

# STRAND

A P R I L \_ 2 0 1 9

## IN THIS ISSUE

AN EXCLUSIVE  
INTERVIEW W  
WITH EMPRESS OF //  
BADASS EXPLORER  
FELICITY ASTON  
// INTERVIEWING  
PAINTER LORIBELLE  
SPIROVSKI // WE TALK  
TO PHOTOGRAPHER  
CHLOE SHEPPARD  
// FILM PODCASTER  
ROWAN WOODS //  
INTERSECTIONALITY  
ISSUES // MASCULINITY  
IN THE DANCE WORLD  
// AND MORE...

THE  
EMPOWERING  
WOMEN  
EDITION



# MAKE DO PLAY

## WELLBEING THROUGH CREATIVITY

### LAUNCH PARTY

Monday 18 March, 17:00–19:00  
The Arcade, Bush House

Come along to the launch of Make Do Play, a seven-day creativity-for-wellbeing campaign taking place from 18–24 March, co-designed with King’s students. Get creative, meet new people and discover how singing, dancing, making and drawing can help you to feel great.

**FEATURING**  
Internationally renowned dance psychologist, Dr Dance Kavina Upadhyay from the Roundhouse  
Artist Jenny Leonard and her amazing travelling canvas KCL DJ Society  
Makerversity, stalls, drinks, nibbles and goodie bags

Find out more at [kcl.ac.uk/makedoplay](https://kcl.ac.uk/makedoplay)  
#KingsCulturalCommunity  
@CulturalKings

## EDITOR’S NOTE



The first thing I thought about Strand is how I excited it is to have the opportunity to write about art at university. Up until this moment, I’ve been working with the team as head of the art section, and my love for Strand has only grown. It’s been a crazy year, with many nights of both hard work and (drunken) shenanigans with new, creative and slightly crazy friends. The magazine has slowly but surely secured its place in my life with all the unbelievable opportunities it has given me – interviews with artists, press viewings at Tate Modern, and access to the Media Suite, a myth to most students. I am unbelievably excited to be the new editor-in-chief for Strand magazine. I’ve seen from up close how hard everyone has been working to make this a success, and how that hard work has paid off.

My first issue is a project close to my heart, covering themes regarding female empowerment, questions of gender, and what it means to be a woman in the creative industries. I hope you’ll enjoy what we have brought to the table, just in time for women’s history month. We have multiple exciting features and interviews with female pioneers in the creative sectors, an in-depth piece about masculinity in dance, essays on feminism, and more.

I want to thank Sammy, for all the hard work he’s put in the magazine and still does, more so than he should. Your baby is in good hands. I look forward to the future of the magazine and I’m eager to show you all we have to offer. I hope you’ll enjoy this issue!

Isabel Veninga  
Editor-in-Chief

cover: 'EMPERESS OF' by FABIAN GUERRERO  
back cover by LORIBELLE SPIROVSKI

### PRINT EDITORIAL

**EDITOR-IN-CHIEF**  
Isabel Veninga  
[headeditor@thestrandmagazine.com](mailto:headeditor@thestrandmagazine.com)

**DEPUTY EDITOR-IN-CHIEF, TRAVEL**  
Corissa Hollenbeck  
Deputy: Halim Kim  
[deputyeditor@thestrandmagazine.com](mailto:deputyeditor@thestrandmagazine.com)

**CREATIVE DIRECTOR, DESIGN**  
Samuel Antonio Turner  
[contact@thestrandmagazine.com](mailto:contact@thestrandmagazine.com)

**ART**  
Godelieve de Bree  
[art@thestrandmagazine.com](mailto:art@thestrandmagazine.com)

**HEAD OF DIGITAL**  
Evangeline Stanford  
Deputy: Dimitrina Dyakova  
[contact@thestrandmagazine.com](mailto:contact@thestrandmagazine.com)

**DANCE**  
Audrey Lemarchand  
Deputy: Nadya Oppenheim  
[dance@thestrandmagazine.com](mailto:dance@thestrandmagazine.com)

**ESSAY+LITERATURE**  
Victor Chaix  
Deputy: Issabella Orlando  
[essay@thestrandmagazine.com](mailto:essay@thestrandmagazine.com)

**FASHION**  
Joe Bromley  
[fashion@thestrandmagazine.com](mailto:fashion@thestrandmagazine.com)

**FILM**  
Eloise Wright  
[film@thestrandmagazine.com](mailto:film@thestrandmagazine.com)

**FOOD AND DRINK**  
Jules Brahms  
[foodanddrink@thestrandmagazine.com](mailto:foodanddrink@thestrandmagazine.com)

**MARKETING AND DIGITAL MEDIA**  
Tara Clatterbuck, Seline Cornfield  
[marketing@thestrandmagazine.com](mailto:marketing@thestrandmagazine.com)

**MUSIC**  
Amika Moser  
[music@thestrandmagazine.com](mailto:music@thestrandmagazine.com)

**THEATRE**  
Charles de Falletans  
Deputy: Olive Franklin  
[theatre@thestrandmagazine.com](mailto:theatre@thestrandmagazine.com)

**TRAVEL**  
Katharine Trojak  
[contact@thestrandmagazine.com](mailto:contact@thestrandmagazine.com)

**PHOTOGRAPHY**  
Jared Phanco  
[photography@thestrandmagazine.com](mailto:photography@thestrandmagazine.com)

**SEX AND RELATIONSHIPS**  
Helen Soulsby  
[sexandrelationships@thestrandmagazine.com](mailto:sexandrelationships@thestrandmagazine.com)

**DRIP CREATIVE DIRECTOR**  
Seline Cornfield

**EVENTS COORDINATORS**  
Ella Bardoe, Giulia Hilmoine  
[contact@thestrandmagazine.com](mailto:contact@thestrandmagazine.com)

**GRANTS AND FUNDING OFFICER**  
Emma Campbell  
[marketing@thestrandmagazine.com](mailto:marketing@thestrandmagazine.com)

### CONTRIBUTING EDITORS AND MEMBERS

Nikhil Kanukuntla  
Alissa Barette  
Angel Garcia Brown  
Ffion Lavery  
Alexander Astruc  
Lucia Cardelli  
Ana Pau B. Leon  
Joséphine Tapiro  
Helen Blasak  
Molly Boniface  
Andres Fuentes  
Eleonora Colli  
Francesca Charlemagne  
Siri Hedreen  
Pan Padam  
Annabel Wood  
Jessica Allee  
Michael Clarke  
Sophie Perry  
Ali Jongman  
Alisdair Grice  
Sarah Bowler  
Mary Oa  
Owen Goodie

Michaela Kašparová  
Cornelia Sheppard Dawson  
Olivier Clément  
Charlotte Marston  
Annabella Lundström  
Abi Arnold  
Robert Carden  
Victoria Turner  
Yana Yadav  
Lili Hemi  
David Teveth  
Olive Franklin  
Nikita Biswal  
Ellie Potts  
Rebecca Surgeoner  
Charlotte Bailey  
Katharine Trojak  
Richelle Sushil  
Sarah Saeed  
Sofia Ferreira Santos  
Tom Keogh  
Fatima Aamir  
Aily Faughnan  
Dide Sisik  
La Laleli  
Da Ai  
Sukhmani Bhakar  
Monica Mao  
Aybike Ceren Kahveci  
Afia Semesta  
Jiyoung Kim  
Unique Clarke  
Tamsyn Chandler  
Lili Stern  
Mirjam Seller  
Nicolas Boivin  
Noor Zehra  
Miranda Yates  
Charlotte Prowse  
Mimi Possa  
Shreya Sharma  
Eglantine Chahmerian  
Grace Vickers  
Isabelle Ragnetti  
Sofia De Ceglie  
Anastasia Yannopoulos  
Emanuela Lipari  
Maggie Mahoney  
Casey Ansara  
Ella-Mae Earnshaw  
Zaffie Lawal  
Nadya Oppenheim  
Lola B Rees  
Clotilde Chinnici  
Kareena Garg  
Irene Bird  
Anyssa Parker  
Nadia Dohadwala  
Sukirti Lohani  
Emma Campbell  
Sandy Kan  
Zoë Blacklock  
Danny Llewellyn  
Thao Huong Vuong  
Firyuza Yunusova  
Hana Mizukami  
Maria Archer  
Nina Wilms  
Jlyoon Ha  
Cammie Hilblitt  
Rachel Moore  
Elena Richardson  
Aashna Nithianandan  
Haruka Miyata  
Lexi Lawrence  
Alissa Clausius  
Xanthe Nathan  
Alexia McDonald  
Pallavi Ghosh  
Andriani Scordellis  
Henry Mason  
Hephzibah McHugh  
Sebastian Leyton  
Nathalia Maciel  
Masuma Ali  
James Cathcart  
Jasmine McBride  
Liza Mikhaleva  
Daisy Dickeson  
Sarah Ireland  
Dimitrina Dyakova  
Siobhan Clark  
Anna Gómez  
Wing Choy

