artistic and Cultural Imperative

By Victor Chan

**King's Wellbeing**



Overloaded with deadlines, night outs, extra-curricular activities and daily responsibilities, we can sometimes neglect our emotional inner world and dismiss the importance of taking care of our spirit and wellbeing. If this negligence is taken through for too long, one might even go through a psychological burnout. Beyond the physical aspect, I will argue that the most important part of wellbeing resides in psychological wellness, in which art and culture can be a deep and useful remedy.

of musical melodies, from Buena Vista Social Club's inherent cheerfulness, to Nujabes' melancholic and contemplative notes. Art Galleries give you a break from daily activities in order to contemplate life in a unique perspective, seeing the universe's nonsensicality through dadaist photography, landscapes' beauty through impressionism or even history's grandiosity through neo-classical paintings. Art allows one to switch from perpetual action to intermittent contemplation and reflexion. Art is cathartic.

about: paradoxically bringing out one's inner reality thanks to outer artistic fabrication. As a real catalyst, art can externalise inner troubles and convert the artist into an emotional alchemist of his inner world. It also, wonderfully, gives responsibility for their pains and psychological struggles. In an article from this July in The Guardian, Mark Brown observes that 'All-party inquiry demonstrates benefits to health and wellbeing of the arts, leading to fall in hospital admissions.' Indeed, 'arts can keep people well, aid recovery from illness, help people live longer, better lives and save money in health and social services.'

his or her inner confusions and specific feelings. It is by learning and culturing ourselves that we learn the right words for the right situations, the convenient concepts for particular states of being. Words, in this way, enable us to know ourselves and to better identify the contents of our inner life. That can be the case for instance when one is learning a foreign language – you can discover new terms that are unique to a language but that seem nevertheless indispensable in your own vocabulary. Words such as shadenfreude in German, which translates as "the pleasure derived from another's misfortune", or desbundar in Portuguese, "to go off your inhibitions and have fun". Cultural development can thus allow us to pinpoint indispensable words to our feelings. As wisely quoted from Henry de Montherlant, 'It's when the thing is missing that you have to supply the word'.

*"Art washes from the soul the dust of everyday life"*  
- Pablo Picasso

Beyond art-consuming, art-making is a great way for one to sublimate inner troubles. As explained by Kathryn, 'taking part in the arts anchors us into the present moment.' Indeed, this crucial break into present time is what the creation of art brings

Finally, cultural and intellectual development can greatly enhance wellbeing by teaching one words and concepts, by conferring one the ability to place substance to

What do we mean by wellbeing? According to Merriam-Webster's definition, wellbeing is 'the state of being happy, healthy, or prosperous'. By that definition, we can induce wellbeing as harmony between mind, body and spirit: an equilibrium that could be brought about thanks to the magic of art. Indeed, art has the power to transform one's relationship with life and, by that, lead to happiness. Quoting the famously stoic philosopher Marcus Aurelius, 'almost nothing material is needed for a happy life, for he who has understood existence'. Art is thus that medium by which one sees and understands existence, makes peace with all of its facets and in this way reaches a certain contentment. This happiness is entailed in the definition of well-being and is arguably its decisive point. As explained by Kathryn Richards, from King's wellbeing, 'the emotions that we experience, including happiness, can serve as a barometer to our wellbeing.'

Taking a moment for artistic activities in one's life is crucial: it allows these sacred moments in which you can reconnect with yourself. Novels and fictions teach you the profoundest lessons on how to live – from Proust's appreciation of little things in his description of his madeleine moment to Oscar Wilde's lesson on the importance of being earnest in his comedic play. Inexpressible emotional states are contained in the depth



Art and culture are essential in daily life. However, we may underestimate its power for psychological and inner healing, a spiritual wellbeing which is ultimately the most important in this enterprise. As Kathryn beautifully states, 'The mind and body are two halves of one whole.' Let's all care care a bit more about our minds and start intoxicating ourselves with artistic and cultural occupations.

*"Music gives soul to the universe, wings to the mind, flight to the imagination, and charm and gaiety to life and to everything"*  
- Plato

# Creative Visions

## Highlights from the Hong Kong Cinema Festival 2017

Iconic shot from *Gallants*, 2010. Left to right: You-Nam Wong, J.J. Jia, Susan Yam-Yam Shaw, Siu-Lung Leung, Kuan Tai Chen

By Sara Masud

## Revisiting *Gallants* Review

10:30pm. A red, velvet-lined room at The Soho Hotel. Toasty and scarf-bound, the audience burrow into their seats, still crippled with laughter from the previous screening. Enter Gordon Lam Ka Tung. Sporting a deliciously well-kempt designer beard, this megastar actor-producer is in perfect keeping with the festival's glamorous Soho setting. There is something strikingly elegant in his demeanour. A longline coat; sleek, black trainers; adorned with a certain chic functionality. And yet, a mischievous smile greets us as Tung opens the floor to questions. This dichotomy in character is reminiscent of Tung's hybrid stylisation in *Gallants*. This Q&A follows on from a screening of the 2010 release, in which Tung debuted as producer. What emerges from this quirky Kung-Fu satire, is an overwhelming sense of the old and new world colliding. As one audience member pointed out, the orange-tone, fist pumps of Bruce Lee lurk ever in the periphery. Brimming with 1970's nostalgia, *Gallants* is a vivacious look at the lost

traditions of the past, gesturing at a neurotic, capitalist modernity. Ouch... that sounds rather stern for a film that revels in slapstick peeking ducks and a fake zombie martial artist. The film brings together Hong Kong screen heavyweights Teddy Robin Kwan and Siu-Lung Leung amongst a cohort of younger, emerging actors. As with his cheeky grin and pristine hair, from casting through to dialogue and editing, Tung here demonstrates that contrast certainly marries well.

## A Q&A with Gordon Lam Ka Tung

**Q: Why did you choose to make *Gallants*? Was Bruce Lee an inspiration here?**

"We wanted to work with young actors as they have a lot of potential. But the older generation are often forgotten, they don't get offered the types of roles they deserve. So, I wanted to produce this to show that the older generation still have a lot to give, bringing the two generations together. There is also a strong co-producer system in Hong Kong cinema, so I was rallying against this."

**Q: I was just wondering how long the shoot was and what was the biggest challenge in making it?**

"We shot for a total of 18 days as it was a low budget film. The biggest challenge was definitely getting the older actors to do their own martial arts stunts, one of our cast is over 70! The actor who plays Tiger (Siu-Lung Leung) is a big cultural hero in China, so we played on this in our casting. In the final scene, Tiger wasn't too keen on doing the fight sequence. We had to convince him that scene wasn't about winning or losing, it was about what the character learns through doing it."

