

Her Edit

FOR THE INDEPENDENTLY MINDED WOMAN



Issue Two

November/December 2013

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Her Editor

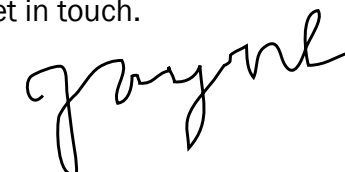


Welcome to Her Edit

Welcome to the second issue of Her Edit. Our theme this month is Pictures and Image and produced a wealth of thoughts and views. From an extreme sports woman who finds a freedom from gender stereo-typing on the slopes, to a woman who takes pride in preserving her femininity on the slopes of the highest mountains. Moving from lippy to another kind of lippy, we look at the pressures to conform to a received image beyond the outwardly visual.

Do go the Her Edit website and read this month's guest blog by Sarah Day, in which she questions the double standards of sexual images in the music industry. And talking of sexual images, the Her Edit team had a long debate over this month's front cover. Can we use a stereotypically sexualised cypher to illustrate Simone de Beauvoir's point or are we being complicit in a media-driven construct of how women are represented? Let us know your view on twitter or email your thoughts to editor@heredit.com and we'll post them on the website.

Thank you to everyone for the incredibly positive and supportive feedback we received after our first issue. There's clearly an audience for an intelligent publication for women, so please share your copy. If you would like to contribute to future issues of Her Edit or write a blog for our website, please get in touch.



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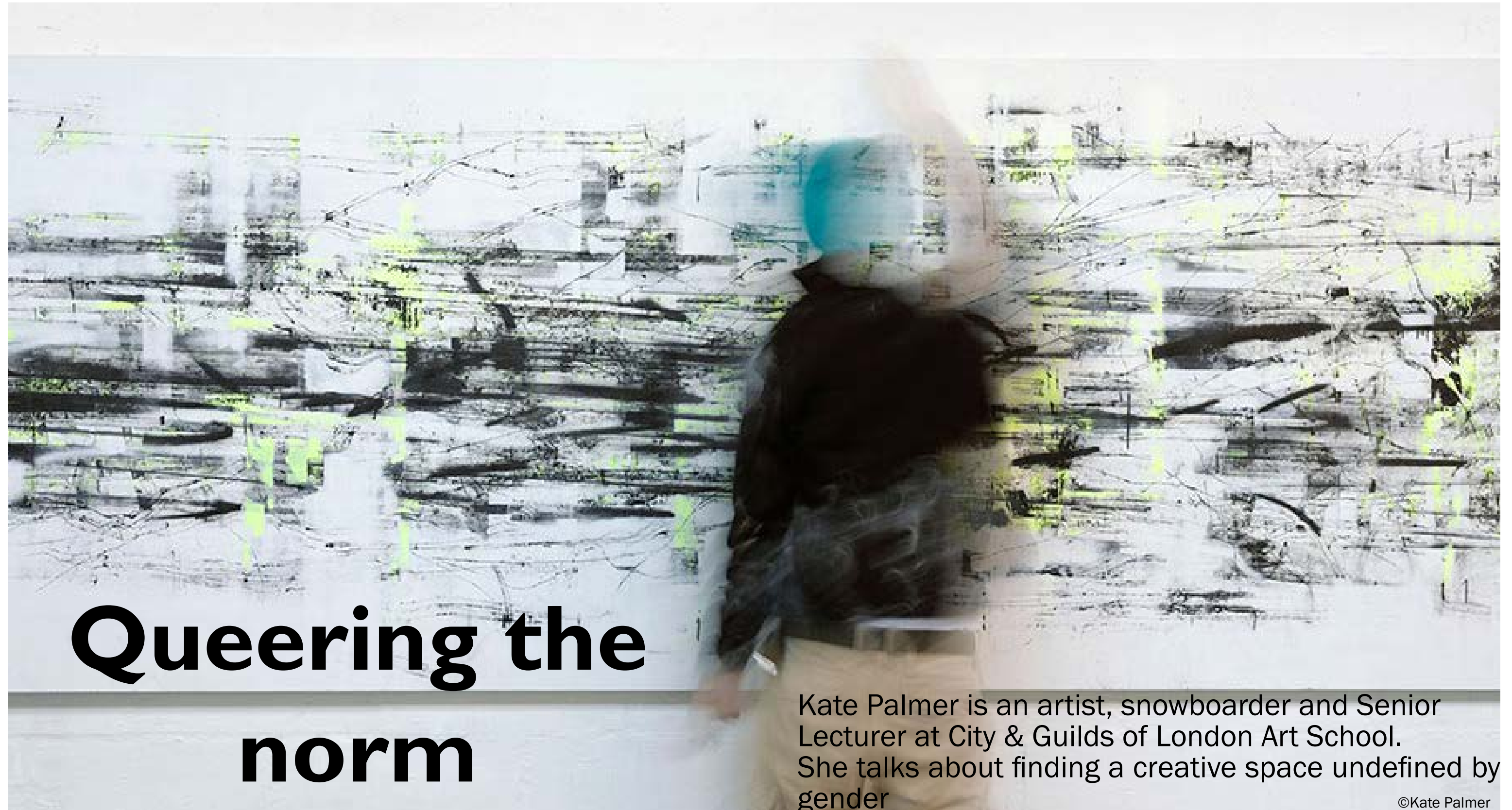
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Red despair by Juliette Jeanclaude
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Queering the norm