Hannah Sanderson  
Stefano Santori  
Magdalena Lapa  
Martha Irwin  
Sara Flo  
Joe Jones  
Tallulah Jackman  
Filip Kaleta  
Giulia Cozzi  
Stephanie Burrell  
Méabh Magee  
Aga Serdyńska  
Anoushka Chakrapani  
Austin Dodge  
Julia Pedersen  
Hannah Chen  
Alcha El Alaoui  
Aneta Swianiewicz  
Katy Maddie Webb  
Siiri Eklén  
Margarita Bassova  
Maria Niewegłowska  
Megan Wilson  
Max Farr  
Alina Goh  
Flora Hausammann  
Lilian Fawcett  
Yelena Zylko  
Khan Mir  
Virjinia Vassileva  
Meg Hain  
Hannah Alkindi  
Rachel Brooker  
Fatoumata Diallo  
Camille Chu  
Angela Rose Bryan-Brown  
Tamara Hamandi  
Simran Kaur  
Ellise Trumpeneers  
Aistė Bakutytė  
Giulia Cozzi  
Nejla Karić  
Carla Suárez  
Conor NW  
Minul de Alwis  
Devil Safira  
Daniela Diaz  
Luke Buffini  
Josephine Ditlev Houman  
Megan Williams  
Jordi Rocha  
Aaron Michael Burbank  
Matt Lulu  
Anna Skavlan  
Octavia Fox  
Ilayda Danisman  
Emily Nablián  
Natali Dare  
Kaya Heaton  
Inseya Ali  
Dina Akhmetshina  
Holly Harland  
Anastasia Chau  
Alexandria Payne

[thestrandmagazine.com](http://thestrandmagazine.com)  
[contact@thestrandmagazine.com](mailto:contact@thestrandmagazine.com)

Supported by  
The Entrepreneurship Institute

**STRAND**  
STRAND works under a creative  
copyright license ©

# T H E W O M E N W H O M A D E M E

written\_JULES BRAHMS  
edited\_VICTOR CHAIX

It takes a village to raise a child, or so the saying goes. And it takes a whole lot of positive female role models to make a woman. More specifically, me. I consider myself an empowered, strong, independent feminist, but I didn't arrive here by myself. Sometimes life gets tough, so my kitchen pre-emptively has a homemade calendar featuring an inspirational woman of the week to remind me to keep on keeping on. In the spirit of female empowerment, I would like to share a few more or less well-known female badasses to inspire you to live your best life and kick ass along the way.

*Hermione Granger*

In a world dominated by princess books, Hermione Granger taught me that I needn't be the damsel in distress. Before her, there weren't many literary figures that I, a bookish, sometimes brash girl could identify with. With her, Meg, and the criminally underrated Disney's Hercules, Mulan, and Pocahontas, little girls like me were taught early on that we don't need anyone to save us, but that we are in charge of our own destiny and can be the heroes of our own story. Elle Woods definitely features here as well. Elle has shown me and countless other girls that who we are does in no way limit who we can be and that we can be unabashedly feminine and kick ass all at the same time.



*Angela Merkel*

I only recently realised how important it was to grow up with a female head of state since I was ten. Being fortunate enough to be governed by a woman that has worked in not one, but two male dominated fields (Merkel has a PhD in physics) I never once thought that there was anything a woman can't do. If the highest office in your country is held by a woman, the concept of a 'man's job' is inherently foreign. Dr. Merkel showed me that my gender does not keep me from pursuing whatever dreams I choose, be it "masculine" ones.

*Ida B. Wells*

Ida B. Wells was born into slavery and freed by Lincoln's Emancipation Proclamation. She was the first in her family to go to college and worked as a teacher to keep her siblings together after her parents died when she was 16. She became an outspoken critic of Jim Crow-era policies after she was dragged out of the first-class carriage of a crowded train, when she refused to give up her seat for a white woman. One of the founders of the National Association for the Advancement of Coloured people, she documented lynching as a journalist and writer. Oh, and she was a feminist, too, saying once "I will not begin at this late day by doing what my soul abhors; sugaring men, weak deceitful creatures, with flattery to retain them as escorts or to gratify a revenge'.

*Marion, Countess Dönhoff*

If I can be half as cool as Marion, I will have lived a great life. By the time she was 36, Marion had already lived enough for three lifetimes. She was born into an aristocratic Prussian family in 1909 but had to relocate to Basel after the Nazis came to power. From



Switzerland, she participated in the resistance, first handing out leaflets, but eventually participating in the 1944 Operation Valkyrie, an attempt to assassinate Hitler. In 1945, the advancing Red Army burned down her family castle and she had to flee to the West on horseback which took her seven weeks. Eventually settling in Hamburg, she founded Die Zeit, one of the biggest newspapers in Germany today, as well as the German Council on Foreign Relations, a think tank that also still exists. Throughout her life she was politically active and a dedicated journalist, working as co-publisher and writer for Die Zeit until her death at 92. When asked about her life, all she had to say was that "Given the chance, I'd do everything the same again."

*Hedy Lamarr*

Hedy Lamarr's genius is criminally understated. She's an Austrian-born American actress that portrayed the first on-screen female orgasm in 1933. From then on, she was known as "Ecstasy Girl" and a bombshell, being once named "The Most Beautiful Woman in the World" by MGM. This title would turn out to be somewhat detrimental to her, because her true passion was inventing and she was really good at it. So good, in fact, that she developed a "secret communication system" for the US Navy, which guided radio-controlled missiles underwater in an undetectable way in 1942. Why does this matter? Oh, it's only used in modern wireless communications, so it's really no big deal. The US government thought so, too, because she was told that she would make a greater contribution to the war effort

by cheering up the troops as a pinup than as an inventor. It was only towards the end of her life that her contributions became known.

*My Mother*

There are very few people in this world that I admire more than my mother. Her childhood was less than ideal, to put it mildly. She has her own demons to fight, for sure, but I think there are few people whose life has not improved through knowing her. Unlike most people, she has dedicated her life to making sure the lives of those around her are as good as they can be. Whether that is the life of her daughters, her daughters' friends, or even strangers, when anyone is in need of help, my mother is the person we turn to and she has never let me, or anyone else down. She taught me that we thrive on selflessness, and that the most important legacy we can leave behind is the kindness we show to those around us.

(left)  
'Hermione Granger'

(above)  
'Ida B Wells'



# ROWAN WOODS

## IN CONVERSATION

interview+edited\_ELOÏSE WRIGHT

I first heard Rowan Woods the week she was a guest speaker on the weekly film podcast “Truth and Movies”, by “Little White Lies”. Her eloquence and ease speaking about film was evident, and after exchanging a few messages, we realised that both of us had been the editors of the film section of The Mancunion (The University of Manchester’s student paper) at different points in time. Her passion and dedication have resulted in an already vast knowledge of what it’s like to work behind the scenes for film and film related events, and has taken it upon herself to work hard at creating exciting opportunities during her career. Now a freelance Curator and Panel Moderator for BAFTA, Underwire, or the EIFF just to name a few, but also a Development and Acquisitions Consultant, Woods is just getting started.

