



IS THERE FREEDOM IN THE AGE OF INSTAGRAM?

By Elle Cameron-Turner

After lulling indulgently through my Instagram feed every once in a while, I feel like I've just massively over-eaten something grossly sweet.

Quite frankly, a good dose of social media makes me sick.

When I use Instagram despite my better judgment, I am ultimately unhappy with myself for judging everyone else, and I am unhappy with everyone else for being so blatantly self-centred, and self-objectifying. Especially among women, I can see that the need to look good in a photograph is the basis of an Instagram account, meaning that a woman's body becomes an even stronger centre of her attention. We feel the need to shape ourselves, so that the way we are viewed by the world is the best possible view – better than we view ourselves. Instagram is a container of unhappiness, an unhappiness which each day plays a charade pretending to be happiness. And everyone buys it, thinking that everyone else is happy, and you yourself are the only one who isn't. You feel trapped by your own inability to be the kind of person you so want to be.

In the modern digitalised world, it has become common to fear some sort of unknown authority - a power that will one day restrain us with the help of technology. I don't doubt that it's a likely future situation, but I wonder if our freedom is not already waning in a different way.

Continued on page 2



Continued from page 1

I see it everywhere. People, and young people in particular, are behaving in the way that Instagram tells them to. My friends in Australia all post about their weekends - how much they partied - as if it's a competition. And it's hard to tell who is who, because they all post the same story.

We're dressing the way that Instagram tells us to. This is why Instagram 'influencers' are so successful. We see people that we admire wearing a particular kind of bathing suit, so we buy the bathing suit. Or we see a particular 'look' and relate ourselves to it: the 'boho' look, the 'retro' look. Then we post ourselves online, thinking that this is who we've chosen to be.

It feels as though I am in an age where every individual participates in their own massive projection of the self. We feed each other constructed facts about ourselves every day. We say to each other: 'This is my style,' 'These are the kind of people I like,' 'I'm funny,' 'I'm not funny,' 'This is who I am.' It has become important to have a strong sense of self, to decide.

But what is a sense of self?

And is it something I should want?

You could say that a strong sense of self, of knowing exactly who you are, is a mark of self confidence. But how can I grow and move forward if I'm so confident in who I am now? How can I live with someone - a friend, a partner - if I can't adjust myself to accommodate them when I need to? I would rather be confident in my ability to change. I think that confidence is knowing that I don't know who I am, that I don't have to be anyone.

I would rather be completely willing to change, so that I can be inspired every day by something new. So that I am able to grow all the time, in all the intricate ways that a human being must grow.

So that I can have relationships that I never thought I would have.

And it's not to say that I shouldn't have a character, it's to know that that character does not hold me, does not bind me and keep me from being different to the person I was yesterday. Not to be anyone is a wonderful gift.

But right now, exactly the opposite is happening. Social media and the social profile are pushing us to define and shape ourselves, and the issue doesn't stay and end online.

Almost everyone around me takes care when dressing in the morning, perfecting a personal style. We think that our presentation is all we are - something reinforced by social media - so of course we get frustrated with ourselves. We listen to what other people say about us, or we reject it, all the while fitting ourselves into a mould that confirms our identity.

But the truth is that it's not our identity. My social profile and what I choose to project about myself is only a fraction of my being. So it is impossible for someone else to try to relate on a personal level to these exterior things that I choose to put on display. And it is impossible to try to construct an idea of myself that will be true. So a profile is useless.

Yet we contain ourselves within the walls of these media platforms, thinking that they represent us. We put ourselves there for the rest of the world to scrutinise.

Our social profiles create a structure that allows us to define each other and define ourselves, without even having to interact. But by defining each other, aren't we already restraining each other?

There is no need to fear the future, it is already here. We are our own prisoners, and we hold ourselves and everyone else captive every day. ●

Artwork (cover and p2) by Elle Cameron-Turner

On Freedom

One thinks of freedom only as freedom of movement, either physical or the movements of thought.

It appears one always seeks freedom on the surface, the right to go from here to there, to think what one likes, to do what one likes, to choose, and to seek wider experiences.

Surely this is a rather limited freedom, involving a great deal of conflict, wars and violence. Inner freedom is something entirely different. When there is deep, fundamental freedom, which has its roots not in the idea of freedom but in the reality of freedom, then that freedom covers all movement, all the endeavours of man. Without this freedom, life will always be an activity within the limited circle of time and conflict.

So when we talk of freedom we are talking of the fundamental issue. It is not a freedom from

Starry heavens

On an evening in February, teachers and students lined up on the South Lawn to look at the moon.

There was much excitement as we queued up to watch the craters. I thought of Carl Sagan's statement that we are stardust and when we look up to the heavens it's one part of the universe looking at the vast expanse of another part of an existence in a cosmic dance.

When one of the students looked through the telescope and smiled I was wondering what was more fascinating, the craters on the moon or the joy and innocence reflected in the face of a teenager. Kant very rightly reflected: "Two things fill the mind with ever new and increasing admiration and awe, the more often and steadily we reflect upon them: the starry heavens above me and the moral law within me."

In light of the onslaught of virtual reality and over-domination of the intellect it was very refreshing to see so many teachers and students show interest in looking up at the reality of stars. ●

Abhijit Padte



Photo by Monja Wolf

something, but the quality of a mind and heart that are free, and in which direction does not exist.

Freedom from something is only a modified continuity of what has been, and therefore it is not freedom. When there is direction,

and therefore choice, freedom cannot exist; for direction is division and hence choice and conflict. ●

From The Whole Movement of Life Is Learning: J. Krishnamurti's Letters To His Schools (Chapter 66).

Editorial

What is the most important issue facing young people today? This edition of the Brockwood Observer was set in motion when we asked this question in the English Writing class. "I don't know what freedom is", one of the students replied. "I feel I am constantly being watched".

We talked about saccharined traps and digital quicksand. The deluge of technology that erodes our agency and intelligence. #InstaFamous, scroll till you die, For Google's Eyes Only. And the nagging feeling that Something Is Not Right.

By the end of the class 'Freedom and being observed in the age of Instagram' became our theme. "It is only in freedom that anything can flourish", Krishnamurti said. Some of the articles in this Brockwood Observer are a reflection of the practical and diverse inquiry of the students into that topic. Other articles give the reader snapshots of life and education in Brockwood and the effects of the coronavirus pandemic.

In the mirror of relationships

at Brockwood Park School, the community quickly reflects what we ourselves sometimes don't yet see - or don't want to see. In that reflection, observation opens the door to learning. "I could tell by your reaction that my decision wasn't right", is what we, as residential staff, have told each other this year. Being watched then feels like being held, with sensitivity and an intention to learn.

We don't envy the students, trying to navigate this world; maintaining their sensitivity when states, businesses, friends and authorities of all manner and order have so many tools and incentives to crush it. And yet we remain optimistic. Brockwood was founded by Krishnamurti to give us the possibility of freedom through an observation of what is true. "In a world of vast organisations, vast mobilisations of people, mass movements, we are afraid to act on a small scale; we are afraid to be little people clearing up our own patch... and the small scale is the me and the you." ●

Christopher Lewin
Dolf de Groot



LOOK, HE HAS INSECURITIES!

Illustration by Gaia Lavers

By Anonymous

Illustration by Nino Sinzinger

I guess this piece of writing is supposed to be about insecurity.

First I wanted to write this on the computer. The computer in the middle of the library. A place where people walk by. They might peek over my shoulder, trying to figure out what I am writing.

"Why is he writing about his problems in a public place?", they would think.

"He just wants attention", they might assume.

"Does he think he is a special guy with extraordinary problems?", they'd guess.

All these thoughts prevent me from forming clear ideas in my head. I just sit in front of a blank screen, nervously fidgeting around until I decide that I can't write here. I get up and walk to the very back of the library. After changing to the computer hidden between the bookshelves the words start flowing.

But should I actually write something like this for the school's magazine?

Headline: "Look, he has insecurities!"

"The school's magazine?!", continues the voice in my head. "Man, that's something everybody in Brockwood reads."

I'm quite torn.

On the one hand, I think I should write this. I wanted to let it out anyway. Why not like this? On the other hand, I don't want people to judge me based on this little piece of writing. "Then just do it!", I think to myself. "And just publish this article anonymously". But would that be easier or create bigger problems?

"Have you read the anonymous article?"

"Who would have written it?"

"Somebody told me it's him."

"Why did he write it anonymously?"

Why does this voice in my head have so much fun making up scenarios about what might happen? It gives me one

excuse after the other – in order to stop me from writing down what I think.

Here in my hiding spot, hidden behind the bookshelves, I feel comfortable. It is isolated from other people. I am alone. This feeling of isolation grows when I unconsciously decide to listen too carefully to the "but-what-would-they-think-of-me" guy in my head.

But how can I connect to people if I never show them who I am? Maybe I should just talk to someone about it. I think chasing these thoughts out of my head through sharing would really help. What would be so difficult about that?