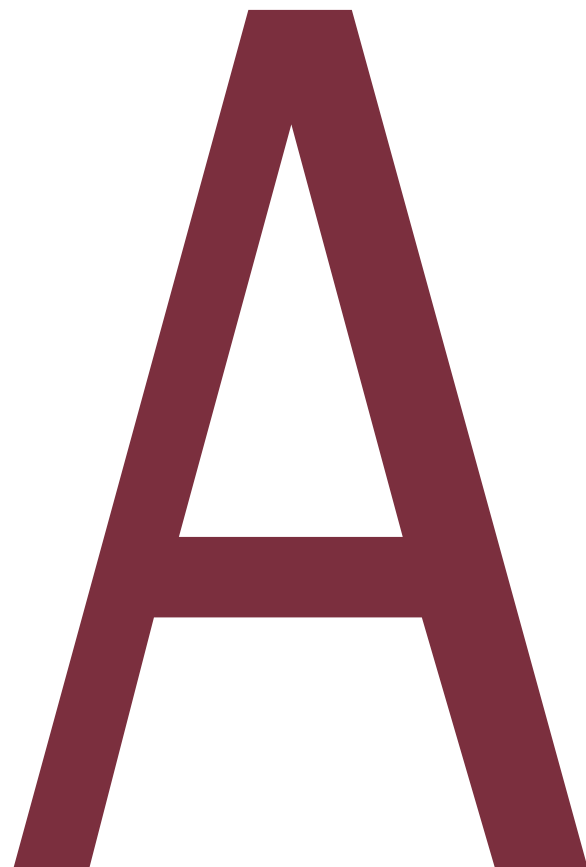
Kate Palmer is an artist, snowboarder and Senior Lecturer at City & Guilds of London Art School. She talks about finding a creative space undefined by gender

©Kate Palmer

Her Story



©Kate Palmer



Artist, snowboarder and mountain instructor might seem a queer combination, but for Kate Palmer each of these pursuits offers the possibility of transcending the orthodoxy of mainstream expectations of women.

Palmer is interested in what lies just outside the cultural and social mainstream – somewhere betwixt and between, a place of ambiguity that challenges our received notions of what defines the female role.

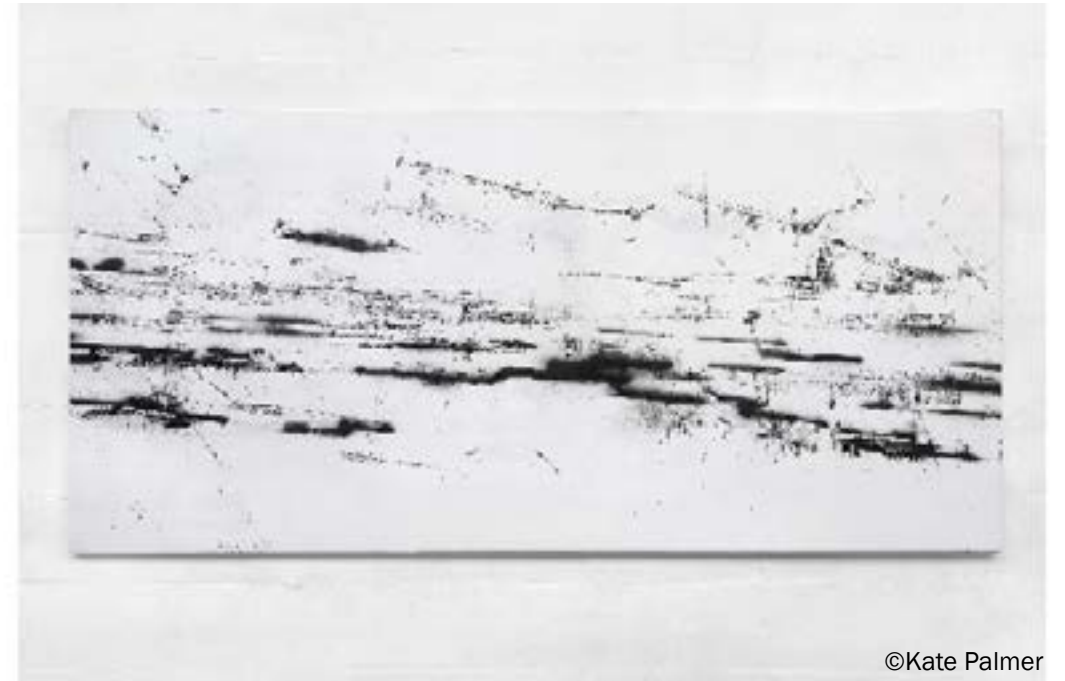
As a gay woman, Palmer says she happily fails to live up to her prescribed gender role.

‘Life can seem a bit tough when faced with established norms and hierarchies, but I think there are areas where regulation is manipulated, played with and challenged and this is clearly evident in contemporary art practice and extreme sports culture’.

Kate Palmer

Previous page, Riding Switch 7.

Right, Riding Switch 2, and below Kate Palmer on the slopes



©Kate Palmer

Kate Palmer’s art practice draws on her very real and well lived experience of an extreme sport, snowboarding, which she clearly revels in and is a world where, for Kate, gender is just not an issue.



‘Like dance, riding (the term used for snowboarding) is a totally embodied experience – you’re in the moment, alert, thinking, moving; choosing a line and type of turn for each particular terrain.’

In finding this non-gender specific identity, she cites the American post-structuralist Judith Butler who argues in her 1998 publication, Gender Trouble,

‘If the appearance of ‘being’ a gender is thus an effect of culturally influenced acts, then there exists no solid, universal gender: constituted through the practice of performance, the gender ‘woman’ (like the gender ‘man’) remains contingent and open to interpretation and re-signification.’

