

ISSUE 1



**FLAMING
FEMME**

CELESTINA BILLINGTON

I am a twenty-two-year-old puta-cunt-bitch-artist from Houston, Texas. Set to graduate from college in less than one month, my degree promises no definitive life plan, suggests little monetary success, and begs the question **"SO WHAT ARE YOU GOING TO DO, EXACTLY?"**

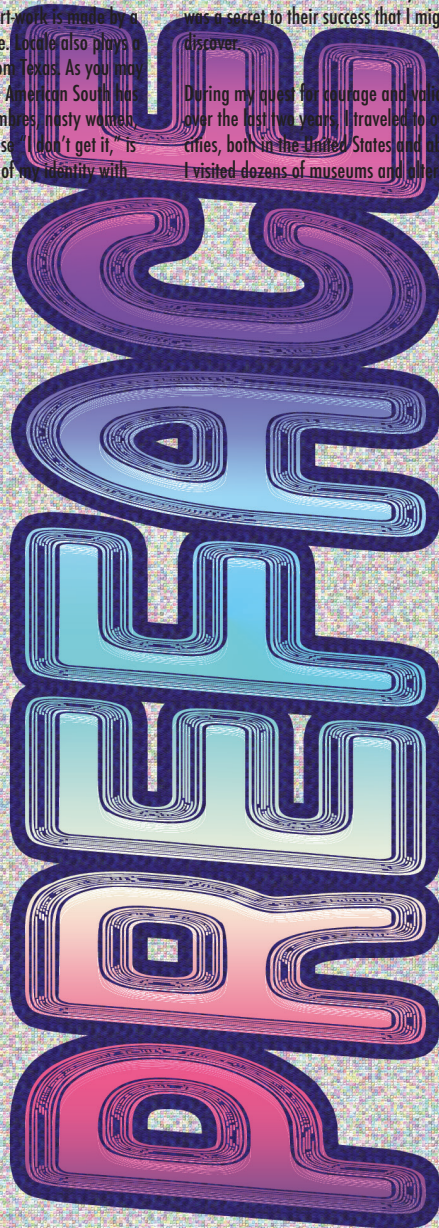
Delinquency delineates creative work, because productions that exist outside the real and imagined frameworks of contemporary capitalism are suspect. And that mistrust intensifies when the art-work is made by a puta-cunt-bitch like me. Locale also plays a role: I told you I'm from Texas. As you may already be aware, the American South has little taste for bad hombres, nasty women, or weird art. The phrase "I don't get it," is said at museums and of my identity with rivaling frequency.

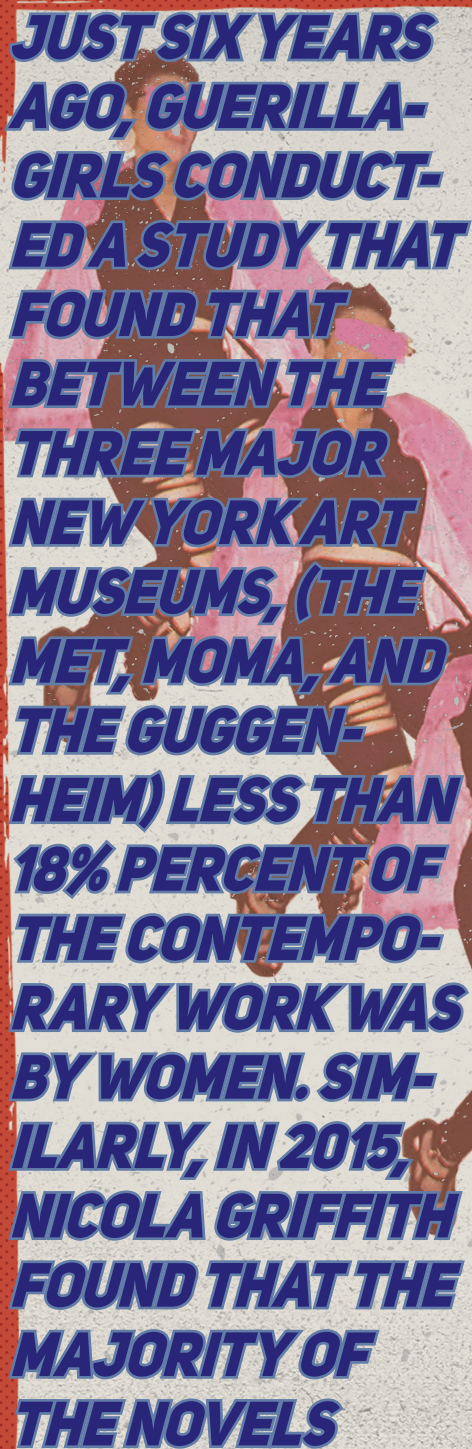
When I started this project in 2015, The FlamingFemme Interviews, I was looking to access a means by which to "get myself," so that I would be better prepared for what comes after commencement: the writer's block, the art critics, the being broke, the potential fall of democracy to a fascist (ok, I didn't necessarily foresee that last part, but it definitely applies.) I spoke to these women to get their perspectives—and a part of me must have wondered if maybe there was a secret to their success that I might discover.