As I'm about to talk about my thoughts the "but-what-would-they-think-of-me" guy in my head screams so loud that my head feels like I've just been on a crazy rollercoaster ride.

I would never share my kiwi with him

The next day, the same guy makes me stay in bed again. Thinking about why I give so much importance to what I think other people's judgements could be. The scenarios are vague and surreal. And even if they would think "Man, I would never share my kiwi with this guy", can I not just let them think that and not care?

Adapting to people and trying to be someone they like makes me feel isolated. I wonder why I think I have to change in order to be a likeable person. Why can't I lean back on my blue sofa and do what I please?

It is the "but-what-would-they-think-of-me" guy that makes me wander around, feeling like a grey, empty person.

Someone who adapts to everybody in order to collect imaginary friends. ●



SECURE

IN A SURVEILLANCE STATE

By Gaia Lavers

I live in a place where I can leave my phone on a table in a café.

And find it there an hour later.

I live in a place where people don't lock their doors at night. When I look out of the window in my living room, I see security guards on patrol – pausing every so often to light a cigarette.

I live in a country where I am constantly being watched. The government knows what is happening and where. But it never seems like a bad thing. If anything, it makes me feel safer and more secure. The chances of anything bad happening are so remote that I never have to worry about it. This

makes the scary things in life a little less scary.

When I tell people where I live, they assume that it is underdeveloped and dangerous.

Perhaps because of the media. But in my experience, the reality in the United Arab Emirates is the opposite. It is probably the most forward-thinking place I have ever been to – and I've travelled a lot. I'll give an example. Close to where I live, a church, mosque and synagogue are being built next to each other. To me, this is an example of tolerance and celebrating diversity. Whereas many so-called liberal democracies suffer from racial profiling, xenophobia and altogether seem to lack tolerance.

However, in order to maintain such an atmosphere the rules and

regulations are just a tad different than we are used to.

I also live in a place where you could get jail time for complaining about a terribly parked car on social media if the owner of the car is 'important'. It is also a place where my friend's mum would never talk

Who knows who'd be listening

about politics in public. Actually, she would always put her phone in the car before she spoke about anything slightly controversial. Who knows who'd be listening.

Measured by western standards, I was never free to do what I liked. The implied repercussions always stopped me. I didn't openly speak about controversial topics or do

anything that could get me in trouble. Underage drinking, for example, might get you a slap on the wrist in the UK, but I know people that got deported for it – and with them their entire families. Yet, whether it would be walking home at night without a care in the world or being safe in a huge crowd, there was always this sense of freedom. Much more than I have felt it anywhere else in the world.

For me, it's worth it. Because of the surveillance, I always know my family is safe and protected. If I had to choose between that and what the western world sees as freedom I would take the safe option every time. The world is such a dangerous place, security is something a lot of places cannot offer. ●





CARRIED BY THE DANUBE

By Finn Cameron-Turner

We'd planned a three thousand kilometer long sailing trip over the Danube. But we ended up rowing most of it.

After our first few days of rowing, our hands were callused and rough. Each pull on the oars got a little harder as the days progressed, feeling the weight of the water we moved through. In the evenings, after eight hours of rowing, we were exhausted. Sometimes we slept under a tree, too tired to pitch our tent, waking up to a windstill morning.

Tereza Deminova and I, students at Brockwood Park School, started our journey in Germany. We had helped build a wooden sailing boat in Brockwood's workshop: a sixteen foot long Matinicus Double Ender. Now we were going to sail it from Germany to the Black Sea, starting just outside of Mainz. In a month's time, we would be on the Danube.

The Danube is Europe's second longest river. It starts in the German Black Forest and flows through ten countries before meeting the Black Sea. This great body of moving water is integral to the lives of so many people that we met on our trip. They worked on the river, drank from it, fished, lived on its banks. And they were always happy to share their river with us.

It was a hot day in August and, this morning, we had rowed out of Belgrade. The grey factories on the outskirts of Serbia's capital had changed into beautiful green hills dotted with fruit trees. The sun was starting to sink, so we kept an eye out for a place to sleep on the riverbank. Rowing through a small fishing village that seemed to float on the water, we asked a man for advice. Before we set off with his directions, he offered us grapes from his vines. When the man saw us hankering down his grapes, he started to fill plastic bags with more. He then offered us a place to

sleep in the house he was building in the village. From the house, we could see the long stretch of river that we had been rowing on that day and, as it got dark, the lights of Belgrade in the distance. For once, we were looking down on the river rather than up from it.

A week later, we crossed illegally into Romania. At least that's what the ten policemen who suddenly surrounded us said. The weather was rough and they had seen our risky approach to the lock we had to pass. The problem was that our passports were stamped in Serbia, at the other river bank. We didn't have permission to enter Romania. The policemen told us that an accident would put Romania in a bit of a pickle. And it was a tricky passage in high winds.

They shared their river with us

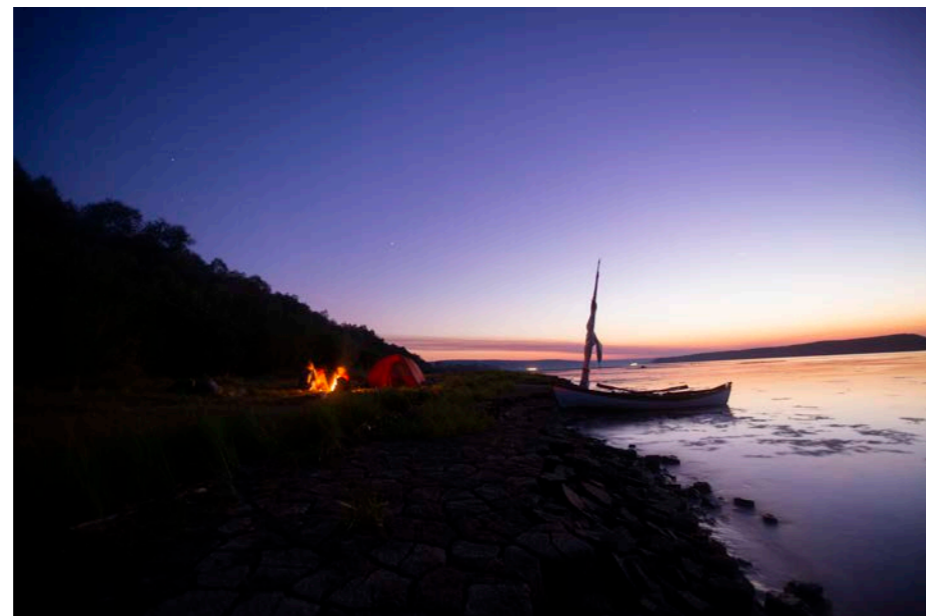
They told us to wait behind a line and discussed what to do with us. We could see that the lock operator was on our side. Eventually the policemen decided to let us through. A police boat met us on the other side and towed us to the nearest city, Drobeta, where our passports were stamped.



The Romanian river police then let us pitch our tent by their pontoon. As we began to prepare a warm soup, two of the policemen brought us supper. Another came by with coffee. By the end of the evening, we'd had four meals.

Eventually, we got into the rhythm of rowing. We got stronger, pulled the oars in unison and propelled ourselves forward. Rowing is a slow process but the effort of every stroke is satisfying.

Sometimes we had a steady gust of wind blowing at our sail. It made



us feel weightless. On those days, we would be carried so far with so little effort. The wind was a friend we often missed – every breeze gave us relief from having to row. But that changed in Romania.

It started as just another day on the river. We noticed that we would have a strong headwind, but we were confident. Half an hour later, the wind grew stronger, waves crashing into the boat. We rounded a bend in the river and suddenly we were sailing downwind. Tereza and I grinned at each other. Perfect sailing conditions. But in the minutes that followed, the firm breeze changed into the heaviest wind we had ever felt.

We were going too fast – and we realised we were in danger. Behind us, the waves began to grow. We were on a long, straight stretch of river in between two mountains. Those mountains acted like a giant funnel and we were in the middle. Tereza hung out of the boat with her upper body to steady us against the howling blow that now thundered our sail. I was at the tiller struggling to keep the boat from gybing and losing control.

Capsizing was a real possibility now. Our belongings would be everywhere and the water was cold. We pointed the bow of the boat into the wind to stall it. Tereza jumped to the sailing rig and began to take the sail down as

fast as she could. The waves were pushing and rolling under us with frightening power. When the sail was down, I grabbed the oars and Tereza steered us to safety.

This scary episode was the culmination of our cooperation. On our entire trip, Tereza and I worked together. We dealt with the weather. We cooked dinner on our little stove. We rowed within a meter of each other and slept within half a meter. Four months of planning, rowing, sailing and getting to know one another. At times, it was hard. We had to make decisions while having different points of view; decisions about which way to row when a cargo boat was coming towards us, where to stop

or pitch our tent. Or if we would row into the night. I am thankful that Tereza and I were able to talk about everything.

