Manic Monday

Tight schedules, fake marble and sexy fish

Valerio Esposito
23 hr ago 1

"It's just another Manic Monday," the North American philosopher known to literary scholars as *The Bangles* once proclaimed. Some people may think of it as a playful song about a woman who'd rather make out with a man named Valentino than go to work. I look at it as a sharp, finger-on-pulse critique of the incessant demands of capitalist society and a bitter *j'accuse* against the relentlessly exploitative diktats of modern life.

It all begins in the morning, when the alarm goes off and I have to produce a mental estimate of how long it will take me to get ready. Teeth, shower, hair - sometimes at the same time, so I allow myself and my flatmate enough bathroom time before we go to our respective jobs. Any flaw in my calculation will result in me having to brush my teeth on the No8 bus into Central London (which is still not the worst thing I've done on the No8 bus into Central London).

Then there's public transport - where planning is key. Check CityMapper, the Transport for London dashboard and the Ministry of Defence website. One knows where one is going, but one never knows whether one is going to get there, so one inevitably always end up screaming and crying in the middle of Bank station. Traffic, disruptions, roadworks, Extinction Rebellion protests, the district line. My journey to and from work has become like a game of Super Mario, advanced level, but at the end you actually die.

A packed bus during rush hour is, paradoxically, the only place in which I'm able to relax. I don't dictate its pace, it's out of my control, and there's nothing I can do to make it go faster, so I delegate responsibility to the bus driver and the notoriously capricious Gods of London traffic.

But then I lose myself in intricate mental calculations. Do I have any clean underwear left? Negative. Will I have time to do some laundry tonight? Unlikely. Am I going to resort to wearing pink swimming shorts instead tomorrow? Wouldn't be the first time.

Breakfast before work? I don't even know her.

Work, of course, is the place I spend the majority of my waking hours, but I refuse to complain about it. When I look at people in my industry, I think I might be one of the lucky ones: I go to bed when the sun goes down and wake up when the sun comes up. I have dinner at dinner-time, a luxury many of my colleagues are not afforded (e.g people who work in Breakfast TV and start their shift at midnight, bless their souls).

But work takes priority: not because I buy into the toxic culture of stakhanovism that has resulted in 176 book deals on millennial burnout and countless essays analysing the ramifications of late capitalism on modern business culture - but simply because the sense of urgency that comes from being one paycheck away from bankruptcy doesn't leave me with much energy to actively promote groundbreaking societal changes.

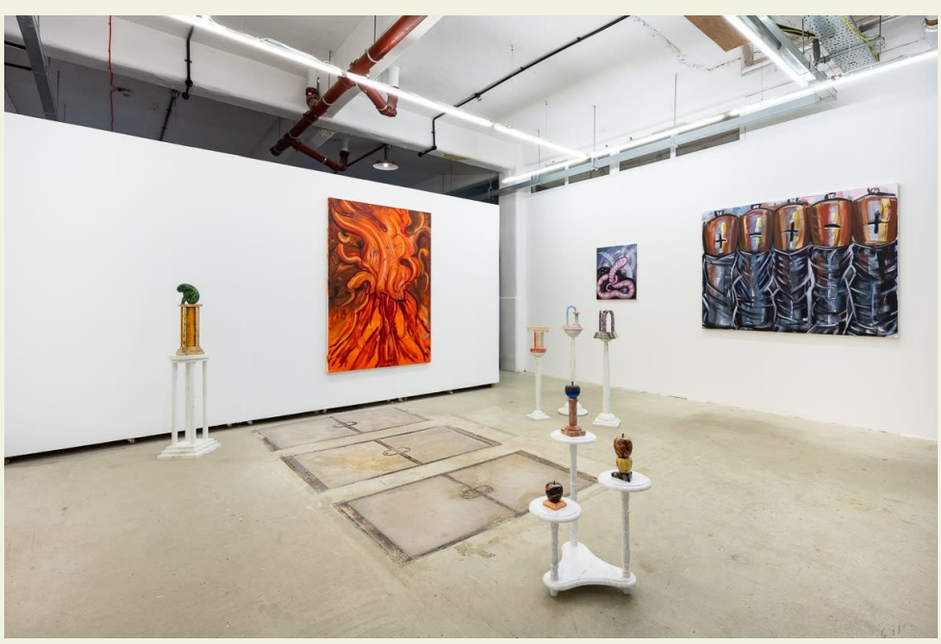
To this you must add the predictable accidents of daily life. A mistake in your latest electricity bill (50 minutes in a virtual line to speak to an unhelpful customer service assistant who tells me to send an email instead). A leak in the bathroom means I need to take a day off to let the plumber in. The plumber will of course discover that there's a second, more severe leak that I hadn't noticed and that the shower tray needs replacing. Turns out there are more leaks in my bathroom than in the British government - who knew.

