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Felix

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MURAL MONSTROSITY

*'What the f*** is that?' ask students*



'What the f*** is that'

'It's horse sh*t'

'Vehemently ugly'

'Ew wtf why'

'It looks like the cover of a terrible young adult fantasy novel 🤡👁️'

'Pompous, counterproductive and has no place at Imperial.'

'Regardless of what students or the union decide, if the university wants it they'll override it. Like they did with the penis statue.'

Editor-in-Chief JAMIE JOHN

Imperial has renewed its efforts to secure planning permission for a mural students described as 'void', 'meaningless' and 'garish', less than six months after its original application was rejected.

The mural is to be painted onto the western wall of the Roderic Hill Building, at the entrance to Callendar Road.

The College says it has conducted an internal consultation on the proposal. But many College members, including Camille Boutrolle, the current Imperial College Union President, were unaware of the new application, which was submitted at the beginning of → READ MORE ON 4

EDITORIAL

Halloween was a month ago, Imperial



→ READ MORE ON 3

What the mural would look like, according to planning documents. The comments displayed were sent to *Felix's* Instagram account by students. Graphic created by *Felix* using mural by Vesod overlaid onto photograph by Shadowssettle (CC BY-SA 4.0)

DECLARATION

At *Felix*, we believe that it is always in the interest of the students to be in the know. Transparency in the workings of the College and the work of your student representatives is key. Therefore I, the *Felix* Editor, on behalf of the team promise that:

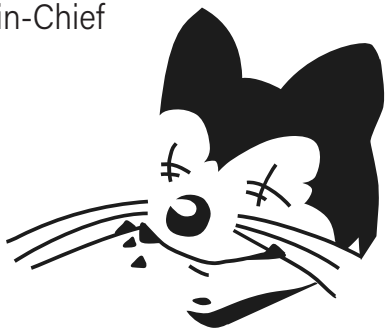
We will, to the best of our ability, tell you the whole truth and nothing but the truth.

We will keep your confidence and will only publish something you say to us if you have explicitly said that we can.

We will work to expose unfairness and discrimination in all forms that it takes at the College.

We will treat fairly any article sent to us, regardless of point of view, and do our best to work with you to prepare it for publication.

Signed by:
JAMIE JOHN
Editor-in-Chief



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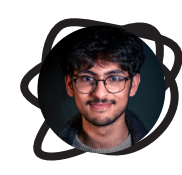
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EDITORIAL

Halloween was a month ago, Imperial

Can someone remind Imperial that Halloween was a month ago? The College has wheeled out a spectre from its closet, cobwebs and all.

This week, *Felix* revealed that Imperial has renewed its efforts to secure planning permission for a mural students described as 'void', 'meaningless' and 'garish', less than six months after its original application was rejected.

For those unacquainted with the original fiasco, here's an excerpt from a previous *Felix* article, dated 16th March 2023:

The mural has reportedly been in the works since summer 2022; however, residents of the building – staff and students of the Department of Physics – did not find out about the plans until the morning of Friday 24th February. This is despite a notification being sent to Blackett and neighbouring buildings, including Huxley, in early February.

It is unclear who received the notification, as Operations Manager for the Department of Physics, Luke White, was also unaware of the plans. He discovered and notified his colleagues of the application within three days of the deadline to comment.

Nevertheless, there have since been 37 objections made online by outraged staff and students alike.

Members of the Physics department fought hard to ensure that their voices were heard, and Westminster City Council ultimately rejected the Blackett Laboratory proposal, on the grounds that the 'visual impact [of] the mural would harm the appearance of the building and this part of the City.'

The College apparently missed the memo though. It has rehashed the same mural, minor changes notwithstanding, and moved it to the adjacent Roderic Hill Building.

By doing so, it has made the mural less visible from Queen's Gate. But the fact still stands that students and staff find it downright hideous.

Here is a selection of our favourite



Illustration by Nico Torán

comments from Imperial students, sent to the *Felix* Instagram page:

'What the f*** is that?' – Michael, Life Sciences

'It's horse sh*t' – Joey, Physics

'It looks like the cover of a bad fantasy novel.' – Evie, Life Sciences

'It looks like it could have come straight out of DALL·E or some AI art generator' – Joel, EEE

The whole debacle reminds your Editor of the end to a horror movie: you think

you've slain the ghost that's been haunting you, only for it to re-emerge unannounced in a post-credits scene.

The man with the golden dong

What is it with Imperial and ugly art? The College seems hellbent on amassing a collection of unsightly curios, and fighting everyone who objects until it gets its way.

Last year, it was ALERT, the phallic Antony Gormley statue that had students up in arms and the international media pointing and laughing. Union Council

lobbied against installation of the statue, describing it as 'exclusionary', and produced a now-iconic diagram to illustrate its point, featuring the words 'Penis (erect)'

This year it's the mural, which the College seems intent on pushing through, even in the face of widespread opposition and a letter of refusal from Westminster City Council.

It just can't seem to take no for an answer.

The mural proposal document is a treasure trove. It reads like it was written by a 12-year-old on a deadline. Here are a few highlights:

This will ensure that the public art – and its message of the relationship between mankind and nature – can be utilised to draw people onto Prince Consort Road where only then can the mural be seen in full and truly experienced.

The proposal has also been subject to internal consultation at the College, ensuring that the location, size and style or [sic] the proposed mural are all in keeping with what those who work and are studying at Imperial College would expect and consider appropriate for the western end of the Blackett Building and the campus as a whole.

