

# ED FORNIELES ASSOCIATIONS

17 April – 22 May 2021

Private View: Saturday 17 April, noon–6pm

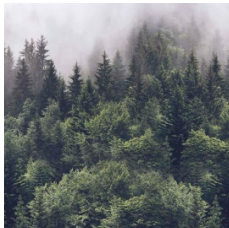
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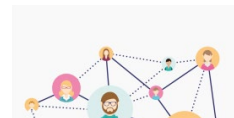
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# Associations

a text by Ben Burbridge and Ed Forneiles



## Seeing

One image is followed by another until a chain is formed. The shift from one image to the next is an easy one – an aesthetic or conceptual similarity make for a frictionless experience.

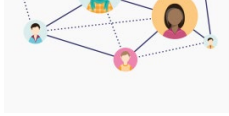
I have fallen into a hole. Time goes by but I'm not totally sure how much. I remember a sense of movement, but I can't remember a specific destination, or specific anything for that matter. I seem caught in between things.

## Possibilities and Limitations

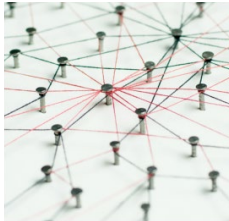
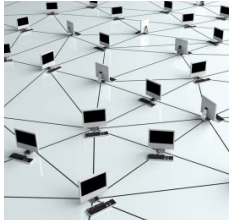
Images are not planned in advance – no direction is set; the chain of images is left to grow; one image leads to the next and so on. In this way, there is a sense of something without end, a sense of possibilities. It is clear with each image, any number of divergent directions seems possible.

On reflection, the association arrangements (lines, loops, grids) may say more about limitations than possibilities. They are not evidence of the infinite, but quite the opposite. We are

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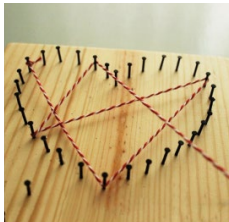


witness to someone's limitations, constrained as the work is between the capacity of Fornieles to form an associative link and the possibilities on offer.



### Subject Formation

Apocalyptic destruction; biological and/or technological reproduction; the interplay of nature and culture; literal and figurative forms of patterning; the consumption of food, bodies, images and/or commodities; the playing of games. The indecipherable point where social, cultural and political worlds are translated into the fears, fixations and fantasies of a single person. A network made legible as a chain of infinite yet strangely circumscribed possibilities.



### The Search

The primary search tools used include but are not limited to:

1. Search engines such as Yandex, Google, Bing and Tin Eye
2. Personal image archives
3. Public image archives such as stock image sources
4. Social media apps such as Instagram, Twitter and Tumblr

Methods for searching include but are not limited to:

1. Keyword image search
2. Reverse image search
3. Keyword image search and reverse image search
4. Image distortion and reverse image search



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### Puzzles

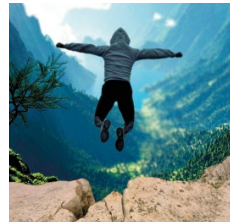
Arranged as square tiles in interlocking rows and columns, the "maps" initially look like crossword puzzles. When we think about how the patterns are produced – how images generate more images generate more images – the geometric forms become traces or trails, a game. For art historian Robin Kelsey, the conceptual game-playing of an artist like John Baldessari – repeatedly throwing three balls in the air and photographing the shapes they form, for example – interrogated photography as a representational system and playfully harnessed "Cold War" knowledge systems based on randomization. Games and simulations "enabled designers of hydrogen bombs and conflict analysts of the RAND Corporation to grapple with an increasingly complex world." *Associations* takes aim at the social and computational algorithms that determine our engagement with images; using a game-playing sensibility raised on a diet of Snake.

### An Intimate Relationship

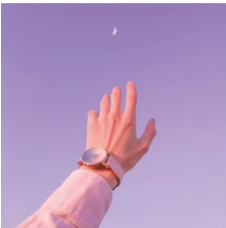
You and the algorithm are in a relationship – as you feed off them, so they feed off you, to the point where it becomes hard to tell where they begin and you end. The algorithm is subservient, constantly trying to please you; you begin to take its service for granted; you are neglectful; you do not question for a second what is brought, or the dynamic you find yourself in; you simply accept their gifts. It must be their chosen language of love.