And don't even get me started on the daily upkeep of my 100 sq meters mansion (ha!) which requires a disproportionate amount of daily maintenance and upkeep (time to invest in a Dyson vacuum, I tell you) because dust accumulates and cat hair is shed and the litter tray needs changing and the bin bags are, you guessed it, leaking!

And while you're busy attending to the crisis of the day, the messages pile up: friends I haven't seen in months ask why I didn't reply to their invitations to dinner, my mum wants to know when I'll visit next, my cat demands I throw his monkey toy so he can catch it (he thinks he's a dog). Life has become a rollercoaster: I go up and down, left and right, spin and drain and up again.

At the end of the day the work is done and the house is clean and the monkeys are thrown - and I am impossibly tired. So one question remains: am I a stressed millennial - or am I just a shit friend?

ART RADAR: "MUSCLE BEACH"



In the exhibition "Muscle Beach", artists Ana Kazaroff and Hannah Bays explore the link between inanimate objects and human desire. Before I went in to see their collection of painting and sculptures, my slightly unrefined mind wondered if this had anything to do with vibrators and sex toys, which only reveals the narrow-minded view of desire most of us ascribe to in modern society, where the concept of desire is dressed with an exclusively (and explicitly) sexual layer of meaning.

“Desire is a broad term encompassing all motivating impulse and life force,” Bays tells me.

“Throughout time the human relationship to objects has embodied desire – from the decorative embellishment of early tools, to fetishistic objects, to the co-option of our desires by advertisers of consumer products,” she adds.

The magic of Hannah’s and Ana’s work is that it encourages us to see desire from points of view that we may never have considered before, experimenting with the dialectical tension between death and desire.

Slow Dance by Hannah Bays

In Bays’s painting *Slow Dance*, we can observe what looks like a person trapped in a fire, partly fighting it, partly abandoning themselves to it. “As individuals we have a limited time alive, we are aware of this whether we choose to dwell on it or not. In *Slow Dance* the tragic, comic, face of the fire reflects this awareness of its fate as it burns,” Hannah explains.

Argentine-born Kazaroff’s take on desire, instead, goes from the literal to the metaphysical through an intricate game of deception aimed at reversing common beliefs of hierarchical order. One of the most striking elements of her work is the use of fake materials, such as wood sculptures that are painted to look like marble: “I’m interested in the status of materials. Faking is a way of questioning this hierarchy as it has the added value of the handmade.”

The use of disguised materials is a way to take ownership of one’s own desirability, by showing desire as something not innate but that can be acquired and earned through hard work: “Through labour, the fake, cheaper materials become objects of desire as much as the real materials they imitate."

Her vision is deeply influenced by her upbringing in Argentina, and by aspects of macho culture she seems to have internalised and then eviscerated, as seen through her trophy collection: "Small local sports clubs in Argentina often have a display of trophies, which are phallic symbols related to macho culture and the exotic."

+ show full post

A Walk In The Park

Talking ducks, first dates and the meaning of 'community'

Valerio Esposito
Sep 12

Patricia has been very moody lately. She's not eating much, which worries me, because she has a notoriously voracious appetite and a well-documented penchant for cheese crackers. I want to ask her why, but I don't want to make her uncomfortable: has Frankie been giving her trouble? I noticed he went off with Carmen the other day and didn't come back until the morning after. I won't bring it up.

I am determined to take her mind off the idea of Frankie going off with another bird, so I pull a half loaf of wholemeal Warburtons from my canvas bag. She notices and starts to get closer. "Go on then," she seems to say. I tear off a large chunk of bread and chuck it at her.

Patricia is a duck, and so are Frankie and Carmen. We became friends a couple of years ago when I first moved near Victoria Park and I noticed her swimming in the boating lake. She seems to like me: I am a crazy duck man after all.

I don't know if Patricia is her real name, but it's the one I gave her when I first met her. The way she chewed her bread reminded me of my auntie Pat. We bonded over our passion for carbs and our mutual dislike for gulls (greedy buggers), our conversations are mainly non-verbal, but they're never short on drama and intrigue. Never a dull day in the park.