Back in her studio in east London, Palmer reflects upon and re-explores her ‘tracks’ or embodied calligraphy in the snow. This process is arrived at through her drawings, paintings and prints. Using both traditional materials like printing ink, and more contemporary ones like spray paint, Palmer seeks to visually reconcile the experience of the tactile mark, the body and physical act which has created it.

Earlier this year, Kate was artist in residence in a disused restaurant in the Swiss Alps which is now used as a project space and gallery.

‘At 2,750m above sea level, my studio was only accessible by riding down from the top of the mountain or by cable car. It was dramatic and very cold at times,

Her Story



©Kate Palmer

with snow coming through the roof and sub zero temperatures, but I nevertheless made a large body of work called 'Riding Switch'.

Post the 2012 Olympics, the sexualized feminine athlete, off the track or arena and attending an awards ceremony or similar red carpet event, is now a familiar one. There is almost a sense of threat if women can achieve great things without the usual prescribed accoutrements that culturally define the feminine.

Kate feels that riding - wearing her baggy pants, jacket, helmet and goggles - allows her to engage in a gender non-specific activity; a space for her fantasies of just being - a fellow rider.

'Riding is a totally embodied experience'

She says:

'This confounds more familiar or popular sports where, for example, skiers such as Lindsey Von are required to present an image of heterosexual femininity by posing in bikinis with phallogentric props suggestive of penetration and submission'.

Whether in art or extreme sports, attempting to assert that performance can subvert gender constructs is still a challenge.

But this is what Palmer hopes to achieve. Within an art world defined by historic old school hierarchies, supported by a robust establishment and fed by large quantities of cash, she sees opportunities to re-evaluate where and how we

Kate Palmer



©Kate Palmer

Previous page, Kate Palmer snowboarding in Saas-Fee, Switzerland 2012. All images ©Kate Palmer

engage with art liberated from the usual gender prescriptions.

The long years of a Thatcher-led government, antipathetic to the arts, are frequently credited with creating a generation of artists and creative thinkers who were forced to generate opportunities outside of cash-strapped institutions. The current economic climate, defined by 'austerity measures', similarly seems to offer the possibility of an autonomous sphere in which to operate.

Kate says: 'Artists are working more and more with 'project spaces'. They've always been around, but

they are now more important than ever. I see these as a third gender of gallery; not-for-profit contemporary art spaces run by artists, where individuals or groups can exhibit work that doesn't have the pressure of a dealer or the commercial market directing or influencing the nature of their practice.'

' Skiers such as Lindsey Von are required to present an image of heterosexual femininity by posing in bikinis with phallogentric props'

Similarly, Kate Palmer sees the potential to work as an artist and be involved in extreme sport in order to challenge and subvert these troubling social, cultural and gender constructs.

You can read more about Kate Palmer's work on her website www.katepalmerart.com

Annabelle Bond

Adventurer and activist Annabelle Bond OBE came to public prominence in 2004 after climbing Mount Everest. She is only the fourth British woman ever to do so and went on to become the fastest woman and fourth fastest person to climb all seven of the highest peaks in each continent in just 360 days. She has raised \$1.6 million for the Eve Appeal, which specialises in the prevention of ovarian cancer. In 2006, she was awarded an OBE for services to mountaineering and her charity work. Here Annabelle tells Her Edit about the importance of lipstick at 29 thousand feet.

‘Take every opportunity that comes your way’ has always been my mantra. Now here I was at Everest Base Camp, on a bed of rock and ice, gasping at every breath as the 17,500 feet air took its toll. I’d just arrived at my home for the next eight weeks, a small tent pitched precariously on an icy patch of rock and ice.

Was this fly-by-night opportunity to climb Mount Everest really appropriate for a girl who only took up climbing the year before and who was terrified of heights?

Fast forward four weeks and base camp air was like sea level. I was now a veteran of rickety ladders roped over bottomless ravines of ice, avalanches, endless fixed lines up icy 70 degree pitches. Life-threatening incidences were daily occurrences and a shower was a lifetime away. Men and women climb as equals here. There is no gender discrimination; no acts of chivalry such as ‘can I carry your pack?’ were ever extended to me. We were all in our own