[This passage appears to have been copied verbatim from the last proposal. The authors didn't even bother to replace 'Blackett' with 'Roderic Hill']

And best of all, running out of justifications for the mural:

The proposals will provide further enhancements to the South Kensington campus public realm and, through the creation of a distinctive feature, improve the ability of those who are unfamiliar with the campus or the local area to effortlessly navigate their way around.

You honestly couldn't make this up.

NEWS

→ FROM P. 1: MURAL MONSTROSITY

September.

Students expressed their anger at the new proposals in Instagram messages to *Felix*.

‘What the f*** is that,’ wrote Life Sciences student Michael.

‘It truly looks like the cover of a terrible young adult fantasy novel,’ lamented EEE undergraduate Joel.

‘I thought this was a joke’

Occupants of the Roderic Hill Building – students at the Department of Chemical Engineering – disputed assertions made by College leadership that they have been consulted.

“I thought this was a joke when *Felix* told me about it earlier this week,” said a student representative in the department, who wished to remain anonymous. “My personal view is that the mural is not the most appealing. I’m intrigued as to how the proposal was cleared.”

The representative indicated that they would have surveyed their cohort on the proposals, had they been informed.

In a letter of support submitted together with the planning application,

Imperial President Hugh Brady claims students and staff ‘are enthusiastic about the project’.

‘My Department and students are behind the ambitions of this important project,’ concurs Professor Omar Matar, Head of Chemical Engineering, in his own letter of support.

Students in a Roderic Hill workspace expressed surprise upon being told of the plans by *Felix*.

“I’ve not heard about this mural until now,” said Guv, a Chemical Engineering undergraduate. “It’s got nothing to do with Chem Eng or Imperial, and it looks really poorly made.”

It is unclear to whom Brady and Matar spoke, to reach their conclusions. Professor Matar did not respond to multiple requests for comment.

‘Economical with the actualite’

A similar scenario unfolded when the College put forward its original application – for a mural on the façade of the Blakett building.

Students and staff complained that they had not been consulted, submitting a total of 37 objections to Westminster City Council.

‘I saw no consultation at all for

the Blakett proposal,’ said Dr David Clements, Reader in the Department of Physics.

‘Either someone is being economical with the actualite here or they’re using a definition of the words ‘internal consultation’ that I am not familiar with.’

The idea of a mural was floated to last year’s Union President Hayley Wong. She acknowledged the possibility that she ‘may have agreed the topic of sustainability is important to students.’

But documents from the new proposal go further, claiming she felt the mural ‘was a prestigious marker for Imperial on the international stage’, and ‘highly relevant’ to topics student care about.

‘The only time they mentioned it to me was months before the design had even been made,’ said Wong. ‘They said it was a UN initiative about the topic of sustainability, but I received no further information after that.’

Wong’s account has been corroborated by last year’s Deputy President (Education) Jason Zheng. ‘Hayley asked us about it at the time. We felt that a mural was a cool idea, but didn’t see the design.’

‘I assumed the new design would be run by the new president [Boutrolle] before the planning application got submitted.’

means the mural has been downsized by 42% to 11 × 14m, though it would still occupies most of the available wall space.

The mural artwork itself has also been modified. Commenters on the original Blakett Laboratory proposal took issue with ‘the outdated and somewhat sexualised representation of mother nature as a white woman’.

In the revised mural, the central female figure appears older, and holds a book in one hand. She is now accompanied by two men, who sit cross-legged beneath her on the ground.

The work is part of a series commissioned for the UN Decade on Ecosystem Restoration. The UN Environmental Programme is covering the up-to-£2m cost of the mural.

‘The intention of the piece is to promote sustainability,’ reads the planning document. Imperial was selected ‘as an ideal partner in this scheme because of its research excellence in sustainability.’

‘Furthermore, ICL’s sustainability strategy is focused on the environmental and governance aspects of sustainability,’ adds an accompanying design and access statement.

‘It is quite frankly ridiculous to call ourselves a leader in sustainability, when we haven’t yet cut ties with polluting and unethical companies and have a severe lack of biodiversity on the city campuses,’ said a spokesperson for student activist group Imperial Climate Action.

‘The College’s energies would be better directed towards meaningful and impactful actions and if a mural is to be put up, it should be a student- and community-led project.’

An Imperial College London spokesperson said: “Having taken on board feedback from our own staff and students and the local community, Imperial worked with the UN Environmental Programme and Street Art for Mankind on a fresh proposal.”

“We consulted with staff and students in the Department of Chemical Engineering and this fed into the mural’s design and a public consultation is underway as part of the planning process with Westminster City Council.”

Spot the difference



Rejected mural for Blakett building



Proposed mural for Roderic Hill Building

What’s new?

Westminster City Council’s letter of refusal for the Blakett proposal raised concerns that the ‘visual impact [of] the mural would harm the appearance of the building and this part of the City, harming the setting of the Knightsbridge and Queens [sic] Gate (RBKC) Conservation Areas.’

By shifting the mural away from Queen’s Gate, and onto Prince Consort Road, the authors of the new proposal argue that there will be ‘notably less impact’ on how the two conservation areas are ‘enjoyed or perceived’.

The shift in location

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SCIENCE

The magic of winter halos

Exploring winter halos: a scientific peek into the optical illusion seen lighting up UK skies.

Science Writer
FARHANA ISMAEEL

A rare 'winter halo' was spotted on Saturday evening up and down the UK.

It is believed this optical illusion occurs when sunlight or moonlight is refracted by ice crystals high in the atmosphere.

This causes a bright luminous ring to appear around the Sun or Moon.

If you stretch out your arm and look at the halo in the sky, its radius will appear to be roughly the length of your outstretched hand.

The rings are called 22° halos, because the angle formed between the observer's eye and the edge of the ring is 22°.