Duck feeding is part of my park routine. I stop by the Loafing bakery on Roman Road to pick up a stale loaf of bread from the day before, walk past Wennington Gardens, rush down the steps near the bridge and get on the canal. Turn left for Limehouse Basin (never), right for Broadway Market (always).

I take another picture of the big weeping willow on the other side of the canal to send to my mum. It's always the same tree, but it seems to be a different colour every day. Today it's shimmering silver. I learned to observe even the most imperceptible alterations in my surroundings - a helpful reminder during lockdown that time hasn't stopped. The clock is still running.

I walk past a new coffee shop called Blue Ivy - which surprisingly only has pink and white furniture. I object to the decor, but the coffee tastes ok. I make my way to the small gate on the side of the pathway, jumping over the usual pond of mud, and I am finally here.

The park is not a park. It's a point of convergence. The lives of E3 and E9 residents overlap and juxtapose like in a stage play - and the park *is* the stage. The darkness is the curtain but, even when the sun has gone down, the show still goes on.

It's so close to where I live I sometimes refer to it as my back garden, but more than that, I think of it as "a significant spot", the backdrop against which most of my adult life has unfolded, the only community in which I know how to exist.

So much life has been lived in this park, but I try to forget, to sever the links in my brain that make up the map of prejudices and habits I've built throughout the years. The park is a sanctuary, the *tabula rasa*, and I know better than to spoil it with an excess of memory.

If only Patricia could talk, the stories she'd tell you! Off the top of my head: Jessie and I reading the Sunday papers on a bench, Silvia trying to climb over the gate when the guards locked us in (it took her 15 minutes, but she got there). Atina celebrating her 24th birthday in typical Atina fashion (balloons, balloons, balloons - stress on the first syllable). A first date ("*You just peed in a bush, Val, but I still kinda fancy you*"), a last date ("*My biggest dream is to make money. For what, you ask? Well to go on holiday of course*!). The first, whiskey-soaked kiss ("*But I thought you didn't like me!*"), me tearing up listening to a song about Amelia Earhart. A phone call from my sister ("*The doctors say she's not going to make it*").

The park is the place where things never stop happening, come hell or high water, summers and winters, lockdowns and reopenings. It acts as a reminder of the past, and a catalysis for the significant events the future holds.

I look at the lovely town houses: small doors covered in sage-green paint, pots of geraniums carefully placed on both sides of the stone pathways. It's easier to look inside the windows at night: a floor lamp in a corner, a fireplace, a mantlepiece with abstract statuettes and a collection of vintage records. A hologram of the life I want.

The park makes it easier for me to envisage a future, to give it a shape, to borrow the lives of strangers while I try to make sense of my own. I am a thief: I watch the same people do the same things every day and when they cross the gates and head to their homes I fill in the gaps with my imagination, I close my eyes and I see the decades to come. Everything comes and goes, marked by lovers and styles of clothes - but not the park, the park stays where it is.

READING LIST

Novel: "Victoria Park"

Interview with the author Gemma Reeves

I found this book by chance, while browsing in a Waterstones in Westminster before my 11am shift. Predictably, the name of the book is the thing that drew me to it. It's like finding out someone wrote a novel about your house… you kind of want to know what's in it.

Once I bought it, I found out two of my friends already had it. Last to the party? Maybe. But it only came out this year, and it's the author's debut novel, telling the stories of twelve strangers over the course of a single year, their lives unfolding in and around Victoria Park.

From the mundane to unusual, the author is able to weave an intricate web of sub-narratives where ordinary becomes extraordinary, and once again the park is the catalysis for all these stories.

I spoke to Gemma about her novel and she kindly agreed to be interviewed for the Everything is Copy newsletter. She got the idea for the book when she worked in a pub by the park in her early 20s (she won't say the name, but i have my theories). She explains: "I knew I wanted to write something which explored community in big cities, and why people seek it out, why other people reject it, and how very different people cohabit."

The way Gemma intends the idea of community is very realistic even when explained through the lens of fiction, revealing an understanding of how the concept of community is too wide and personal to be pinned down: "I wanted to write about the different ways that people kind of leave indelible marks on other people's lives as they're going through their ordinary days," she says.