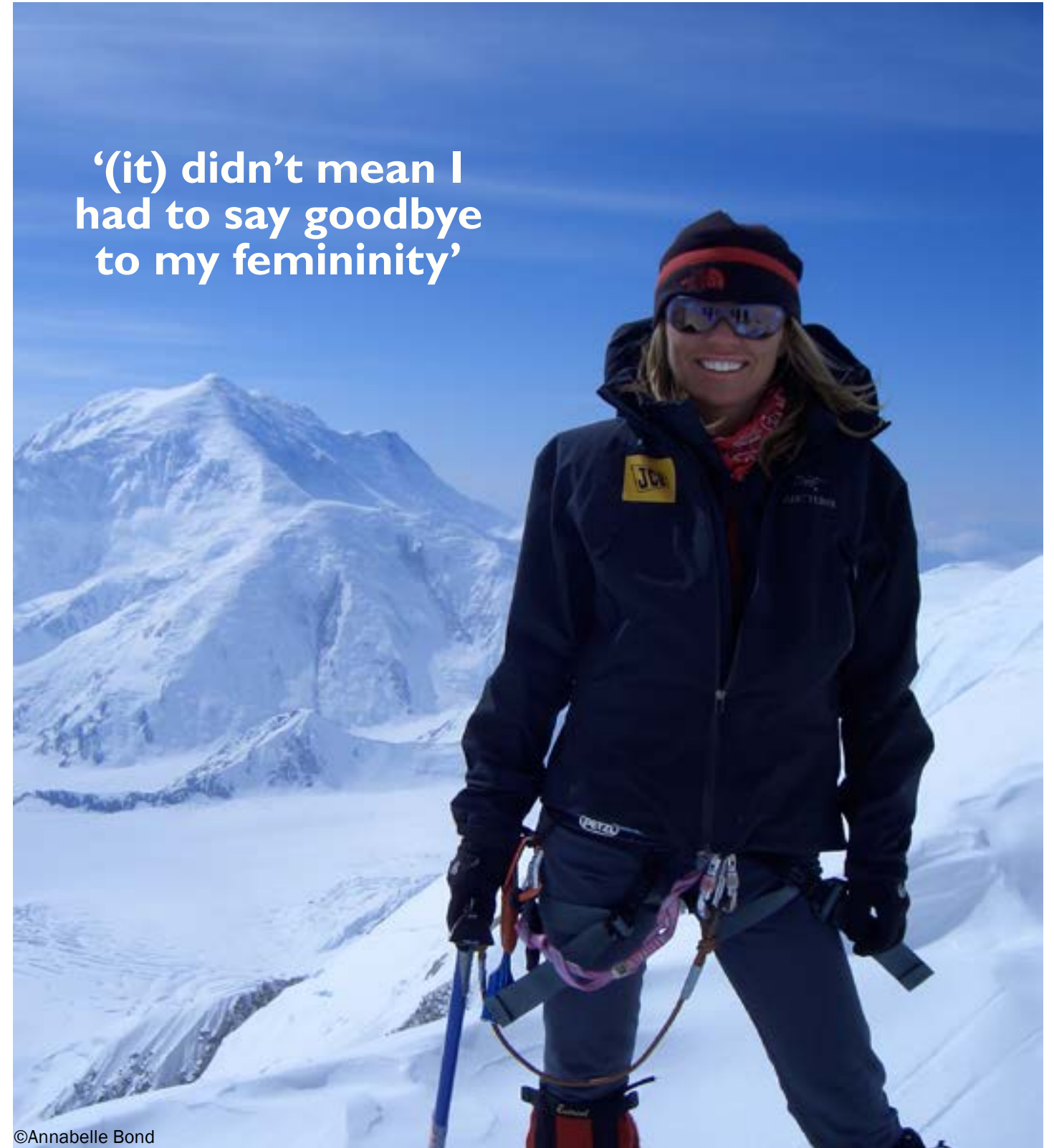
world of survival and determination and we climbed as equals.

In my oxygen-deprived mind, just because I climbed the same terrain as the men didn’t mean I had to say goodbye to my femininity. No drab colours existed in my new world, a touch of perfumed oil eliminated any unwanted odors, a scarf that matched my boots, fun sunglasses and hats (all technical of course) and, of course, my spf trademark lipstick.

Who said you can’t stand on top of the world in style?

Read more about Annabelle at www.annabellebond.com

For more information about the Eve Appeal for gynaecology cancer research, visit www.eveappeal.org.uk



©Annabelle Bond

Are women their own worst PRs?

Shock horror! At the age of 43, American actor Heather Graham said she felt sexy (Metro October 1). Doesn't she know that when the number of a woman's age reaches more than the size of her hips she becomes invisible, as Selina Scott said?

Why are women so obsessed with image? We spent more than £10 billion – yes billion – on cosmetics and beauty care in the UK last year, while nine out of 10 plastic surgery operations are carried out on women.

The truth is, image matters. People take us at face value. Royalty as far back as Elizabeth I understood the importance of having a powerful image and controlling it, just like high profile figures and celebrities today.

How do we judge the fat gouty Queen Anne? Was she deluded, hopelessly under the influence of favourites and sycophants? Or a queen whose political and diplomatic achievements included successfully championing the union between Scotland and England? Take your pick, but it was Anne, not her father James II, who delivered the union.

So what can we do about this obsession with age and image?

First, embrace it! Those who watched the absurdly named 'Fabulous Fashionistas' on C4 recently would have seen a celebration of the life and styles of six women whose ages range from 73 to 91. They included choreographer Gillian Lynne, 87, and cook-



©Pamela Munter

Pamela Munter is a communications professional with a passion for international communication. She has worked for the oil industry, agribusiness, life sciences and not-for-profit sectors across the world. She is a Fellow of the Chartered Institute of Public Relations (CIPR) and a member of both its Council and International Committee.

turned artist Sue Kreitzman ('Don't wear beige it will kill you'), and Baroness Trumpington.

The 91-year-old Baroness helped crack German spy codes at Bletchley Park in the 1940s, got the better of the 'Have I Got News For You' team and more recently won fame for flicking a 'v' sign at a ranting colleague in the House of Lords.

Of course, their image was important, but it wasn't just the way they looked that accounted for their confidence and self-assurance. The thing they all shared was a purpose in life and being comfortable in their own skins.

'You don't get a second chance,' said supermodel Daphne Selfe, 85.

Not surprisingly, we expect actors to be confident and many now eschew the ubiquitous botox and fillers in favour of projecting their skill and personality. Celia Imrie fled Hollywood when it was suggested she 'have work done', while Ab Fab's Joanna Lumley has gone from bobbed leggy blonde to saviour of the Gurkha soldiers abandoned by the British government.

