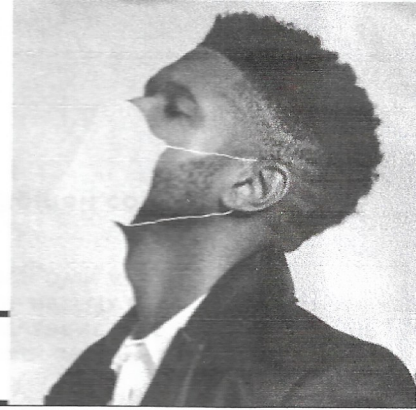


# The Usher

MAY 19TH

#3

FREE



## USHER: IDEAS MAN

Welcome to the third issue of *The Usher*. Hopefully you're starting to get the idea. What's the idea? Is it a good idea? Is it big? Is it bright? Here's an idea: maybe you remember when you were a child or a teenager, and you organised a spectacular birthday present or event for a friend. Or perhaps it wasn't all that spectacular or even well executed, but what counted was you devoted *your time* to creating the wonderful thing: the memories photo collage, the colony of origami penguins, the papier-mache alien wastepaper bin (thanks Neil Buchanan). Some people hold onto this childish pleasure but most of us haven't had the time and trade it in for turning up and buying some drinks. Which is fine!

But right now we can't do that, and we have lots of time on our hands. We can't even go to the pub when it's nobody's birthday, often the best reason. So instead, maybe there's time to make lots of tiny birthday presents for nobody's birthday, and we'll reschedule our Zoom with them to next week.

*Skip Henshaw & Saoirse Hammer*

XX

## Banality is Returning, pt 2

BY MANGO

(Continued from *The Usher* #2) The new reason to avoid the city centre is that it's not 'local', which just goes to show. What's near to me is where Duddingston Road meets the A1, one of the first great junctions east of the volcano. Normally there's a shiny long two- or three-row queue of cars at the lights. Another row of cars turns into the junction from the other direction. Now, there is rarely a queue of more than 1 or 2 cars, and this has revealed for the first time a blank stone wall. A stone wall blank save for one grated window cut out, drawing attention to the long, high roof of the squat care home that hides behind. The window is a dark and dusty eye peeking out a bit ridiculously on passers-by. What was once nothing in particular, out-of-town chaff, is now remarkable because it's never before been part of the background noise - and haven't you heard? background noise is what's happening these days.

Cars haven't disappeared from our streets by any means (the suburbs are chock full of them) but for the time being we've exchanged traffic queues for corner-shop ones. This means we now have much more time to contemplate the road junctions that have become almost reborn. Many are quietly rediscovering a sort of stature they were always entitled to but, lacking any built-to-purpose landmarks seeking attention, had gone unnoticed. They are the anti-landmarks, proudly banal but potentially just as 'characteristic' as any tower or steeple. Spare infills of grass, illegal gatherings of feeder pillars, pillar boxes, and litter bins, mysterious windows in walls. Banality you'd tip your hat to. Banality you can sink your teeth into. Banality is returning, we are the - [banal joke.]

• Soon the anti-landmarks will once again disappear. I've already been seeing an uptick in traffic and spending less time outside the Post Office. But maybe if we pay attention now, we'll remember where they were, and we'll make sure to catch a glimpse next time the lights turn green.

## WHO FANCIES WHO

Let out your lockdown love and lust frustrations. Who's first on your list for a post-lockdown drink?

To the big tall man in the denim jacket that I had borderline indecent levels of eye contact over the veg in Leith Walk Sainsbury's on Saturday - I'll give you one of your five a day  
- **Situation in Aisle 3**

To the beautiful woman with the spaniel puppy out in Holyrood Park in the evenings: fancy company for one of your walks?  
- **Pink leggings**

Upstairs neighbour on Dalmeny street with the 8pm workout videos - it's annoying as fuck but you're too hot for me to complain. Let's get sweaty together  
- **Number five**

Mary Margaret Poppy - do we fancy each other a wee bit maybe?  
- **Calling from 1820**

## CREATE

BY AGNÈS GRANÉ

Create paintings, and drawings and sketches.

"Are you studying arts?"

No, I just like to create.

Like I've been given this time that is life to explore, and investigate, and search into the deepest of my being and come across unique thoughts, ideas, concepts, and then give them a shape and a mix of colours and allow them to have a life themselves.

Create.

Create foods, and sweets and breakfasts.