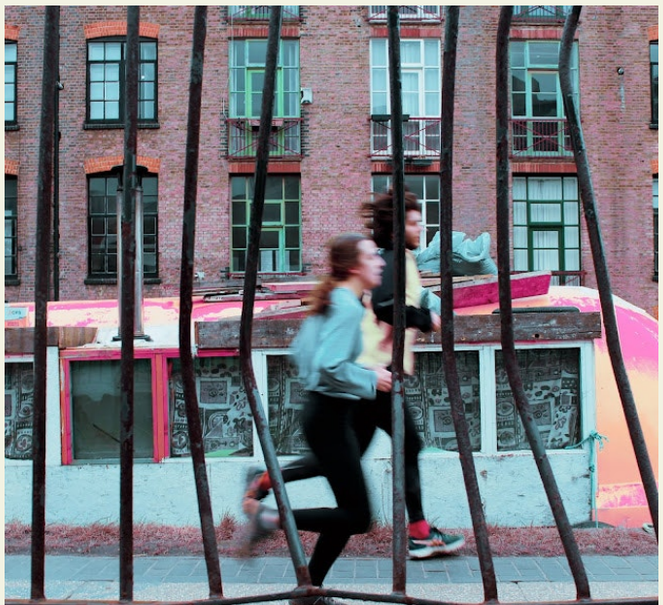
Gemma shows us an idea of a community where everything is always moving and changing, but the people who make up said community always have something to hang on to: each other, and the park. Not in that order.

Here in London, I have seen countless people come and go. I came to think of it as a port, a place of transit where people come to find themselves before heading to their final destination. So I cling on to what I know and what i can recognise, which is what i meant when I wrote "the park stays where it is." It's a landmark, the Eastern Star, something to look out for when I'm lost.

Similarly, Gemma turns the park into a character itself, a hero of sorts: "One character dips out, another character comes in and picks it up and the park is present, still changing or growing. But it lives on beyond all of these characters' lives."

Hardback, £14.99/Paperback £8.99

WRITING

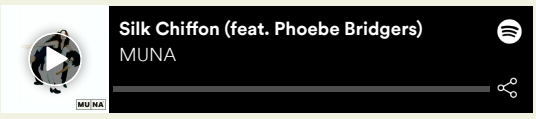


All that time taking pictures meant I used the park as a microscope under which I observed people's lives with their million idiosyncrasies. Here's my hilarious people-watching diary, Vicky Park edition. Link here.

"10:50

Man with man bun and faux leather trench coat and a New Yorker tote bag. He doesn't know it – but today is trash collection day. You in danger, girl."

VAL'S JUKEBOK



Just in case we needed a further reminder that we should keep a keen eye on MUNA - here's a new, breezy, hopeful reminder that life can get heavy, so best to keep it light (like silk chiffon) if we can help it.

The park is the best place to contemplate the imminent end of the "fairest of the seasons".

PHOTO SERIES

Pretend It's a City

The park is my favourite subject - so here's a series of pictures I took in and around the park last winter, in the depths lockdown. Click here to view the gallery on my blog.

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A Severe Case of Man-struation

A Severe Case of Man-struation

Irritable Male Syndrome, Dead Alpacas and Bloody Avocados

Valerio Esposito
Sep 5 1

I knew it was coming when I was standing in line at the cafeteria in my office building last week, ordering my third breakfast of the day. I sat down and I began wolfing down large spoonfuls of blueberry compote, avoiding eye contact with the shocked barista who had just served me my third slice of polenta cake. I was ravenous.

I went up to the office and scrolled through my Facebook feed (very 2010 of me) when I saw footage of Geronimo the Alpaca being sent to his death and I felt a tight grip in my stomach accompanied by a sensation that can only be described as the feeling of boiling water in the back of my head. The anticipation of tears.

I might be soft, but I'm not *that* soft. I mean, I turned up at work the day after my grandmother (my favourite person in the world) died and I did not shed a tear. No one even noticed I was having the worst day of my life. So I wasn't about to cry over Geronimo the alpaca in Edit Suite 2. No ma'am.

But something was up, and I wondered what it was. I started my shift and began reading through the news agenda for the day: stories of death, illness, bereavement, terror threats. I began to take the news personally, which is never ideal, especially when you work in news. That's when I knew: I had a severe case of man-struation.

Now, people don't know that, but being hormonal is no longer a female prerogative (sorry ladies, just another thing men have taken away from you). As it turns out, cis men have periods too: a quick and approximative google search for the sake of this week's newsletter revealed a shocking truth: testosterone swings in men can cause symptoms that mimic those of pre-menstrual syndrome.

When Katy Perry said "You, PMS, like a bitch, I should know"... I felt that. And of course it doesn't help that I am notoriously *iN tOucH wIth My fEeLings* so I can tell with a certain degree of accuracy whether the emotions I'm experiencing are ordinary emotions or the result of whatever chemical and/or hormonal struggle is occurring in my system.