### Control

Our networked interactions with images in the past and present are reprocessed in statistical




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terms to shape the probability that any particular image will become the subject of our attention in the future. Images become embedded within the individual and collective consciousness that determine our future interactions – what we search for, what we share and save, what we click on now.

### Maps




In his 1929 *Atlas*, Aby Warburg attempted to map the “afterlife of antiquity,” tracking how images of symbolic, intellectual, and emotional power emerge and then reappear in the art and cosmology of later times and places. His interest was not only in the recurrence of specific forms, but in the symbolic and metaphorical possibilities this created. Warburg’s *Atlas* could conceivably be generated via a Google reverse image search.

### The Test




This is perhaps something like a Rorschach test – the results are evidence of something. Over thousands of images, patterns become discernible. As Fornieles is constantly asked the question “what next,” we begin to detect repetition, begin to see the contours of desires, values and a specific cultural inclination. In this way, an image of Fornieles’ psyche begins to form, the meaning of which somehow exists in and between these images.

### Patterns



What was once a new and until that point unarticulated set of associations later becomes a familiar pathway that might reappear with or without thought. In this way, we begin to form


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a set of default responses that might be deployed when the right set of triggers are present in any given situation.


Plotting routes through Fornieles’ maps, I had the uncanny experience of encountering the exact same images I had used in presentations, lectures and curated exhibitions. Others felt immediately recognisable – legible? – to me. I can only speculate about the combination of social, cultural and technological factors this involved.

### The Flattening




Hierarchies are flattened by the screen – there is no longer any inherent value in what is represented. Context trumps content. The amount of replication is important, and this will affect its capacity to resonate and penetrate our consciousness. It is perhaps fair to say that the meaning of any one image is suspended in its multitude, its potential found through circulation.

### Forks



Nothing is certain, the association you made now could quite possibly be different on another day. Your selection is tied to too many variables to comprehend.

### A New Sublime



The incomprehension made comprehensible. It is not so much the abundance of online content that is modelled as a sublime, but the contingent factors according to which any specific piece of content is accessed and given meaning. *Associations* exemplifies what every interaction with the network makes plain: a kind

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of hyper-specificity forged from infinitude. *That image, on that screen, in the place, at that time.*

### The Edgeless Bubble

Stacked folders, stacked credit cards, a credit card suspended above a hand, an opaque orb suspended above a hand, a bubble above two hands.

When forms are interpreted as objects, and those objects are assigned meanings, they acquire symbolic potential: finance, bureaucracy, technology, what Hito Steyerl calls “bubble vision” (among any number of alternative possibilities).

The orbs and spheres that provide the central allegory for Steyerl’s performance-lecture always make me think about the scene at the end of *The Truman Show* when his boat hits the horizon, which is also where water meets the sides of the giant dome in which his life has played out in front of television audiences; then he finds a flight of steps, walks up and opens a door onto black nothingness.

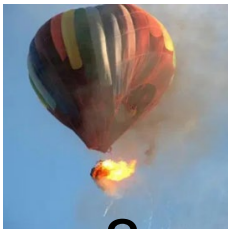
### The Zone State

The zone or flow state is the mental state in which a person performing some activity is fully immersed in a feeling of energized focus, full

involvement, and enjoyment in the process of the activity. It is a state connected both with the creative act such as playing a musical instrument as well as compulsive behaviour and addictive behaviour. It is a state that many social media companies aim to push their users into as it both captivates their attention and makes them pliable to suggestion and direction.

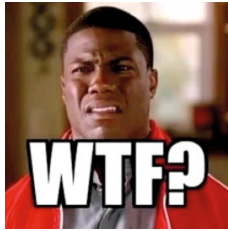
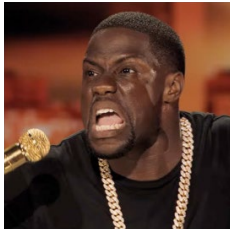
### Liquid

With remarkable economy, *Associations* highlights how images today exist in a space that is at once human and non-human, and are constituted via a fluid, ongoing dynamic that lacks beginning or end. The experience of tracing the connections that power through the series, as one image morphs into the next, and then the next, makes it clear that any effort to break, or even halt, that process is arbitrary and probably pointless. It is instead through an immersion doubling as an acute form of awareness – a kind of attentive, meditative state – that we can knowingly inhabit, and so better understand, the processes through which we become images, and images become us.