*Could you explain what your past position as Development Executive for BBC Films entailed?*

I recently left the BBC to go freelance, but while I was there I worked as a Development Executive at the feature filmmaking arm of the BBC. Each year a portion of the license fee goes towards investing in British independent filmmaking (recent projects backed by BBC Films include Apostasy, Yardie, The Children Act, The Happy Prince and Lady Macbeth) and my job was to assess projects that were submitted for funding, write detailed editorial notes on scripts and films in post-production and proactively seek out new writing and directing talent. It’s a little bit like being a literary editor. I got to work with some of the best international filmmakers, which was a real privilege.

*As a Programmer and Event Producer for Misc. Films, could you talk to us a bit about your role there?*

Alongside my role at BBC Films I ran a programming collective called Misc. Films, which I set up with a friend of mine. We put on screenings of films at venues across London and also across the UK, including at HOME in Manchester. Together we decide which films we want to screen, secure cinema partners and negotiate terms with whoever owns the rights to that particular title. We also handle all the marketing and social media and then introduce the screenings or host Q&As on the night. We sometimes get the filmmakers along too, and have had Barry Jenkins and Jane Campion attend our screenings in the past. It’s a lot of work, but it’s something we both enjoy and we’ve gained so much valuable experience through doing it. I’m a big fan of creating your own opportunities rather than waiting for vacancies to arise.

*What is the greatest professional challenge you have ever faced? How did you overcome it?*

Ha, good question! If I’m being specific I’d probably say that while I was producing interviews for one of the BBC’s biggest film programmes (the Kermode & Mayo Film Review on 5 Live) we had a Steve Spielberg interview cancelled at the last minute because he was stuck in Paris due to snow. At 6pm on a Friday night I managed to track down a freelancer in Paris who was able to go to his hotel and record his end of the interview (which we then did over the phone) so that we could stitch the questions and answers together for broadcast and thus save the interview. In broader terms, I’d say one of the greatest challenges I’ve faced is a lack of confidence at the start of my career, and there are times when I wish perhaps I’d been bolder, but I’m making up for that now!

*How did you get involved in film journalism?*

I attended a meeting for the student paper (Student Direct, as it was called then) during Fresher’s Week and immediately started writing for the music and film sections. I did this for the whole of my first year and then was made Film Editor in my second year.

*As a former film section editor for The Mancunion yourself, what are your fondest memories from that time?*

I had a brilliant time working on the paper and made so many friends who are now all working across many different areas of the media - at the BBC, the Telegraph, Digital Spy etc. Some of my fondest memories are of campaigning outside the student union during student elections, and press day was always fun.

*What advice would you pass on to aspiring film journalists?*

Remember to turn your Dictaphone on when doing interviews! This is something I learnt the hard (and embarrassing) way as a student journalist... You should also watch as much cinema as you can, develop your Twitter presence, start a blog or podcast or offer to write for online publications, be passionate, be bold and network, network, network!



*What did you focus on in your Film Studies MA? Or in other words, what were your main areas of interest?*

I’ve always been interested in film and gender, so this is something I focused on during my MA. For my thesis I wrote about the treatment of masculinity, heterosexuality and bromance in the Hangover movies! I also wrote about baseball movies, film noir and the work of Claire Denis.

*What’s your opinion on Netflix Originals not being eligible for Academy Awards unless they have a cinema release?*

I think we’re at a moment when the definitions of ‘film’ and ‘cinema’ are being disrupted in a really interesting (and potentially terrifying) way. For the moment the industry is just about managing to cling on to the idea that films are things that you see in the cinema, but I’m honestly not sure how long this traditional definition will hold. I’m a bit of a purist, so I do think that films should have a theatrical release if they want to be part of the awards conversation, and this is as much about preserving the health of the cinema industry as anything else.

*What drives you?*

I’m pretty ambitious so to a certain extent I guess you could say I’m driven by the desire to succeed in a fairly conventional sense - to do well, get promoted etc. But I’m also driven by a deep love of cinema and by the sense that as a programmer, or as an Executive at the BBC, I might be able to make a difference to the kinds of films that reach audiences. I’m particularly passionate about the need to support the work of female filmmakers and stories about women. I’m also lucky enough to be surrounded by a community of friends who all work in film in some form, and seeing your peers succeed can be very emboldening and drive you to take risks or seek out new opportunities for yourself.

(left)  
‘Rowan Woods’ (2018)



# T H E E Y E S O F C H L O E S H E P P A R D

written+edited\_JARED PHANCO  
edited\_AUDREY LEMARCHAND

## *What got you into photography initially?*

I've always had an interest in photography since I was quite young. I remember having a load of cringey photo albums on Facebook with equally cringey titles to them. My interest originally came from this idea, I felt like capturing moments with a camera, I would never lose them. It's quite a strange concept to me now as I tend to shoot what I describe as fantasy or imagined worlds I have constructed.

## *How did you first get interested in photography?*

I got followed on Instagram by the arts & culture editor at Dazed & Confused magazine. After this, I decided to take the opportunity to email her asking if she was interested in my work and I was so surprised when she told me she actually wanted to feature it! That became a huge starting point for my career and I always think if I hadn't sent that one email, I'd still be stocking shelves in Tesco. After that article went up on their site, it created a sort of snowballing effect in terms of jobs and opportunities coming my way, which really helped give me the motivation to continue what I was doing.

## *How did your work evolve into your current style?*

When I was 15 my uncle introduced me to Black Sabbath & from there, I watched a load of documentaries on them and following that, something just clicked in my brain. When I found out about film photography it naturally became an influence. I was mesmerized by vintage Top of the Pops episodes, I loved the way they acted as time capsules of somewhere and sometime that seemed so different from my boring little village in rural Cambridgeshire.

## *Who are your main inspirations?*

The artists I draw inspiration from tend to vary a lot as I discover new ones however, I always have a few that I consistently come back to. Anyone who's followed me for a while on social media will be aware of my (sometimes healthy) obsession with Lana Del Ray. I also love the work of the French New Wave directors of the 60's. In terms of photographers I never tire of, there is Baron Wolman, Vivian Maier & Jess Franco, Joel Meyerowitz.

## *Why make the transition to videography?*

Besides being yet another way to explore my love for the film styles of the late 60's, I loved that it gave me a stronger narrative. My dream job would be to make music videos, not necessarily just for the types of artists that I listen to. Back in sixth form, I used to shoot music videos for media class and after that I began to make fan made music videos for my favourite artists, which are still up on a YouTube channel out there somewhere, though I refuse to tell anyone the name of it!

## *What is it about shooting film that draws you in so much?*

I love the process, you don't know if it will work or not until you get it back. I recently made a short film on a 16mm camera, I had to wait an entire month to get the footage back and the whole time I was completely convinced I had fucked it up, the relief I felt after that made it all worth it! When you get your first roll back and half of them are black it can be discouraging but when you start to get better, you'll feel so accomplished. Film seems to be in full force once again and I think people will always be drawn to it, you can get some lovely tones that just don't work the same with digital photos.







It sounds weird, but I get an actual physical feeling inside myself when looking at photos from the past. From everything to the fashion, cars, hairstyles even mundane street scenes and riding public transport. I'd love to go back as a tourist for a week and capture as much as I could'. I hate to be one of those people who spouts off about how they feel as though they were 'born in the wrong generation'. I find it so cheesy and cliché because we'd all be so lost without modern conveniences and technology but I can't help my infatuation with the past!

***How do you generate ideas for your work?***

The most common way I come up with ideas is through listening to music. Music or a situation I'm trying to romanticise or watching an old top of the pops / live sets from bands. I usually sit and listen to something for a while then begin to picture a scenario that could fit to the lyrics, I feel like I can picture the video to fit the song. For instance, with 'A Much Better Illusion' I was picturing the film to Lou Reed's Coney Island Baby. This can sometimes become annoying though as it's hard to switch off when you just want to listen to something and relax!