Coco Chanel came out of self-imposed exile at the age of 71 to design the iconic Chanel suit, declaring that she disliked the prettiness of Dior's 'New Look'.

So how do women rise above the superficial appreciation (or not!)

of their appearance and assume their place at the top table?

The characteristic all these women share is that they make us believe they believe in themselves.

Second, it is too easy to give in, give up, to blame others/society/ men for not having the lives we want. I think we need to toughen up.

Victoria Beckham is subject to an astonishingly snide press yet has transformed herself from being a so-so pop star into a respected fashion designer.

'how do we judge the fat, gouty Queen Anne?'

She is unashamedly ambitious and has recreated her public persona into her new brand. One of her weapons must be a thick skin (despite her skinny frame): so often women are prone to collapse at real or imagined slights and criticisms.

In the workplace one issue may be that we are not assertive enough. We need to make our points as strongly as men, while understanding the distinction between being aggressive and being assertive.

It can be too easy to blame others for our lack of self confidence. Was it Noel Coward who said:

'Shyness is only becoming in the very young'? If we don't believe in ourselves why should anyone else?

Thirdly and most importantly, we must support our own sex. Don't deride women wanting to better themselves. Have the guts to put the female point of view. Talking about sexism in Fleet Street, Guardian writer Polly Toynbee, said:

'Frankly, what's to choose between Rebekah Brooks and Paul Dacre? Other values of decent journalism far outweigh gender equality.'

We can rage about Anna Ford being dumped at 62 and David Dimbleby having his contract renewed at the age of 74. We can give three cheers for Harriet Harman's Commission on Older Women. We can give in and let ourselves go in the belief that we are part of a youth-obsessed society in which any woman over 50 is considered redundant and of no value.

Or we can live life to the full like my glamorous 80 year old friend Cynthia. She shattered the glass ceiling without bruising people along the way and says of her zest for living:

'Well, I don't want to miss a moment of life.'

Pamela supports Radio Lollipop, an international charity for children in hospital www.radiolollipop.org/

Depicting the goddess supreme.

Queen Elizabeth I is probably one of the earliest examples, not only of a woman of power, but of one whose public image was carefully controlled as a means of maintaining authority and securing her status. The exhibition Elizabeth I and Her People is currently at the National Portrait Gallery in London. In an extract from the catalogue, its curator, Dr Tarnya Cooper, explores the images which defined Elizabeth's reign.

When we think of the Elizabethan period, we perhaps think of the glittering Queen herself dressed in an elaborate costume. This image is not simply the product of films and costume dramas, but can be seen in paintings made in her lifetime. Elizabeth was probably the most widely recognised of all Tudor monarchs as a result of the extensive circulation of her portrait. While the majority of her citizens would never have encountered Elizabeth I in the flesh, the Queen's image could be bought ready-made in the form of prints and painted images, and of course was widely known through her profile portrait on the newly-minted coins.

Today, in a culture fascinated with celebrity and saturated with photographs, it is hard to

imagine a time when picture-making was a novelty whose artifice was an accepted part of its power. Elizabeth I rarely sat for her portrait, and a draft proclamation of 1563 reveals how she attempted to control the production of her image through accepted 'patterns' which could be copied by artists and re-used. A good example of this is the 'Darnley' portrait (facing page), so-called after a previous owner and dating from the mid-1570s. It shows the Queen as a confident ruler, aged around forty, in a rather masculine dress consisting of a skirt and matching bodice with scarlet frogging that

'it is hard to imagine a time when picture-making was a novelty'

fastens down the front like a doublet. Pigment analysis has revealed that the colours have faded considerably over time and the Queen's complexion would originally have been much rosier, and her gold dress closer to crimson. The repetition of this face pattern or 'face mask' in portraits of Elizabeth over the next twenty years of her reign suggests it gained her approval, while also ensuring that she continued to appear youthful into advancing age.

The composition of the Darnley portrait is relatively simple, the only overt symbolism being the jewelled pendant which consists of a large ruby surrounded by diamonds and the figures of Minerva and Mercury, perhaps symbolic of Elizabeth's desire for peace and prosperity. From the 1570s onwards, however, portraits of the



Her History



©The Marquess of Salisbury

Previous page: Elizabeth I, unknown Continental artist, c.1575, oil on panel, 1130 x 787 mm (National Portrait Gallery 2082)

Above: Elizabeth I, the 'Ermine' Portrait, attributed to Nicholas Hilliard, dated 1585, oil on panel, 1054 x 864 mm (The Marquess of Salisbury, Hatfield House)

Right: Elizabeth I with the Cardinal and Theological Virtues, unknown English artist, c.1598, oil on panel, 1190 x 960 mm (Dover Museum and Bronze Age Boat Gallery)

Tarnya Cooper



©Dover Museum and Bronze Age Boat Gallery



Above: Elizabeth I and the Three Goddesses, attributed to Isaac Oliver, c.1590, watercolour and bodycolour, heightened with gold, on vellum stuck to card, 115 x 157 mm (National Portrait Gallery 6947)

Queen increasingly make use of emblematic devices, or playful allegorical allusions, to celebrate her unique virtues. Two very different portraits offer striking examples of this. The first, the 'Ermine' portrait of Elizabeth dated 1585, (page 18) was probably owned by the Queen's chief advisor, Sir William Cecil, Lord Burghley, and would almost certainly have hung within the grand surroundings of one of his two country estates. A small white ermine on the queen's arm gives the portrait its traditional title.