Some people may advise meditation, a long walk in the park or a round of positive affirmations. I find that the best way to deal with IMS (Irritable Male Syndrome) is to take a leaf out of the toxic masculinity book and simply ignore said feelings until they're buried so deep they're out of your sight. Because they're not real!

It's the body equivalent of closing all the tabs in your browser when it all gets a bit too much: switch off your phone, close the blinds and go to sleep. That's why last Wednesday I went to bed at 19:48 GMT. I woke up in the morning and picked up where I left off, but at least that natural state of unconsciousness afforded me a break from all the testosterone-induced madness.

Another obvious solution would be to just sit down, have a good cry and get it all out, but my lacrimal glands are a bit rusty lately. I do have a regular routine when I need to induce tears and don't have time to rewatch Grey's Anatomy season 5: two shots of Jack Daniels and the song *Angels* by Sarah McLachlan on repeat, but adding alcohol to the mix when you're feeling like that is not necessarily a wise choice.

I guess what I'm trying to say is: don't worry, lads, you don't have to selectively numb your feelings. Sometimes it's okay to just ignore them altogether. A lesson I wish I'd learned two years ago, before I cried while on a second date watching the Leonard Cohen documentary at Curzon Cinema in Soho.

Bring on the andropause.

IN THE KITCHEN

I'm in my white pasta phase, triggered by a recipe I found in a book called *Autumn in Piemonte*, about the cuisine of the ever-charming region of Piemonte, in the North-West of the Italy.

I wasn't able to source the ingredients for *that* specific recipe (Taglierini with White Truffles) but decided to experiment and came up with a dish that was substantially different from the one described in the book, but endlessly satisfying: fresh spaghetti with pancetta, butter, sage and smoked cheese.

1) Bring a large pot of salted water to a boil.

2) Dice about 80g of smoked scamorza (or any other melty-ish smoked cheese) and set aside. Cut the sage in thin strips - scissors work fine for this.

3) Chuck 80g of pancetta in a dry, non-stick pan - it should cook in its own fat, but if it's looking a bit dry feel free to add a drop of extra virgin olive oil. When it's nice and crispy, set aside.

4)In the same pan, melt two large knobs of butter, add a smashed clove of garlic and a bunch of fresh sage cut in thin strips. Cook until the garlic clove is golden, then get rid of it.

5) Boil 300g of fresh spaghetti (usually found in the fridge section at Tesco, next to the ravioli and tortellini) for about two minutes - transfer them in the pan with the butter and herbs and mix on a medium flame until they're coated in that silky, sagey, buttery goodness. Add the reserved pancetta, diced cheese, an extra knob of butter and mix. Sprinkle with parmesan, freshly ground pepper and serve. Feeds two hungry people, or one very irritable, hormonal man.

READING LIST

- This profile of the inimitable Fran Lebowitz by Hadley Freeman. She's the wit of the century and she'd probably make fun of me if we met, but I'm okay with that.
- This piece in Times Magazine by a journalist documenting his experience with a female stalker on a mission to ruin his life. Brave, compelling and utterly terrifying .

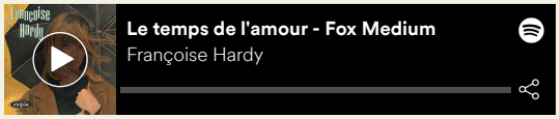
ON THE TELLY

Rotten

Dipping in and out of this Netflix documentary series about the unexpected, criminal reality behind some of the most popular foods on our tables. Your favourite avocado toast will never taste the same.

VAL'S JUKEBOX

This bop by Norwegian singer Dagny. it's pop, fresh and endearing. Further proof that Scandinavians do, indeed, do it better.



A classic by Francoise Hardy. This song is the perfect description of the feeling of anticipation I get when my favourite season is approaching.

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1

Dress Like The Neighbourhood

East London Fashion, Music Festivals and Sour Oranges

Valerio Esposito
Aug 29 2

This could have been a story about All Point East, the legendary Vicky Park music festival I attended for the first time the other day, despite having lived just round the corner for years now.

I could have told you all about the *vibez* and the crowd, I could have written scathing reviews of all the different acts or compiled a listicle of the best portaloos from cleanest to the one in which you're most likely to catch tuberculosis.