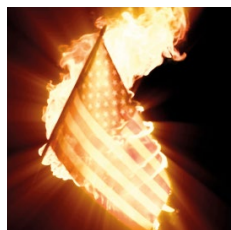
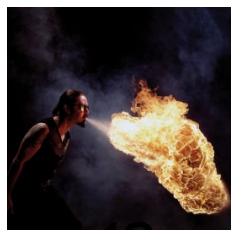
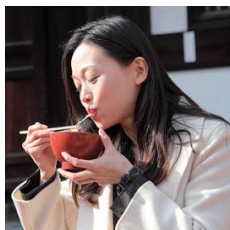




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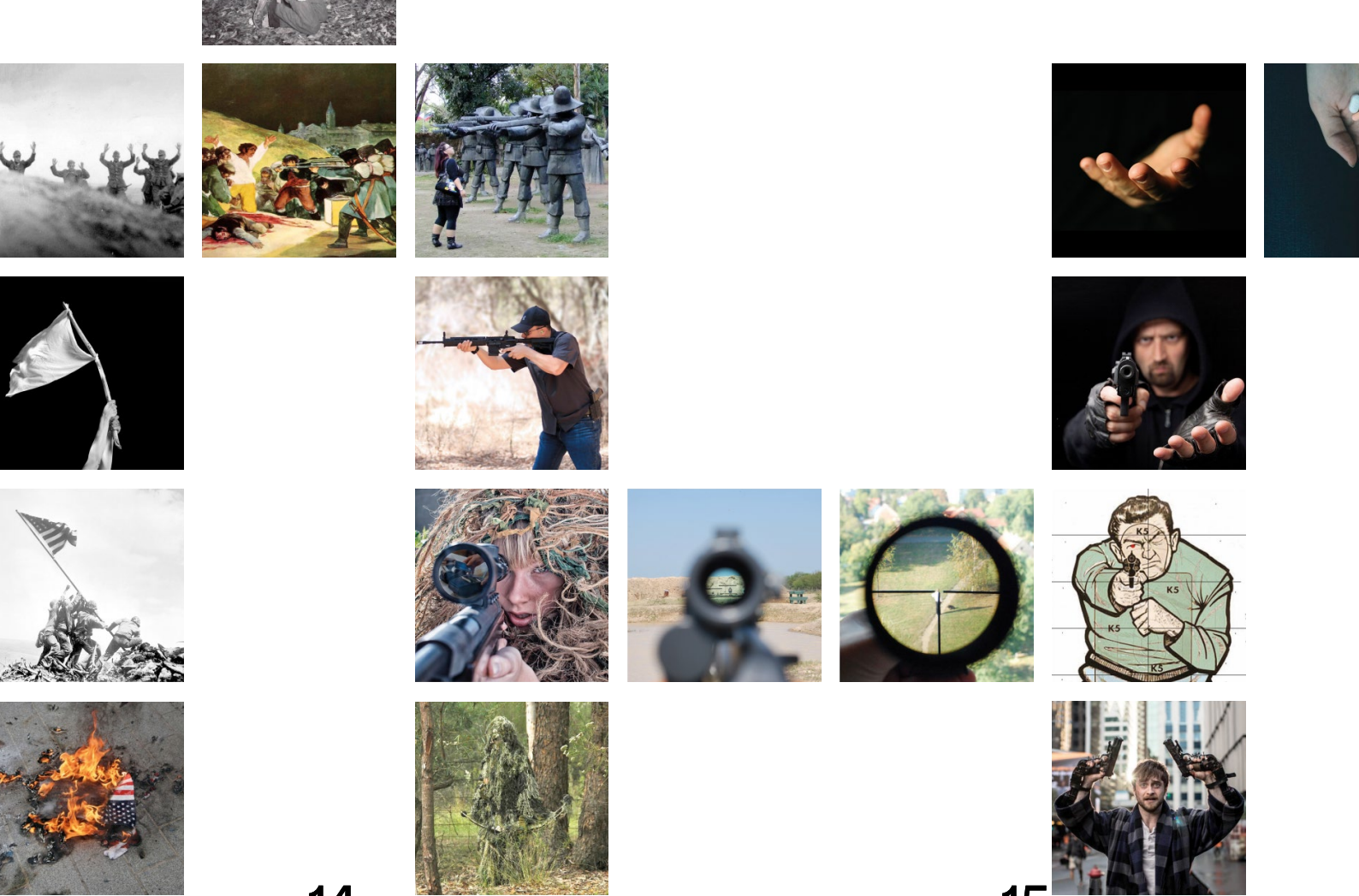
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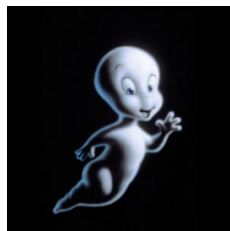
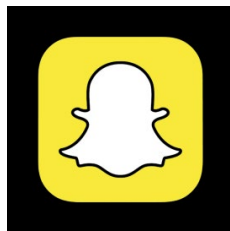