***What advice do you have for aspiring artists?***

Stick at it! If you truly love producing art, then it's worth it. Even with the knock backs and disappointments though they may hurt at the time they all shape your work and if you really enjoy it who cares? Make things for yourself not for social media. The creative industry can be full of setbacks & disheartening moments, just when you think everything is about to take off for you, you can have something bring you swiftly back to reality. You just have to learn that that is how it goes & remember that it's pretty much the same for every new artist,

you aren't an exception. Most importantly reach out to people. Email, Instagram DM's, in person - whatever way. It sounds obvious but most people forget that if you never ask, you don't get. Also, you'll find that once you become more established people will come to you asking to work with you.

***Do you feel social media has become an integral part of being an artist today?***

Unfortunately, I think it's very key today, more so with younger generations. I grew my following mainly by doing interviews and magazine features. However, don't worry about your following too much when you are starting out, people get way to preoccupied in stuff like that. I literally had 800 followers before doing an interview with Dazed & Confused. They liked my work and that's all that matters in the end. Be proactive with your social media usage and it will always be an amazing feeling when your hard work all pays off.

***What's the most important aspect of the shot to you, emotion? Expression? Colours?***

It's hard to explain, but when I look through a batch of 24 photos, I just see one and I know straight away! I always try to make an image in my head first and then recreate it in the studio. In total honesty, I think the most important aspect of a photograph always varies from shot to shot and project to project.

(page 9)  
'Chloe Sheppard'  
by\_CHLOE SHEPPARD

INSTAGRAM: @eolhcsheppard

All images are courtesy  
of Chloe Sheppard





# I N T E R S E C T - I O N A L I T Y I S S U E S

written\_SUKIRTI LOHANI  
edited\_VICTOR CHAIX

Female empowerment focuses on a woman's ability to determine her choices, and her ability to exert control over her own life. Emphasis must be placed on the concept of choice: empowerment refers to a woman's autonomy over her decisions, not societal notions of what female empowerment is. In fact, societal conceptions of female empowerment often focus on what is empowering for a small subsection of women, ignoring that women from different racial groups, religion and socio-economic classes may not actively choose such action. Empowerment cannot take a 'one-size-fits-all' approach.

Take, for example, a rise in the number of women contributing to the workforce. Over the past 40 years, this number has risen continually from approximately 57% in 1975, to 78% in 2017. This increase is predominantly due to a rise in full-time employment. For many women, especially for those belonging to middle and upper class, employment is empowering, as the workplace was previously inaccessible to them. Despite obtaining qualifications from highly-ranked institutions, discriminatory practises meant that women were largely prevented from entering the workforce, as society expected them to stay at home, and look after their children.

However, the situation for working class women is relatively different. Unlike upper/middle class women, working class women have traditionally had to work in order to support the household. Undertaking low paid work as seamstresses and factory workers, working class women have balanced working and familial duties for centuries. If their financial status allows them to, these women may prefer to stay at home, as this is a luxury they have been denied to in the past. As empowerment is about choice, one cannot claim that the choice to stay at home is not empowering. It is clear that we must take a broader perspective on empowerment – this can be obtained through the concept of intersectionality.

Intersectionality is a concept often used in critical theories to describe the ways in which oppressive institutions (racism, sexism, classism, etc.) are interconnected and cannot be examined separately from one another. When it comes to empowering women, an intersectional approach is necessary, due to the diversity in challenges faced by different groups of women. Take, for example, the gender pay gap. On average, women earn 80 cents for every dollar made by a man. For many women of colour, this rate is significantly lower, with Latina women only earning 63 cents. In contrast, Asian women have a smaller pay gap than white women. While it is evident that race plays a pivotal role in understanding this issue, the socio-economic status of these women and the industries in which they are employed is also significant. Statistics show that a majority of Asian women are employed in academia and the professional services, potentially implying that the pay gap is lower in lucrative careers. Meanwhile, black women are more likely to work in lower-paying service occupations than any other industry, where a significant pay gap is prevalent. When considering the implications of the pay gap, it is essential that we focus on race and socio-economic class, as it is here notably that the variations in pay are significant.

When discussing female empowerment, we must also focus on issues faced by the LGBT community, as they may differ from those faced by straight women. Joint adoption by same-sex couples is only legal in 27 countries, depriving many women of the choice of motherhood. LGBT women are more likely to suffer from mental health issues but are less likely to receive adequate support and counselling, resulting in high levels of depression. The latter is particularly high in the BAME community, where 62% of queer women suffer from it. Trans women are arguably the most oppressed group in society, yet very little attention is paid towards their plight.



Trans women, especially those from a BAME background, have a significantly lower life expectancy than cisgender women, and a more likely to be employed in a low-paying industry. In developing countries, many are forced to undertake sex work. Despite the prevalence of discriminatory behaviour towards the LGBT community, these events are largely ignored in mainstream discussions regarding feminism and empowerment, posing a threat to the autonomy of women hailing from marginalised backgrounds.

A one size fits all approach to female empowerment is unsuitable, as there is no unitary experience to womanhood. Race, class, sexuality and other particularities are an intrinsic part of identity, and as such cannot be separated from gender in conversation

regarding equality and empowerment. It is evident that the issues faced by various groups of women will differ from one another. What is empowering for one may not empower another – except, universally, the power to choose.

(above)  
'We Can Do It!' (1942)  
by\_J. HOWARD MILLER



# F I G U R A T I V E P A I N T E R **L O R I B E L L E** **S P I R O V S K I**

interview+edited\_JARED PHANCO

Loribelle Spirovski is one of the most exciting contemporary artists working today. Currently based in Sydney, Australia she was born in the Philippines in 1990, to a Filipina mother and a Yugoslav father. After emigrating to Australia in 1999 she attended the College of Fine Arts in 2008. For the last 4 years she has managed to develop her passion into a full-time job. Her artwork represents somewhere between Francis Bacon & Vermeer, with an incredible ability to paint both dark harrowing portraits and bright vivid studies of life.

*How would you describe your artistic style?*

Though I've come to be more recognised for my abstracted/minimalist portraits, I work in a variety of styles encompassing photorealism, realism, impressionism and expressionism. I feel that we're living in a gluttonous time for art at the moment, and practitioners are able to pick and choose from the innovations of past centuries as springboards for their individual narratives. So, as someone who works primarily in portraiture, I tend to modify my approach to suit the particular subject or purpose of the painting. I also like to return to an 'academic' approach after a series of more abstract work, as part of my own professional development. Artists have always talked of the (deeply anti-artistic) pressure they feel to stick to one recognisable style, and I do what I can to try to avoid that.