We asked ourselves many times why we ever wanted to go on this trip. We talked about how we thought it was going to be when we were in Brockwood, planning and dreaming of taking the boat on a wonderful adventure. In the end it didn't matter why we were there. Every day we had a simple task: moving along the river, meeting new people, making new decisions and learning how to cooperate with each other. ●

See totheblacksea.com for videos and more reports of Finn and Tereza's trip.





GLUTEN-FREE, SUGAR-FREE, VEGAN CHOCOLATE CAKE

By Branwen Clay

At Brockwood Park School we are lucky enough to have a wide variety of narcissistic hippies. You may think, "Wow, they seem to be wording simple concepts intelligently!"

Today I'm going to show you how it's done, so that you too can become #enlightened.

Suppress your anger. A simplistic take on being a spiritual person requires a kind of double think where painful emotions must be suppressed. An #enlightened person will be envious of another's floaty scarf. But they will feel guilty of that emotion as it is not seen as #spiritual. They will hide that

Moving on requires humility

emotion and it will manifest itself into enormous irritation about the lack of vegan digestive biscuits.

#Enlightenment requires constant waffling about one's issues whilst never dealing with them. Moving on requires humility, for which we just don't have time. For example, one could say, "I'm feeling really triggered by shoes that are not Vivo Barefoots. It's such an issue – it stems from my childhood neglect."

Zero judgement. #Enlightened individuals are aggressively non-judgemental. And we are very opinionated about individuals who do judge. My vegan salad is more vegan than your vegan salad and therefore I have transcended my ego.

Floaty scarves and veganism are surface level activities to mask the crisis within ourselves. Looking to objects to complete yourself is obviously futile, because vegan cheese is rank.

The end. ●

CANOE BUILDING:

By Abhisheka Dinsmore-Tuli and Meher Vepari

Five more minutes, a voice yelled from outside.

Through the frame of the open fire-door we watched as the steam-box puffed white vapour up into the darkening sky. There were six of us inside the workshop, some wearing thick leather work-gloves, others with hammers and drills. The air was heavy with wood-smoke and anticipation; tonight we were steaming the ribs.

Steam-bending is an old process, but the idea behind it is simple. If you expose a piece of wood to extreme moisture and heat, it'll be pliable enough to bend and, once secured, will hold its shape. In the months leading up to this day, we'd built a mould; a long curved structure shaped like an overturned canoe. The mould provides the basis for the boat's shape, while the ribs – bent around the width of the mould with equal space between them – would be one of the first components of our canoe.

Outside, the first batch of canoe ribs sat in the steam-box, cooking slowly. We had to be precise with the timing: take a rib out too soon and it would snap when bent; leave it in too long and – we feared – it would turn into a noodle.

"It's done."

Carefully, someone slid the rib out of the steam-box, brought it inside and we slotted it into place. Working quickly, those with gloves stretched the hot timber around the mould, while the others drilled and hammered in bronze nails to hold it down. Once we'd finished, we all stepped back and looked down at our work with satisfaction. A few minutes later, the next rib was ready, and we repeated the process. But none of us minded. We'd been part of the project for four months, but this felt like the first step, the start of something bigger: a journey that would eventually end at the shores of the Mediterranean.

The idea was floated back in October. Under the guidance of our woodwork teacher, a group of students would build three traditional canoes in the school workshop and, during the summer holiday, paddle them south through France towards the Mediterranean. We didn't know anything about building boats and neither of us had been in a canoe more than twice – but, for several reasons, the idea stuck.

At the end of every summer, we both feel like we've wasted our time. Each year we tell ourselves

A SENSE OF SELF-RELIANCE



we'll do something worthwhile – and each year we do nothing. In a bid to gain some sense of purpose (but also to get out of bed before ten) both of us would look for work. Between us we had a few jobs, but they never really lasted – a brief stint at a farm run by two men called Dave; a couple of hastily written articles in a small online magazine; the odd babysitting gig. This year, we were determined to do something different.

Having lived in the UK for most of our lives, the rest of the world has always seemed so much more interesting. And we both wanted to see some of it. But we didn't just want to board a plane and idle away the time with a number of barely-audible films while thoughtlessly hurtling through the sky. We wanted to know what it takes to get somewhere.

A journey is straightforward. By whatever method or vehicle you use, you're still just getting from one point to another. The simplicity of that notion interested us. So far, most of our lives had been spent in schools, places where no matter the intentions, abstract thinking prevailed. We wanted to

do something concrete, something tangible. To use our hands for a reason other than designing fonts and writing two essays a week. Building canoes from the bottom up, and then paddling them down through France: it seemed perfect. We were all in, and for good reason;

A chance to do something tangible

a journey is an endlessly appealing blank slate onto which streams of travellers are constantly scratching their own stories.

Besides, the way we occupied ourselves during the summer holidays wasn't the only thing that needed to change. As we grew more and more aware of our contributions to climate breakdown, we also recognised how little we were doing to actually amend our behavior. This realisation began to sink in after a protest on a humid afternoon in central London. One of us had sat, with hundreds of others, at the centre of a busy junction and blocked the traffic.

"It's for the environment." That's what we said, with absolute

conviction, to the unimpressed policeman who was asking protesters to move. He shook his head and said that the protest was simply holding everyone up: "You'll understand when you're older." At the time, his comment seemed condescending and uninformed. Eight months later, however, it makes a lot more sense.

There is something oddly inspiring about a protest – ultimately, it's just a group of strangers who've congregated to shout. But most evenings we returned to our respective homes with hoarse throats and the feeling that, in reality, we hadn't accomplished anything.

Both of us like to claim that we care about the environment. We've lamented the state of the world, preached our opinions to people who weren't all too interested, and succumbed to hopelessness when no-one listened. Eventually, we realised that the problems didn't lie in others as much as we thought they did: it was us who needed to make the change.

We each told ourselves that, among other things, we'd have to adjust our travel habits. Flying



Photos by Finn Cameron-Turner



less seemed to be the most obvious option. But many members of both our families live abroad, a vast web of relatives cast across five continents. Travel has been a large part of both of our lives, so when we told our families about our plans, there was one comment we kept hearing: "You'll never get anywhere if you don't fly."

So when the prospect of a canoe trip was raised, we were interested from the start. In some ways, the trip came to represent what we were trying to achieve: built using local timber, our canoes would cost few emissions to make – and absolutely none to paddle.

The project also offered the chance to create something from scratch, without depending on some corporation to do most of the work. Over the past two years, our relationships with consumerism have grown to frustrate us.

There's an industry for everything. Whatever it is you want, it'll be provided if you pay someone enough: because of this, we've become passive. Despite a soon-to-be-completed education, we've come to realise that we're pretty unskilled. If you asked us to grow our own food, make adequate clothing for ourselves, or create a safe, appropriate shelter, we wouldn't know where to start. We'd initially assume that it couldn't be too difficult. We might sift through memories of school years in hope

of finding a solution; or stretch our recollection back to something we watched in a survival documentary once. But the truth is, we've never really learnt to provide for ourselves in a practical sense – how to be truly independent. Because until recently we hadn't seen the

We grinned stupidly at each other

need; real independence had never been required of us.

Canoe building, therefore, seemed like an opportunity to gain a sense of self-reliance; a chance to take things into our own hands, and away from industries that profit off our unwillingness to make things for ourselves. Building and paddling canoes definitely wasn't going to end our relationships with consumerism: timber still had to be processed at a local mill, special tacks and nails shipped in from America and Manchester. But it felt like a place to start.

Before schools closed in March – due to the Covid-19 pandemic – we had been working on the canoes for almost five months. Some of us had been waking early, rising before the sun and getting in an hour and a half of work before breakfast. When we would finally amble into the dining hall – covered in

sawdust and looking like a troop of overzealous bakers – we felt a genuine satisfaction that no amount of extra sleep could have replaced.

There's a simplicity in building something with the intention of using it, a feeling that what you're doing really has a point. And there's pleasure in it too; what John Steinbeck called 'the indescribable joy of creation.' After the ribs were done a few of us planked the hull of the canoe and, on a clear afternoon, flipped it off the mould. It was lighter than we expected. Once we'd lowered it carefully onto the stands, we stepped back and grinned stupidly at each other. We stood around for a long time, admiring the curve of the hull, the delicate tapering of the ribs, the bend of the stem at either end of the boat. It seemed so perfect, and we marvelled at the idea that we'd created it.

But now, the project has ground to a halt. As the Covid-19 situation escalated, we set aside the canoe trip. No one knows when the pandemic will be over, when schools will reopen, or when, and even if, things will be normal again. There is a vast sense of uncertainty at the moment, and it's impossible to tell. However, as soon as we're able to, we'll be back in the workshop.