During my quest for courage and validation over the last two years, I traveled to over 20 cities, both in the United States and abroad. I visited dozens of museums and alternative

art spaces—from the MoMa, to MONO, to Casa Azul. All the while I have been simultaneously attending school full-time, working minimum wage jobs off and on, and performing. It's been a whirlwind, and as such I naturally picked up both magic and dust along my way.

These interviews are amongst the magic of my experiences. And indeed it was through these that I found the secret to success. I invite you to take a look inside





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MICHELLE YUE



DESIGNER, MUSICIAN AND POTENTIAL NON HUMAN

Michelle Yue is a 26-year-old artist living in Portland, Oregon. She has worked as a singer, songwriter, pianist and synthesizer with two popular bands, Matsu Mixu, and Monorose. But Yue's success doesn't end there. Yue is an all-around artist, finding inspiration and success in a variety of creative fields. With her upcoming jewelry company Shopnonhuman, her work has been featured at the Contemporary Arts Museum of Houston as part of the Texas Design Now exhibit and is wildly popular with Instagram models.

THE PIECES YOU HAVE FEATURED AT THE CAMH ARE STUNNING. WHAT WAS THE INSPIRATION BEHIND THEM? IN GENERAL, WHAT INSPIRES YOU?

MICHELLE YUE The naked human body and simple shapes inspire me. A lot of my work comes from confronting issues with the functionality of consumable goods. Broken clasps, missing gems, and tarnished material... These are just some of the problems that

pushed me to explore new forms of body adornment.

HAVE YOU EVER BEEN "MANSPLAINED" ON YOUR CREATIVE PROCESS OR ART IN GENERAL?

Michelle Yue Definitely, but I am a strong personality type and may have 'mansplained' a mansplainer - if that makes any sense. Overall, I don't encounter many people like this."

YOUR PIECES AT THE CAMH ARE ALL JEWELRY (AS I UNDERSTAND), WHICH I SUSPECT WILL BE WORN PRIMARILY BY WOMEN-IDENTIFIED INDIVIDUALS, THOUGH I COULD BE WRONG. WHO DO YOU IMAGINE WEARING YOUR PIECES?

MICHELLE YUE Currently, there are more women who wear my pieces. This is not my personal intention. Jewelry is unisex, like clothing, like

office supplies. People need to spend less time wondering if the item they want is made for boys or girls and more time looking in the mirror and saying 'Damn, I look good and feel good in this.' Everything to me is genderless, unless it has the biological markings of male / female. I see style-forward and artistic individuals wearing my pieces.

VIEWING YOUR PIECES AND THE ORIGINALITY OF THEIR SHAPES AND TRANSLUCENCE—ONE CAN EASILY SEE THAT YOU HAVE AN EYE FOR THE AESTHETIC AND THE TECHNICAL SKILLS NECESSARY TO PULL IT OFF. DO YOU CONSIDER YOURSELF AN ARTIST?



Instagram model Josephine Pearl Lee in Shopnonhuman

MICHELLE YUE I actually consider myself an artist before jewelry designer. This is because I began life as an artist. Like many artists out there, my creativity comes out in multiple dimensions.

The desire to create is a universal feeling that expresses itself through as many forms as an artist chooses. (Music, poetry, painting, interior design, fashion, makeup, etc.)

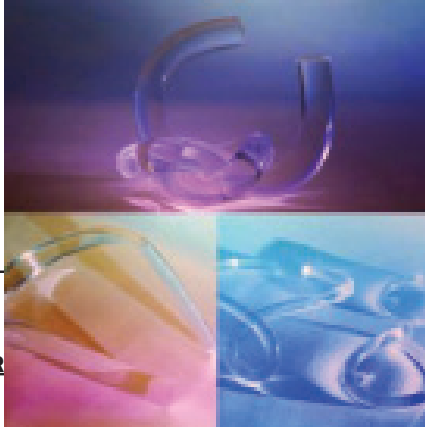
WHO ARE OTHER WOMEN-IDENTIFIED INDIVIDUALS THAT YOU KNOW WHO ENCOURAGE YOU, AND SUPPORT YOUR WORK?

MICHELLE YUE There are so many women who have helped me along the way, and I am grateful to all of them for their willingness to collaborate and experiment with me. I recognize that my work is different

and therefore, often confronted with misunderstanding. Andi Valentine is a photographer & artist & model from Houston who actually helped get my work noticed by Settlement Goods, a boutique. She has also photographed my work on various occasions.

I love to leave her alone with my jewelry and her camera. She's a magician! A lot of my photos are from her. Sarah Kate is a stylist & model & writer from New York who has modeled for me various times as well as shared my work to her fans on social media. She has even helped me with interview responses! She's a strong woman and great style inspiration.

My mom came from rural China and made a luxurious life for her self here in America through hard work and perseverance. I look up to her in so many ways, and I find strength in her when I feel weak and afraid of failure. She has supported me in so many ways, and I would not be who I am without her. Whenever I would worry, she would say to me – "I didn't find myself until I was 30. You will find yourself. Just keep working hard and always be a good person." My sister Tina Chang has also



Shopnonhuman products, as photographed by Andi Valentine

been a huge help. She recently graduated from the Savannah College of Art and Design with a study in film, so she has a keen eye on aesthetics. She has set up photo shoots that I could not have dreamed of. She is basically my partner in business, and I love her for supporting me relentlessly. There are many more wonderful women who have gone out of their way to represent and support Shopnonhuman. Their love, kindness, and praiseful

words really help me get through the daily struggle and the fears of my own work. Always praise people for their work - find the beauty in what they do. You might just be watering a seed that will grow into a beautiful fruit.