**Q: The opening title sequence was reminiscent of Italian, spaghetti westerns. I'm assuming you're a fan of the spaghetti western? Did you have this in mind when making *Gallants*?**

"The visual you see in that sequence comes from old, 1970's films. The 70's was a big influence for myself and the director. These are the films he grew up with as a child. The colours in those films are so bright, but as we get older colours fade in our memory. We wanted to preserve the colours of the 70's and bring that back."

**Q: The soundtrack of this film is really memorable. How did you create the music?**

"Again, the music had a 70's inspiration. Robin Kwan (who plays Master Ben Law) actually produced the music. He was in a band in the 1970's so he brought that to the film. Incidentally none of the music in the film was digitalised. Our entire process of making the film was analogue."

## Fresh Film Finds

All the best opportunities to get involved in, right here, right now!

By Ceyda Uzun

As a film reporter, I've been asked several times 'How did you get into the industry' 'where do I start' and the truth is, getting in isn't easy, but it isn't about luck. It's about timing and persistence, following the right people on social media, keeping on top of emails, and building your options more through the events and people you meet. Right now we're studying and we're young, so rather than forcing your dream job to materialise, it's essential to take part in as many career building events as you can. From networking to skills sessions, volunteering and so on. For this issue I've put together a short round up of events for you guys to get involved with (without neglecting all that end of semester work you have piled up) recommended by my PR and from my own research.

Interested in programming? The BFI hold youth programmer days for film festivals which I have been actively going to for the last couple years. It's great to be able to critique and debate films with other passionate people, for real award categories at LFF and LSFF. To get started, follow the BFI Young Fan Facebook page to look out for and discover opportunities local to you

On the flip side, if you're interested in film making you can always submit your work forward to the youth jury through these festivals. This year's LSFF will be held January 12th-21st

Still 19? Don't miss out on the chance to apply for an Into Film Award for the 'Ones to watch' Category, a title celebrating the best of youth talent.

I emphasize the BFI as a great way to get involved not only because it's outside our doorstep, but they offer many amazing Q&A sessions not only open to press but to the public. So if you're interested in journalism but don't yet work for a company, don't shy away from exploring and writing/promoting on your own. You can check out this month's events through the whats on section of the BFI web.

Film London also has a great newsletter to keep you up to date, but for now check out the Industry Events and training section on the Film London website. There are several sections from screenings, networking events, festivals and so on.

The Triforce Short Film Festival take pride in diversity, and is a definite recommend for anyone interested in film making and film production. The festival takes place on Saturday 2 December, from 11.00am at BAFTA HQ. The full schedule of workshops and networking events can be viewed here: <http://tfsff.com/schedule-2017/>

The Curzon is notorious for its Q&A screenings also, and sparked an interest with me when I heard about The Underwire Film Festival taking place this month, celebrating female talent. Explore these through their events page on The Curzon website.

Get down to Southbank for this free networking event December 1st to discover new talent. S.O.U.L CelebrateConnect promotes film and tv through ethnic minority groups, with the event itself being a screening of short films, followed by a networking session and drinks. Don't forget to reserve your place first through Eventbrite.

Finally, it's a little obvious to mention but essential to remind you; you make your own network. This magazine is built on creative individuals who care about media. So is student radio, TV, and all the other student publications at Kings. Our uni itself is filled with opportunity, from film screenings to Q&As held on our own campus. Just look around, get inspired, and get creating!



Creative Visions festival poster



Poster for *Mad World*, UK debut at the Hong Kong Cinema Festival



# Weaves Interview

By Nikhil Kanukuntla

**Strand Magazine caught up with Jasmyne Burke, the frontwoman of the band, for a quick interview:**

**Our writers here really love your music videos, which is the band's personal favourite? And how much personal creative input does the band have in making them? Any interesting stories while shooting?**

Oh thanks! Umm I guess we've had a lot of input on editing and overall mood but our latest video 'Slicked' (at the time of interview) pretty much was all Zach Tatham, a Toronto-based filmmaker. But I guess we try and work with people that might fit into our world. So it's a nice balance. But we also make videos on our own such as the one for 'Scream'. So I guess it just depends on the mood of the song and really if we'll all be home and available long enough to shoot a video.

**Do you prefer playing to festival crowds or music venues? What's different about them for you?**

I mean they are both fun. I'd say festivals are a great way to reach a large amount of people that have maybe never heard of our band. We're definitely not background chill out music so it's fun to kind of confuse and excite people simultaneously. But I like small clubs as well because you get to talk to people afterwards. We've had the pleasure of meeting some really interesting people on the road. I think it allows us to attract wanderers and weirdos so it's nice to have conversations at the merch booth and hear about other people's stories.

**Which album(s) do you wish you had made?**

Hard choice. Too many opposing voices in our band to pick one.

**Do you feel like the band is a product of a Toronto indie scene, if so, what it like being a part of that, if not, why?**

In a way yes. I grew up in a suburb a little outside of downtown but as soon as I was old enough to leave the house I started sneaking into shows and inserting myself in the Toronto music community. But I guess at this point we're away so much it feels a bit distant. It definitely informed my initial music but I think at this point touring and seeing other bands/artists from around the world helps inform or push us to create something that is hopefully Weaves sounding.

**What do you think is next sonically for the band?**

More rhythm. More 80s. I'm feeling kind of bored with the guitar. I want to write melodies over drum patterns and sampling sounds. So ... umm we'll see. Could be that. Or could be not. That. At all. [Laughs]

# Wide-Open Review

*'Polished Torontonion alt-pop makes for a rewarding listen'*



Weaves' sophomore album carries a very comforting brand of 21st century radio-ready rock. The Canadian band's origins in a buccaneering Toronto's music scene (still thriving with artists like EgoWright, Jazz Cartier and fellow indie rockers Always) has impressed itself onto their earlier work, with its frenetic energy and alternating wiry-to-muscular instrumentation. Weaves are, for now, very much a touring band. They've played relentlessly around the United States and the UK for the past year. Their debut EP and album especially were characterised by myriad borrowings from cowpunk, steady garage rock scalings and unidirectional quivering rock vocals - perfect indie soundscapes for music venues up and down the country.

innovative musically but brings a dynamic professionalism to their sound. The function of this is to centralise the emotional cruxes of their songs, both playfulness and agony are often carried in Burke's vocal strains alone, and the previous artistic frills and feverish instrumentation of their music has been re-packaged into a less saturated and more accessible format. The eponymous track in particular does this to beautiful effect. 'Wide-Open's slow-modulating synths and the curvature of its pacing guitar leaves plenty of gaps to mark the interstices of the chorus's "it's...wide open". The verse's "I gotta tell you something's stripping me out - I gotta feeling it's nothing/ trying to kill all of us" marks the easy-going anxiousness of this LP and its almost breezy schizophrenia, a quality that reaches a notable apex in 'Scream', the album's uncharacteristically deranged but thematically logical 8th track, which borrows the vocal stylings of Tanya Tagaq - the well-esteemed throat singer of Nunavut, Canada.