'In effect, these suspended or falling flecks of ice mean the

atmosphere is transformed into a giant lens causing arcs and halos to appear around the Sun or Moon depending on whether the effect is happening during the night or day respectively', says Space.com.

Winter halos are a common occurrence during a full moon, when the moonlight is bright enough to illuminate the ice crystals and create the halo effect.

Do winter halos predict the weather?

According to folklore, the appearance of lunar halos foreshadows rainfall, especially during winter.

This belief stems from the fact that the formation of halos

is linked to the presence of high-altitude cirrus clouds.

Cirrus clouds often indicate rainfall within the next 24 hours.

The atmospheric optical illusions they create became ingrained in weather lore, serving as an early empirical method for predicting weather before the establishment of meteorology.

Although these beliefs have deep roots in cultural traditions, there is no scientific evidence to substantiate the notion that lunar halos themselves directly induce weather changes, or forecast specific events.



22° halo around the sun over the Himalayas. Anton Yankovyi



22° halo around the moon over the Mayall telescope. NOIRLab

ENVIRONMENT

What to look out for at COP28

The United Nations' flagship conference on climate change is back and more intersectional than ever.

Environment Editor
SIMRAN PATEL

Delegates from around the world meet annually at the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change's (UNFCCC) Conference of the Parties. Here, climate action is coordinated internationally with input from the private sector and marginalised demographics. The 28th Conference of the Parties (COP28) started yesterday in Dubai, United Arab Emirates. COP28 will include the UNFCCC's first Global Stocktake, measuring how much countries have progressed on climate action since signing the Paris Agreement in 2015. Prime Minister Rishi Sunak, Scottish First Minister Humza Yousaf, and His Majesty King Charles III are among those representing the United Kingdom in Dubai.



COP28 will include the UNFCCC's first Global Stocktake, measuring how far countries have progressed on climate action since signing the Paris Agreement.

The host nation was not chosen without controversy, given United Arab Emirates is one of the ten largest oil producers

in the world. Dr Sultan Ahmed Al Jaber, the COP28 President-Designate, is chief executive officer of the state-owned oil company Adnoc – which plans to double oil output by 2027. Calls from over 100 politicians from Europe and the United States to have Dr Al Jaber removed as President-Designate were unsuccessful. Dr Al Jaber is also chairman of the renewable energy firm Masdar, so his supporters say that his expertise in both the fossil fuel and renewable energy industries make him well suited to the role. Regardless, this presidency further adds fuel to the debate between 'phasing down' and 'phasing out' fossil fuels globally – which environmentalists hope will be resolved at COP28.

Proceedings at COP28 are divided into the Blue and Green Zones. Political negotiations will take place in the Blue Zone, which is managed by the UNFCCC and restricted to invitees. The Green Zone contains stalls and talks based on seven themes – see overleaf. There will be a Voice for Action area in the Green Zone where activists and representatives from civil society can book 30-minute or one-hour slots to speak freely about environmental injustices. The Greening Education hub, also in the Green Zone, will

Envato Elements,
Simran Patel



host over 250 sessions emphasising the role of education in fighting the climate crisis. Artistic performances, film screenings, and documentary screenings will be held during the conference. At least two-thirds of the catering across both zones is vegan or vegetarian, including a 100% vegan food truck park. For the first time at a COP, the menu is compatible with the Paris Agreement target of keeping global warming at most 1.5°C above preindustrial levels.

Most days of COP28 are themed around a different aspect of the climate crisis. Some people think that focusing on different issues every day will detract from the 'core' climate negotiations. Others, myself included, welcome attention being given to intersectional issues neglected at previous COPs. Here are the events I am most excited for on each themed day.

3rd December: Health / Relief, Recovery and Peace

Accelerating climate action in countries and communities facing multifaceted crises: Launch of the COP28 Climate, Relief, Recovery and Peace Declaration

Countries worst affected by the climate crisis are often in need of the most humanitarian aid, because climate change makes natural disasters and conflicts over natural resources happen more often. COP28 is

the first time this is being addressed on the international stage, by launching the 'Relief, Recovery and Peace Declaration'. Experts in climate, humanitarian aid, peace building, and sustainable development helped draft the text of the declaration – which calls for more funding to be directed towards places at the frontlines of both war and climate change. The declaration recognises the importance of tailored, community-led local solutions that simultaneously address conflict and the climate crisis. These solutions should also empower marginalised groups within these communities such as women, refugees, and indigenous people.

4th December: Finance / Trade / Gender Equality / Accountability

Arab Women Leaders' Summit with WiSER

The effects of the climate crisis vary with gender. For example, women are less likely to receive relief and assistance in natural disasters because they are less involved in decision-making and receive less education about the disasters. Climate change may also exacerbate women's health, such as extreme heat increasing the chance of stillbirth. Women in some communities are more likely to be farmers, and climate change is making agriculture more difficult. The Women Leaders' Summit was organised by the COP28 Presidency and Women in Sustainability, Environment and Renewable Energy (WiSER) to discuss this gender disparity. The summit brings together academics, activists, and politicians to create action plans for how to promote gender equality in climate action. WiSER

is a platform founded by Masdar which provides women in the United Arab Emirates with training and mentorship on how to become leaders in green industries.

5th December: Energy, Industry / Just Transition / Indigenous Peoples

Electrifying cooking: A just journey towards net-zero

A Just Energy Transition means the world getting less of their energy from fossil fuels, without harming communities currently reliant on those fuels for income or energy. For example, 2.3 billion people worldwide burn wood or other polluting fuels to cook their food, the indoor air pollution from which affects both the climate and respiratory health. Electric cooking would allow these people to move away from these sources while improving their quality of life – an example of the Just Transition. The Global electric Cooking Coalition (GeCCo) aims for at least 10% of households in at least 10 countries in the Global South to cook using electricity within seven years of the coalition being founded. In this event, GeCCO and its government collaborators will talk about the progress they have made and what the next steps are for the coalition.