DARCEY STEINKE

WOMAN, AUTHOR, WORLD TRAVELER

Darcey Steinke is a highly acclaimed American author, whose work has been featured in the The New York Times, The Washington Post, and Vogue. She teaches at Columbia, Princeton, and in the summers, at The American University of Paris, in a creative writing program that she co-founded.

For FlamingFemme, Darcey dished on writing, unpaid internships and her worst ever travel experience:

IN LIFE AND LITERATURE, THE VALIDITY OF WOMEN'S STORIES ARE OFTEN TAKEN INTO QUESTION. HOW DO YOU COMBAT THIS TRADITION AT WORK, IN LIFE,-- AS WELL AS IN YOUR WRITING? YOU MENTIONED UNLIKEABLE FEMALE CHARACTERS--DO YOU THINK THAT THAT PLAYS A ROLE IN COMBATING THIS STIGMA?

DARCEY STEINKE I think female characters should have all variety of qualities. I do think sometimes editors push women writers to write more sympathetic female characters which is a problem. I don't know if you've read Sabeth's Theater by Phillip Roth, but in that book Sabeth behaves in the most outrageous ways, sexually, morally, etc. and it's so fun to read. I don't think that book would have even been accepted by a publisher if the character had been a woman. I just don't think you can have women misbehave in the same way. This is a big problem as it restrains us in the type of stories that can be told. I mean why do women always have to be life-affirmative?

It's gotten a lot better obviously but there is still a lot of work to be done, to make the playing field fair for everyone. I think first-off: people need to read more women. And teachers need to teach more women. We have to make it clear in the arts and in all aspects of life that men's work and men in general are not intrinsically more important than women and women's work.

THERE'S OFTEN A LOT OF PRESSURE ON CREATIVE TYPES TO GO UNDER-PAID. DO YOU ALWAYS DEMAND COMPENSATION FOR YOUR WORK? WHAT IS YOUR ADVICE IN THIS REGARD FOR YOUNG FEMALE ARTISTS STARTING OUT? A LOT OF PEOPLE SAY UNPAID INTERNSHIPS PAY IN EXPERIENCE, WHILE EXHIBITIONS AND PUBLICATION PAY IN "EXPOSURE." WHAT'S YOUR OPINION ON THIS?

DARCEY STEINKE I think this is very true. Creative work is often underpaid or not paid at all. Sometimes the very best creative work goes un paid. We would not have some of the great works we have, Ulysses for instance, if writers always worked for money. Innovation in the arts is often ignored at first and so it's key at times to work for free, or for love, as I like to think of it, But having said that it's also important to stick up for yourself and ask for what you deserve. People will always try to take advantage of creative people, so it's key to ask for compensation when you know its possible to get it. As to internships I do think it's OK to work a summer or two without compensation. I did it, I worked for a literary magazine and I learned a lot. My daughter is working on one now at Impose Magazine and she is writing about music and culture in away that would be impossible any other way at this moment in her 19 year old life. They do sometimes lead to jobs as well. In a perfect world young people would be paid for their first work efforts but to me it's OK to be an apprentice for a bit while you are still under your parents financial wing.

Who are women travelers and creatives who have influenced your work?

DARCEY STEINKE Stein I guess. If you haven't read Paris, France, you should, it's great. Also my friend Liz Gilbert, who wrote Eat, Pray, Love. She is just a natural traveler, it's almost like the road is her home, not a house. That is very rare for a writer- writers usually want quiet, stability, routine. I am more of the home-loving type myself. I love thinkers and adventurers like Margret Mead. Also, if we are going to broaden it out some I have always been inspired by Joan of Arc and also Amelia Earhart. But I guess too I think you can go on an adventure in your home town or even in your own room. I always think of Emily Dickinson, the traveling she did inside four walls. I admire that just as much as I do world travelers.

DO YOU EVER FEEL LIKE YOU HAVE HAD TO SACRIFICE FEMININE CHARACTERISTICS IN ORDER TO BE TAKEN SERIOUSLY?

DARCEY STEINKE This is a really big question that we need like a night long wine drinking session to really deal with fully. But here I will say that, yes, of course I have felt not so much the urge to be taken seriously but just the real hardship and double work of women. I was a single mom for much of my daughter's childhood and it was really hard to juggle her needs, teaching, and writing. I did it with a full heart and love and I have no regrets AT ALL, but still it was a struggle. And I do get jealous of male artists at times -that have like full time help in a wife. Even a working wife supports their husband in a zillion small ways. I am not saying that husbands can't support their wives. They do. But it's just not set up the same way for us to have family and work.

WHAT'S BEEN YOUR WORST TRAVEL EXPERIENCE--AND YOUR BEST--IN THE CONTEXT OF BEING A FEMALE/CREATIVE TYPE?