Jasmyne Burke's songwriting has been pushed to the foreground in Wide Open as a purging mechanism

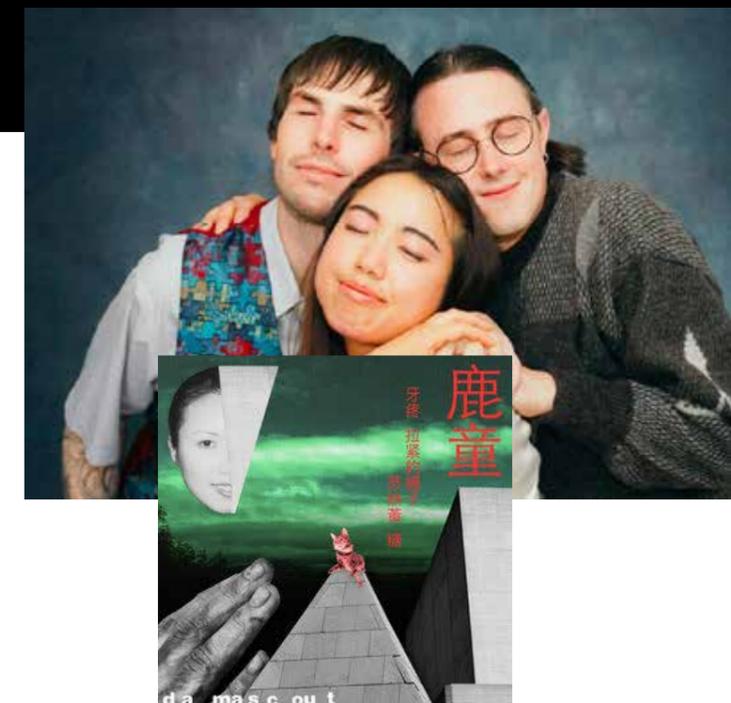
that has done away with a lot of the improvisational-sounding detritus of their earlier work, and the production has improved tremendously. It is a development that is not necessarily

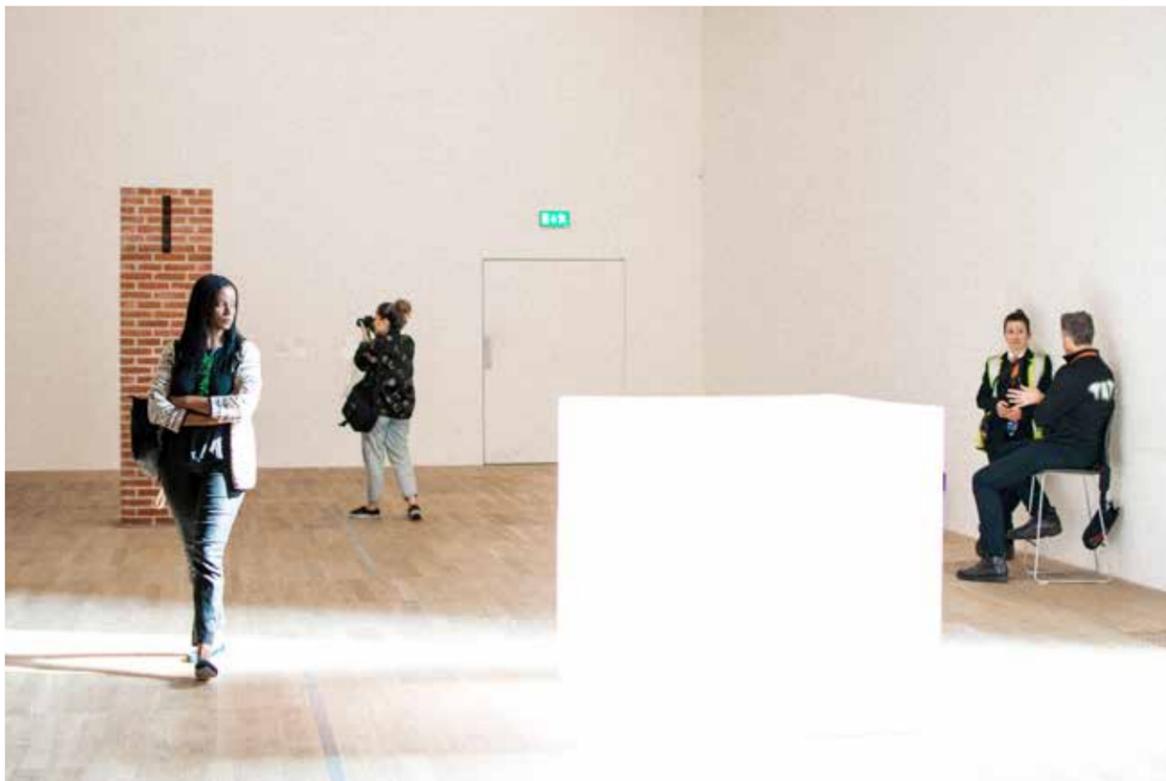
Wide Open is a pliable record, emotionally available and easy for your hand to hover over and select to play. Its heavy reverb and rounded bass tones come from comforting cross-traditions of garage rock and the wider alt-scene, and Burke is an unpretentious and capable vocalist, she may be 'just a nomad on the land that don't belong to any of us' but her assured skill and command makes her all her invitees.