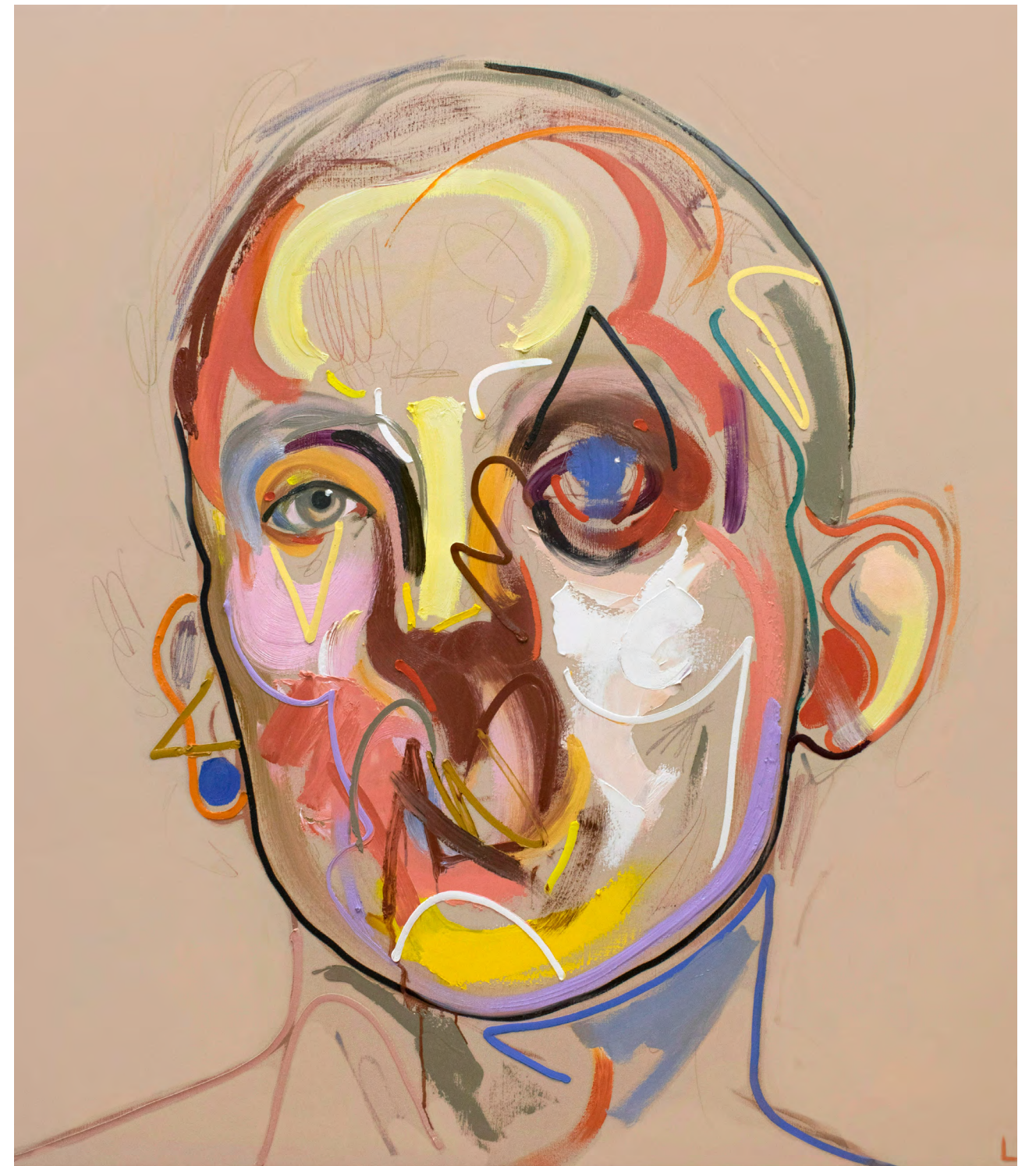
*Who do you cite as your main inspirations to your artistic style (doesn't have to be only artists / illustrators)?*

I've spoken a lot about the influence of Francis Bacon's work on my own stylistic development. I came to rediscover him through my love of filmmaker David Lynch, who is

also a significant influence in terms of my conceptualisation of space, and the surreal scenes I often like to portray in my larger works. Among my other influences are Egon Schiele, Lucian Freud, Paula Rego, John Singer Sargent and Caravaggio (just to name a few). Over the past few years, music has also come to play a more prominent role in the creation of work, in particular the music of Olivier Messiaen, Dmitri Shostakovich and Radiohead. Other influences include filmmaker Jan Svankmajer and writer Mark Z. Danielewski. If I need to get into a particular zone or headspace, I'll listen to a particular piece – for instance, I've had Rachmaninov's 2nd piano concerto on loop for a few weeks now. But then I usually like to listen to podcasts (mostly horror) as I paint.

*Your current work is considerably more minimalist and abstract than the earlier work available on your website. How did you develop into your current style & do you think it will evolve further?*

In 2016 I entered the Archibald Prize (Australia's biggest art prize) for the third time, with a photorealist portrait of my husband Simon. Confident that I would finally be selected – as this was my most accomplished painting to date – I was devastated with the eventual rejection. This marked a significant turning point in my practice and I've since moved away from the photorealist style, cultivating a more experimental study-based approach that emphasised texture and the natural distortions that my own hand/eye tended towards. Undoubtedly, my current 'style' will continue to evolve, particularly as I work in different scales; every time I shift from the abstract works to realism, the shift back inevitably brings another augmentation, whether it be focus, colour, line etc.



*Your website claims that you tend to produce work that 'reflects how I was feeling within particular spaces' can you elaborate further on this?*

I draw a lot of inspiration from my childhood in Manila and all my 'room' paintings such as 'Pieta' are allegorical interpretations of my memories and experiences growing up there. With all of my 'Homme' paintings, I work from the background up, and often prepare the background with a particular colour that then dictates the feel of the subject. I often don't

know what I will paint until I have finished preparing the background and have sat with the 'empty space' for an hour or so.

*Do you have a personal favourite painting you have produced?*

My favourite tends to change every now again, currently it's one called 'The Pianist' which is painted on raw (unprimed) linen. I love the permanence of mark-making when working on unprimed linen and how it forces one to be decisive and take risks, to go with the flow and





let the painting compose itself. It's a portrait of my husband once again, and to me is the perfect bookend to the chapter instigated by that Archibald rejection in 2016. 'The Pianist' reimagines the portrait I initially entered into the prize that year, but in a much freer, confident hand. It says a lot about how much I've grown as a person since that time.

*Of the solo exhibitions you have put on, were there any particularly memorable reactions your work received?*

My solo show in New York was definitely the most memorable in terms of audience responses. Many who approached me became very emotional because of the works, which triggered their own mental/emotional struggles. I was deeply moved and couldn't have imagined that my work could elicit such reactions.

*What plans do you have for your art in the future?*

At the moment, the main thing on my plate is a residency at Palazzo Monti (@palazzomonti) in Brescia, Italy, as well as a couple of commission projects. This year is also shaping up to be pretty full on, with two solo shows as well as various group shows. My plans are just to keep on keeping on and embrace the opportunities as they come, I've got the best job in the world!

(above)  
'Loribelle Spirovski'  
  
(page 15)  
'Homme 93'  
(left)  
'After Warhol, After Vermeer 1'  
(below)  
'Homme 4'  
by\_LORIBELLE SPIROVSKI

All images are courtesy of Loribelle Spirovski







# T H I S I S E M P R E S S O F

interview+written\_AMIKA MOSER  
photography\_FABIAN GUERRERO

Lorely Rodriguez, who goes by the name Empress Of, has been busy. She's collaborated with successful artists like Blood Orange and Khalid and released her album *Us*, an ode to her home in LA at the end of last year. In 2019, she's collaborated with Perfume Genius on a cover of her favorite song off of *Us* 'When I'm With Him' and started a world tour that will bring her to London at the end of the month. Strand Magazine had the chance to talk to her about her music, her tour and her inspirations.

*Your album was released in October, what have you learned from its release?*

It's been really positive, it's interesting because everyone has noticed that this record is more pop. I don't really feel that way, maybe it's because I didn't intentionally try to make a pop record. I work with a lot of pop artists like Khalid, MØ and Tommy Genesis so maybe those collaborations influenced me.

*Does it frustrate you to be put in a box or categorized like that?*

It frustrates me when people use it as a negative connotation. I think pop music is really cool and personally, I take it as a compliment because I don't come from a typical pop sphere. I mean, I started making music in Brooklyn and went to shows in DIY venues. If I can contribute to shaping the future of pop then I do take it as a compliment but when people use it negatively, I'm like why are you jabbing at pop music like this is something that everyone loves.

*Do you think that reducing your music to pop is related to your gender? Have you experienced any discrimination because of that?*

I don't think that being a woman impacts the way that my music is received. I think that there are things that people are quick to talk about because they're being lazy. It's very common for people to quickly write about emotional music and vulnerability when they're talking about a female artist and not go into the technical aspects and production. I think that it's something that's changing over time, but I haven't experienced discrimination on this record. I mean I did collaborate with artists for the first time on this record and a couple of outlets forgot to mention that it was co-production. They'd be like "song produced by my collaborator who was a male." But I called that shit out and that's how you teach people that "hey by the way that's not cool and totally incorrect."