6th December: Multilevel Action, Urbanization and Built environment / Transport

Formula E's race against the climate change

Fossil fuel money is pervasive in today's sports, from an Adnoc board member owning most of Manchester City football club to oil giant Aramco sponsoring the recent Cricket World Cup. In contrast, Formula E, a racing championship featuring only electric vehicles, has been net zero since it was founded 10 years ago. At COP28, the Formula E delegation will explain how the championship provides manufacturers with a way of testing new electric vehicle technology on the world stage. If successful, this technology can be used in regular electric vehicles – reducing reliance on fossil fuels in the transport sector.

8th December: Youth, Children, Education and Skills

Dubai youth climate dialogue + Youth Stocktake outcomes launch

Paragraph 65 of the Glasgow Climate Pact, an agreement reached during COP26, 'invites future Presidencies of the Conference of the Parties... to facilitate the organization of an annual youth-led climate forum for dialogue between Parties and youth.' The second of these forums will take place on 8th December. The youth forum will enable children and young people to speak directly to policymakers who, in the Global North, are used to representing the wishes of older demographics. In parallel with the main global stocktake, this event will present the findings of a stocktake

assessing how much young people have been included in climate action so far. The COP28 Presidency started the stocktake process at the Bonn Climate Change Conference earlier this year alongside the Youth Climate Champion, a role within the COP28 leadership team specifically to amplify the voices of those under 35 years old.



The youth forum will enable children and young people to speak directly to policymakers.

9th December: Nature, Land Use, and Oceans

Coral conservation in the Red Sea - A story of regional collaboration

Corals in the Red Sea have evolved to be unusually heat-stable. While corals around the world are bleaching as a result of global warming, conservationists are turning to the Red Sea to figure out how to stop this. However, overfishing, tourism, and oil extraction have exerted pressure on the Red Sea's coral reefs and wider biodiversity. This threat was recognised as far back as 1982, when seven countries signed the legally binding Jeddah Convention to conserve biodiversity in the region. At COP28, a panel will share more insights into how countries are working together to protect this unique ecosystem.

10th December: Food, Agriculture and Water

Accelerating food systems transformation: Multi-stakeholder action

Farmers, fishermen, businesses, and other non-state stakeholders have developed a 'Call to Action for Transforming Food Systems for People, Nature, and Climate', which will be launched at this event. Signatories want to help each other and governments transform food systems in ways that empower women and young people and respect the rights of indigenous people. They call for national governments to redirect subsidies away from farming practices that harm nature, and for climate and nature risk disclosures to be compulsory. The event will announce more ways different stakeholders are transforming the food system, and highlight what has already been done.

COP28 Green Zone



Thematic hubs at the COP28 Green Zone. [Simran Patel](#)

The COP28 Green Zone is split into seven thematic hubs. As written on the COP28 official website, the themes are:

- Energy Transition: 'a place for connecting, collaborating, and sharing insights, strategies, and solutions to combat climate change'
- Climate Finance: 'the center of COP28's transformative mission, hosting key players of the financial industry'
- Youth: 'a home away from home for young people to gather and organize events, exchange ideas, find opportunities, and engage in climate change discussions'
- Knowledge: 'a platform to bring together non-governmental organisations, UAE government ministries, local government entities, and their partners'
- Technology & Innovation: 'where cutting-edge technologies and progressive thinking will converge to create innovative solutions aimed at tackling climate change'
- Startup Village: 'a dedicated space within the Tech and Innovation Hub, featuring over 100 climate tech startups'
- Humanitarian Hub: 'raise awareness about the humanitarian impacts of the climate crisis and inspire action to address climate-related risks'

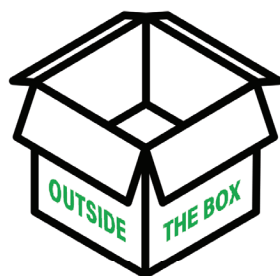
In the lead-up to the climate summit COP28, all attending parties will have been re-evaluating and assessing their positions on how to tackle climate change. It is interesting to consider the motivations of the delegates and how these will impact the relationships between them and the discussions that will take place over the next two weeks (November 30th to December 12th).

The host country this year is the United Arab Emirates (UAE), with the conference taking place at Expo City, an events space in its capital, Dubai. This was a contentious choice, given that the Middle East is responsible for 31% of the world's oil and gas production, and that the UAE is a member of OPEC, the Organisation of the Petroleum Exporting Countries. There is fear among policymakers and activists that this will result in a conference plagued by fossil-fuel lobbying and misdirected agendas, especially given that conference president Sultan al Jaber's affiliation with the Abu Dhabi National Oil Company, which has plans to spend \$150 billion on expanding its oil and gas production over the next five years. Al Jaber has, however, actively supported the EU's goals to increase renewable energy production, as well as showing interest in implementing the Loss and Damage Fund, proposed at last year's COP27.

On the flip side, the African Group of Negotiators on Climate Change (AGN) have made ambitious requests for climate commitments to high-income nations, calling for them to stop approving new oil and gas projects. The Group of 77, which includes China, is a coalition of 135 member states in the Global South which are aiming to 'present a united voice' at this year's conference. The group will be

seeking greater contributions to the Loss and Damage Fund, which primarily supports nations already being impacted by changes in climate.