# Dama Scout EP Review

*'You should be listening to the Dama Scout EP right now'*

I hear much more than a buzz-band here. The London/ Glasgow trio recently opened for Weaves at their London gig at Oslo, Hackney and their November release, their first non-single output, is absolutely brimming with interesting ideas. The band announced itself with a single from last year, 'Forget It's Good', a lo-fi ballad crawling into a dreamlike climax of guitar-based aberration. The EP turns out to be a continuation of this formula. Similar to earlier bands like Slowdive and Sebadoh, whose influences can be heard here, the band are captivating from their contrasts. 'Tightrope's chorus for example is sunny pop turned psychedelic meshwire latched onto a post-punk revival breakdown, with elements of gospel vocal phrasings. Suzie Wong is the most deceptively pop-sounding track but its playfulness has a demented edge, something carnivalesque, redolent of Pink-Floyd circa their Syd Barrett years. Their music has a omnivorousness to it, you get the sense that the band has great music taste. Dama Scout are definitely ones to watch, and I'm twiddling my thumbs for their debut LP.





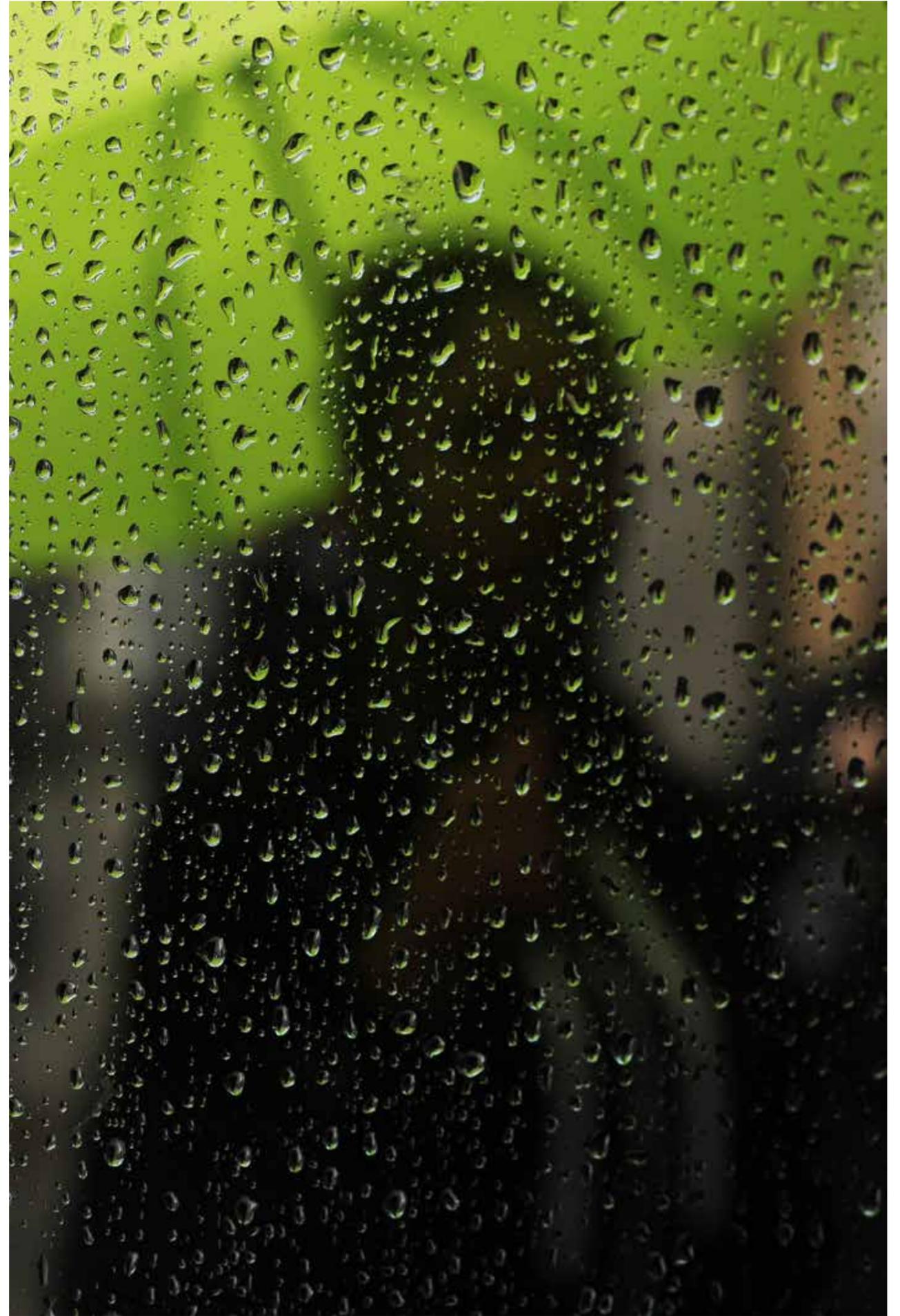
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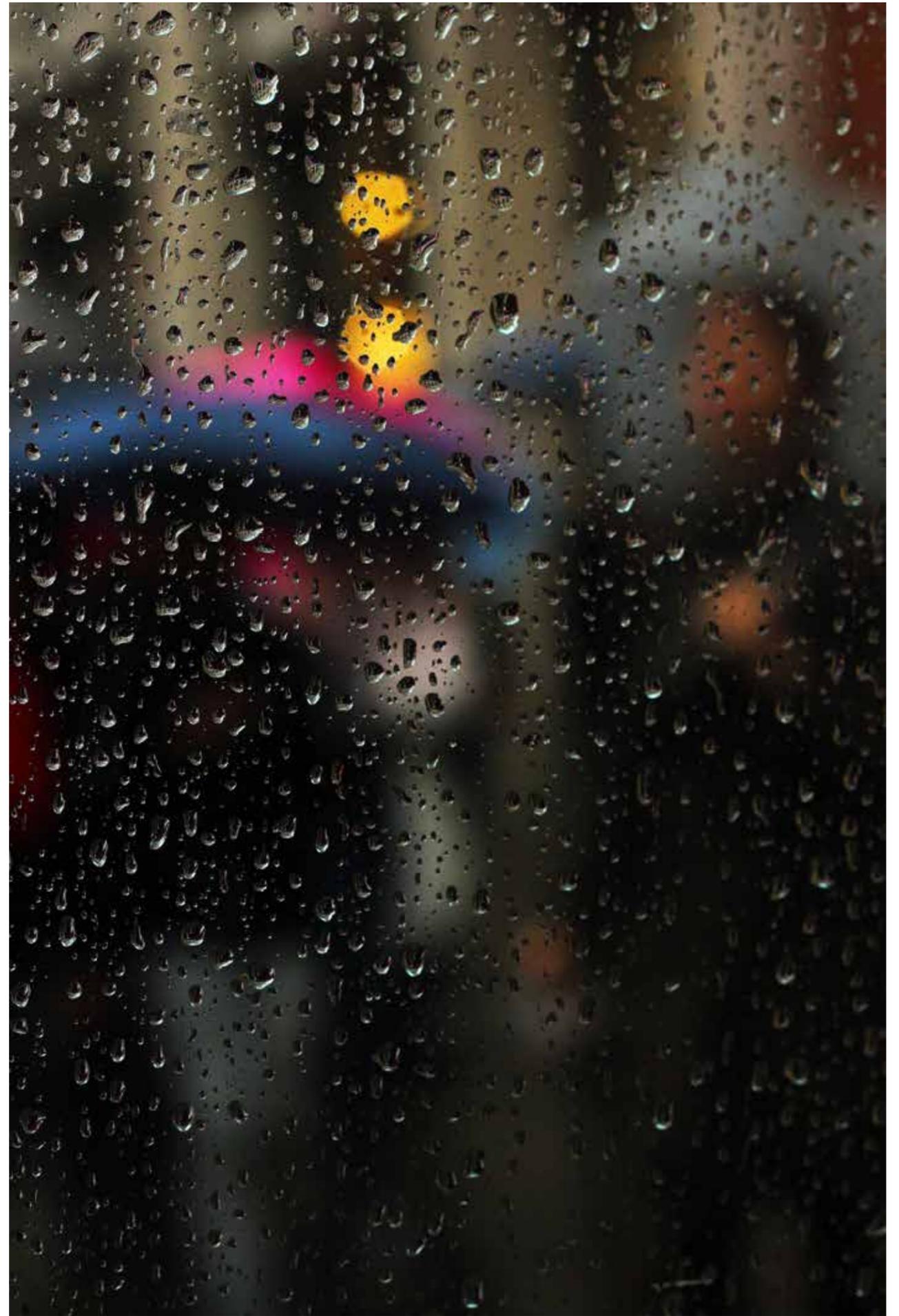
London, Mixed  
Pages 12-13