We're grateful for the opportunity we've been given, an opportunity that many people our age aren't offered. To experience the whole process of creating something; all the bent nails, the broken drill bits, the spot of blood on the front deck that refused to rub off. The opportunity to build, as a group, something that is both beautiful and useful.

During this mandated period of social distancing, we've come to miss the time in the workshop. Our classes have moved to an online format, but this process doesn't really lend itself to woodwork. And so, for now, the canoe sits incomplete: waiting in an empty workshop amidst a haze of sunlight and dust. ●

16 DAYS OF LOCKDOWN

In the middle of March, all students left Brockwood and went home because of the coronavirus pandemic. Rosa Niness kept a diary of her first two weeks of lockdown in Belgium. transcribed & illustrated by Grace Harpur

Day 1: When I arrived in Brussels there were people everywhere. Not as many as usual, but clearly a few hadn't gotten the message that they were in lockdown, as of six hours earlier. My dad and I walked home talking about exactly the same thing as everyone else.

Day 2: I studied and ate. It was fine, I've always been a bit of a hermit.

Day 3: I agreed to write this article today, and I already regret it. Behold the fruits of my labour. Also, my dad came in just as I was standing by the open door to the terrace, breathing. He said it was creepy and laughed, but we'll see if he's still laughing in a few weeks...

Day 4: I had an argument with my dad and his girlfriend today and I didn't study. I expected ups and downs, but expecting them didn't help much. Which I also expected.

Day 5: I went OUTSIDE, don't tell my mum! We tried to go to the market but it was closed so we walked back home. On the way, my dad and his girlfriend saw some tomatoes that someone had dropped on the tram tracks and went to "rescue" them. He put them in a curry for dinner. Having to stand there pretending not to know them while homeless people overtly passed judgement was a bit mortifying, but it was a good curry.

Day 6: I spent the whole day revising for a chemistry mock. I ate one and a half meals, so I'm not immensely proud of myself. It's good to have something to do that could matter longer than this virus does. I got an A but I forgot to brush my teeth and

Day 7: I'm starting to get used to this. I'm trying to avoid arguments because we all have to tolerate each other so it makes no sense to make things worse. Productivity is starting to dip.

Day 8: I don't even remember what happened today...

Day 9: It may have been bad, but who can say?

Day 10: The days are starting to blend together. There's been a lot of introspection and not much studying, although introspection may be a better use of my time now the exams are cancelled. Someone once said to me that when we see something about ourselves that we hadn't seen before, that something doesn't like to be seen. I wanted this article to be light-hearted but not as much as I wanted it to be truthful, so that's today's introspection.

Day 11: I went out again today. Mum, if you're reading this, it was Dad's idea. I walked around the square in front of the store. Either the police in Brussels all live together, or they're breaking the law, because they will walk up to you, shoulder to shoulder, and tell you you're not allowed to sit on a bench because you're only allowed out to exercise.

Day 12: Still no studying, but I think it'll get better. That is also what I thought 3 days ago. And 2 days ago. And yesterday.

Day 13: Did some chemistry today. Not enough, but some.

Day 14: It has officially been two weeks and I still have some brain cells left!

Day 15: I skyped my mother today. No more brain cells. (Mum, if you're reading this, that was a joke!)

Day 16: I need some kind of rota where I go out every 4-6 days just to remind myself that I still live in a society and there is a world outside of this apartment. Thank God. I develop from this pandemic. There will probably be a lot of people with lasting anxiety. There will also be a fair few divorces, I imagine. Over the last 16 days I've been reflecting on the whole situation, and I've realised I'm incredibly lucky. Not just to be a private school student or to have a father with a steady job; I'm also privileged in other ways. My family is bearable and I'm good at spending time alone and some people don't have that. I am truly looking forward to what this virus will bring to society when all is said and done. Maybe landlords don't need all that money, and maybe disabled people can work from home, and maybe by the end of all this, we'll all be able to stand being alone with ourselves...



MY EDUCATION,

By Grace Harpur

A good question when doing a piece of school work: Would I be doing this if there weren't a teacher here?

After being a student at Brockwood for two months – I joined the school in January – I noticed a new feeling: a feeling of actively wanting to do school work. The feeling of being passionate about a subject and spinning off on your own thread of learning not just because there is an authority standing over you but for the sheer enjoyment and benefit of it. An experience entirely my own.

It was such a novel feeling; glorious and wholesome.

The problem with the conventional education system, with its force-feeding of badly-taught subjects, is that it doesn't inspire students. That's a big problem, because inspiration and motivation are essential in order for students to learn. There needs to be a reason to work hard. But how does that feeling appear? How do we find it?

Before Brockwood, my school was quite old-fashioned; 'normal', in the worst possible sense of the word, with rigid rules about uniforms, timetables and even drinking water.

Nine classes a day, thirteen subjects in total, most of which I struggled to find any interest in at all. The subjects were not intrinsically dull but, because they were taught from a textbook, classes would simply consist of ingesting definitions and technical sounding terms. Then you would

do your best to memorise and regurgitate them in an exam before proceeding to collapse that part of the brain like a deckchair until the start of the next year.

I began to feel pretty manipulated and strangled during my time in school, and I lost most of my faith in 'school' as a concept. I know this is not a rare feeling among students in traditional schools; I consider myself very lucky that I was allowed to drop out.

After dropping out, at the age of fourteen, I spent a year educating myself. It was a revelation. It wouldn't matter if I spent the day playing the guitar or watching Ted talks; if I felt it was worthwhile then it most likely was. I managed to detach and 'unstrangle' myself from the education system.

Left to my own devices, without the control and supervision from teachers, learning felt like a breeze. I had a new drive from within, even for subjects like maths, which in school I found to be a complete nightmare.

The concept of learning something that doesn't interest me now seems a little bizarre. Why is it expected of young people to acquire knowledge about something that seems dull to them?

The control and moulding of children's learning starts early. Recently, I read about the research professor Susan Engel, an international authority on curiosity in children. Her main message is that curiosity drops dramatically once children start school. In a classroom study that she conducted

UNSTRANGLED

in an American elementary school, she found that the youngest children ask between two and five questions in a two-hour period. A classroom of 10 and 11-year-olds didn't ask their teacher a single question in a two-hour period. This compared to a study in 2007 which found that, on average, 14-month to five-year-olds ask about 107 questions an hour.

Something invisible must be happening along the path, something powerful enough to make young people stop questioning.

It can still get worse. A while ago, I read about an unprecedented response to the issue of unmotivated kids: a school in China that uses facial recognition technology to monitor the attention span of students. Cameras at the front of the class feed the images into a computer which translates the expressions into seven possible emotions. The PC subsequently sends a notification to the teacher if a pupil is preoccupied with thoughts other than school work.

One student at the school said it was "like a pair of mystery eyes constantly watching me" and they didn't even dare let their mind wander after the system was installed. However, I got the impression that the general consensus was that it is a wise idea, a good way to get students to put their heads down and focus on their school work.

To me, it is terrifying.

Humanity has a common pattern of trying to solve problems by

introducing rules and practices that bypass rather than address the root of those problems.

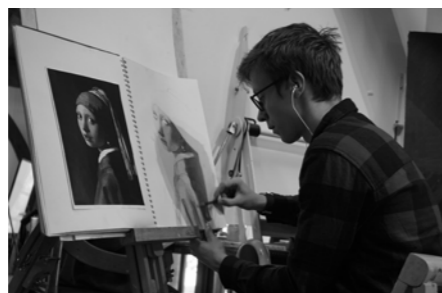
It is common practice on chicken farms to trim the beaks of the birds to avoid them pecking each other to death because, rammed into barns by the thousands, they drive each other crazy.

This is the same absurd logic as the school surveillance example. The problem is unfocused children. An answer is needed so they introduce a device which threatens the children with constantly being punished to 'motivate' them. But the solution doesn't deal with the root of the problem. The students wouldn't be bored if they were allowed to focus on their personal interests.

We need the people within our education system to realise that if they want students to cooperate then they need to do half of the cooperating.

Can students ever learn without external control? How much change and adaptation from the current set-up would that require? We know it's possible to learn this way, it's just a question of how it can be implemented. We also know it's possible because there are examples of thriving, vibrant places, like Brockwood, where students, aided by staff, are encouraged to find or extend passions and interests.

After two months at Brockwood, I think there might be a great hope for bringing this type of education to schools after all. But we have to do it differently and, in my opinion, Brockwood is paving the way. ●



Photos by Arno Le Talludec, Monja Wolf, Jennifer Kowalewski, Giacomo Piffaretti, Meher Vepari, Julia Trevino, Arya Katwe



REDEFINING THE STAGE

By Néa Ranganathan

Where's the stage? a student asked me. "We don't have one", I replied. "But... we really need a stage!" he exclaimed.

Without ever doing theatre before, this seven-year-old student at Inwoods Small School believed profoundly in the importance of the stage – a belief that I know all too well.