But here's the twist: this is not a story about music. It's a story about fashion - and East London, and how years spent on this patch of the city have fundamentally changed my perception of what looks good on me and what doesn't, despite what my South London nemeses will whisper about it in each other's ears when I leave the table to go for a wee. East London made me beautiful.

Fast forward to Friday morning, Day 1 of All Point East. Four hours before the event was scheduled to start, I opened my wardrobe only to realise I did not have a suitable outfit for the occasion. "Molly;" I told myself, "you in danger, girl."

So I began to panic: oh god, no, what are people going to think? That I'm past my peak? That I am yesterday's news? That papi simply *don't* got it anymore? I had to do something about it - and I had to do it fast.

So I turned the chore into a game. I just thought about that little game I play whenever I go to the farmers market and buy an odd-looking ingredient I've never used before and then build a whole meal around it. Same thing, but with oversized flannel shirts instead of celeriac roots and cured banana skins.

Picture this. It's 11am and I have two hours and a half to come up with something. I have not had my morning pee. The pressure is real (and yes, I'm talking about my bladder). I grab my bus card, hop on the 277 Bus to Hackney Central and get off just before Amhurst Rd, the centre of convergence of all the dirtiest-sickest-dustiest charity shops in East London.

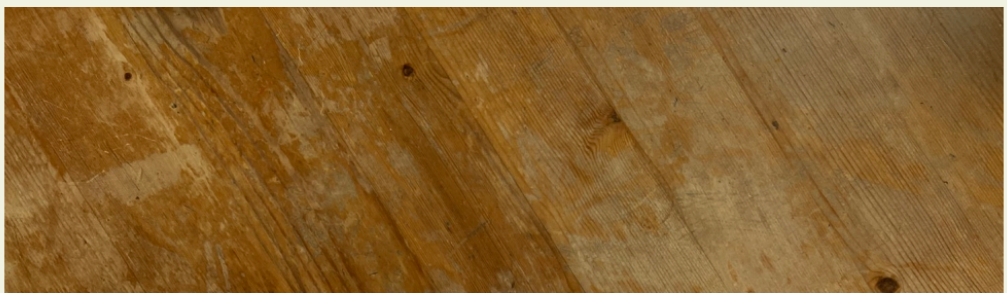
The challenge is to find ONE charity shop item that will serve as a starting point to build a full festival-friendly attire made up of a mix of items from my wardrobe, other charity shops and TK Max. Hell, I'll even go to H&M if I have to. Whatever it takes.

I am the creative director of this whole operation, but i must remind myself to respect one very important condition: whatever I end up wearing MUST go well with the shoes, a pair of Vans in Aura Shift (£35) which I already had in my collection waiting to be used for this occasion, since they're painted in the same color(s) palette as the festival's logo.

Don't act surprised - we're talking about the guy who matches his surgical masks with his socks here - my OCDs are well documented at this point, so nothing to see here.

Now, an easy option at this stage would be to find one of those ugly-ass hippie tie dye psychedelic t-shirts but - against all odds - I choose subtlety today.

I turn the corner and walk into one of my favorite, most-underrated Charity Shops in Hackney, a Scope by the Big Tesco on Morning Lane. I am immediately drawn to this pink top (£4.99) with the words OVER printed on it. I touch it, it's perfect. So here's item zero, ladies and gentleman: A beautiful long sleeved t-shit by Danish brand Soulland. Very trendy and very east, but still too plain for my taste.



We're still missing the shock factor - so my quest continues. I keep in mind that the English summer was basically over two weeks ago, so whatever shock element I'll end up incorporating into my outfit, it had better be warm, too.

The Gods of synthetic fabric answer my call and there it is, staring at me from the furthermost corners of the shop, partially hidden by a pile of junk: an electric blue fleece jacket (£4.99) that seems to be calling my name. And when fleece calls, I follow.

Here we are: pastel shoes that throw to the bold pink of my top, complemented by the liveliness of the blue of my fleece jacket. The transition from pastel to fluo is seamless, and the vibe, finally, begins to take shape: Stranger Things meets Space Jam meets your first babysitter? If there ever was a man that could pull off this look, well, he's writing this newsletter right now!

I look at the outfit, rejoice at the sight of what I see: a promising ensemble with great unlocked potential. So what's the key? Accessories, baby. Get in, loser, we're going to TK Max.