**Jared Phanco**

Rain Abstracts  
Pages 14-17







# Sarah Howe Interview

By Samuel Antonio Turner

Image credits to Hatley Madden and courtesy of Sarah Howe

Sarah Howe is a Hong-Kong born British poet, academic and editor. Her debut collection, *Loop of Jade*, won the T.S. Eliot Prize for poetry in 2015 and is an amalgamation of poetic form, cross-cultural identity and intimate storytelling based on the reconnection with her Chinese mother's heritage after leaving Hong-Kong for England as a child. Having collaborated with the likes of Stephen Hawking and composer Prach Boondiskulchok, she has worked as a research fellow from Cambridge to UCL and now works at King's College London. Sarah Howe is also the founding editor of *Prac Crit*, an online journal of poetry and criticism which seeks to explore the composition and inner workings of select contemporary poetry.

You were the Poetry Society young poet in 2000, so did you have ambitions in poetry from an early age or was it later on that you decided to pursue that?

I wasn't one of these writers who wrote feverishly through childhood and teens. I mean, that is surprisingly common a story actually — that people have this sense of vocation early on. I recently did an event at The Southbank Centre that was focused on the new volume of Sylvia Plath's letters and she had that fierce sense of dedication to becoming a poet from a frighteningly early age. From fourteen or fifteen she was already being published in national magazines and sort of knew that that was what she was gunning for. I wasn't really like that. When I sent off those poems, that little packet of four or five, to the Young Poet of the Year Awards (now Foyle's Young Poets), I'd only written a handful of poems in my entire life — mostly in English lessons to prompts. It was really just seeing the poster for that competition on the English corridor notice board that made me think "I can maybe give this a go", and that was a freak occasion really. I didn't know what I was doing and I think that of the five poems I sent, four of them were totally dreadful and just one of them must have had something going for it. But I didn't know at that point how to make a poem, so it was only when I reached my twenties, sort of twenty-one, twenty-two, when I reached America and took this creative writing workshop in Harvard with Jorie Graham, that I sort of gained a sense of direction. That was sort of to do with many things but possibly it was also the point in which I started in earnest to reconnect with my Chinese heritage and about the same age that I started travelling more extensively in Hong Kong, which I hadn't visited for years and years, and mainland

**"I think, in a funny way, it wasn't so much about me as about interrogating my relationship with my mother and her experiences"**

China, where I hadn't been before. I think it was that conjunction of technical knowhow, which was given to me by Jorie, and the emergence of a subject-matter.

Do you still struggle with cultural identity?

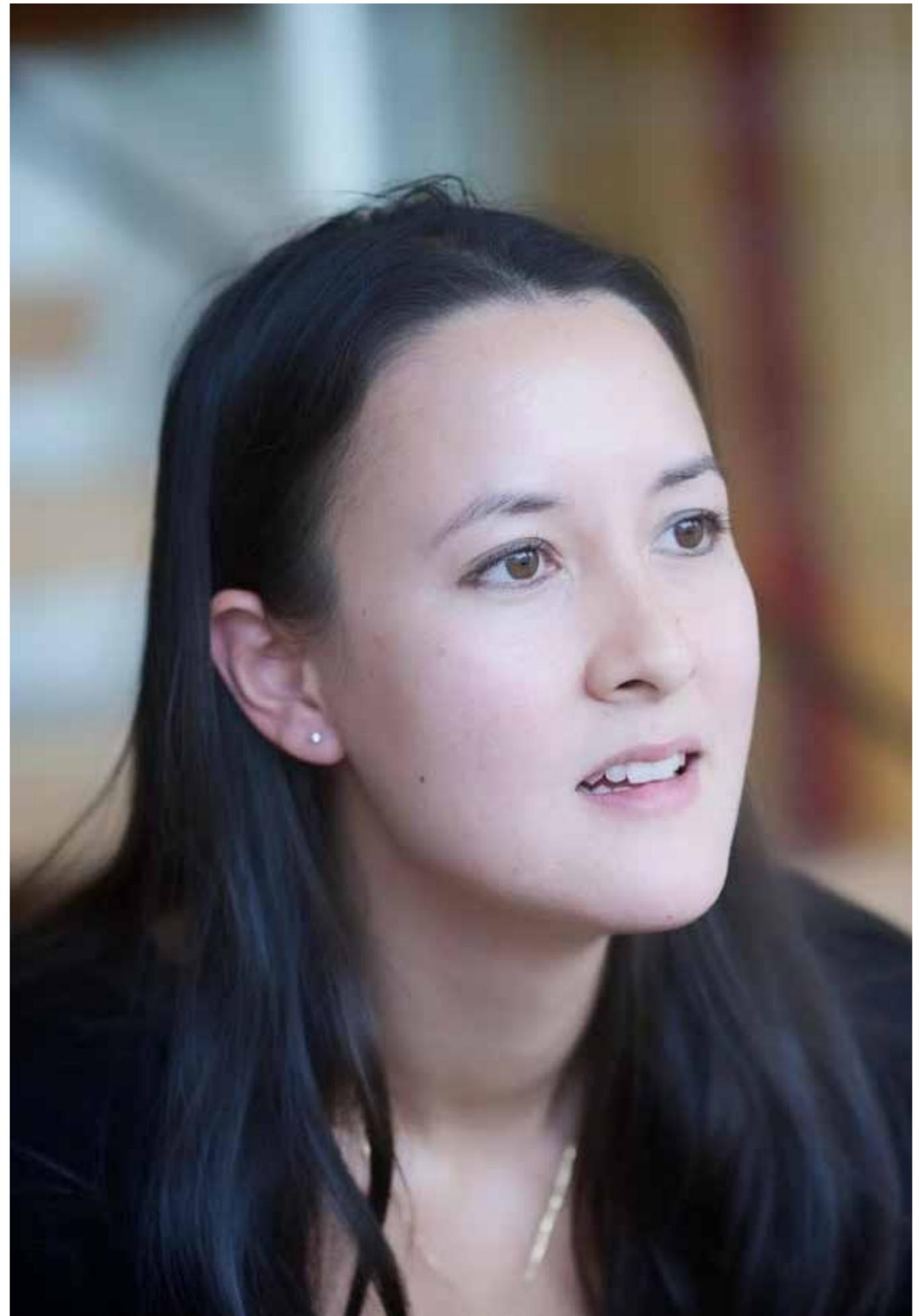
I suppose we can use all sorts of metaphors to talk about the experience: *struggle* is maybe one of them. I don't so much feel it as a struggle these days — maybe a tension, maybe even a productive tension. I don't really anymore, if I ever did, feel like I'm grappling with something that threatens to overwhelm or be fought against. I do feel, with the publication of *Loop of Jade*,