Being confined to a stage has been a pivotal part of my drama experience. When I was two years old, I would put my family on the sofa and build a line of cushions in front of me. The stage was beyond that line; my territory. For me, that division created performance. When I was ten years old I joined my first theatre company. There, I was taught that the boundaries

between actors and audience are necessary. But now that I am a student at Brockwood Park School, these rules feel contrived.

I have witnessed how the stage has become a crutch for many people involved in a production; actor, stage crew and audience. We rely on it in the way we prepare, perform and perceive drama. When we leave the physical stage, we find every moment to create a stage out of the space that is accessible. But this is unnecessary.

At the beginning of this school year, my drama teacher at Brockwood gave me an illuminating book. *The Empty Space* by Peter Brook, an acclaimed film and theatre director from

London. Brook says, "[You] can take any empty space and call it a bare stage. A man walks across this empty space whilst someone else is watching him, and this is all that is needed for an act of theatre to be engaged." This was incredibly inspiring for me, as I was beginning to learn how flexible theatre could actually be. Manipulating empty space can be easily done and can change the entire feeling of a show. After reading this book, I realised I had to include Brook's concepts in my work with the pupils of Inwoods Small School. At Inwoods, I teach theatre to the children through drama games and strive to inspire them to be excited about expressing themselves through

Empty space changes the feeling of a show

Preparation for the Show

Character Description and Costume Design

Main/principal Characters = ■
Secondary Characters = ■
Ensemble Roles = ■

1 Sylvester (Donkey)
- young
- curious
- imaginative
- many lines/songs
- independent
- donkey ears
- button down shirt
- shorts
- plain black shoes

2 Mother (Donkey)
- mature
- worrisome
- caring
- sings alone
- friendly
- long floral dress (a)
- comfortable black shoes
- donkey ears
- sun hat? sunglasses
- jewelry
- tie for hair

3 Father (Donkey)
- sensible
- determined
- sings
- caring
- older character
- blue trousers
- nice colourful shirt
- jacket - colourful
- glasses
- comfortable black shoes
- watch
- donkey ears
- white handkerchief

4 Brother (Donkey)
- young
- silly
- playful
- sings
- shorts
- button down shirt
- donkey ears
- black shoes
- sunglasses?

5 Sister (Donkey)
- young
- annoying
- sings
- pushy
- playful
- sun hat?
- shirt
- button down shirt
- black shoes
- donkey ears
- bows for hair

6 Lion
- scary
- energetic
- good roar
- lion mane
- yellow body
- face paint
- black shoes
- lion ears

7 Police (Pig)
- humorous
- demanding
- sings
- pushy
- pig ears
- face paint
- police outfits
- black shoes
- whistle

8 Lone wolf
- scary
- howling

9 Dog Handlers
- professional clothing

10 Other Animals that could be in the show:
- chickens
- sheep
- cows
- mice
- cats
- horses
- ducks

11 Dog
- wear ears of dogs and black, brown, and grey mixed clothing for each dog

12 Neighbours
- any animal
- years for their costumes and any appropriate clothing
- any age voices

13 Stars
- some dressed in black holding hand-made stars

14 Moon
- someone dressed in hand-made moon costume

15 Leaves
- dressed in red, orange and yellow clothes

16 Snowflakes
- handmade snowflakes

17 and onwards => Are dancers and stage crew backstage



their bodies.

In the months before, I had witnessed the impact of the defined stage when the Inwoods students play drama games. The actors are fully immersed in improvisation and are attentive to the activity, whereas the children in the audience zone out. They genuinely believe that their role is unimportant. But what if we were to break the barrier between actors and audience?

I decided to address the idea of stageless drama and my plans for the summer show in a meeting with the Inwoods staff. When I brought up the idea of using nature and the surroundings of Brockwood to create the production, they were exceedingly interested. I wanted the children to be exposed to different interpretations of the stage which I did not experience when I was their age. I believed this would reduce the gap and hierarchy between actors and stage crew that exists in the conventional theatre world. When the roles are redefined, everyone can share more appreciation for each other and their role in the production.

I asked the children "What is a stage?" A fundamental question to comprehend. We started by brainstorming words they typically associate with the word 'stage'. Many children reference words that connect to the physical stage such as 'curtains' or 'backstage.'

I asked: "Imagine you didn't have a stage, what would it feel like?" By changing the question, their perceptions of the boundary shifted and opened up their minds to exploring uncharted ideas. The predominant reaction was the

feeling of freedom and creativity.

This shift of understanding was evident when rehearsals began for our summer show: *Sylvester* and the *Magic Pebble* written by William Steig. The play was created for a stage but I had full artistic licence. However, before I could begin, I had to discover what stageless meant to me.

I feel that the stage is associated with rules and restrictions. But with the lack of rules, there is stageless drama which creates endless possibilities. This was difficult for me to wrap my head around, as I always had past theatre experiences blocking me.

I decided to include the children and brainstorm ideas to create a clearer picture of the outcome of the show. One issue to consider was how Sylvester could turn into a rock incorporating the idea of 'stageless theatre'. We created a sculpture of

a rock that has one side missing. The child playing Sylvester will be able to sit inside the sculpture and be seen by the audience. Here we break 'the fourth wall' as Sylvester will be interacting directly with the audience unbeknownst to the other characters.

This idea created an explosion of stageless ideas from the kids who were beginning to feel the freedom and creativity. For example, the children want to appear from the audience constantly, showing the perpetual changing of seasons. We were beginning to create the show around the empty space concept and I was uncovering my individual approach to stageless drama.

Now, after Inwoods had to close because of the coronavirus pandemic, I am only able to visualise the finished piece.

It is evening, and the summer sun is lighting the grass like a spotlight. Little feet shuffle from behind bushes and the cellist sits on a tree stump and begins to tune. The natural surroundings of Inwoods Small School begin to glow as families and friends take their seats. I take a deep breath and smile at the children, dressed in handmade costumes. Our little stageless show.

"Ready?", I whisper.

"Ready", they echo. ●





To be free

I need to breathe
To think and know
All that life wants to show.
I need space from the world
To live.
Let every part of me be free
Living truly
Wildly.

If there are no rules you don't have to break
them
In order to be truly free.
If no one is around
They won't care if you howl
Naked, from the top of a tree.

If no one is there to tell you
What can and cannot be done
You learn your own limits.
How far you can run.

I need to learn to fly
Roll naked in the snow
Dance and sing with no witnesses.
Climb until there's nowhere else to go

But how are you supposed to learn
The limits of your abilities
If someone's standing next to you
Saying, "don't do that, it's too scary"

Eva Martinson

Extract from the writing of Ruby

Moss covered branches curled over me; a cocoon of
warmth protecting me from the creeping winter. The
leaves were translucent and glowing neon green in the
sun. Bursts of green fading into orange.
The sun was pure. It blocked out the fear of cold, it
cuddled me with its warm arms of light.
Golden rays of joy peeping through the limbs of the
tree; creating a patchwork pattern on the uneven slope.
The sun was dancing with the world, they were happy.

Ruby Rose

Life is about living. That's why I'm here

I want to move forward but
my
thoughts
make
me
stop.

Stuck.
Still.
I fear the next step.
Moving on or regret?

L o s t.

Vicious circle.
Something dense is pulling me down.
I inquire, doubt.

There is a noise, loud.
What if I don't care?
Then the sound burns my head.
My ego.
A living despair.

My words were taken away.

(But maybe there is a way)
I could change what they say.
Disagree? They may.

What is living if it isn't without art?
It's so simple.
Why try to make it hard?

What if there is a door?
Or an open place to explore?
No fight, war.

Where?
Where?
Where?

(My heart)
Always here.
Never apart.

Duda Cavalheiro

Cold Plum Juice

Light purple fabric up to my knees.
Dense fog disguising Mom's maple trees.
Cold plum juice. She notices a tiny crease

And shouts through the doorway:

"Dad come and iron, jeez!"
Soft laughter brought by the mellow breeze.
"Dad! just move your ass and do as I please."

"Too tired ma girl, I've been locked down all
day."

Nino Sinzinger

Extract from 'A heart on the line.'

Love each other with great passion,
With tears,
With laughter,
With starry nights.
Fall in love with the people.
Fall in love with our planet.
The trees.
The air.
The virtues we have in our life.
Right here, right now.

I have put all my feelings at risk for a boy I met a year ago.

Let's see how it goes...
Are we gonna last?
Will my heart break soon?

Don't wait for answers.
Get out there and start risking.

Canela Cervantes

Stolen

Do I seem easily stolen from?

I don't like to have locks
But now I feel as if I must.

I bet you think "she won't notice it's gone".

A silver necklace, a random shirt I wore to my favourite concert.
A piece of chocolate, the bag of chips
that I reserve for those moments I feel shit.

What hurts most is that if you'd ask, I'd give it to you.

But it's easier for you to do no good.
Ask yourself quietly,

How would you feel if this happened to me?

Ana Chaparro Fernandez

Message in a bottle

I keep my thoughts inside of me.
The life I live, a fantasy.