*This album *Us* is focused a lot more on community. How has your background influenced your songwriting?*

I moved back to Los Angeles when I started making this album. I live fifteen minutes away from my mom and I feel very safe and inspired surrounded by all these people in LA that have had similar experiences growing up. It's just great to watch people like you pursue their dreams and goals. And by people like me I mean other Latinx artists pursuing a career in the arts. Most of the time, for first generation Americans or kids of immigrants, it's a luxury. That whole aspect has been really inspiring for this record. You know, calling it *Us* and wanting to write about all the aspects of my life and not just one romantic relationship.



***You talk a lot about taking creative control in your music videos, how will that influence your tour?***

A lot of the time I take creative control because I can't afford to hire people, but the great thing is that I've learned how to do shit that I thought I couldn't do before. I directed my music videos because directors wanted way more money than I had budgeted for music videos. So, I just learned how to do it and it was terrifying, but it was cool because I've learned a lot of stuff. With the tour, I designed the live show musically and a lot of people work with musical directors, but I've designed the whole show. For example, I really love dance music and I've incorporated a lot of that spirit into the live show. I try to mix songs so that the whole set doesn't stop for 60 minutes, the songs weave in to each other and it's really fun. Right now, I'm learning how to program lights so that's been interesting. But yeah, it's very much in my control.

***Besides tour, you're playing at Primavera Sound this summer and it's one of the only festivals that really pushes female frontliners, what are your thoughts on that?***

Primavera is my favorite festival in the world. I love everything that I've seen from the festival. I feel like they are making an effort to be even on the booking. I've played it once before and it was so cool. It's a really interesting booking and obviously Barcelona is beautiful.

***What have the highlights been in your career so far? Do you feel like you've made it?***

I don't feel like I've made it. I feel like I'm making something.

***Is there a specific thing that you want to reach? Or is it just the idea of it?***

I don't know. I mean everyone is like "Oh my god you're popping off" but I don't know it just doesn't feel like it I mean I'm working really hard. I think when you can feed your whole family, or at least your mom and they don't have to worry about money anymore, that's a really good "made it". That's like a rapper "made it". So, if I can do that, I think I'll have made it.

***Are there any moments where you thought "Oh I'm approaching it now"?***

No. There's just so much room to grow and I'm the type of artist who's not doing a straight

line. My path is very much "find your own little corner to jab yourself into" and I think it's because my music is a little weird.

***Are there any artists right now that are inspiring you or that you think everyone should listen to?***

I've just been listening to the Toro Y Moi record "Outer Peace" on repeat. I really love the song that ABRA is on and if anyone hasn't heard her music, she's like a legend. I've been listening to that and Tommy Genesis. I feel like her record is very feminine, it's about owning your body and owning your sexuality.

***How was collaborating with Tommy on 'Naughty'?***

We're friends. We met through ABRA and I had no idea what her record was going to sound like. My song is the slowest song on the record, and it was hard to tell what the whole thing was going to sound like. She's really lovely and she wanted me to be really happy with my part, because I wanted to go back and forth on a lot of stuff. So, I can tell that she works really hard and she is very careful about her art.

***Do you enjoy collaborating with different artists? Does it happen organically?***

I genuinely get hit up by people who are just fans and it feels really good. And it's like "oh damn you like my music because of this" and that inspires me to add something to their music that I can contribute. It's very natural and it has a lot to do with relationships. I mean, working with Blood Orange is great, we're really close friends. It's awesome just like hanging out and he always happens to be making music.

***Before we end the interview, I wanted to ask what you're looking forward to about playing in London this tour?***

My last show was right before my album came out, maybe two weeks before and it was sold-out, and I was really excited but nervous. I mean a lot of stuff was going on with my record. I was really honest with the crowd of 300 people and being like "aaaah I'm playing songs and I haven't played them before." So, I'm excited to come back because I feel like London is really special place for me.

***Empress Of will be performing at the Scala on March 26th***





# FELICITY ASTON: EXPLORER, SCIENTIST, ALL-ROUND BADASS

interview+edited\_CORISSA HOLLENBECK

Felicity Aston is the kind of person you could chat with all day – I almost did. She is warm-hearted, extremely bright, and utterly fascinating. She is a woman that has had brushes with polar bears and has trekked through the Peruvian jungle; Felicity Aston is a role model in the purest sense of the term.

Her first trip to Antarctica was in 2000, when she travelled with the British Antarctic Survey as a meteorologist. She stayed in Antarctica to monitor climate for 2 and a half years continuously at the Rothera Research Station. In 2005 she took part in the 'Polar Challenge' (a race across Arctic Canada) and was part of the first all-female team to complete this race; coming in 6th place out of 16 teams. 2012 marks her most famous accomplishment, Felicity was the very first woman to ski alone, unassisted, across the entire Antarctic continent. The journey took 60 days, and covered over 1700 kilometers. Felicity has also been appointed Member of the Order of the British Empire (MBE) and awarded the Polar Medal in the 2015 New Year Honours for services to polar exploration.

*So, we're a student-led magazine and I have to ask the stereotypical question of how you got started, what was your path from UCL and Reading?*

At UCL, I was studying physics and astronomy, which I loved, but by my third year I realised that, that the romantic dream I had of being an astronomer, stranded on a mountain

in Hawaii somewhere with a telescope, probably wasn't going to happen! I really wanted to do something more hands on, so I went to Reading to study meteorology, and particularly climate. At that point, people were becoming more aware of climate as a subject, and the issues surrounding it – and climate change, of course! This was back in 2000 and my dissertation for my postgrad was about climate change in the Antarctic peninsula, which, at the time, was the place where it was becoming more apparent.

That led to a job with the British Antarctic Survey. I was a meteorologist on Rothera Research station, which is the largest of the UK's two research facilities on continental Antarctica. I was there as a meteorologist for two and a half years. It was the standard 'tour', if you like, at the time. The standard contract was for thirty-nine months – you spent some time training in Cambridge, but then you went to Antarctica for summer, so you completed a summer season, a winter, a summer, a second winter, and a third and final summer before you came home.

I got there in December 2000 and left in April 2003. What was daunting was that you didn't go home for a break! Now they're able to be more relaxed, but it was too expensive and took too much time to get backwards and forwards. You could leave if you wanted to in the summer time, but then it was understood that your contract was over so you couldn't come back again. So, in that middle summer it was a question that all the "winterers" (as we were called) asked themselves: do I stay for that second winter or do I go home? I'm so glad that I did stay for my second winter because



it was a totally different experience to my first winter. Obviously, now, in retrospect, I think the experience was very fortunate for two reasons: firstly, you get to see Antarctica in so many different guises. You get to see it in the dark of winter when you really don't want to be there, and you get to see it on those wonderful days where there's nowhere else in the world you'd rather be; secondly, it gave me a really good grounding in the dynamics of small groups of people. You know when people are feeling vulnerable and afraid and it's all very raw, you see how people pull together and pull apart – that was brilliant!

*Yeah, all kinds of human psychologies are at work.*

Yeah, so kind of patterns. The biggest of which is that you know people never behave in a logical way. When you look at it on paper, you're like there's this and this and this and the outcome should be this and so, if we do this that would make you feel like this and everything will be fine. No, it never works like that!

*So interesting!*

You know, logistics are building blocks. The way my brain works is in patterns – I love seeing patterns and so logistics are really great for me,

but then human beings, they never work the same patterns they always throw something into the mix. It's always the hardest bit of any expedition, getting your team to work.

*So next question is: what on earth made you want to take on that solo expedition? Normal people look at that and go 'what's wrong with her?'.*

(laughs) It wasn't out of the blue. At that stage, I'd spent the previous—so that was 2011 and 2012 and then my first visit to Antarctica was in 2000—I'd been a part of some expeditions before that. Once I got back from Antarctica in 2003, I started putting together my own solo expedition. So, it was more than ten years of putting together trips and going backwards and forwards to the Antarctic. It was something that evolved gradually. I don't remember where the initial idea came from because it feels like it was always rolling around in my brain somewhere, but in 2011 I reached the point where I felt I had the confidence, the experience and the knowledge to be able to do it safely.