that I did somewhat close the page on that quest — which is not to say you can ever settle these questions — but something about the urgency, the need, to look into my place in the world as a biracial, bicultural person. I no longer feel I need to write about that in the way I did. Which is not to say that it has entirely disappeared from my output, just that now I look at it in slightly different ways — historically motivated ways rather

than personal ones, maybe more politically motivated ways rather than personal and autobiographical ones.

So you consider that *Loop of Jade* was a more personal discovery of identity, whereas now your poetry has a more social or political inclination?

Possibly. It's a spectrum in as much as, in the last years of writing *Loop of Jade* showed me, finding out that some of the poems dramatise this business, that in order to interrogate this place as an individual in society, and maybe as a half-white, half-Chinese individual in society, you need to go back and look at all sorts of structures: previous poets; racial taxonomies; all sorts of historical currents that explain why and where we are. I think maybe I oversimplified if I suggested that you could tease those apart. But there definitely was a more personal element at work in *Loop of Jade*. I think, in a funny way, it wasn't so much about me as about interrogating my relationship with my mother and her experiences. So it wasn't so much autobiographically focused as it was biographically focused. I felt like I was, to some extent, unearthing her story and I guess the poems I am writing now don't really work in that way anymore. They're not about personal histories. For example, I just finished a sweep of poems for radio that came out of aural testimonies collected



in London's Chinatown. So it still has this dimension of people telling their stories, but it was a huge range of voices of people from all kinds of different life stages, migration histories and things.

**Do you feel that may be your function as a poet, to be that ambassador or communicator between biracial and bicultural communities?**

Ooh! Ambassador feels like a big word. [Laughs] Possibly not, in as much that any kind of official role in this makes me feel a little bit allergic. But maybe that's how people would take my output. I sort of want to just think of myself as a poet but I guess this is always the question, isn't it? Whether as a minority poet, as a woman poet, whether we can buck these labels and aspire for some kind of universality that might naturally seem to be denied to us. Back to the ambassadorial metaphor, I don't know if I would think of myself as having this diplomatic role as it were. Empathy is definitely something that I am preoccupied about – *that* is maybe one of the most recurring themes in the poems that I am working on at the moment. The sort of ethics of interpersonal relations and particularly how we write about others and maybe even write about their pain, and the social and political circumstances that lead them to be suffering without appropriating their suffering or aestheticising it to our own ends. I mean, how do we exist in this world as moral beings that want to reach out to lives that are different to our own without sort of being tainted by that impulse of tainting it.

**“I thought it'd be interesting to write something about black holes as this sudden extinction of light”**

**So you've written a poem for Stephen Hawking called *Relativity* which he then asked if he could recite for you. How did that come about and what were your intentions when writing the poem?**

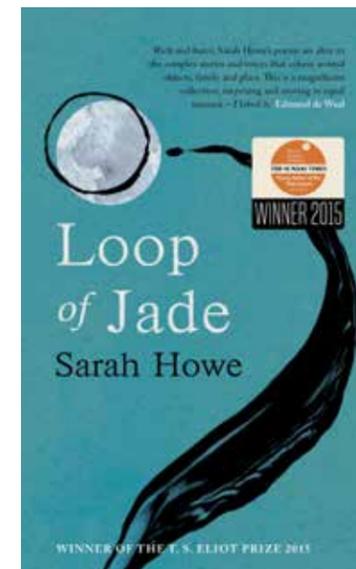
It came about because in 2015 I received this commission with maybe five or six other poets to write a poem on the theme of 'light' – every year the National Poetry Day Committee choose a theme. I think they had ambitions, as I suppose they always do, that the poems could serve to bring people, communities and constituencies to poetry that wouldn't normally be touched by it. I think they thought that by using the medium of film, or particularly the medium of videos, it could be shared through social media would be a good way of reaching people – I think they were right actually in that instinct. So we had pretty much carte blanche as to how we interpreted the theme. I remember the initial proposal email sort of said things like “do you want to write about going to the beach and sitting in the sun” [Laughs] or about an electrician or as far from a poet as you can imagine. Something about light and 2015 as the centenary of Einstein's theory of relativity, came together in my head and I thought it'd be interesting to write something about black holes as this sudden extinction of light and, by extension, the physics of light – both those scales of subatomic particle physics and the big universal scale that physicists are always trying to reconcile, the quantum in the relativistic. This took me back to my early love of science-fiction. I did actually really enjoy science at school though physics was probably the weakest three for me – my maths was never too hot – but I did always love the ideas