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red



blue



green



gold



16



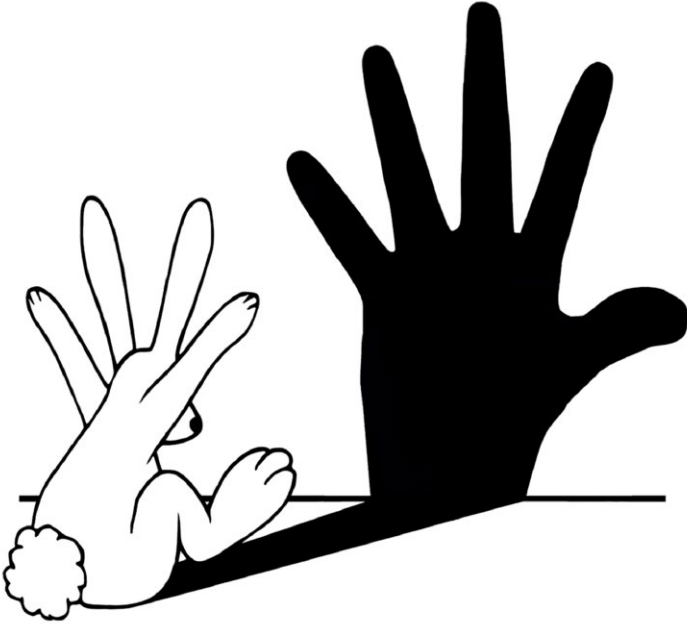
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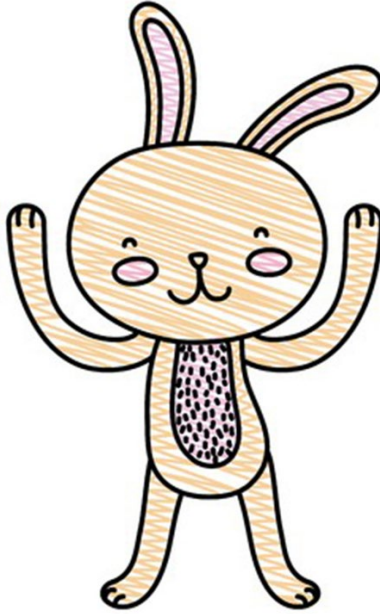
The source of this image is unknown, although it appears on Imgur, a meme archive, in November 2012. The image depicts a shadow puppet of a rabbit. There is no precise account of when hand and shadow puppetry started. One of the most probable estimates is that it evolved during the cavemen era, 1.7 to 2 million years ago, when fire was first mastered. You can well imagine a group of cavemen huddled around a fire, contorting their bodies to communicate to each other, relaying information about things seen or imagined.

When I was four, my family went on holiday to visit my aunt in the south of Italy. My two sisters and I stayed in one small room where one night my father told a story aided by shadow puppets upon the wall. It is the only time I remember my father telling a story before bed, although that is not to say it didn't happen more often. I remember the story he told involved the pope, whose poop was pure white, and the queen, who had no bum hole. The reason I still remember this moment is perhaps because it was preserved by the family, being remembered and spoken about on several subsequent occasions.



Originally appearing as a t-shirt design on several websites in May 2012, the image depicts a humorous reversal: the rabbit, so often the subject represented by the hand, takes control using their body to puppet a shadow image of a human hand. A one-liner, this image-joke is available as a design on t-shirts as well as various other garments, bags and merchandise.

At art school, in my first year, I bought a rabbit which I was later to kill and eat as part of a piece that was based on the practise performed by new soldiers in the barracks near where I grew up. Soldiers, as part of their training, would live with a rabbit, nurturing it, feeding it from their rations, and then later killing it – the idea being to begin to acclimatize them to the act of killing. The rabbit I bought was later stolen by a fellow student who said the work was immoral, despite the fact that she was herself a meat eater. Several aspects or themes to this event would later repeat in my life: the first, an attraction to a spectacle and the conversation it often produces; and the second, a preoccupation with what manliness is and the violence that is often wrapped up in it.