For the first time since 2017 (COP21), Hong Kong is sending its own delegation of roughly 30 people to the conference, facilitated by Hong Kong Ambassadors Club. Though the island city has the 20th highest GDP per capita in the world, it is threatened by severe tropical storms and flooding that will only get worse with increased climate instability and sea-level rises. Hong Kong's overarching target is to achieve carbon neutrality by 2050. The delegates will be seeking to gain insight into the current state of global climate commitments while highlighting the city's potential to contribute to green finance and innovative technologies



Letting their voices be heard: is COP28 effective at generating support for the countries that need it?

WITH ZANNA BUCKLAND

– such as GRST, a battery-technology company which recently won the Earthshot Prize in the 'Clean Our Air' category (see En-

vironment, Issue 1834). This division between low-income and high-income countries, and the Global North vs.

Global South, has been an increasingly frequent discussion topic in the last few years at COPs.

The position of low-income countries and small island nations on climate goals differs quite significantly to that of developed countries. One of the major differences is in individual versus global focus; many states in the Global North see climate change as an issue to be tackled through sharing the collective burden of implementing mitigation, whereas Global South countries generally have more immediate issues that need to be addressed, such as poverty, the impacts of war, and the after-effects of natural disasters.

In the past, India in particular has been vocal about putting support for its economy and people ahead of the collective goal of net-zero emis-

bon budget should be allocated to their country; a controversial claim to say the least. Assignment of the entire global carbon budget to a single country is unrealistic, but there is a lot of validity and strength in India voicing its desire to maintain economic development at its current rate.

The last few annual COPs have increasingly felt like a façade of political power covering up an international governance system that is cracked and crumbling, particularly given that many countries' nationally determined contributions (NDCs) – their independent, legally-binding plans for climate mitigation – have been put on the backburner in favour of responding to socioeconomic crises.

Ultimately, COP28 exists to provide a platform for activists and the governments of smaller countries to voice concerns and explain their perspectives. However, a few people in a room looking each other in the eye often produces much better results than hundreds listening to a few speakers.

Though such smaller meetings are an existing element of the conference, I question the effectiveness of this two-week long climate change summit every year; perhaps it is time for another shift in the status quo. Countries fostering mutually beneficial relationships, through holding shorter, more focused, and intimate discussions throughout the year about the action they feel able to enact, would perhaps lead to construction of more feasible, long-lasting policies. This could also be more conducive to negotiation from low-income and more vulnerable countries for the support and compensation they deserve from high-income nations.

FILM&TV

Doctor Who is back

The Time Lord and his Tardis are once again gracing our TV screens, but is the 60th anniversary the start of a new Golden Era?

Film Writer
IVIN JOSE

Saturday, November 25th, 6.30pm marked the return of *Doctor Who* to our TV screens with its spectacular 60th anniversary special: *The Star Beast*. After 13 long months since the end of series 13, the Doctor and the Tardis are once again whisking us away on the adventure of a lifetime. November the 25th was the day I'd been living for ever since the miraculous news that the 14th Doctor would be none other than David Tennant! Accompanied by Catherine Tate's Donna Noble, and with Russell T. Davies running the show again, it felt like we'd travelled back in time to 2008. As a slight-

ly obsessed Whovian, (Matt Smith's my doctor, sorry Tennant fans), Christmas had certainly arrived early! Nevertheless, settling down to watch the episode live on Saturday evening, I would be lying if I said I wasn't a tad apprehensive.

Series' 11-13 had been mediocre at best. Jodie Whittaker's Doctor failed to hit the mark. The writing lacked the sci-fi brilliance and intricate timey-wimey plots that *Doctor Who* is renowned for. However, with Davies back on his throne and Murray Gold returning as Musical Director, the 60th anniversary seemed destined for a return to form. Paired with the fabulous duo of Tennant and Tate, surely nothing could go wrong, right?

Well, it gives me great pleasure to answer with a resounding yes! *Doctor Who* is most definitely back, but not

quite better than ever. I cannot express quite how blissful it was to see Tennant, complete with amazing hair, stepping out of his Tardis and onto London's streets. My usually cold and barren heart was brimming with joy and the fact that a man stepping out of a wooden box can provide me with that much pleasure either exposes my insanity, or is a testament to how marvellous this show really is.

Following a brief fourth wall-breaking introductory narration filling new and

casual viewers in on necessary lore, the Doctor once again crosses paths with Donna Noble. It is brilliant and heart-breaking. Seeing Donna back to her original, pre-Tardis-adventures-self, staring at the Doctor without a clue in the world, is enough to break both of the Doctor's hearts, let alone my own. The added fact that she'd named her daughter Rose (because of course she did) and Tennant's iconic ensuing "WHAT?!" was just the touch of humour needed to keep tears at bay.

And then we're off! The plot kicks into gear as a spaceship is seen hurtling through the sky and crash landing nearby. What unfolds is a very contained, down-to-earth adventure between two alien species with the whole of London at stake. I'll say no more in the interest of keeping this spoiler-free and to allow any lost souls who haven't seen the episode yet to discover its charm.

There's so much to love about this episode! Decisions, call-backs, and references abound to make casual fans and fanatics alike burst from the seams with happiness. Listing them all here would be quite unwieldy, so let me take you through my highlights.

The acting from the entire cast was outstanding. It goes without saying that Tennant and Tate stole the show; their interactions and mannerisms intoxicatingly nostalgic, stirring up many fond memories of peak series 4 *Doctor Who*. Tennant mentioned in interviews leading up to *The Star Beast*'s release that his 14th Doctor wouldn't just be a rehash of the 10th incarnation, but a whole new character. This turned out to be true; his current iteration is a perfect amalgamation all of the three Doctors since his time. Gone is 'the man who regrets' – unburdened by the loss of the Time War, the 14th Doctor blends 10's emotional humanity, 11's child-like joy, and 12's endless compassion, with dashes of 13 in there too!