that came out of physics. I was really obsessed with science-fiction of all sorts growing up, with star treks, with time travels and things. But I'd also listened to Hawking's *A Brief History of Time* in audiobook when I was younger than a teenager. So I wrote this poem, which explores some of these things, and I happened, by dint of being a research fellow, to be already embedded in this structure, which is Cambridge University and of course Hawking's own institution. I can't say I'd interacted with him much more than passing him on the street but I wrote to him and he seemed quite taken with the idea of a poetic exploration of these themes. He suggested that we meet over dinner, which was a pretty memorable conversation and also quite stressful for me – I didn't realise it's impossible for Steven to talk over dinner because he relies on his cheek sensor to say anything. So whilst he's eating you can only talk at him, which is, socially, a little bit awkward – god knows what I whittled on about. [Laughs] I read him the first draft of the poem and it changed quite a bit after that on the basis of discussion – though by then he'd committed to read it. The rest is history I suppose and I suppose it has opened up this interest in poetry and metaphor and science, which I've sort of continued – I just did another commission this year about genetics – I'm interested in looking to that more.

**The way that *Relativity* was then shared was as a short film. Do you think you could go on to explore inter or multidisciplinary forms of poetry?**

It is quite a thriving area of poetic endeavour at the moment. Poetry seems to exist at the cusp of various art forms, which is topical given, maybe, the nature of your magazine, which reaches lots of different areas of the arts. I suppose quite a bit of work, since the publication of *Loop of Jade*, has been in this area of cross-art collaborations. As we speak, one of my poems is being choreographed to be danced by a professional dancer and filmed. I think that whole project, called Dancing Words, is due to launch the films by a poem of my own, as well as the British-Indian poet Mona Ashi, at the end of January next year. I haven't actually been involved with the production of that, though I'm fascinated to see what comes out of it. Things I've been involved with more directly are a collaboration with a composer, for example. Which was fascinating because I'm not terribly musically savvy or educated or aware myself other than my childhood piano lessons. But I did really enjoy that process. We decided to set it up as one of call and response almost. So I took a piece of his that he'd written and reverse engineered words into it – it was a violin trio, I think – which I then wrote words to that were beamed onto a screen so that you would have this linguistic dream-like experience. It's this very dreamy piece called Night Suite. So you had the musicians playing on the stage and this abstract canvas of words appearing behind them. Then Prach Boondikulchok, this Thai-British composer I was working with, took one of my poems called Tame and wrote this incredible, sweet song setting in, I think, five movements in response to it – which was performed in King's Place earlier this year. That was a fascinating experience for me because it showed me what the different art forms' representational differences and varying strengths and modes of working are. I think the thing that hit me hardest was

**“in the music, all of that emotion, horror and pathos was absolutely present, there was no repression of it. I found that almost unbearable to listen to actually.”**



it was absolutely emotionally harrowing for me to listen to that piece as, at the same time, I thought it was incredibly beautiful – partly because that poem is a very emotional one, but all the emotion is very pared back, its quite repressed actually. A lot of the tension in it comes from the disjunction, the sort of violent, horrific things that the poem describes and this very clipped emotionless narrative voice. But in the music, all of that emotion, horror and pathos was absolutely present, there was no repression of it. I found that almost unbearable to listen to actually. So, I am interested in what poetry can become when you bring other art forms into it – I suppose the visual arts are the ones I am most comfortable with myself, but funnily enough I haven't worked with a visual artist recently. I suppose that's the next way to go.

**How do you personally define culture or art?**

Gosh I feel like that's launching me off on a whole books worth. It's one of these words which you reach for its opposites in order to define it – so it's usually opposed with nature or formlessness isn't it. I guess in the tangle of thoughts that swims up when you ask that, the one that beats most urgently in my mind is: do we need to define it? This is something that I sometimes encounter when teaching very beginning poets how to approach poetry, that they want a list of parameters, they want a list of rules and definitions because they're looking to throw out things that aren't 'poem'. So they're very puzzled by something like the prose poem definition – which would seem not to be poetry on some level but actually, because of the way its been framed, sort of creeps into the category by the back door. I think that would be the sort of definition of culture I would want, something that is flexible enough to accommodate errant examples.



# Painting the Town

Poetry: LLN



Colour marks the places that I've been  
Concrete is a canvas I can turn to  
Technicolour like you've never seen

Shake the cans and rattle them  
Violate and Vandalise  
But make it beautiful  
Make it You

Don't mistake the neon yellow  
Or the pink or the black and red stripes  
That's me on that building  
My hand, my imagination  
The green, that's a guy I see sometimes  
I said hello last time,  
He waved his paint at me and nodded

Everyone has their colour  
I paint in stripes, black and red  
The city could be technicolour  
But we keep getting arrested

I'd say arrest artists that paint on canvas  
But their frames are already a jail  
Paint without boundaries, friends  
This city is too grey and pale

Concrete not Canvas

LLN

# City Lovesong

Poetry: Anonymous



Buildings roads and cars  
When eyes shut in the country  
The city starts its rhythm

Red and yellow and green  
Street signs, shop signs  
Footsteps  
Step

Step  
Stop

Do I know you?  
It's dark, I can't tell  
What was your name again?  
You look different in this light  
Flashing blue and yellow and white  
It's too loud to hear  
What?

Silent laughs  
Take my hand

Let's go somewhere quiet, outside?  
Footsteps, our steps  
Step

Step  
Stop

Can you hear me now?

Lovers in the city shouting over traffic  
Lovers walking city streets together  
So many footsteps, in step, hand in hand

Step  
Step  
Stop



# Culture Hack!

## 'Arts and Society Hack'



**ARTS  
&  
SOCIETY**

**ARTS  
&  
HEALTH**

**ARTS  
&  
GLOBAL**

By Samuel Antonio Turner  
Image credits to Dominic Turner and courtesy of The Cultural Institute

Held by Emma Waslin of The Cultural Institute and supported by a variety of notorious institutions, The Arts and Society Hack seeks to explore and empower arts and culture in a time where the arts have actually perpetuated injustices that it should be seeking to defeat. As an evening of free food and drinks, collaborative working and the chance to win £100 in cash. With the additional future chance to win a fully-paid internship, the King's Culture Hacks are extremely unique and exciting events.