I think a point that is often missed is that when you're putting yourself out there, is people have to come and rescue you. Antarctica's still a dangerous place: just a few years ago there was a helicopter that crashed and before that, there was a light aircraft that crashed. So, you



know these people that come out to get you, they're putting their lives at risk really.

Another big thing that you don't talk about much is that Antarctic expeditions aren't in a catalog; you don't just flip through and choose which one you want to do next. You have to find the money to support it. You have to be able to give something back that is worth that kind of money to be suddenly out there. All those things kind of came together for me, I felt, in 2010, 2011 and we started putting it together. It happened at the end of 2011 and 2012.

*What was the backing like? How did it come together?*

I was sponsored by a company called Kaspersky Lab, who had sponsored an expedition I had completed the year before and it had worked really well for them. They just happened to be producing—well releasing—a product that was called Kaspersky ONE. It was all about digital pollution and living in a sort of landscape that was free of digital pollution and it was one product to do everything. The picture of a person walking alone across a landscape like Antarctica worked perfectly for them. They were a big support of female role models in cybertech and the fact that I was a woman doing it, kind of worked well for them and the values they were asserting at the time.

*I was going to ask originally if you faced any forms of sexism, but I'll just ask what kinds of forms of sexism did you face?*

It's still going on right now. There's been a lot of discussion recently about two guys that have crossed Antarctica using a shorter route than I used, but unsupported, so they have everything they need with them for the whole journey and not using kites.

*Is this the New York Times article?*

Yeah, there's been a whole lot of media. In most of those articles, I'm not mentioned at all. That might just be because they don't feel that my journey is relevant to what they're talking about but it is hard not to see that as maybe you feel that this makes what they're doing appear less worthy? It's hard not to come to that conclusion. But in terms of sexism, people have been very supportive. I think the whole point of this is to try and create a world where people are judged on their individual merits and not through their gender, their sexual orientation, their religion, the colour of their skin – all of these things that have been used in the past to stereotype people. We've got to shake that off.

So, what I've experienced is part of all of that, but luckily, I don't feel that its particularly held me back in any way – it's just more in the



league of slight annoyance! When, for example, jobs are being divvied up and you're standing there with a couple of guys who haven't got the same technical experience that you've got and yet, you're told to go do the meet and greet roles while they're off doing the whole technical roles, or when you're stood next to a guy who hasn't got the same amount of experience as you and someone asks them a question about their opinion rather than yours because the assumption is, they must know what they're talking about more than you. It's those kinds of low-level everyday sexism moments that are still out there. I think that is perhaps what the kind of "me too" and "time's up" movements have made women today think 'we shouldn't have to put up with this anymore' or it is time for that to be put to bed and recognised for what it is.

Read the rest of the interview online at [thestrandmagazine.com](http://thestrandmagazine.com) or scan the QR code below:



All images are courtesy  
of Felicity Aston



# M O V I N G   B E Y O N D

## G E N D E R   N O R M S

interview+written\_STEPHANIE BURRELL  
photography\_ROMAIN BIROS // @PICOFROM  
edited+produced\_AUDREY LEMARCHAND  
models\_BAKANI PICKUP; MATTHEW RAWCLIFFE;  
JACOB ROBERTS

The nature of contemporary dance is to disrupt and dismantle normative and linear ways of thinking, creating and moving. Pioneers such as Martha Graham, Merce Cunningham and Katherine Dunham unabashedly rejected the hierarchies of the balletic stage, its euro-centric standards and traditional relationship to gender. Contemporary dance listens to poetry, architecture, music and politics, meaning it's on the cutting edge of progressive cross-disciplinary artistic movements. Similarly, the art form also negotiates and navigates through contemporary understandings of gender.

I have interviewed three male dancers at different stages of their careers to take a look at how gender, gendered norms and identity politics frame the contemporary dance community and discourses. This begins by mapping their dancing journey with the classically asked questions: 'What inspired you to start dancing?', 'Did you ever want to give up?'. Those seemed particularly appropriate considering infant ballet classes are usually swarmed by girls in gendered pink tutus.

Matthew Rawcliffe, a dancer in-training at Rambert School of Ballet and Contemporary Dance, was first involved in acting, martial arts and gymnastics. By chance he was casted in a pantomime, which exposed him to ballet, jazz and tap dance. However, there was something lacking that circumscribed his creative and artistic expression: "I wasn't getting loads out of it. Ballet, jazz and tap I didn't really warm to, there was not enough of an artistic side to it in the same way there was with acting and making theatre. I stumbled on contemporary by accident with the Lowry Centre for Advanced Training in Contemporary Dance".

Jacob Roberts' early dance years were characterised by the descent on to the dance floor at family weddings and tantrums at ballet classes because of the lack of *black* male ballet shoes, instead there being only *pink* female ones. He is now training on London Contemporary Dance School's performative post-graduate degree.

Bakani Pickup, a freelance choreographer who recently completed a Master's at Trinity Laban Conservatoire of Music and Dance, says his path towards contemporary dance came as a challenge he posed to himself when choosing his A levels. His South-African identity influenced this choice, as his initial cultural dance knowledge made him curious about contemporary and ballet: "I didn't think I would be learning contemporary and ballet, so in that sense I walked blind into this thing I now consider my career/profession."

Youth engagement with dance is characteristically populated by girls. However its professional scene is heavily dominated by male choreographic figureheads such as Akram Khan, who choreographed the 2012 London Olympics Opening Ceremony and Wayne McGregor, who participates as movement director in many blockbuster films (the latest is *Fantastic Beasts and Where to Find Them*). They are heralded as institutional and cultural figures for British contemporary dance. Arguably, this dissonance between dance as a female-dominated simple 'past-time' and the male-dominated professional achievements is not only rife within contemporary dance but in other industries as well such as fashion and food. And all three young performers agree that male dancers have an advantage when it comes to visibility politics within the contemporary dance world. The dancers believe male privilege exists not only while training in the dance studio but also in later commercial and professional circumstances, where males are over-represented. Jake points out the lack of female associate artists at most major dance institutions. He also informs on a culture of male choreographers under-paying dancers when they are in the best supported position to do so.

Visibility politics also promote men as early as youth training years. Matthew's pathway into dance wasn't linear, starting at the unusually late age of 16. He believes male privilege



easy for me to be recognised and seen. I can understand that being recognised as one of many [female dancers] is a lot harder. I am recognised as 1 in 10, whereas a female of equal capability is recognised as 1 in 50. I question whether if I would be in the same position if I were a female dancer with the same experience. You begin to question, do I deserve the opportunities I have had, because I may have got them purely through being male?"

operated at this level. "If I was a female I don't believe there would be the same belief in my ability to get to where I have gotten to. There is an awareness that there is less people for me to compete with."

Jake similarly touches upon the benefit of being a male dancer: "It has been relatively

The fluid and varied modes of expression in contemporary dance also act as a space to dismantle gender roles that styles such as ballet tend to maintain.

For example, Jake's unconventionally short



height for a male dancer tends to hinder him from lifting female dancers, however he enjoys subverting this normative tradition of men carrying women. The trope of sculpted ‘manly’ six-packs standing topless on stage creates pressure that Matthew feels as a performer. While normatively gendered body ideals still remain, advocates of body-inclusivity and -positivity also use contemporary dance to highlight the ways in which these tropes affect women, men and non-binary identifying people. Bakani is well aware of more nuanced body politics that are imposed on his work. Although he is trying to create work with non-politicised bodies, his black queer body has context and meaning imposed on to it, especially when working with white cis-male dancers.

Masculinity within contemporary dance is a nuanced and complex idea that the dancers approach with fluidity.