This is the Doctor back to his complex and multi-faceted best. Tate was magnificent as Donna. Perfectly embodying the emotional heart of the episode, she balances soul-crushing sadness with unstoppable humour, manipulating viewers' feelings in a way that only Davies could ever really capture as showrunner. The dynamic duo aside, the rest of the cast is tremendous. Jacqueline King reprises her role as Sylvia, and her interactions with the Doctor in the first half of the episode are hilarious. New *Doctor Who* actresses, *Heartstopper*'s very own Yasmin Finney and *Years and Years*' star Ruth Madeley were sublime and amazing additions to the show.

The writing of this episode, although not ground-breaking, was a return to the cosy, comfortable adventures that we're used to. No new alien planets, no multiversal catastrophes threatening all of creation, not even a mention of a Dalek. Instead, we are treated to two new alien species: Beep The Meep and the Wrarth Warriors. The costume design for both of these was brilliant; The Meep was utterly adorable and is certain to become a merchandising icon, sure to be a wonder-



ful addition to any Whovian's stockings this Christmas. Miriam Margoyles, who voiced The Meep, delivered a stellar performance, remarkably depicting the depths of the alien's character. Even the Sonic Screwdriver has been given an immense upgrade, now capable of much more than opening locks and tampering with technology. One wonders whether this iteration is finally able to deal with wood.

Of course, I can't talk about *Doctor Who* without discussing the Tardis. Resplendent. Radiant. Gorgeous. Gone is the dark, claustrophobic interior of Jodie's Tardis, replaced by a masterpiece of design. I was gob-smacked. Without spoiling too much, this Tardis has given a whole new meaning to 'bigger on the inside'. Witnessing the 14th Doctor's sheer, unadulterated joy at the redecoration lit up the inner child within me and I know I will be living off that feeling of pure, innocent happiness for days to come.

More than the returning cast, the new Tardis, and the new lore, what surprised me most was just how stunning the episode looked overall. Partially funded by Disney, under the studio name Bad Wolf Productions, *Doctor Who* finally has access to the budget it deserves, and it definitely shows. High quality drone shots of London, the Stark Tower-esque UNIT headquarters, and need I even mention that the astounding practical effects have never been seen in *Doctor Who* to this standard. No longer limited by BBC funding, hopefully this new era of *Doctor Who* can fully realise all the wonders of time and space.

Directed by the masterful Rachel Talalay, the episode was shot brilliantly. It switched between perspectives and locations smoothly and clearly, keeping the audience thoroughly engaged as the pace picked up and reached its climactic end. Murray Gold's triumphant comeback to *Doctor Who* made this episode's soundtrack extraordinary and every time iconic soundtracks were woven into the episode, my heartstrings were pulled to devastating effect. This was an aspect I had sorely missed in series' 11-13, so I am glad that along with the writing, the acting, and the visuals, the music of this beloved show is well and truly back as well.

However, for all the love I have for this episode, it's not without its (minor) pitfalls. The pacing, though perfect for most of the episode, becomes rushed towards the end, racing towards a breathless climax and a comparatively slow denouement. The solution to this episode's threat is strikingly reminiscent of *The End of Time*, making the ending feel a bit anti-climactic. Fans of a more sci-fi grounded plot resolution might feel the episode leaned too far into the whimsy, leaving the viewer ever so slightly disappointed in how 'easy' the ending was – crossing the 't's' and dotting the 'i's' too perfectly.

On an unjustifiably pedantic note, I do have a few personal gripes with the new intro and outro sequences, with them lacking a certain flourish or polish. Addition-

ally, whilst the 60th anniversary episode is undoubtedly a commemoration and celebration of *Doctor Who*'s rich legacy, I can't help but wonder whether the technobabble-infused resolution would captivate first-time viewers lacking the nostalgic rose-tinted glasses.

So, what's my final verdict? Did the rushed ending scupper my overall viewing enjoyment of the episode? If you've read this far, you already know the answer: *The Star Beast* was an absolutely fantastic return to form. It made me laugh, tear up, and well up with emotions

I hadn't felt for a TV show in a long time. Now, if my friends know anything about me it's that I love rating things, so, *The Star Beast* proudly takes its place on my completely subjective and arbitrary scale with a respectable 4.25 out of 5 stars (because who needs objectivity when you've got stars to throw around?). But what I can say to everyone – Whovians and first-time watchers alike – is that the Doctor and his Tardis are back to travelling through space and time again, and I, for one, wouldn't miss it for the world.

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2023

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BOOKS

The scents in killing

Katia Zykova provides a chemical and literary perspective on the acclaimed story of a murderer.

Books Writer

KATIA ZYKOVA

Perfume is the morbid tale of a serial killer, who murders young girls to extract their scent. In essence, more reptile than human, Grenouille, the ghoulish centre of Patrick Süskind's *Perfume* cares not so much for people's souls, but their scents.

Born in the most pungent fish market of eighteenth-century Paris and yet somehow himself odourless, he possesses an extraordinary sense of smell; with this, he seeks to create a perfume that, when worn, will help him escape his pain of neglect. For Grenouille, the world is not just a palette of colours witnessed, but an olfactory map to be plundered by the nostrils.

"Brass," Süskind writes, "porcelain and leather, grain and gravel", these are the items that can only be detected by "the best nose in Paris". But Grenouille himself knows that ordinary scents are unable to accomplish his exalted goal, and yet he is consumed by its pursuit. Looking at things from today's perspective, why?