A stoat in its winter coat, the ermine had long been seen as a symbol of purity as, according to legend, it died if the whiteness of its fur became soiled. The fourteenth-century writer Petrarch had used an ermine to adorn the banner carried before Laura in his *Trionfo della Castità* (Triumph of Chastity), a work that was widely referenced in the sixteenth century and may have provided the basis for the symbolism found in this painting. This would have been readily understood by its original audiences.

An image created for a very different audience can be found in a portrait of Elizabeth I with the Cardinal and Theological Virtues (over previous page) from the end of her reign. This portrait was bought by the Corporation of Dover in 1598 for their town hall, and is one of the few surviving paintings known to have been displayed in a civic context in the Queen's lifetime. It cost 25

shillings. Elizabeth is represented in her parliamentary robes of crimson velvet lined with ermine. Her face is highly distinctive and may have been adapted from patterns available to a local artist's workshop. The pillar to the left of the composition depicts medallions with personifications of the virtues. At the top of the column are represented the God-given Theological virtues of Faith, Hope and Charity. Beneath them are the human, or Cardinal, virtues of Justice, Temperance, Prudence

'The repetition of this face pattern...suggests it gained her approval'

and Fortitude. Pillars were regularly incorporated into the Queen's personal iconography and the personifications of the virtues were a common form of Renaissance symbolism, found in literature, plays and prints. Like the references to the purity of the Virgin Queen suggested by the ermine, these allusions would not have been lost on the painting's first viewers.

Along with the virtues, comparing the Queen to the classical goddesses was a standard form of flattery by the closing decades of the century, particularly in literature. A previously unknown miniature depicting Elizabeth I with the three goddesses Juno (Queen of Heaven), Pallas Athena (Goddess of War)

and Venus (Goddess of Love) was recently acquired by the National Portrait Gallery and is on display for the first time in the exhibition (See left). Painted c.1590, it restages the classical legend of Paris, a Trojan mortal, who must award an apple to the goddess he considers fairest. In the miniature, Elizabeth I, in the role of Paris, is shown on the left, holding a golden orb in place of an apple. Rather than repeat Paris's folly by selecting one of the goddesses, the Queen instead retains the orb, indicating that she alone combines the three qualities that the goddesses embody separately.

The subject had been treated in an earlier painting by Hans Eworth (Royal Collection) which was displayed in the palace of Whitehall during the Queen's lifetime, indicating that she approved of this likeness of herself as 'goddess supreme'.

This article has been extracted from the catalogue that accompanies the exhibition *Elizabeth I and Her People* which runs 10 October 2013 – 5 January 2014 at The National Portrait Gallery in London.

Too lippy?

Her Edit co-founder Sue Christoforou explores how the pressure to conform to an image has led to a rise in genital cosmetic surgery.

I have no doubt that many who know me might describe me as being too lippy - always having an opinion on whatever the issue under discussion may be. Up until now, I would meet an accusation of being 'too lippy' with a resigned sigh of familiarity, but in recent times that phrase may have taken on a different meaning. An increasing number of women are not concerned about being viewed as too forthright in their opinions, when they fear they may be too 'lippy'. Instead their concern is of a far more intimate nature.

Ever more women are seeking aesthetic surgery to alter the appearance of their lower lips. The cutting and reshaping of labia minora or labiaplasty is becoming more common, with the number of women undergoing the procedure within the NHS having increased five-fold in the ten years to 2010. But this is only the tip of the iceberg. In the UK there are around 70 private labiaplasty clinics catering for women who are not offered surgery on the NHS and it is these clinics that meet most of the demand for lip snips. And a snip is not 'a snip' - it could set you back by between £1,300 and £3,700.

The obvious question to ask is why do women get referred, or



©Warren Johnson

self-refer, for this surgery and why has the number of women having it done increased at such a rate? Let's see what a surgeon says. Paul Banwell, spokesperson for The British Association of Aesthetic Plastic Surgeons (BAAPS) told the Daily Mail earlier this year:

'About half my patients want labiaplasty for function - due to discomfort and problems with exercise. The other half want it purely for aesthetic reasons.' But, says Banwell,

'I don't think it has anything to do with the glamour industry.'

For 'glamour industry' we can read pornography industry. Banwell gives us no reason

for supposing that artificial representations of 'normal' female genitalia in porn have not had an influence on what women think is 'normal', but then Banwell offers no explanation at all for the rise in demand.

OK, let's turn to an academic. Publishing in BJOG: An International Journal of Obstetrics & Gynaecology, Sarah Creighton and colleagues say,

'There is no known increase in labial pathology in recent years.'

So there is no evidence of an increase in medical or health issues relating to labia. Creighton also found that over three quarters of the women seeking lip snips, who took part in her study, said they wanted to 'improve' the appearance of their labia.

So there is clear evidence of a massive increase in female genital surgery (FGS), but no proven increase in health need. This can only lead us to conclude that in the ten years to 2010, thousands of women have decided that their genitalia look so offensive that they are willing to pay significant sums to undergo surgery so that they can 'look better' or 'look normal'.

This begs the question, who defines what is 'normal' in this



Illustration ©George Melling

context? Is there a representative gallery of gashes that one can peruse to determine whether one's lips are within the parameters of normal? Are there catalogues of 'before and after' shots that one might leaf through in the labiaplasty clinic waiting room?