Shutterstock image by username "Guiseppe\_R." The tags on this image include "adorable" "cute," and, of course, "rabbit." The image depicts an anthropomorphised rabbit with their hands up and eyes closed. It is as if the rabbit has been caught ?, is giving up in some kind of game, or perhaps the scenario is more serious. There seems to be an expression of contentment on the rabbit's face, having been finally caught, and with the prospect of what might follow. Perhaps then, this points to it being an excited moment, part of some sexual or romantic game.

I can identify with the desire to surrender – on bdsmtest.org I rate as a 100% switch. I like the idea of moving between the role of someone who dominates in the bedroom and then switching to the person who submits. The submission bit happens less often than I would perhaps like. I find, as a guy, there can be an expectation to assume control – or perhaps that's just the people I find myself with, and in actual fact, I'm less comfortable with being submissive, as I, or the BDSM test, make out to be.



This hand puppet of Peter Rabbit is available on [beatrix-potter-shop.co.uk](http://beatrix-potter-shop.co.uk) as part of "The Smash Hit Beatrix Potter Musical Adventure, Where is Peter Rabbit? A production at The Old Laundry Theatre in Windermere in 2017." The buyer, one presumes, would be able to reenact this adventure in their own home, or, more likely, to stage their own completely original drama using the Peter Rabbit puppet with perhaps a larger cast of puppets and toys to produce a more loose, free-wielding narrative, with an improvisation logic at its core.

Childhood for me feels distant – it feels like a place more than a time with its own customs and ways of doing things that I can no longer access. Saying that is making me think of the film *Hook*, where Peter Pan, played by Robin Williams, who has grown into an overly busy adult, is flung back to Never-never Land, where he finds it hard to access this raw imaginative energy that gives him the ability to fly. I often worry I have a bit of a Peter Pan complex: a fear of growing up, a desire to immerse myself in fantasy and not confront the reality I find myself in.



This image first appeared on 13 June 2019 on Bigstock in the category of “people.” The photo depicts a woman with white hair smiling while raising her hands. The image tags include “stretching,” “overjoyed,” “screaming,” “senior” and “aged,” amongst others. The image captures a sense of celebration that might be used to illustrate a number of life events that occur during the later years of one’s life. These include but are not limited to: a financial windfall, the all clear from a cancer scare, the freedom gained from someone or something that had previously held them back or limited them in some way.

The first time I took Ecstasy, I was 18, at a large house party at university. I was overcome by the sensation that I loved the world and the people I was with in some deep and profound way. Although the sensation at the time felt genuine, I would later stop taking the drug because I began to interpret those impulses as fake – that although these were emotions being held by my mind and body, I could not trust them. They seemed disingenuous, and therefore I should reject them. Although vocalising this now, it feels very 18, and I wouldn’t be against doing it again sometime soon.



First found on Shutterstock on 24 August 2015, and appears on several websites to illustrate “confidence.” This includes a website called “Misid,” where in one article titled “Six Personality Grooming/ Improving Traits,” under the image, it reads: “Don’t doubt yourself, have faith in your abilities as this is going to help you in building self confidence, which is a principal trait stepping towards a more composed and charismatic personality that everybody adores and likes to believe in.” The Misid website seems to advocate for a self help version of self care, adopting a language that is new age, but also broken as if it was a translation made by some AI. The Misid “About” section states: “The health and beauty content is created through thorough studies and research. We go to the extra miles to provide the accurate & updated information that is approved by our team of medical experts and beauty professionals.”

I often feel like I am performing confidence in social situations. It feels like a nervous energy that can make me overly talkative. On reflection, I think it comes from a fear that the person I’m talking to might not like me, or will reject me in some way. If I am able to get a signal from them that they are entertained, or happy in my company, then I am able to relax. I am thankful this impulse or need has quieted a little in recent years.



First found on 13 October 2013 on blogs. reuters.com by username "jim bourg," filename "RTX134FA600.jpg." This image also appears in various articles, including one titled "Boomer Deniability: we didn't light the fire"; and another, "Son Sets Mother On Fire For The Most Shocking Reason! Heights Of Inhumanity!"; and another, "Up in smoke! Burning Man ends in a blaze of glory after record-breaking crowds dance the night away in the Nevada desert." The last appears, most likely, to point to the image's true origin as the first blog post itself includes "burning man" in the header although the page itself no longer exists.