DARCEY V Well let's see... I have had so many wonderful moments as a traveler. The best that comes to mind now is once I was leaving Ireland for england I was taking a boat over. And I was tired and hungry and hung over, I am sure, as well. I had said a dramatic and sad good bye to an Irish boy-friend, and so I was wrung out in all ways. Also, I had no money. I was hungry. I sat next to this nun, very smart and lovely and she shared her turkey sandwich with me. I can still see the sandwich in tin foil, the way she had cut the crusts off and just her lovely manner and generosity of spirit. I learned a lot from that encounter.

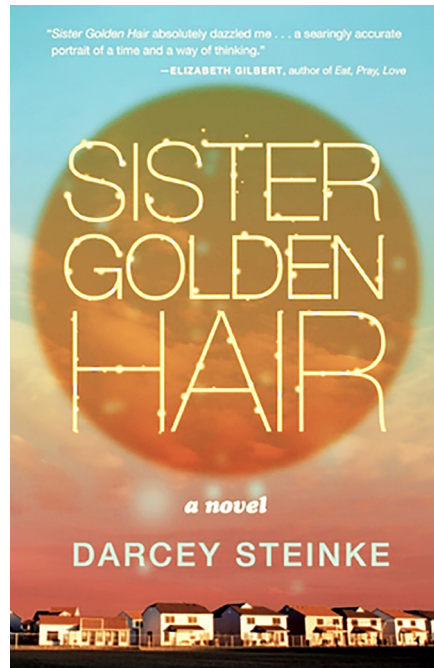
Worst I think was coming back once from a film festival I'd gone to in Virginia. I had taken the bus- when I was young I was a huge Greyhound bus traveler, and I was going back to Ocracoke Island, this little island off the coast of North Carolina, where I was living at the time. So my bus arrived late, and my

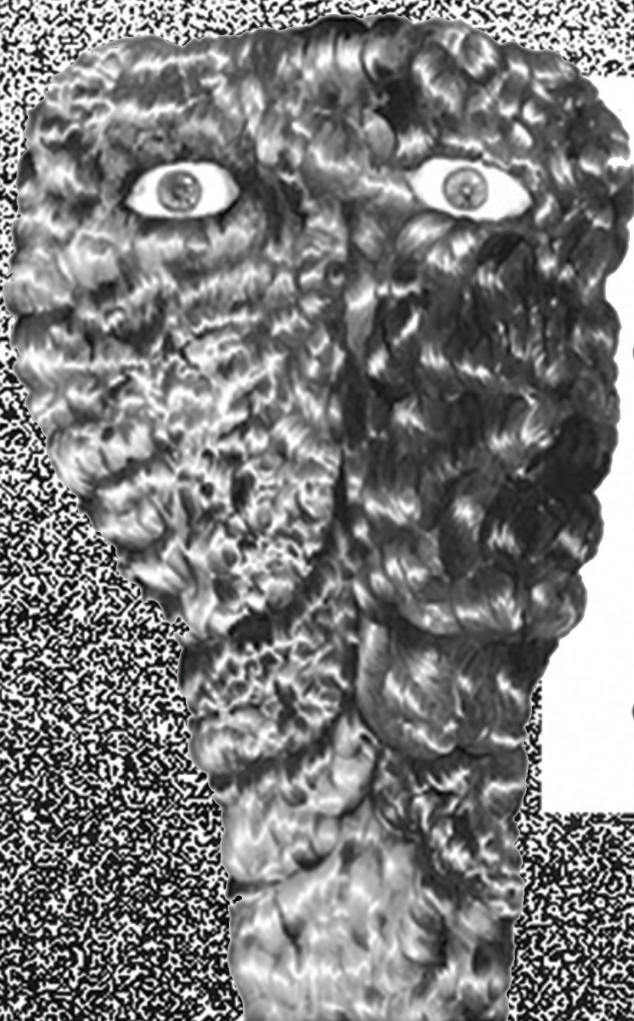
connecting bus had already gone. It was a once-a-day bus, so I had to wait a whole 24 hours in the bus station. That was hard. But even then I remember a little boy I spoke to, in my mind's eye its all very clear, I can still See his face.



*The cover of Steinke's acclaimed 2012 novel, **Suicide Blonde***

Darcey's books *Easter Everywhere*, *Suicide Blonde*, *Sister Golden Hair*, and *Up Through the Water* are all available through Amazon. Those interested in learning more about the literary rock star can visit her website: darceysteinke.v





INTERMISSION

Shakespeare & Co is perhaps best known for being a hangout to the famed ex-patriot writers of the roaring twenties. Before its reincarnation by George Whitman in 1951, it was frequented by James Joyce, Ezra Pound, Gertrude Stein, Ernest Hemingway and F Scott Fitzgerald. Following its revival, James Baldwin and Anais Nin were known to visit the shop. And in the short month that I was in Paris, I encountered Jonathan Safran Foer, Zadie Smith, and Geoff Dyer there—reading excerpts from their works to the English speaking literati of Paris.

But what remains the best kept secret of Shakespeare & Co, is that on the last Sunday of each month, at 6PM, a little-known artist and writer hosts what she has self proclaimed “The Tea Party.” And indeed, the experience does echo that of Alice’s following her tumble down the rabbit hole.