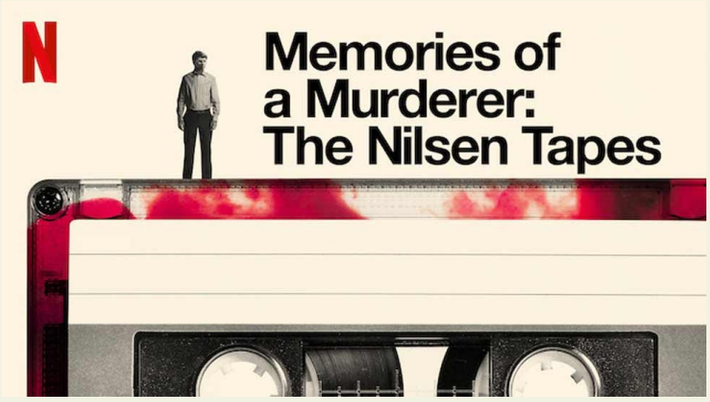
And there it is, a yellow fanny pack from Champions ($7.99) that's brighter than the sun. Did somebody say sun? Only one way to deal with that problem: shades. Yellow, fluo radioactive plastic shades.

I think I understood the assignment. All Point East is an iconic festival - but most importantly, it's an East London tradition. And I honoured it in the only way I knew how to: by dressing like the neighbourhood.

Second-hand shops are key: recycled fashions are given a second, arguably better life in the hands of people with little money but a good eye for what looks good, right here, right now. And it's a way to honour the people who decide what a city looks like by collectively being their authentic selves, painting a Kaleidoscope of colours and shapes that can only really be appreciated sitting on a bench on Regent Canal, watching the cool people walking up and down, dressed like the neighbourhood we love so much.

WHAT I WATCHED

Memories of a Murderer: The Nilsen Tapes



The life and crimes of the Denis Nielsen, a serial killer convicted of murdering at least 15 young men in the late 1970s and early 1980s. Narrated by Nilsen himself through tapes he recorded while in jail, the documentary tells the story of how an anonymous civil servant became the most infamous killer of his generation. Chilling.

WHAT I ATE

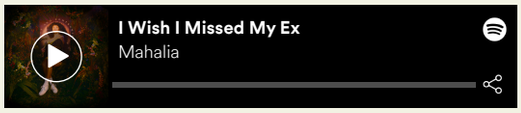
Roast Orange, Garlic and Thyme Chicken

This recipe from the book Weekly Provisions by Kim Duke. It's impressive-

looking and takes no more effort than a standard chicken dinner. The orange is the standout star in this dish, however, so make sure you buy ones that are juicy and charged with flavour. It's a delicate aroma and it needs to be present in significant quantities for it to be noticed, so make sure you work that juice and zest in! I opted for a side of roast potatoes, asparagus and tenderstem broccoli, but feel free to use whatever vegetable your heart is calling for. Enjoy!

WHAT I LISTENED TO

I Wish I Missed My Ex



One of the standout acts from Friday night at All Point East. Mahalia, a British-Jamaican singer who knows how to make the crowd go wild by introducing each song by telling the story of the people and situations that inspired them, making her music all-the-more relatable. Think of her as a friend who tells you the truth when you less want to hear it.

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The House Sitting Diaries

Fancy living, edible glitter and impostor syndrome

Valerio Esposito
Aug 22 1

Hello comrades: I have officially returned. Every summer, I religiously respect the Italian holiday period - despite not living in Italy and having already been on holiday this year - so I paused all writing endeavours in order to focus on my skincare routine and my increasingly demanding day job. I will not be taking any questions at this difficult time.

That being said – I took some time to plan content for the future of my weekly-ish newsletter. But let's start by talking about what I've been up to the past couple of weeks. I have binge-watched Paris Hilton's new cooking show, I've started exercising in the morning and spent 4 hours in A&E the other day. The three things should not be connected, but I can't be sure.

The truth is, I have had quite a bit of 'me time' lately – my sweet friends Camilla and Ludo needed someone to water the plants in their Central London Jungle Flat (I have counted 18 house plants so far, but who knows really) and they kindly offered I move in for a month while they're away on holiday. 30 days in a lovely, modern flat in the West End, located a twenty minute walk from my office and only five minutes away from the nearest TK Max? It's a tough job, but someone's gotta do it.

I have lived the past few weeks as a sort of social experiment: a Hackney South reject spends four weeks in the life of a boujie bitch from the CG (Covent Garden) – a new Vice documentary. I mean, it wasn't easy, you know. It took me a whole 23 minutes to adjust to this fancy lifestyle. It's terrible, terrible I tell you!