The image of the burning monk protesting Vietnam, or, more recently, the guy on drugs who set himself alight in front of the White House. That video is particularly disturbing because he carries himself with such ease, seemingly unable to feel the pain before he died. I have seen various snuff films. There was one that my friend got me to watch without telling me what was happening. It consisted of a man being held by two other men as a horse goes to mount him. The horse enters him and then his body suddenly goes limp. At art school, for a time, we drew dead bodies. Each week, another layer had been removed by the medical students, stripping the thing back until there wasn't much left.





First found on 7 August 2016 on a blog by Kate Goria who is no longer active. It is later used to illustrate a story about Halloween on [rense.com](http://rense.com); under the image it reads: "Poisoned candy is an urban myth, right? Nobody in their right mind would deliberately give harmful substances to trick or treaters, one might assume. Well, in 1974 an 8-year-old boy named Tim O'Brian ate a piece of cyanide-laced candy slipped into his bag by his own father, who had taken out a \$40,000 insurance policy on him. Since then, parents routinely rifle through the night's loot to toss out anything that is not in its original packaging."

I would say I was sick, which would give me an alibi to enter my parents' bed and be close to my mother. Using sickness like this, as a way to get attention and to soothe myself, probably has its roots in several later episodes when I found myself in hospital or bed for days at a time needing to be looked after. Even now, there is a part of me that takes comfort in sickness – an excuse to stop everything you are doing, to pause responsibility for a time. I should probably learn that you don't need to be sick to have one of those moments.



First found on 5 February 2008 on a Chinese blog although the page no longer exists. The motif of skeletons dancing around the fire is called “the dance of death” and is old – an allegory dating to the late middle ages. It has consistently been reinvented throughout the years. This particular image is reminiscent of “Silly Symphonies,” a short by Disney made in 1929, which is described at the time by *The Film Daily*: “Here we have a bunch of skeletons knocking out the laughs on their own bones, and how. They do a xylophone number with one playing the tune on the other’s spine. All takes place in a graveyard, and it is a howl from start to finish, with an owl and a rooster brought in for atmosphere.”

When I was curating a show in Vienna around the theme of “cursed images,” a person named Peter committed suicide, jumping from the fifth floor of his apartment onto the glass roof of the gallery below. A technician installing work luckily moved moments before and avoided a sheet of glass hitting him. I was at dinner at the time and left after receiving a call. When I got back to the gallery, everyone was drinking beer outside. The gallery was full of shattered glass and blood pooling under the hole in the glass roof. Thankfully by that time, the body had been removed. The atmosphere between us and the fire brigade was oddly heightened and jovial. Sometimes one of us would break out into laughter without knowing exactly why. We did not leave the spot outside of the gallery for a long while.



First found on 1 January 2006 – filename, “bonesbig.jpg” – on charliechanannex.blogspot.com, on a post called “A Jitterbugging Skeleton” in reference to a dance mentioned in the film *The Chinese Cat*. The dance is described as “a strenuous dance, performed to quick-tempo swing or jazz music and consisting of various two-step patterns embellished with twirls and sometimes acrobatic maneuvers.”

I won a prize for dancing at a school disco. When I got a little older, I was attracted to disco. Disco is one of the darker music genres. It’s full of all this hedonistic abandonment after everyone has given up on the optimism and communalism of the 60s. It’s cocaine and speed over weed and psychedelics. It has a way of making you move your body that taps into a libidinal energy. I have seen my parents dance maybe twice in my life. The remnants of disco were still apparent in the way my father moves. At several points he gave the suggestion of a disco flourish.



*NoBody likes a fit of the blues* is a life size bronze sculpture featuring a fully restored professional tenor sax by Amanda and Björn Sjöling. On the artists' website it reads "the 'NoBody' series takes another poke at idioms. The emotional divide between joy and depression, an encompassing statement of life! Bjorn has a particular fascination with wind instruments and can fully restore most. This particular sax is an early Buffet-Crampon from 1915 and can be heard in the YouTube clip below being put through its paces by Martin Bradshaw. There is a certain poignancy in giving breath to a skeleton." This text is accompanied by a video showing sax player Martin Bradshaw playing while another shot pans around the sculpture. The effect is such that we can begin to imagine Martin's skeleton under this skin as he plays – his rib cage expanding and contracting as he plays.