Perhaps Jamie McCartney is the man we should be turning to for a realistic representation of how different female genitalia are. For five years from 2006, McCartney invited hundreds of women, aged 18 to 76, to contribute to his Great Wall of Vagina, a nine metre long series of four hundred plaster casts of vulva. In McCartney's view 'vulvas and labia are as different as faces and many people, particularly women, don't seem to know that. For many women their genitals are a source of shame rather than pride and this piece seeks to redress the balance, showing that everyone is different and everyone is normal.'

Did he just say 'everyone is normal'? Then why are all those women paying to be cut? Where are they getting their ideas about what's normal? Where else, other than the Great Wall of Vagina, is one going to see such a display of the most intimate part of women's bodies? I contend that the world of pornography is now the most accessible source of (mis) representations of women, women's bodies and women's sexuality. Given the freely available access afforded by the internet, what more prevalent source could there be to identify what one 'should' look like 'down there'?

If FGS is slashing women's genitals to conform to a stylised, porn-influenced, cultural norm, how do we differentiate it from FGM? The Female Genital Mutilation Act 2003¹ prohibits the surgical removal of tissue

¹ http://www.cps.gov.uk/legal/d_to_g/female_genital_mutilation/#definition

from labia majora, labia minora or clitoris for non-therapeutic reasons. So in legal terms, there would seem to be no distinction. Yet there are clinics all over the country taking money to cut for non-therapeutic reasons, without fear of prosecution.

FGM is a practice routinely described as barbaric, that we rightly believe girls and women must be protected from by law, while FGS attracts no equivalent moral judgement. Surely we have to question the ethics of a procedure, the purpose of which is to enable compliance with a male-defined cultural norm, when it is distinguished from a commonly perceived-to-be uncivilised practice only by the slick marketing of the cosmetic surgery industry?

Can channelling our creativity improve self-esteem and self image?

Let me begin with my own definition of creativity:
 “Creativity is a primary energy that flows through us and allows us to transform what exists into something new.”

We are all creative at all times. When we cook, we take existing ingredients, tomatoes, red onions, feta cheese and olives, the mood we’re in, The Beatles in the background, and we chop, rearrange and transform them into a Greek salad.

When we paint, we take existing material, canvas, oil paint, brushes, a vision or a life model, light, feelings, and we mix, apply and transform them into an oil painting.

Have you ever realised that after having cooked or painted you feel different? That’s the magic of creativity. Without us doing anything, but being absorbed in our creative task, we are transformed at a psycho-physical level.



What happens scientifically I’m not sure, but I know from experience that each time I feel low, I spend 15 minutes writing and I feel better.

For example, last summer, my parents came for the week-end to visit me in London. On the Sunday evening after they’d left, I felt really lonely and started crying. I thought: “OK Juliette, you can cry and curl up on the sofa for two hours or you can cry and paint whatever comes for two hours”.

So I took some paper, a brush and my watercolours and I started painting. I painted people in despair, people crying, people dancing their pain. After two hours, not only I had stopped crying, but I felt fed, held and cleansed and I had made 11 paintings!

I believe creativity allows me to be with whatever state I am in without any judgement.

There’s a quote from Rumi I love: “Out beyond ideas of wrongdoing and rightdoing there is a field. I’ll meet you there.”

Creativity takes me to a place where healing happens, self-esteem is allowed, as I am absorbed in my creative endeavours. I physically feel at one with everything.

When I paint an apple, I feel at one with that apple and I stop worrying about my life. Writing down my feelings allows me to know myself better. Dancing connects me with my body. I feel alive and present. Over the years of practising art, I have seen

my self-compassion increase, I am better at acknowledging my strengths, and more accepting of my weaknesses, my shyness, my shame and my fears.

It’s very simple to use creativity to feel better. You devise a creative exercise with two essential components:

Firstly, an art form. Choose whatever you feel like doing: paint, draw, write a song, write a poem, write the first paragraph of a book, dance, take photographs, craft, knit, cook, sing, play the piano or sculpt.

The more you do the exercise the more complex the art form can become. You can dance for two minutes, then sing for two minutes and finally write for two minutes.

As my mentor Paul Oertel, would say:

“The art form works as a container”.

Without a chosen art form to channel this energy, it can often be directed into unpleasant experiences such as worries, blame or self-sabotage, which are also manifestations of your creativity! The art form directs the energy like rail tracks direct a train. From sadness to feeling fed through the ‘railway’ of 11 paintings!

Secondly, a time limit. Set yourself a time limit for the exercise. It’s very important



Yellow Soul ©jjillustrations.com

because if you don’t set a clear boundary with your other activities, it can dissolve into something else and you won’t get the transformation. Start with 15 minutes.

What is important to remember is that your intention is to get in touch with yourself. It is not to feel better, but that is a natural side effect of creativity. You cannot force yourself to feel better, but you can let the art form be the container for your feelings, and let creativity transform what exists into something new. So off you go!

©Juliette Jeanclaude

Juliette Jeanclaude is a French visual artist who trained at Central Saint Martins School of Art and Design. She has gone on to become a certified energy healer via the Helios School of Healing and a self-expression facilitator. Since 2010, she has worked with hundreds of amateur and professional writers, singers, painters, dancers and actors through her unique Healing Creativity method. Read more about Juliette’s work at www.healingcreativity.com or contact her by email at juliette.jeanclaude@gmail.com



The oldest known baked clay figure found at Dolní Vestonice near Brno. About 26,000 years old, it depicts the body of an older woman who has had children rather than the sexual potential of a younger woman.
©British Museum

The ice queen cometh

Jill Cook is Deputy Keeper, Head of Prehistory in the Department of Prehistory & Europe at the British Museum. Jill was curator of the blockbuster exhibition *Ice Age art: the arrival of the modern* at the Museum in 2013. Here she looks back at her early career and the assumptions made about images of women over the centuries and how some of the finds in the exhibition confounded expectations.