Like I want to try the infinite combinations of flavours and smells and textures and tastes. Like I don't have enough meals to experience all the deliciousness that's been made available for me. The nature, the human previous creations, the cultural identity; the precious ability to combine all of those and create something mouth watering and unique.

Create.

Like my days are my responsibility and I am what I do. The hours that I spend on a project, the final touches, the thoughtful arrangements of colour, the care behind. Like my creations express who I am, what I want, what I live for. Varied, chaotic, unordered, like me. Colourful, random, beautiful, like life itself.

"You're so good at this"

Or not, depends who's judging; their talent, their expertise, their mercy. But see, why should I care? I am no artist, no chef, no illustrator. I don't want money, or praise, or a profession. I just have a hungry soul, eager to grow and explore and I can sometimes feel her leaving my body when I'm not taking proper care.

Create.

Like my life is precious, the possibilities endless and my potential as high as I'll let it fly.

## Delirium

BY GERGELY HAJAS

I can feel my heartbeat increasing in my chest. It reverberates through my body out my back, a hollow feeling. I shift positions and the weight of the blanket feels pleasant on my legs and head, the tension it creates as I make a cave for myself mimics what is within me. Tensile strength stretched to the limit wanting to let go but no, not yet. I connect to my device, no cords within my cavern, my lonely home, just the sweet numbing of the screen and the smell of my breath. I log on and forget the cave, the room, the world and myself. Sweet numbness expands in my head, filling me with detachment. I fall asleep, my eyes tired shriveling up in their sockets. My dreams are messy and strange, at least I know I am somewhere else but I'm jolted awake by a light. Waking up in sweat, struggling to breathe the tepid air I find the source, my headphones letting me know I'm still connected, just a tap away from my escape. The blue light calling and blinking like a lighthouse in storm and I'm a sailor desperate to get to the shores of neverland. At last I am back, my ordeal is over, I am lost again.

## SOURDOUGH

## TROUBLESHOOTING GUIDE

BY ROB HENTHORN

You've given in, got on the baking bandwagon and lovingly cultivated a precious little starter. But after all the hype, are your loaves letting you down? Never fear - here's the Usher guide to sourdough success.

**"My dough is too slack and sticky to shape by hand."**

Over-hydration is your problem here. Try cutting back to three cups of tea a day, avoid coffee after lunch, and resist cracking open the wine until 5pm. When it comes to liquids, less is more.

**"My loaf is still flat after an overnight rise."**

All good things take time. But bad things take time too. The pandemic has stolen time from us, wasted our days and our weeks, it's May already, where is the year going? When it comes to time, less is less.

**"My crust comes out tough and bitter."**

Phone calls only last a few minutes, because there's nothing new to say. You're beginning to forget what their faces looked like in real life. The warmth of a hug, the scent of their skin. When it comes to loneliness, more is more.

**"The crumb is tight and spongy like a crumpet."**

Baking is exhausting, and waiting is exhausting, reading is exhausting, the news is exhausting, however long you sleep it's never enough. You are too tired to do anything, tired from doing nothing. When it comes to doing either more or less, both are exhausting.

**"I forgot to feed my starter."**

Slow down. Lower your expectations. You can't 'fail' at lockdown. There is no deadline for grief. This tenement is too small for your dreams, and they will all still be here when this is over. Next week: banana bread.

## NEWS, ANNOUNCEMENTS, MISCELL

LEITH WALK SAINSBURYS CONTINUES POOR TRACK RECORD OF OVER-BAKING COOKIES

EVENINGS SEEM TO BE LIGHTER THAN THIS TIME LAST YEAR BUT ALSO MAYBE THIS IS JUST THE FIRST TIME YOU'VE EVER REALLY NOTICED ANYTHING

SEAFIELD ROAD CONTINUES TO SMELL LIKE GIANT WET DOG

WE'RE GETTING SORE WRISTS FROM TOO MUCH TIME AT THE LAPTOP - NO STOP LAUGHING WE DON'T MEAN - BUT OKAY SEEING AS YOU'VE MENTIONED IT YES ALSO FROM WANKING

SAOIRSE IS WATCHING: CLUELESS AND EARLY 2000'S R&B MUSIC VIDEOS, AND READING JEANETTE WINTERSON

SKIP IS WATCHING: UNBREAKABLE KIMMY SCHMIDT: KIMMY VS THE REVEREND, THE NEW INTERACTIVE FEATURE-LENGTH. NETFLIX PARTY DOES NOT ALWAYS LET YOU CHOOSE YOUR OWN ADVENTURE