This is the sixth culture hack event held by the Cultural Institute at King's. Under the theme 'Arts and Society', this particular event was attended by the V&A, Royal Opera House, Roundhouse, Cardboard Citizens and Graeae Theatre Company – all of whom work symbiotically with our global and national societies. The event opens at 5:30pm with introductions from each of the institutions. Cardboard Citizens opens with their aim of reaching out to the homeless and those affected by homelessness, to bring them into theatre productions that not only feature their talents on the stage and behind it, but also to eliminate stigma against the homeless. Graeae Theatre Company are next: supported by Arts Council England, it gives actors with disabilities the opportunity to showcase their talents in theatre productions that promote diversity and inclusivity. Meanwhile, Roundhouse provide a huge amount of workshops and opportunities for young people; from an extremely cheap (roughly £50 for the day) recording studio and mixing slot to entire music and poetry events by young people. The V&A share their aims in outreach to bring all sorts of people from all backgrounds to the spaces – including an evening that was dedicated

*"Art Changes Everything"*

to integrating global refugees by sharing a variety of stories based on migration. The Royal Opera House is last, highlighting everything from their Young Creatives programmes to their schemes for young people to make the Opera more affordable.

After Q&As, we all reflected upon our collaborative twitter discussion about how the arts impact our society and what outreach we can do to bring people into arts and culture. All the answers come from a different frame of thinking; from art as a form of communication to using it as a tool to insight change.

Moving from a lecture theatre in Bush House, we all move up to the building's eighth floor where everyone is plentifully supplied with masses of pizza, snack foods, beer, wine, and soft drinks. What follows is an opportunity to meet everyone from the institutions and the King's Cultural Institute itself; a chance to ask industry professionals all sorts of questions over free food and drink.

After this short recess, everyone is split into groups overseen by the industry professionals. For the next hour or so we all brainstorm ideas, attempting to 'hack' ways of bringing down barriers that threaten to alienate and exclude all sorts of people and marginalised communities from experiencing and integrating in cultural celebration. I am placed with Adrian Jackson's group, Artistic Director and CEO of Cardboard Citizens. Each of the groups then split up into teams of four with the aim of taking one of these groups and scheming a way to revolutionise or integrate their experiences with arts and culture. My group pitches a scheme for theatres called Little Learners: a way for all parents and guardians with young children to leave their children in the theatre while they watch a show, giving them not only more chances to experience theatre, but also a chance for young children to play fun activities and games while meeting other young people.

Going back down to the lecture theatre, a primary, winning team is picked from the main groups and given a strict two minute pitch in front of everyone. The ideas were fantastic. Everything from cultural integration for refugee women to a monthly date catered for young adults and children – similar to Southbank Centre's Family Fun events. At the end, everyone goes online and votes for their favourite ideas of

the selection. The winning team produced an outreach programme that would bring elderly sufferers of dementia, alzheimer's and similar grave ailments back into the cultural sphere. As a reward, each of the four team members are awarded £100 in cash, congratulations and thanks from the representatives.

Of all the events King's organises and holds for the humanities, arts and culture, this is not just one of the most interesting, but perhaps the most valuable. For those with an interest in arts and culture as a whole, this hack stimulates the mind. Looking to get into cultural management? Perfect. Or even if you just want a good evening of activities, the Arts and Society Hack is perfect for you. You get the opportunity and privilege to not only work together with others that have the same passions as you do, but to win prizes for it.

The next hack event is 'Arts and Global' on Monday 29th January at Strand Campus. For further information on the events, The Cultural Institute and the paid internships up for grabs, head to the link below:

[www.kcl.ac.uk/Cultural/Cultural-Institute](http://www.kcl.ac.uk/Cultural/Cultural-Institute)



# Museum 2.0

## A virtual reality experience

By Sara Naffa



The Strand Magazine has come into contact with co-founder and COO of VR platform Memento, Olga Kravchenko to discuss an upcoming immerse VR game targeted at children in order to help them spark an interest in history and culture – this all in coordination with museums all around London.

Museum 2.0 is a new an immersive VR mobile game perfectly suited for children ages 8 through 12 that manages to combine state of the art animation and technology to produce an exciting experience for young museum-goers. The aim of the project is to have a virtual companion tailored to members of the charmingly titled “iGeneration” who have grown up surrounded with the latest advancements in technology practically at their fingertips.

**Olga:** *“We want to create an exciting companion for a child to explore culture and its traces. We use real museum spaces and the historical narratives as quest settings for the game to create stimulating challenges for children. Our mission is to develop a culturally conscious generation by evoking their interest in science, history and arts, all of this by doing what they enjoy the most, playing.”*

The game intends to follow the child as they explore the museum building and plunge them well into a deep and immersive VR universe. Museum 2.0, which follows a chapter by chapter narrative and is accompanied by appropriate riddles, meticulously curates puzzles around information they will be exposed to within the museum exhibition itself and the VR room on the app, allowing for a dual-interactive space for them to comfortably explore.

**Olga:** *“He or she will see a museum building, with Pterodactyls flying, Native Americans building wigwams and Da Vinci paintings coming to life. When they enter the big museum door, which acts like an entry portal, they will see a book with chapters (The Big Bang, the Jurassic period etc.) that they can choose to enter. And the game starts.”*

After the child has successfully passed these specific quests they will have the ability to move to new rooms with their own separate set of challenges and games. The mobility to and from the virtual and the real will allow for a connection to be formed by the child with the museum comfortably, as it is now on their terms. Museums are often an intimidating place which do not allow for young participants to enjoy the minutiae of the details presented to them. Museum 2.0 hopes to foster and encourage a sense of excitement and investigation for youngsters by providing a competitive element and an immersive experience for them to actively search for new information that they otherwise would have no interest in finding.

**“The museum, the sacred temple of historic and artistic narratives, struggles, due to its static nature, to attract iGen’s attention. But we believe Museum 2.0 is the solution.”**

When asked about possible future endeavors for the project and its potential for expansion following a successful reception Olga responded: “In the ideal world, Museum 2.0 should be available as an educational tool for kids around the globe. And this is the purpose of it to some extent - to open up the museum and its treasures, the knowledge and its narratives to every child. So global expansion is definitely something we want to do. We want to change the observation to experience and active learning.” For now, however, the London Transport Museum, the Foundling Museum and the Bank of England Museum have shown some interest in the project already and are looking to test out the prototype of the app.

**Olga:** *“Culture is an international heritage, and it needs to be openly available to anyone who wants to learn and explore it.”*

Many thanks to Olga Kravchenko and Memento for taking the time to answer our questions. If you would like further information on Museum 2.0 please visit: <http://memento.media/> or drop by Bush House and speak to a representative