It was a hot Paris afternoon when I met PANMELYS on the second floor of the infamous bookshop. She was standing in front of a narrow window that overlooked Notre Dame, her blond hair defying gravity as it curled upwards around her smiling face. Despite her age, PANMELYS is still bursting with raw energy. That day, she sang ditties, read poetry and displayed one of her paintings. She served homemade lemonade in cups she’d hauled from home. During the gathering, PANMELYS asked the few of us who were in the room, as we were sitting on the floor beneath shelves and rows of leather bound books—if we would also sing, or recite poetry, and to write a sentence or two in her notebook, which she passed around. I remember writing something crass about vomiting up a chocolate croissant below the Eiffel tower after a wild night. I nervously gulped down cup after cup of her lemonade, worried she wouldn’t agree to an interview.

But, she did:

WOMEN’S ART IS OFTEN DE-VALUED IN COMPARISON TO MALE CONTRIBUTIONS. WE ARE FEATURED LESS IN MUSEUMS, AND OTHER RECOGNIZED SPACES. BUT WOMEN STILL CREATE; ARE CREATIVE. HOW DO YOU NAVIGATE A MALE DOMINATED FIELD? DO YOU FEEL LIKE THERE ARE FEMININE PARTS OF YOURSELF THAT YOU’VE HAD TO SACRIFICE TO BE TAKEN SERIOUSLY?

PANMELYS Apart from many essays, writings, and my “teachings,” – as well as my artwork in the realm of oil painting, I’m basically a nobody. My work is geared towards posterity, mainly because of a certain otherness deep inside of me. The sheer effort of struggle in order to be taken seriously, or even to be ‘seen’ in this mass produced explosion surrounding art today has just never seemed worthwhile, or, rather, to my mind, appears unimportant to the future of woman in all fields of her development.

Woman is simply not listened to, or promoted, alongside men, and this is the main problem. Time alone will prove those fine words of Eva Hesse, an American Sculptor, who said: “The only way to surmount male dominance in art– is by Art. Excellence has no sex”. When you think of Sappho who sang her poems, of Cleopatra’s greatness as a Queen, or Boadicea going naked into battle, avenging the rape of her daughters, those locked inside nunneries, to include Hildegard, Heloise – or those lucky to be born daughters of great male artists, like Artemisia, or Judith Leyster, those having ‘fingers in the pie’ – by being admitted into all male circles by male relatives, such as The Royal Academy of Art in England and Italy, e.g. Kauffmann and Mary Moser ...we can see the excellence in their works, and feel sorry for male chauvinism in its blindness.





"Stones," by PANMELYS

Like those before me, I've always been confident that I was meant to be a pioneer of the new opaque spirit, the "Greater Spirit." This 'Otherness' of the female gender moves upon the face of the waters, coming into her own, slowly and without need to ask permission of entry. The opaque spirit will always be above anything man creates, and enters in its new disguise as it feels itself recreating creation. This "Otherness" takes its space prepared, beside that of her brother, -not apart, not as a challenge, nor striving to be better, or above, but rather, as a complimentary sister, as a twin. So therefore I've never navigated within a male dominated society. My world is of a Divine nature, a gift bestowed at birth, to be practiced, taught, written about in the silence and excellence sought in secrecy, without praise on ivory stages, or power of might, without a need to compete.

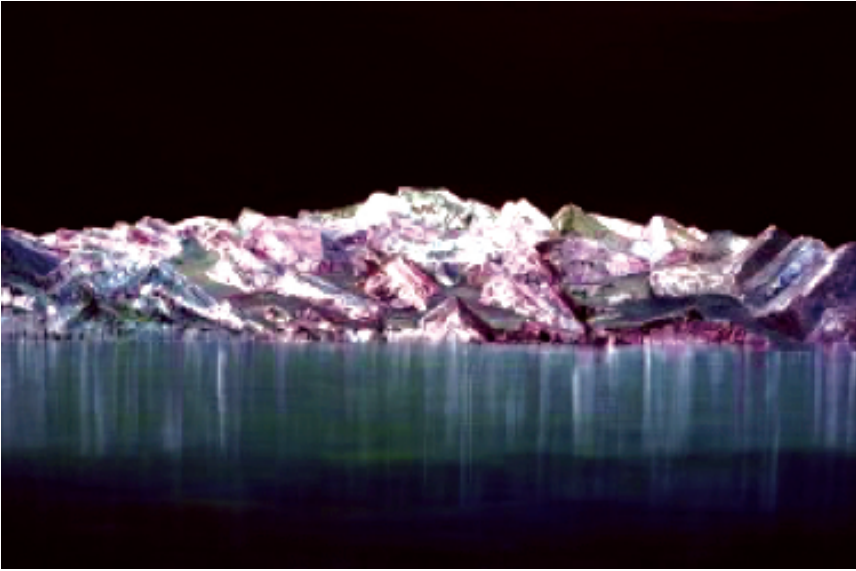
Those few who have seen me, shall be welcomed as guests of high standing into my Celtic grove of greenery, where many male spirits, of like opaque awareness, share this vision, to pass on messages of hope to future generations.

YOU MENTIONED AT ONE OF YOUR TEA PARTIES THAT IT'S TERRIBLY COMMON FOR TOURISTS TO BE CHEATED IN PARIS, AND THAT YOU FELT THIS ATTITUDE TO BE DAMAGING TO BOTH FOREIGNERS AND LOCALS. WILL YOU TALK A BIT MORE ABOUT THAT IN RELATIONSHIP TO WOMEN IN PARTICULAR?