I started the trumpet when I was twelve and gave up after around five lessons. I have in my time started a lot of things. When I begin, I enter a fantasy state, imagining the potency of being accomplished – an image of impressing people, of being truly fluent in the instrument, or language, or whatever it is. That sensation itself can feel very tantalising, and I wonder if that is itself the reason I started in the first place, knowing deep down that I don't actually have to commit to all those hours of learning. There is something hypnotic about a thing like that, kept in a state of potential. The problem, though, is the obvious one: that fantasy remains just that, and you never get to feel the warm sense of something mastered.



This image was attached to an event that occurred on 14 August 2018. The advert for the event reads: "The Caribbean's smoothest saxophonist comes to Birmingham this summer bringing a taste of carnival across the pond from Barbados. Tappin will once again take guests on a musical journey of the Caribbean islands, playing the smoothest in Jazz and reggae, thrilling the crowds at multiple venues across the country." Arturo Tappin is described in an article from *The Reggae Times* as: "the smoothest, sexiest horn man the Caribbean has to offer."

The night I lost my virginity was by many parameters a good experience, but by others, awkward. Firstly, I feel my family was oddly complicit. It was my 18th birthday and they had agreed to leave the house so I could have dinner with Debbie, my girlfriend at the time. It was never overt, but I always felt there was a sense of knowing of being set up. My room at the time contained such artifacts as a lava lamp, a sheepskin rug @\_\_\_@ and this big sound system. I lost my virginity to "Lay Lady Lay" by Bob Dylan on the sheepskin rug under the lava lamp.



First found on 16 September 2013 in an article by Bradley Tremmil titled "ART Love It MELTING MOMENTS," although the low quality of the image would suggest it had been taken from a pre-existing source. Of the 48 pages on which this image is still active, the majority have used it to represent a jazz or other music event; one person has used this image as the profile picture for a dating site. One can imagine this person's attempt to communicate a sense of femininity alongside a deep love of jazz.

I have at times used dating apps, although I have only gone on a handful of dates and never done more than kiss a person. Instead, I find myself on the apps for other things. Firstly, there is the searching element – this quest for someone with the right look, something that appeals to your predefined idea of what is attractive. Then, there are the conversations – at times, when I have not been in a relationship, they have taken up the space where a partner might have been. It's a surface conversation with very little at stake, in which you can feel like you are connecting without any of the dangers of being hurt.



First found on 8 February 2013 at gagpress.com in a post that is no longer there but whose URL has “a\_message\_to\_all\_ladies” as part of the address. The original image looks to predate this post. On some early versions, the edges of a scanned page are visible, and a small blurb which reads: “sky-high heels make bone injury prone because the ball of the foot bears the body’s entire weight, you’re inviting a fracture.” The high heel was until relatively recently worn by both genders, although certain kinds of heel have been associated with femininity and female sexuality. A 17th-century law in Massachusetts announced that women would be subjected to the same treatment as witches if they lured men into marriage via the use of high-heeled shoes.

I am attracted to small feet and a high arch, which I would not describe it as a fetish, but something I am actively aware of. I can’t pinpoint the root of this attraction, although it was present by the time of my second girlfriend, Laura Cherry, at the age of 18. There are certain features in a person that I am sensitive to. There are some things that I can trace back to my earliest sexual memories. Nevertheless, I feel desire is also something that grows and shifts with each encounter, with people and images, or whatever. I also get the sense that it’s something you can take an active hand in shaping if you have the mind to, like any behaviour or habit.



First instance still on record is 19 April 2008 on a French language computer maintenance website, [docteurordinateur.com](http://docteurordinateur.com), although the image has been photoshopped to show a cartoon computer feeling sick instead of human lungs. This points to the image predating 2008, by how much it is unclear. The composition would suggest a stock image, perhaps produced before the migration of stock image services online. The image itself shows a fairly young male doctor looking over an X-ray of a chest. Chest X-rays produce images of your heart, lungs, blood vessels, airways, and the bones of your chest and spine. The image helps the doctor determine whether the patient has a heart problem, a collapsed lung, pneumonia, broken ribs, emphysema, cancer or any of several other conditions.

A friend of the family fell over the banisters in his house while drunk and punctured a lung, and that then had to be drained with a syringe. The doctors told him he would have died if he hadn't been drunk, as it had kept his muscles relaxed. I am most relaxed after a day's work. It feels like the work is required for me to justify the letting go. This sense of relaxation feels crystallised by a cold beer.