The ghoulish centre of Patrick Süskind's *Perfume* cares not so much for people's souls, but their scents.

The art of perfumery

There are two techniques of perfumery that are described in this novel: distillation and enfleurage.

Behind the doors of the laboratory of the character Baldini, Grenouille's first instructor in this sensory art,

is found an alembic in full operation. Its revelation is on par with a magician pulling off a trick.

The alembic heats substances in order to extract the valuable compounds of a mixture. The vapours of the volatile compounds rise and condense into a separate flask. With its ties to alchemy, distillation was, at the time, viewed as a process filled with mystique.



A parfumerie in Grasse, France. Christophe Finot, Wikimedia Commons

The framing of the scene is crucial, from literary and chemical perspectives. The image of two perfumers slowly watching the generation of a golden liquid signifies the cutting-edge nature of this technology in the era, a symbol of its intrigue.

Distillation has a long history interwoven with tradition and culture. The first alembic has traces back to 4000 BC Mesopotamia. Its invention is not only important in the history of perfumery, but wine and

beermaking as well.

Thus, the unorthodox approach that Grenouille takes to mix perfumes – without care or use of measurement – heavily diminishes the importance assigned to the craft by Baldini.

These are embodiments of modernity placed against tradition. Süskind incorporates these themes to acknowledge how he himself breaks tradition in the publication of his controversial novel. The reader encounters outrageous ideas ideas presented in *Perfume*. Their notions on the conventions of literature are challenged.

By breaking out of the shelter of tradition held up by



The reader is forced to open their minds in outrageous ways to the ideas presented in *Perfume*.

Baldini, the reader is taken to the French town of Grasse (the world capital of perfume-making), and is introduced to the technique of enfleurage.

Fragile flowers

From enfleurer ('to saturate with the perfume of flowers'), enfleurage can be broken into two types: hot and cold.

It is a necessary distinction. In hot enfleurage, also known as maceration, flowers are placed in oil (a blend of $\frac{3}{4}$ fat from beef, and $\frac{1}{4}$ from pork), heated within the range of 40–60°C and regularly stirred. The oil is then filtered and washed with alcohol, in order to obtain a scented infusion.

Cold enfleurage, conversely, is used on fragile flowers and plants that cannot withstand the high temperatures of maceration. It involves the layering of flowers in animal fat on a wooden chassis, left for much longer than flowers in hot enfleurage. The flowers are removed by hand and the fat is washed away with alcohol; what remains is the essence absolue – a concentrate of a flower's scent.

Enfleurage, both hot and cold, was a labour-intensive

and an expensive process. It is this unrelenting dedication that contributes to the eerie note that playing throughout *Perfume*. One played above its base chord of absurd horror, as Grenouille chooses cold enfleurage method to extract the human scent.

In the novel, Süskind's implicit reference to the girls murdered as "fragile flowers" and the arduous elements of this process contribute overwhelmingly to the interpretation of *Perfume* as an allegory to Armageddon. Indeed, Grenouille's disturbing physical qualities, paired with his slatternly mother, characterise him an Anti-christ figure. His actions in pursuit of exalted perfumery exhibit the exact qualities expected in an Antichrist: a drive to replace God on Earth. The contrast between the beauty of the girls and the vileness of their murder indicates an explicit hatred of humanity – not just a simple love of murder.

Love in the ether

The limitations of these old-fashioned techniques were a source of literal pain for Grenouille – as upon discovering that he is unable to capture such wonderful scents as the "odour of glass, the clayey, cool odour of smooth glass," or that of "brass, porcelain and leather, grain and gravel," he almost died.

So although Grenouille hunts after what to us seems like a rather odd assortment of items, the juxtaposition of the bloody, cold odour of brass to the warm, fragrant scent of leather and grain follow a preference for sym-



Another question to ask is can a scent induce love in us?

bols of duality by Süskind.

We are reminded that Grenouille is both a collector, and a boy seeking love. Although he yearns to preserve every scent – it is those scents that will garner him the love that he centres on the most. Hence this jump from glass, brass, and porcelain to more familiar scents such as leather and grain.

Why did the boy Grenouille, want love? Or another question that can be asked is can a scent induce love in us?

Humans have about 400 active odorant receptors, each expressed on the cell membrane of the olfactory sensory neurons that communicate with certain regions of the brain. These include the amygdala and prefrontal cortex (PFC), both closely related to emotion and emotion-related learning. Scents are associated with a

reward value, just as food is. (The body asks us, in turn, should we stay away or come closer?)

A remarkable creation of Grenouille's follows his arrival at Grasse: a perfume to mimic the human scent. From this seed, he is able to create various perfumes, all human, but capable of invoking shifts in the attitudes of the people around him. "He changed [them] like clothes," Süskind writes, "as the situation demanded and which permitted him to move undisturbed in the world of men and to keep his true nature from them."

Thus, Grenouille is able to draw others close and push them away, through scent.

The heart note

However, he remains unsatisfied. He begins to believe that what he was born for – his ultimate purpose was to create a scent so powerful it could command the masses through love.

Out of this, the core theme of *Perfume* arises: a universal desire set in each person to fulfil some task or accomplish a goal that they believe they were born for. Grenouille believed he was born "to create a scent that was not merely human, but superhuman, an angel's scent."

He becomes convinced that love was something automatically assigned to us when we are born. Rejected by every maternal figure and so overcome by his pride he does not see the same happening to others. Incorrectly he draws the conclusion that he has been cheated out some form of inheritance.