What people see is embellished me.
I'm empty inside but they think I'm free.

Weak, afraid, lost and bottled up.
They don't understand,

I am just stuck.

Anousha O'Malley

Jump

Jump I told myself.
Jump and you will be on the other side; where you wanted to be.
Jump.
Or just sit back and see everyone else run to what you could have had?
Jump.
Why won't you understand that there will have to be a risk involved?
Jump.
There's only freezing water, do it!
Jump.
Why can't you see yourself?
I jumped.
I fell.
I rose back up again with a smile on my face.

Aurelia Jones



IS POPULAR ART GOOD ART?

By Nils Hadamovsky

I looked up the three most popular posts on Instagram with the hashtag #art.

I found a drawing of a man, in colour pencil, with his face distorted in a few places. A photo of a slum in India. And an image of a man and a skeleton looking at masks and skulls.

I stare at these images and it makes me struggle to grasp what art actually means. Are they jaw-dropping or life-changing? For me, the answer is no.

As a student at Brockwood Park School, I have been studying art for the last 2 years. I am very interested in traditional realism and I mostly work with oil paint and pencil.

As an art student, the question 'What is art?' intrigues me. Sometimes it seems that art is anything that the majority calls art. I recently read about the Italian artist Maurizio Cattelan, who taped a banana to the wall of a gallery with duct tape. That installation was so popular that it went on to display at the Art Basel Miami Beach exhibition, where another artist ate the banana, by the way. The question that comes up for me is whether I can call myself an artist even if no-one likes my art, or if I depend on popular opinion?

For me, art is something that captures a moment, a feeling, or conveys a message. Art has to emotionally touch the viewer. Art,



Drawing by Nils Hadamovsky for me, is a portrait that feels like it is alive, as if I see the piece through the artist's eyes. This is what I love in the work of others and live for as an artist. Capturing a moment in its fullest, with all its emotions.

Last year at Brockwood, I drew a smiling old man who seems both happy and sad at the same time. He looks like he is torn apart by his emotions. That is exactly how I felt when drawing him. I hope you can see through my eyes and see what I saw and felt. It moves me emotionally whenever I look at it.

Back to the Instagram images. My question is that, if these posts

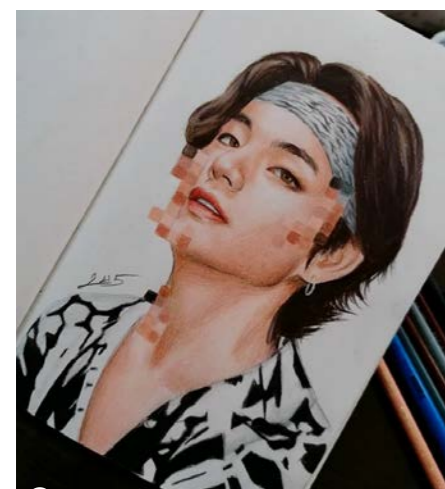
are so popular even though they are kind of 'meh', what is social media doing to our idea of art?

On Instagram, you get a personalised feed, which means that you get shown similar posts to ones you have looked at previously. When you next look up 'art' online, you will see suggested posts and therefore you may favour these images because you only see such a limited amount of similar posts.

This has its benefits and its downsides, in my opinion. The benefits are that you find something you like faster every time you go online. The downside is that you are confined to the same bubble of things. The problem then becomes finding unexpected things that might appeal to or challenge you. It just narrows down your view, making it harder to explore. Whilst this feels comfortable, it may not be the best thing.

Imagine how this applies to other areas aside from art. In politics it could be especially dangerous. If you only know Donald Trump and you only get shown content that confirms how amazing he is, then you might never discover other candidates whom you might agree with more. Do you then just stay in your soft bubble of what you like? Are you okay with that narrowed down worldview?

That is what I want to leave you with to think about. ●



BROCKWOOD AT HOME

By Meher Vepari

At Brockwood, we talk endlessly. Perhaps that's what makes us 'Brockwood students'. Every Wednesday, in a forum called Inquiry Time, we dedicate an hour and a half specifically for that purpose. We talk, we listen. Occasionally we watch a grainy Krishnamurti recording, and then talk about the recurring themes. Fear, judgement, care, responsibility, love, individuality – you name it and it has, almost definitely, been a topic of discussion.

This extends beyond Inquiry Time; we're encouraged to challenge each other's views, to probe further, to open discussions on subjects or issues that might otherwise have remained unquestioned. We're given the opportunity to cultivate our curiosity rather than subdue it. I'm undoubtedly grateful that this is the case; in my previous school I never even considered this as something to learn from. Having the space for discussion often lets underlying feelings and prejudices surface, and the nature of Brockwood allows us to reflect upon these reactions rather than feel ashamed of them.

Sometimes, though, it feels futile. There are a number of words that have become strongly associated with Inquiry Time. Inquire, of course, is one of them. Look at it. Question it. Sit with it. Explore my relationship with it. Every inquiry-based discussion is peppered with these phrases; as a result, they often feel meaningless. We talk about responsibility, but would rather skip rota, about care, but scatter plates and cups across the school. We talk about the agreements and still we break them, about fear and judgement but continue to fear and to judge. For all our empathetic nods and murmurs of agreement, we often end up doing little. We'd rather talk about it instead. Because it's easy to moralise. The harder part is changing that yourself.

So to me, the question is less whether it's possible to be a Brockwood student if you're not there, and more whether we can take what we've talked about at Brockwood and implement it in our lives at home. Whether we can turn what we've theorised about into something real; whether we've really learnt anything.

With the Covid-19 situation persisting, we need to be responsible. The sparse supermarket shelves speak loudly to me. They remind me of our pizza lunches when the manic rush around food clouds our ability to be considerate. The posts I see of young people flocking in large groups or the pedestrians who take

Illustration by Lorena Magallanes

no measures to distance themselves seem no different to the noise on the wings, to stealing, to the issues at Brockwood that continue despite the numerous announcements made. The current problems have much bleaker consequences, but the mentality is the same. The lack of care or thought that we discuss constantly at Brockwood resounds around me. We haven't solved these problems in Brockwood, but we haven't stopped thinking about them either. We're not in Brockwood, but does that have to stop us? Can we continue our inquiry in a much more practical sense of the word? But then again, I should be careful here, because I'm just moralising too. ●





STEP 1: PICK UP THE CHAIR

By Mathieu Beaucarne

Designers love chairs. It's an object everybody comes in contact with and that we are more intimate with than any other type of furniture. But chairs have more complications than one would think. When you design a chair, you need to pay attention to comfort, ergonomics, strength, use, and appearance. This makes it arguably the hardest furniture designing-task to do right. It is for this reason that many choose to start their design career with a chair.

I've always liked creating so this year at Brockwood, I started a project to design my own chair.

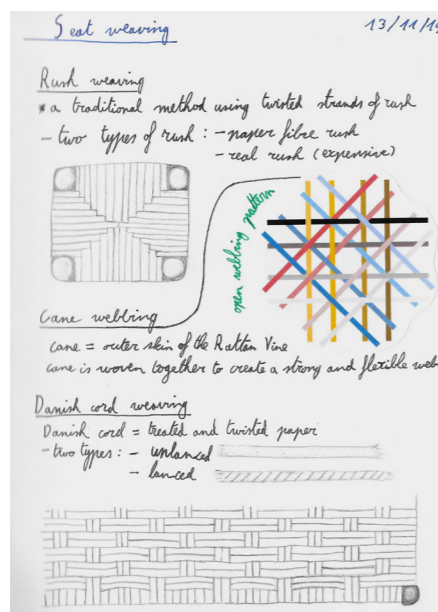
I started by looking at furniture other designers had made, searching for inspiration. When starting a design project it always helps to look at other existing objects even if they have nothing to do with your topic.

Often, I try to get inspiration from shapes found in nature. The petals of a flower could be the right shape for an armrest. If I only turned to design exhibitions for inspiration there would be the danger of me copying more than actually taking inspiration. To keep a certain

I try to get inspiration from shapes in nature

freshness to your design, it is good to look at different artforms. An architect may look at furniture and try to find inspiration there, whilst a product designer may look at sculptures, for example. This approach makes it impossible for you to steal an idea; each time you will have to find a way to make the idea work. Whatever task you may be working on, using this technique will give it a certain freshness.

In the meantime, I also started working on my practical skills with our woodwork teacher, Andrew Turner. The chairs in the dining room quite often need to be repaired and as I did not have



a lot of experience with woodwork, repairing chairs felt like a good place to start.

Repairing chairs taught me a lot of different skills and techniques. We started by clamping the legs into the position they were meant to be in followed by the drilling holes on either side. Next we screwed the parts together. The chairs didn't look very neat at this point because the holes we had drilled were still clearly visible. The holes still had to be plugged. We drilled cone-shaped plugs out of a slab of oak using a vertical drill. These cones were cut to size using a chisel and hammered into the holes with a bit of glue. To make the plug neat we used the chisel to flatten the end until it lined up with the rest of the chair. The last step was to spray a layer of varnish on our chairs. Once it had dried we could proudly carry the chairs back to the house.