Jake regards contemporary dance as a medium that celebrate all types of masculinity, however he exempts the masculinity that is toxic and harmful. He also emphasises that some traditionally male gendered characteristics are a practicality all dancers must possess: “There are some aspects or qualities that are associated with a stereotypical masculinity, perhaps strength, dependability, confidence, that are required of any dancer [male or female]. In that sense there are masculine and feminine qualities that I and all dance artists [regardless of gender] must possess to work well. This of course goes beyond dance and the arts; to understand that humanity is an amalgamation of what we deem as gendered qualities, to see and be and act beyond that binary is how we must continue to exist.”

Matthew recognises that contemporary dancers both use and subvert stereotypically gendered movements. “It’s weird because I think we use masculinity and femininity as extreme reference points to inform our movement – femininity being sensuous

and driven by the pelvis, masculinity being powerful and unfaltering. I think that dance blurs the line between these things – when we see an individual moving through these states hopefully it shows the complex, individual relationship we should all be allowed to have with our identity.”

There is a consensus among the three male dancers in rejecting masculinity as the dominating over-arching feature of their choreographic work.

Jake regularly explores femininity as a choreographic tool. “I have touched on masculinity only because it was necessary to acknowledge in autobiographical work. I mostly consider femininity in my work, maybe because of what I make and am interested in. I’m currently working on a new piece with two women that discusses the powerful feminine presence”.

Matthew currently engages with inter-disciplinary work. He uses his contemporary dance technique to undertake movement direction for theatre. He notes the representation of gender binaries is not only circumscribed to contemporary dance. “I’ve also been assisting a physical theatre company on two of their pieces: BOYS and GIRLS. This involved working with split gender companies aged 17-75 – the works challenge stereotypes and celebrate the lives and identities of their casts. I think the nice thing about this process was just that the work was about those men and those women – not trying to speak for everyone.”

The dissection of masculinity and what it means is a necessary tool in empowering females and their gender identification. Breaking down the definitions of masculinity and femininity helps everyone to have a personal and nuanced understanding of who they are. Exploring masculinity in contemporary dance continues to help in furthering this work.





# WORKING IN A MAN'S WORLD : SPEAKING WITH LINA AMRI

interview\_FATOUMATA DIALLO  
edited\_VICTOR CHAIX; AUDREY LEMARCHAND

Let it be on social media or on television, when seen and heard, women all around the world are adding all of their forces to militate in favour of women's rights and gender equality. We seem to live in a time of feminine revolution in which women raise their voices on social media, speak and protest in order to tackle an issue which has been undermining them for decades. But as social media seems to have become our battlefield, how is this issue really changing in real life? Lina Amri is a 24-year-old woman working in the City, at UBS. She agreed to meet Strand Magazine, to give us her point of view as to how attitudes may have changed in the finance sector, at least since the #Metoo movement.

*Could you tell us a little bit about your academic and professional background?*

I started with a dual degree in English and economics-finance. Then, after a 6-months exchange in Brazil, I turned towards finance starting with a first year Master's in general finance, then I finished my academic training with a second year Master's in finance and by doing an apprenticeship. I started my career with an internship as a structural assistant at Natixis Asset Management. As my internship went well, I had the chance to go on an internship in London at Natixis Investment Banking. Following this internship, I asked myself a lot of questions about my professional future, so I decided to join a start-up that helps young entrepreneurs raise funds for their projects. Strangely enough, I didn't like the start-up atmosphere or corporate finance at all. So, I started looking for a position in market finance again and I am currently Sales Cross-asset in an investment bank.

*Were your programmes gender-equal?*

Well, finance and especially market finance are still male dominated programmes even if it tends to change. As a result, we were maybe 30% women or even less during all my university years.

*As a woman from Maghreb, what were your expectations of the professional scene?*

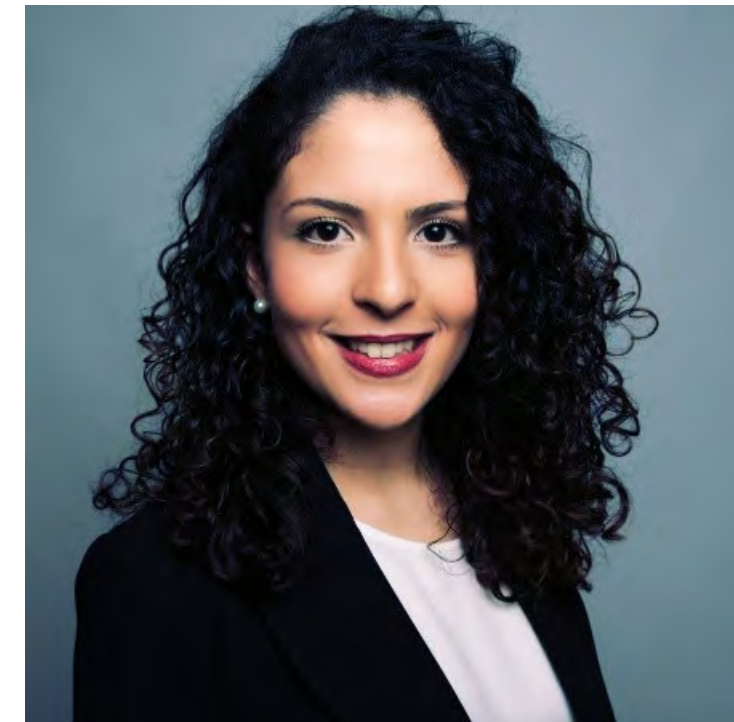
I feel like I knew where I was heading to. Even more, with the gender composition of my classes, I knew that finance was a very masculine world. However, I know now that a lot of effort is being made by banks to tackle this issue. There are quite a few events organized for women, many "trainings" to denounce the machismo that we can face. And this is also the case for cultural diversity. I have never been discriminated against. Actually, I think there is much more discrimination on the basis of origin for men than for women.

*What do you think about quotas and positive discrimination?*

I think it is important to promote the hiring of women and I am fully in favour of positive discrimination. I am a little less in agreement with quotas because in a promotion where 70% of the students are men, it would be difficult to respect a 50/50 ratio. The work should be done at the earliest stage, before girls make their academic choices.

*Do you consider yourself a victim of a system?*

Absolutely not! I don't know if it's because I was lucky but in my internship search and job, my origins or the fact that I'm a woman never hurt me. To be honest, I suffered more



of discrimination against the people who graduated from public universities versus those who came from fancy business schools.

*Do you feel concerned with the feminist struggle in 2019?*

Yes, of course, I think that women have more and more ambitions and that they must be given the chance to achieve them on an equal footing with men. I am not in favour of parity at all costs, however, because as I said earlier, in some sectors it is ridiculous – mathematically, it is not possible.

*Have you ever taken advantage of your woman status to get benefits within the workplace?*

Never! It would have been really counter-productive, you know? If, us, women, want to be recognized for who we truly are and go beyond our feminine status, we should not give reason to clichés. That being said, it must be recognized that being a woman in a male environment can facilitate exchanges.

*What impact has society had on you or your behaviour?*

Well at first, I was afraid to embrace my femininity. I didn't dare to dress/make myself feminine (pretty dresses, lipstick) because I was afraid it would be misinterpreted. It's the same for my curly hair, I kept straightening it because I thought it would look more

professional. Now I have grown to accept myself and I have realized that it has not changed how my colleagues can perceive me in any negative way.

*Why do you think feminism bothers and is misunderstood? What do you think is the weakness of feminist activists today?*

I think feminism disturbs when it is poorly executed and too stubborn. Once again, I will take the example of gender parity at all costs, in some areas it is not applicable, and striving to respect it can lead to rejecting very good male profiles. I think that the work of the feminists has been enormous in recent years and is truly necessary. I think we are already reaping the rewards of the feminists' efforts. Also, I feel like there might be an issue with communication. Some people who don't really understand what feminism means and stands for might think that feminists are anti-men when they are not. So, I think that women and men should come together, as allies, so that we could really move forward.

(above)  
'Lina Amri'

All images are courtesy  
of Lina Amri