PANMELYS What I meant was that France is suffering, as other cultures, from a great wave of nostalgia, and has a long road ahead to realize that what is lost, has gone forever. It's happened before in history, and will continue so. Yet, France's very survival demands she change her attitude to tourists, wearing smiles and being brave enough to recognize it as her livelihood. So, first and foremost she must adapt to the world-wide, universal language of English, -it doesn't mean she loses her own, she simply gains another tongue, or several.

HOW HAS TRAVEL INFLUENCED YOUR WORK?

PANMELYS The obvious answer is enormously. Travel, along with song and reading, are vital trump cards to young people seeking knowledge. And remember: "Knowledge is Power." Observing other cultures opens the portals of the mind, helping us to understand things of dimensions we would otherwise be ignorant of. I haven't traveled a great deal, but North America made me realize my dream of childhood, where I discovered a new planet had developed in my lifetime. (I was) awakened by the love of cinema, which I lapped up twice, sometimes, thrice a week, with a screen that was blurred. (TV)



From PANMELYS' "Melting Ice" series

**WERE THERE ANY FEMALE ROLE-MODELS
IN YOUR LIFE WHO INFLUENCED YOUR
ARTWORK AND ABILITY TO TRAVEL—OR
WERE YOU A TRAILBLAZER? HOW DID
WOMEN ROLE MODELS, OR LACK THERE-
OF, EFFECT YOUR MOBILITY IN THE ART
WORLD AND ABROAD?**

PANMELYS Miss Williams of Swansea. At age 10 when left the village, my world fell apart. [She told me to] "Leave this country, it's got tentacles that'll keep you imprisoned. Go to France, America - it's by travel, and reading everything you can lay your hands on, that will give you culture, knowledge; when you're poor, with a brain, it's the only way to climb out of the hole." Others helped enormously, - but she was the first person to make me aware of my gift, she saw me. I was lucky, teachers are not the same anymore. The rest is hermetic. I'm not sure if I could be called a 'trail-blazer' - I simply took her advice. I gave in to that 'Otherness' I'd always felt inside, an "inner influence," like a magnet showing me the way - sprinkling signs and symbols. Even the negatives ended up as positive, vis-a-vis my artistic creations.

Those interested in learning more about PANMELYS, can visit her website: panmelys.com
Shakespeare & Co can be found at 37 rue de la Bucherie
75005, Paris, France. To learn more about its history, rare book collection, and visiting writers, go to shakespeareandcompany.com.



**IOWA
KEWNEY**

SHAKER OF
IMAGINATIONS



IOWA KEWNEY IS A CREATIVE CONTORTIONIST, COLLABORATOR, AND CHOP AND CHANGE CONNOISSEUR. A DETERMINED DREAMER, KEWNEY HAS PARTICIPATED IN PERFORMANCES AT LIVE ARTS, FESTIVAL D'AVIGNON, AND WORKED WITH ALIAN PLATEL'S BELGIAN CONTEMPORARY DANCE COMPANY LES BALLETS C DE LA B. ORIGINALLY FROM THE SMALL SEA SIDE TOWN AYRSHIRE, SCOTLAND, KEWNEY'S SUCCESSFUL ARTS CAREER HAS PROPELLED HER ALL OVER THE WORLD.

THOUGH KEWNEY IS PERHAPS BEST KNOWN FOR HER THEATRICAL MOVEMENT CONTORTIONIST SHOWS, SHE WAS FIRST FORMALLY EDUCATED IN PRINT-MAKING AT DUNCAN OF JORDANSTONE. AND ACTUALLY, WHEN I ORIGINALLY CONTACTED KEWNEY ON THE POSSIBILITY OF AN INTERVIEW, I WAS UNDER THE MISUNDERSTANDING THAT HER WORK WAS LIMITED TO ILLUSTRATION. I HAD ENCOUNTERED HER SKETCH-WORK AND PAINTINGS FROM MY MACHINES IN GLASGOW, AND IT WAS ONLY AFTER I REACHED OUT TO HER THAT I LEARNED THE BREADTH OF HER REPERTOIRE. KEWNEY EXEMPLIFIES A FEMALE ARTIST WHO IS BOTH INTERDISCIPLINARY AND WELL-TRAVELED, AND I WAS VERY LUCKY TO PICK HER BRAIN FOR FLAMINGFEMME.

WHAT INITIALLY GOT YOU INVOLVED IN THE ARTS? WAS IT A SOUND, A TEACHER, A FEELING? AND, MORE IMPORTANTLY, WHAT HAS KEPT YOU IN THE ARTS?

IONA KEWNEY For me, Art has just always been there, [I have] a huge drive and will power, without questioning or being questioned. It is more like a willed belief, a relentless desire. Focused projection not just to an end point, but an opening into something bigger—whether an insight, learning through the process, and risks, or the greater vision. It is always evolving, falling apart, re-growing. Like life, it has all the elements in extremes.

Painting gives me the freedom to dream and speak my own world and landscape in. It is total. Total, yet apart from the physical, the dance, the movement—which is my beast of desire, and makes my body smile, feel and think. That is human. That is life, and work, and progressive changing thoughts. Since I do not reside in one art form, then one can dictate or compliment or take over more than the other at certain times.