Once I got the hang of these skills, it was time to move on from repairing to actually making furniture. The bench in the courtyard had passed its prime, so I decided to make a new one. This would give me a good amount of furniture-making experience.

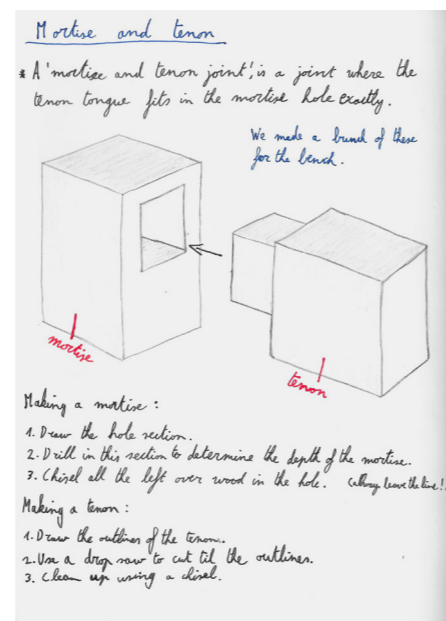
I brought the bench over from the courtyard and started measuring

the parts. We had enough oak planks left in the woodwork shed, so we were able to start immediately. We made a technical drawing copying the dimensions of the old bench, tweaking the design here and there.

During the whole process of making the bench, I learned to use different machines. I got skilled with the band saw, the thicknesser, the drop-saw and the sander. The most important skill I practiced was the making of mortise and tenon joints. These are the most common types of joints, used in almost all furniture. It simply consists of a hole, 'the mortise', and the bit that fits in this hole, 'the tenon'. The goal when making this joint is to make the tenon fit in the mortise as neatly as possible. If done correctly a bit of glue is all you need to keep the two parts together.

To make the mortise holes, I first marked the section I wanted to remove, then I drilled holes in this section to determine the depth. The rest of the job is done with a chisel and mallet. I learned to sharpen the chisel, how to hold it and apply force.

I would carve out all the mortise holes first and then work on the tenons. The tenons went a lot



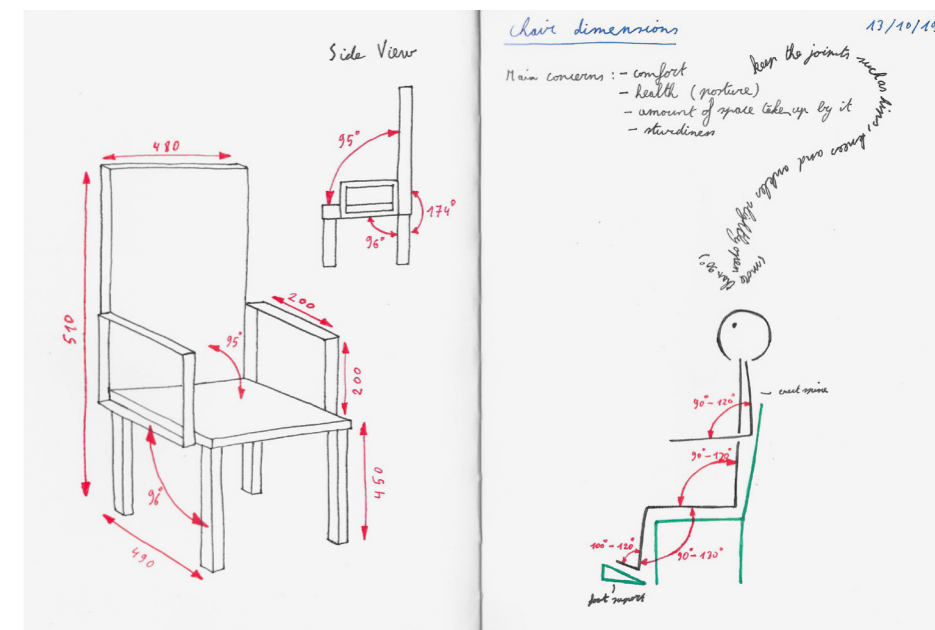
faster. We could make several in an hour by using the drop saw. The drop-saw can be set to the height you desire by adjusting a screw on the machine called 'the depth stop'. Thus the saw would not go further than we wanted when we pulled it down. When our plank was in the right place and the saw was set, we slowly took off parts of the wood by making 'kerfs' in the section we wanted to remove. The final adjustments were still made with a chisel. Once this step was completed, we started fitting the parts. The pieces would often not fit perfectly yet, the mortise holes had to be widened or the tenons were not slim enough.

Each task took practice; it's only with experience that you find the best and most efficient way of performing them. I remember my chisel game being quite weak at the start. I would often not leave the line we had marked or I would have slanting edges. The most important thing I learned is to never take off too much. You could compare it to a suit that needs to be adjusted. A suit can be tailored to fit if it's too big, but this is not possible if the suit is too small. Another key lesson is knowing when to be precise. There are times when precision is vital and times when it's not. Finding the center of a plank for example can be done fast using a square sliding ruler, while it's good to take your time when exploring uncharted territory.

While spending a lot of time in the woodwork shed – and upping my chisel game – I also continued designing my chair. During my design course, I learned a really effective exercise. The idea is that you write down all the steps that happen when using a certain product. In my case it's was quite simple:

1. Pick up the chair.
2. Find somewhere to place it.
3. Place it down.
4. Sit on the chair.

Sounds quite dumb right? Well, the idea is that, for each step, you think of every possible problem that could emerge. It's actually a great way to make improvements and find flaws in your design process.



Even for the first step there are a lot things to think about: chairs are often not easy to move around. This can be due to its weight, the lack of a good handle or grip on the chair, or simply because of the weight distribution. I also started listing different types of chairs (cantilever, Windsor, ladder back, lounge) just so I could get a full scope on what could be fitting for my design.

My research continued. I looked up angles and dimensions that would be good for the average

I remember my weak chisel game

adult. This was an important step, since both comfort and ergonomics depend on these dimensions. I also researched different materials and techniques, looking at different types of wood, plywood and seat weaving.

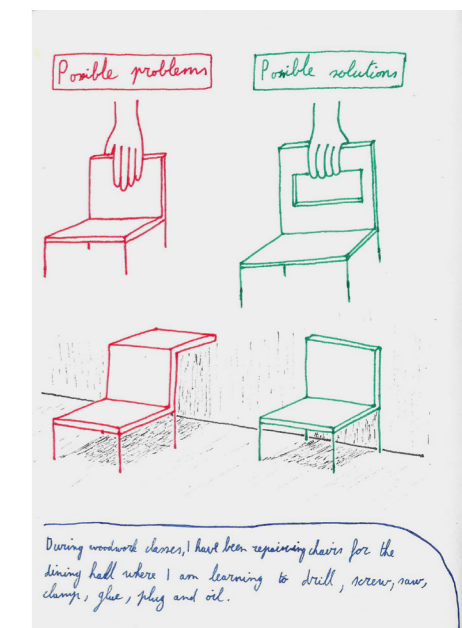
The most common wood used for furniture is oak, mahogany, maple, poplar, cedar and redwood. Each wood has its own properties. Maple, for example, is very hard, while cedar is rather soft.

When it comes to plywood, mahogany, birch and poplar are mostly used. Plywood consists of thin sheets of wood that have been glued and layered 90 degrees to one another's grain. This grants the material flexibility and high strength whatever direction the pressure is coming from. There are a lot of ways of bending these planks which allows a lot of

creative possibilities.

There are many ways of weaving seats, so I decided to focus on my favorite ones and try to somewhat understand them. These are rush weaving, open cane webbing and Danish cord weaving. Each type has a whole history behind them, using different materials and patterns.

My furniture project was abruptly interrupted when the school closed because of the coronavirus pandemic. I had to go back home and haven't spent time in the woodwork shed lately. I did continue my sketches and research. Once I have a design I am satisfied with, I will make technical drawings of the assembly and all the separate parts. Soon, I hope to build my own piece of furniture. ●





FOR YOUR SAFETY

SHORT STORY

By Leafryn Love

Four men in a room, two of them dead. "These are the ugliest disguises we've ever worn", said the man now named Gerald. "Still, it'll be worth the wrinkles by the end of this." He plucked a grey hair from his new face. The other man frowned, trying to remember his new name: Constantine Lock.

The man now called Constantine fiddled with his new beard. "Let's hope no one bats an eye finding 'our' bodyguards dead in 'our' house. Actually, I doubt it's the first time that we've killed our own staff. The cleaners will assume they said something unsafe. 'For Your Safety', and all that."

It felt strange hearing himself speak in the voice of the man he had just killed. Constantine tucked a little black device into his new gold laced jacket, next to his gun. The skin-swapper continued to amaze him.