“A

‘And we all know what Palaeolithic men were thinking about when they made these.’

We students were looking at a small limestone sculpture of a female nude made some 24,000 years ago. The class responded with a shy giggle and, without further comment, the lecturer passed on to men, animals, weapons and hunting. I was left wondering whether this little Austrian masterpiece really reflected an ideal of beauty produced as pornography among supposed savages.

I was also irritated that such a remarkable figure could be so lightly dismissed and resolved to pursue the topic of female imagery. If I wanted a career as an archaeologist, it was no use brandishing a copy of *Spare Rib* or choosing what was then regarded as a soft ‘art’ topic for research. While taking every opportunity to see and work on female figures in museums across Europe my official research was on the hard issues of stratigraphy, taphonomy and stone tools.

My appointment to the British Museum enabled me to focus more on Ice Age imagery in order to care for the superb collection that has come to the

Her History

fore this year in the exhibition *Ice Age art: arrival of the modern mind*. The subtitle reflects how the relevance of art in the archaeological record is now understood to be significant in research on the evolution of the brain and human cognition.

Several female figures reflecting all stages of women's lives were among the masterpieces loaned to the exhibition from across Europe, and displayed with 20th century works placed to provide new ways of seeing and questioning the past, bridging a gap across thousands of years that so often distance us from our deep history.

A sculpture of a woman made from mammoth ivory found in a cave near Lespugue, south west France, was the opening piece of the exhibition. If they did not already know its age, many visitors initially assumed it to be modern before realising it is about 23,000 years old. Below a small head with a delicately engraved hairstyle, slim shoulders and tiny arms embrace an abnormally large bosom with breasts resting on a small abdomen framed by ample hips above well-rounded thighs.

The transformation of the body is extraordinary. The artist viewed the natural form then translated the volumes into new symmetries creating a body of ideas rather than a simple representation of reality.

Even older, the 26,000 year baked clay figure from the Moravian site of Dolní Vestonice (pictured page 25), depicts a woman in later life whose body bears the marks of childbearing. Ceramic models of women, animals and at least one male figure are significant at this site and, together with an ivory portrait of a woman, are the oldest known in the world.

The limestone sculpture of a heavily pregnant woman from the Russian site of Kostienki was found carefully buried in a pit, but before it was deposited the figure was deliberately smashed.

Another sculpture from the same site shows a woman kneeling to give birth whereas a group of ivory figures from Siberia are of slim women dressed in animal skin clothing.



©Jill Cook

These pieces are neither overtly sexual nor maternal, but were probably worn as pendants. The perforations by which they were suspended occur through their lower legs indicating that they hung upside down, perhaps to be held up and looked at by the wearer rather than an observer.

The response to these figures and the exhibition overall was overwhelming. The objects caught public imagination and stimulated lively debates especially about the female images that were liberated from the usual label 'Venus figurines' and the frequent simplistic assumptions that they must be nurturing goddesses or ancient, boys will be boys, porn.

'If I wanted a career as an archaeologist there was no point brandishing a copy of Spare Rib'

See Jill's video about representations of the female form http://www.britishmuseum.org/whats_on/past_exhibitions/2013/ice_age_art/about_the_

Her Agenda

On the couch

With work by Alice Anderson, Louise Bourgeois, Helen Chadwick, Tracey Emin, Anna Furse, Susan Hiller and Sarah Lucas, this exhibition highlights the experience of women and their relationship to those who confined, cared for and listened to them.

Mad, Bad and Sad: Women and the Mind Doctors
Till 2 February 2014
<http://www.freud.org.uk/exhibitions>

Parliament Week

Women in democracy celebrates women's contribution to UK democratic life and explores how women's voice can be better heard.

A variety of inspiring events in Parliament and across the UK focussing on women's impact on democracy in Britain.

Women in Democracy
15 - 21 November
<http://www.parliamentweek.org/whats-new/women-in-democracy/>

Back to school

Freelance journalist and author Susan Elkin's new book recalls her experience aged 21 as one of the first women employed to teach urban teenage boys in the raw.

Please Miss We're Boys is published on Kindle this month available at
http://www.amazon.co.uk/Please-Miss-Were-Susan-Elkin-ebook/dp/B00GABS18Q/ref=sr_1_1?ie=UTF8&qid=1383149954&sr=8-1&keywords=Please+miss+we%27re+boys

Our friends in the north

A portrait exhibition featuring the work of photographers Bryony Bainbridge and Kami Dodds, celebrating the achievements of women who have played a vital role within the North East including politician Mo Mowlam, suffragette Emily Davison and explorer Gertrude Bell.

The Hatton Gallery, Newcastle University until 21 December.
For information email info@hattongallery.org.uk

Meaning business

Scottish Women in Business hold networking events on the second Tuesday of every month. Most are held in the evening with one event every quarter held at lunchtime.

Visit http://www.scottishwomeninbusiness.org.uk/content/events_forthcoming/

Parallel lines

Welsh new writing company Dirty Protest Theatre stages the inaugural Wales Drama Award winning play, *Parallel Lines*, by Katherine Chandler.

The play follows 15-year old Steph and her teacher Simon and their very different lives.

Chapter Arts Centre, Cardiff
20 - 30 November
www.chapter.org

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