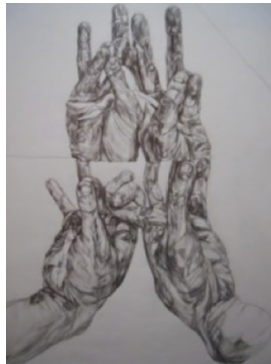
I stay in the arts, because, what else? ... I breath it, and the diversity of people in it, it has become me. I could jump out and do a normal job. But like any artist, if it is in the blood, ideas will start shaping whatever you are doing, [I will have the] desire to start new ideas. The arts are not a job where there is a certain type of person or certain type of rules. But it is a hard survival road sometimes, and inconsistent.



Kewney, left, in Les Ballets C de La B

DOES BEING SUCH A SUCCESSFUL ARTIST GIVE YOU ANY "STREET CRED" IN GLASGOW?

IONA KEWNEY In art you cannot think small or an insular area for that is where the vision stays and ends. You have to project outwards. If you are really in the search, you hunt and you go to that place, person, community. Like a calling, you will find a way. As soon as I knew I wanted to study dance, I went out of the UK completely, as this is certainly not the place for it. Where the theories study's developments happened, where it is electric, that's where I went, and go. Whatever it is I am after, I have had to take a few risks to find.



*Pee Wee,
Iona Kewney*

TATE MODERN DIRECTOR FRANCES MORRIS RECENTLY CAME OUT AND CALLED THE ART WORLD "A BOY'S CLUB"—DO YOU AGREE?

IONA KEWNEY Yes, especially in the Gallery world. In performing [as well] but less so, depending which part of the world you are in. Europe is [a] much more open minded system, and outward looking in the arts. It is written in history of women being the underdogs in painting, arts, and still now. But I'm in for the run, I have the drive in me.



Kewney, performing contortions. Photo by Ben Hopper.

Kewney's upcoming projects include the genesis of the Iona Kewney Company. Currently, she is seeking producers, benefactors and supporters to see this possibility realized. The company will combine innovative approaches to set design, lighting, and perform visceral physical content. In the meantime, she is performing in the Black Regent tour, and may have upcoming performances in New York and across Europe. Her website is www.ionakewney.com





ENE-LIIS SEMPER

THEATRE NO99

AND

TRANSCENDENCE

IN ESTONIA

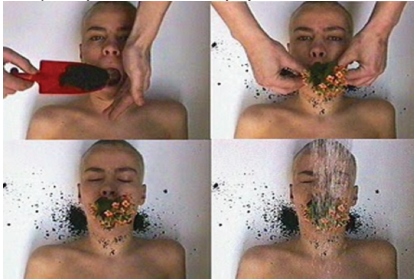
Theatre NO99 is a contemporary performance art theatre in Tallinn, Estonia. Their most notable performance is the NO75 Unified Estonia Assembly, a political piece that excited Estonian society. It was eventually performed before an audience of 7200—one of the largest modern European theatre performances in existence.

Many of NO99's projects are viewable online for free, via their vimeo, including the performance of NO75. The concept behind the numerical titles, NO99, NO55, and so on, is "the inherently finite nature of time and its finality."

At the helm of these projects are artistic co-directors Tiit Ojasoo and Ene-Liis Semper. The married couple has been nominated for numerous awards, and have had staged productions at both Manifesta and the Venice Biennale.

Individually, Ene-Liis remains a force to be reckoned with. Her solo exhibition at the Kumu Art Museum encompassed all five floors, and she has been nominated for the oldest art prize in Estonia, the Kristjan Raud Art Award.

Luckily for FlamingFemme, Semper opened up on her ideas in regards to gender politics, opportunities in the art world for women, and spoke of some of her projects:



ENE-LIIS SEMPER We had two hundred people help us, for the thousands in the audience. We needed the two hundred people to be there, to applause in the right moments and so on. And we've been working with our ten actors (the ensemble), for over ten years.

THEATRE, IN MANY SENSES, IS A HIERARCHICAL ART-FORM, AS THERE IS THE POSITION OF ACTOR, STAGEHAND, DIRECTOR AND SO ON. WHAT DOES IT MEAN TO YOU, AS A WOMAN, AND AS AN ARTIST, TO HAVE YOUR DIRECTORS POSITION?

The 7200 audience members, watching Semper and Ojasoo's NO75

WHEN IT COMES TO POLITICAL THEATRE WHAT ARE THE THEMES THAT REALLY RESONATE WITH YOU?

ENE-LIIS SEMPER I've been in theatre and I've been in fine arts also. I've been working for the theatre for over



twenty five years. I've had to do everything because we are running the company now. I don't see much of a hierarchy. Art is about talent. Being real with yourself. Staying with yourself. I don't feel any kind of limit because of my gender. For ladies, the big dilemma is always –family or art? I have both. We have two children. Some say you have to give everything to the arts. You have children, you go back. But I really believe there are no limits. No limits.

ENE-LIIS SEMPER It's about this and that. Sometimes it's about a feeling. Trying to talk about sorrow—the big sorrow of what's going on. Or comedy. Comments about something. People understand irony. We are trying to be very different from one production to another. We use different styles. We have been doing ready-made plays— writing them during rehearsals. We use dance, singing, physical theatre. My play, (NO47) is about beauty. The meaning of beauty, the female girl. In it, everyone getting confused about the female girl. So she's playing completely naked. They suffer. One sacrifices her breasts.