All that a skin-swapper needed was a body, a battery and a person operating the device. Point, push the button and the little black boxes stripped and swapped the other person's appearance with the operator. They also replicated vocal cords, modified height and adjusted build.

The man wearing Constantine still remembered the feeling the first time he had worn someone else's skin. The quick agony and relief as his skin was peeled away and replaced. But most of all he remembered the way his empty skin had looked when he tucked it away in a closet, dangling by his former mouth, like a fish on a hook.

The man wearing Gerald looked around the room with an expression that didn't suit his new face. Constantine felt it too. There was something about this house that he hadn't felt for a long time.

"Just imagine", the new Gerald said. "Imagine if every house was camera free!" Constantine had almost forgotten the feeling of not



being watched.

"For Your Safety", Gerald spat. His face turned red with anger. "Imagine if you could go out at night without getting shot. Or do this!" He picked up a chair and hurled it at a chandelier. "Or this!", he shouted as he kicked a porcelain vase through the room. "Without having your whole family arrested!"

Constantine couldn't let him go on. The mission would be jeopardised. "Calm down!" he shouted and put his hands on Gerald's shoulders, looking him straight in the eye. Gerald's face went a shade less red. "Right", he



Photos by Meher Vepari

muttered.

As the two of them walked down the staircase, Gerald regained control over himself. "This is what these cameras do to us", he whispered, before opening the front door. They immediately heard a whirring noise. A total of five cameras had caught their movement and zoomed in.

Constantine had once seen what happens to someone caught wearing an official's skin. The nameless screams of the guy when he was stripped by a skin swapper with no skin to swap with. It was the event that made him join the rebellion.

Constantine and Gerald waited ten very long seconds. No sirens – their disguise had worked. Today, the former Gerald would have been giving a speech in front of the town hall. A speech that the man wearing Gerald would now give instead. They walked down the patio and stepped into the limousine on the driveway. The chauffeur put his magazine on the chair next to him and turned the key of the ignition.

They arrived at the town hall a short drive later. At 11 minutes past 11 o'clock, Gerald walked up onto a platform. Every citizen was watching this speech at home – if they wouldn't, the cameras would notice. A great banner with the capitalised words 'For

Your Safety' fluttered in the wind behind the stage. This was the moment the two of them had waited for. The rebellion had been placing explosives and stockpiling guns while they were swapping their way closer to Gerald and Constantine. Today's speech was a gift from heaven – the perfect way to incite the people to revolt.

"PEOPLE!" The guise of Gerald fell apart with that one word and a wild wave of his arms. "REVOLT!" The first bombs went off, levelling the monstrously huge building behind the stage. Chunks of debris flew off into the sky. "TAKE BACK YOUR FREEDOM!" More bombs went off. "YOUR REBELLION WILL GIVE YOU ALL THE WEAPONS YOU NEED. WE HAVE HUNDREDS OF THEM. COME AND FIGHT WITH US!"

A moment of deafening silence and then a crescendo of explosions obliterated every government building for miles around. Trucks full of weapons appeared from everywhere. Men, women and children driven mad with safety ran out of their houses, grabbed a weapon and ran down the streets shooting cameras down.

The man wearing Constantine saw all of this on a small monitor next to the stage. He had a direct link to the city's network of cameras. He smiled. His long job of pretending was finally over; he took out his gun and shot the man wearing Gerald in the head. It had been hard to put up with that red faced fool and his ridiculous ideas and ideals. That was finally over.

His own bombs went off then. He had planted them without the dead man's knowledge. Bombs that now blew up the trucks and the hideouts of the rebellion.

The man wearing Constantine stepped onto the podium and looked into the cameras. "To all loyal citizens, he said calmly, and continued with a triumphant smile on his face: "Don't be afraid! Your just and wise government has drawn the rebels out. We've known about them for seven years. Look out your window and be at peace. You will be safe with us, forever."●

AN ORGANISATION WITHOUT ORGANISATION

By Tom Power

When asked in 1974 by his biographer, Mary Lutyens, to define his teachings Krishnamurti wrote the following:

"The core of Krishnamurti's teaching is contained in the statement he made in 1929 when he said 'Truth is a pathless land'. Man cannot come to it through any organisation, through any creed, through any dogma, priest or ritual, not through any philosophical knowledge or psychological technique. He has to find it through the mirror of relationship, through the understanding of the contents of his own mind, through observation and not through intellectual analysis or introspective dissection..."

I am still young in the Krishnamurti world, entering now the summer term of only my second year at Brockwood and I remember wondering, when getting to know the school, how such a place would run when the heart of what the founder seemed to be saying was not to follow any defined system or organised routines! How can you run an organisation without it becoming an organisation?! Living here I have slowly begun to see how this question can bear fruit if it is lived day to day. How lucky am I!

We have been discussing recently the relationship between tree roots and the dense network of fungal filaments –

known as mycorrhizae – that live symbiotically alongside and intertwined with them. Rather than seeing trees and fungi as two separate organisms, it's truer to see them as a single entity of two parts, both equally supportive of each other and doing, together, more than the sum of what they could do when alone. Likewise, I am seeing how here at Brockwood we're not alone.

We are not alone at Brockwood

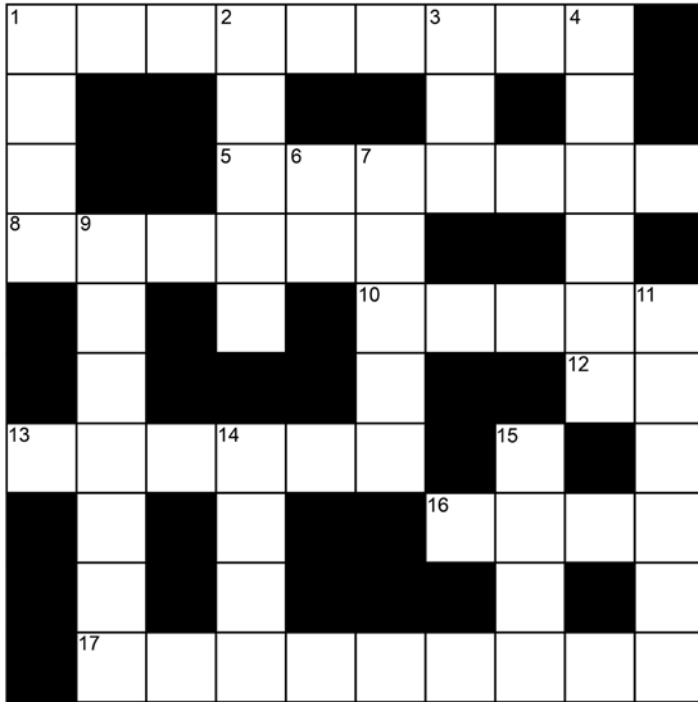
Staff and mature students from the past are regularly feeding us with good will, advice, cups of tea during welcome visits and essential support, financial and through volunteering. With visitors and news from the Oak Grove School and the KFA and visiting a selection of the Indian Krishnamurti schools and the KFI in Chennai, I see that the roots of the Brockwood tree are indeed nourished by an international network of mycorrhizae, connected to other great trees and that there is a symbiotic exchange of ideas, inspiration, support and the necessary loving challenge that comes from true friendship.

The rain is falling in a committed soak today after weeks of sunshine and the trees of Brockwood are bursting with spring life. ●



Four staff members of Brockwood Park School went on a study trip to India in January 2020, visiting different Krishnamurti schools and the KFI in Chennai. This photo was taken at the Rishi Valley School. From left to right: Thomas Lehman, Kate Power, Mina Masoumian, Brockwood's trustee Derek Hook and Tom Power. Photo by Thomas Lehmann.

Crossword



ACROSS:

1. 'like _' (9)
5. not to be confused with a famous french comic character (7)
8. flying too close to the sun is an example of this (6)
10. legal obligation that most people try to avoid (5)
12. mysterious transition element (symbol) (2)
13. raillery (6)
16. (informal) knife (4)
17. love was such an easy game to play (9)

DOWN:

1. bangers and mash (4)
2. 10 million (5)
9. (anag.) nannyuc - (7)
3. great source of wealth, esp in middle eastern countries (3)
14. 'don't give a _' (4)
7. compound with a fruity smell (5)
6. two (2)
4. salt (5)
11. to examine (6)
15. a rapid, nimble and quiet movement, like that of a rabbit (4)

Send your finished crossword to observer@brockwood.org.uk before the 1st of September 2020 with your name, address and t-shirt size. The correct entries will go into a draw and the winner will receive an official Brockwood t-shirt.

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We offer a diverse and individualised programme of study for around 70 students aged between 14-19 years old. We provide for both non-exam & exam students including pre-AS, AS & A level subjects. Our unique curriculum encourages not only academic excellence but also self-understanding, creativity & integrity.



Open day Saturday 26 September 2020