Now let me tell you… Camilla is the creative mind behind the urban chic décor of this flat. We share the same excellent taste and a compulsion to swipe our credit cards. The main difference is that I like cheap trills and end up buying a lot of inexpensive shit that I inevitably dump in an Oxfam two months later. Cami, on the other hand, lives by the motto that less is more, but more expensive.

I've been drinking oat lattes from ceramic cups imported from California, burning sandalwood essential oil from Nepal while cooking hearty but health-conscious meal in an almond-coloured Le Creuset after sanitising my hands with Aesop's bergamot soap with scrubbing crystals.

But the time is coming for me to go back to my cute, cosy, crafty East London flats - where blankets are repurposed as curtains, rugs are not statement pieces but an expedient devised to conceal the red wine stains left by the previous tenants and, I am ashamed to admit, cups are not imported from California but from the nearest Poundland.

Will I be able to readjust? I think so. But the past month has changed me forever – I look at my overdraft and can't help but wonder… was I wrong to follow my passions? Should I just have become a venture capitalist who wears Paco Rabanne One Million and goes to Sushi Samba Liverpool Street to have dinner with his LinkedIn friends? I don't know, man. I hate money but I love things, so the question remains: If capitalism is bad, why the heck does it feel *so* good?

Speaking of hospitals

Every time I have a difficult day ahead of me at work I try calm down by reminding myself that the consequences of a potential mistake are never going to be as tragic as my acutely paranoid brains expects them to be.

The main reason for that - quite simply - is that I do not work in a hospital. You may not know this but… I'm not a cardiac surgeon, my medical training is limited to WebDM.com and I've never had to perform keyhole surgery on a pair of prematurely-born twin toddlers.

My point being, I have just completed my first solo shift on the Westminster newsdesk this weekend – a prospect I deemed exciting and TERRIFYING in equal measure, mainly because the idea of me doing what I do now seemed like a remote prospect just a few months ago, something that only a competent, reliable grownup would be trusted to do, and therefore it never occurred to me I could be in this position now.

Sure, working in national television means that your mistakes are *very* visible. Believe me, I am reminded of that every day when I open my twitter and I see people along the likes of @EssexFella12356 pointing out every minor inaccuracy in the work we do.

I am lucky to operate in a compassionate work environment, however, surrounded by some truly outstanding (and talented) individuals who do not feel the need to foster an atmosphere of terror in order to enhance productivity. Those around me know better than to make a stressful situation even more stressful. This allows me to work well.

My job mainly consists of breaking news (not breaking hearts, as most of you undoubtedly suspect, wink wink). It's unpredictable and intense and it can go terribly wrong. It was something I said I'd never do, but then again I also said I'd never wear flipflops with socks in public. Plans change, people change.

I mostly know what I'm doing, I've studied hard and worked even harder to get to where I am, and I like to think I can execute these tasks to a decent standard, which is all I can aspire to at this stage of my career. Impostor syndrome is a bitch - but then again so am I.

WHAT I ATE

Grilled Aubergine and Goat Cheese Shakshuka by Moi

I bought a book about Middle Eastern cuisine the other day (more on that later) and spent the whole afternoon reading it. By the end of it I was so exhausted and overwhelmed with options that I simply did not have the energy to venture in the realm of a style of cooking which is entirely foreign to me. So I stuck with what I knew – I made "Uova in Purgatorio" (Eggs in Purgatory) AKA Shakshuka: eggs poached in tomato sauce. To that I added a non-committal middle eastern twist: grilled aubergines and fresh goat cheese. Include a slice of toasted sourdough bread and you've got yourself an example of comfort food at its finest. Here's the recipe for two hungry people.

1) Slice one **aubergine** and grill the slices on a very hot pan. About two minutes each side, until they're golden and beautiful. Seasons with salt and pepper, cut each round in four and reserve.

2) Get started on the sauce. Chop a **small onion** and fry in a medium pan with a little **extra virgin olive oil**. Once softened and translucent, add 500ml **tomato passata**. Season with salt, pepper and whatever **dried herbs** you've got lying around.

3) Cover the pan and cook the sauce for about 20 minutes on a low flame, until the tomato has lost its acidity. Add the reserved aubergines. Break four **eggs** into the sauce and poach them – once the egg white has gone from transparent to white and the yolk is still wobbly and glossy, transfer the eggs, swimming in sauce, in a serving bowl.

4) Top up with crumbled **goat cheese** and **chopped parsley** and serve with some toasted bread. I also added some **crispy pancetta** cubes to mine - because it's my dinner and I'll do however I please. Enjoy!

Hot Stone Steak

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