SO, HOW EXACTLY DO YOU PUT ON A PRODUCTION FOR AN AUDIENCE OF 7000?

Of the play, NO99's website describes it further: "Beauty is undoubtedly a major fixation of the contemporary society, but it is so in quite a counter-intuitive way. In a world that talks ever more and more about equality, beauty is the essence of inequality that will never disappear - some of us are touched by beauty and others simply are not."



Rea Lest, as The Beauty, in Semper's NO47

SO IN SOME WAYS GENDER DOES PLAY A ROLE IN YOUR WORK?

ENE-LIIS SEMPER Well, sometimes.

WHAT'S NEXT?

ENE-LIIS SEMPER Well, our last production was Filth (NO43). The actors were covered in mud. In it, they are suffering, it's really cold, and wet. I'm really proud of them. We never did this kind of thing before. Our next project is coming up, but it's still being worked on. And of course, you can feel free to check out our website. (<http://no99.ee/>)

Semper is also the sole director of NO99's next show, NO42, which will premiere December 22nd. The performance will highlight physicality, with themes of human endurance amidst mortality and hardship. Those interested in attending the performance can make their bookings at piletid@no99.ee, or by calling (372) 660-5051.

NO43 Filth, is set to be performed at The German Festival Lessingtage, in January of 2016.

ELLEN COUNT



ON CRIME
WRITING,
NEW YORK
AND BLUE
HAIR AFTER 50

Ellen Count, auto-biographer and former crime novelist, was whistling along to an online compilation of The Blues Brothers, the lilac dye I had applied to her head glistening in the soft light of a paper lantern. We'd spent the day wandering the crannies of the 10th arrondissement in the search for the products I'd needed to color her hair. We ventured through five shops to find everything—Ellen would not be satisfied by any regular old cerulean.

As we chatted over shared Ethiopian beers, Ellen opened up about her experiences as a career writer who travels back and forth between Paris and New York City:

WHAT'S THE WORST EXPERIENCE YOU'VE EVER HAD IN PARIS?

ELLEN COUNT Leaving

—The 1990 crime novel

A LOT OF PEOPLE SAY UNPAID INTERNSHIPS PAY IN EXPERIENCE, WHILE EXHIBITIONS AND PUBLICATIONS PAY IN 'EXPOSURE.' **WHAT'S YOUR OPINION ON THIS?**

ELLEN COUNT I've been published without pay several times. The key is that you're writing what you want to write, and that you can use it later in your portfolio. At Frenchcultureguide.com I just made comments. The work I do editing [and am paid for] is much, much more detailed—and really, quite valuable.

Ellen's work is advertised via word-of-mouth, as Ellen isn't interested in a social media presence. She finds in-person networking more valuable, and she used to organize events for her local Mystery Writers of America chapter. Ellen became a member of the MWA after publishing her first crime novel: *The Hundred Percent Squad*. The idea for a police procedural first crossed Ellen's mind after an encounter with street assailants. She describes the experience on her website, ewcount.com, "I stumbled on the story in the most round-about way. But then I had stumbled into crime writing itself: I was mugged, scruffy-looking plainclothes cops scooped up the bad guys...I was hooked."

From then on Ellen began pursuing interviews with NYC police, fascinated in particular by police who risk their lives in the day to day.

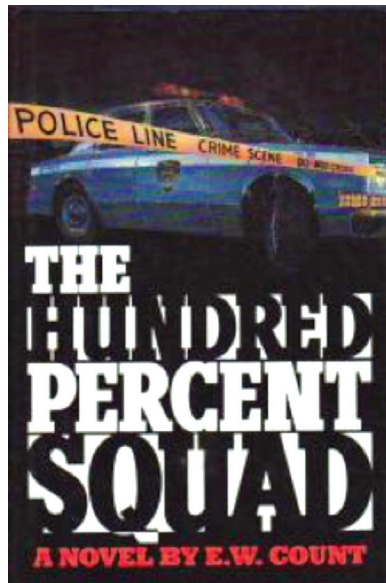
Unfortunately, publishers informed Ellen that they didn't think a non-fiction piece on a New York City detective squad would sell. Instead, OneHouse invited her to transform it into a novel, and even paid her an advance. For the record, this is unheard of for a first novel. Ellen dove into the genre, and took a class called Fiction Writers Workout at the YMCA.

SO, THIS CLASS BENEFITTED YOUR WORK?

ELLEN COUNT I used scenarios and characters from my novel for the prompts we had everyday, and in the end I think everything I wrote in that class wound up in the book. It really paid off.

After our interview, Ellen divulged to me about her French boyfriend. They met at an art gallery, and he naturally was quick to fall for her charms. The first text he sent her said "You've conquered me."

In the end, Ellen conquers all.



poetry is not a luxury



it is a vital necessity

-Audre Lorde

I'd like to thank my family. Thank-you for supporting my creative endeavors, political Facebook rants, and for taking me out to eat. I'd also like to thank Alexander Beraza, who is the good one.

-Celestina Billington

design by Alex Beraza