The soul note

Perfume is a magnificent horror story about a boy attracted to scents, but Süskind writes a novel that feels more akin to an allegory to Armageddon, with Grenouille as its Antichrist – hated by all who set their noses on him.

In our society today, there are Grenouilles who exist: the people who attempt to compel the respect of the population they cater to. Politicians who seek to mask their corruption with pretty speeches. Companies hiding their inhumane production methods. They, like Grenouille, mask their evil with a perfume. But *Perfume* when it comes down to it was never about capturing scent, it was about capturing human love. And, for Grenouille, this will sadly never be possible. A note of melancholy lingers in the air.



Eau de sang. Alicia Okusaga

FOOD&TRAVEL

Hallo Heidelberg, Hallo Hausmeister!

In a new collaboration with exchange student Evelyn, she introduces her newest home in the corner of Heidelberg.

Travel Writer
EVELYN TOSH

The silvery flow of the Neckar river rushes by me as I look out the window of the number 24 tram as it crosses the Ernst-Walz Bridge. The air is still very warm for early October, the temperature closer to that of August or July. The view is pleasant, somewhat Seurat-esque as people relax on the grassy banks or cycle past. Everyone is soaking up the last few days of the summerlike weather. The Neckar River spans 362km from its source in the Black Forest to its meeting with the Rhein in Mannheim, and the city of Heidelberg, located in the Neckar Valley, is considered one of its most beautiful points. Even from my seat inside the scuffed tram, it is clear to see what drew the Romantics to this place.

I arrived in Heidelberg just under three weeks ago with a year of my life packed into a suitcase and a carry-on bag, brimming with excitement. I had been waiting for this moment for the last four years; the thought of it pushing me through the horrors of NMR lectures and one too many all-nighters at the campus library. I am not only one of the few foolish individuals who chose a Language for Science degree and has since stuck with it, but I have almost 10 years of German classes under



The Old Bridge Clara Maton

my belt and a deep hatred of *Leben des Galilei* to prove it. I was looking forward to dazzling Baden-Württemberg with my mediocre German; I realise now that I couldn't have been more wrong.

The city of Heidelberg is comprised of 15 districts, ranging from Rohrbach in the south, through the tourist-trap Altstadt (translated 'old city'), to Handschuhsheim in the North. The area in which I am staying, Neuenheim, is situated north of the Neckar River, just



The accomodation in Neuenheimer Feld Evelyn Tosh

below Handschuhsheim, and dominated by the sprawling science campus of the university on Neuenheimer Feld. It is here that a large portion of the student accommodation is located.

To picture Neuenheimer Feld is to imagine you are a science-fiction writer from the 1960s. It is tall, sterile

and maze-like; a labyrinth of eco-brutalism and fenced-off building sites. Imagine the setting of your favourite dystopian novel or zombie apocalypse movie and then add an alarming number of bikes and a very conveniently placed Aldi.

In one of four tower blocks near said Aldi is my two-person flat (or W-G as they are called here). Compared to the typical cupboards and box rooms which house the students of most London universities, my room here feels abnormally large, accommodating a carpet, a wardrobe, even a full-sized bookshelf. Fortunately, the tiny kitchenette, broken cupboards, black mould and general dirt keep it feeling like home. It was, however, these



It is clear to see what drew the Romantics to this place.

welcoming features so common to the tenants of London but unusual to those of Heidelberg, that led me to the final boss of basic conversational German: the Hausmeister.

The Hausmeister is the German's answer to a hall su-



View from Heidelberg Castle Clara Maton

pervisor or building manager, to whom, according to the tenant rules of my student accommodation, every new tenant must report their arrival. Ordinarily, this would be nothing more than a mental refresh of my Year 7 greetings class and a quick dict.cc search, but, unluckily for me, a damage report is also required.

As I descended the stairs towards the basement where the Hausmeister lurks, my chest began to bubble. No, this wasn't just the standard social anxiety of an Imperial student, but rather the deep and gnawing fear of not being able to communicate. My B2/C1 level confidence had evaporated, leaving behind only words for describing immigration policy, classic German literature and, helpfully, fractal geometry. The education system seemed to have omitted

any words pertaining to hygiene from my vocabulary, limiting me to 'nicht sauber' (not clean) and the word for Hoover, Staubsauger (dust-sucker), which I had retained due to its amusingly literal translation.

Looking back on the event now, as Altstadt grows closer, it is easy to forget how terrified this single conversation made me feel. The Hausmeister, though kind enough, had English about as good as my German, meaning communication became a frustrating interpretive dance of badly broken German, over-exaggerated miming and Google Translate. Even though for anyone learning a second language, surviving such an experience should be considered a success, it is without doubt the scariest thing I have done in recent years.

The tram carriage fills with the gentle hubbub of

vaguely familiar German and the sun is beginning to set over the forest covered slopes of the valley. I feel content, having recovered from my meeting with the Hausmeister and now with sufficient vocabulary to describe black mould. I am here in a beautiful city and working in a lab most students could only dream of. Now I know no matter how much I have to discuss British tea-drinking habits with curious Germans, or explain Brexit or ask stupid questions during lab, nothing will ever be as hard as that first conversation with the Hausmeister. Having managed that, I feel like I could do anything... maybe apart from talking to them again!



Neckar River Phoebe Lacono

PHOTOGRAPHY

A Sensory Experience

How to share sound, smell, taste, and touch through the sense of sight.



Untitled Jonah Hewett

Head Photographer ROLANDO CHARLES

There is something contradictory about the senses. Perceiving the world around us is a natural thing to do, but it feels very unnatural to think about. Consider where you are right now. Do you feel your feet? Not just their presence, but also the texture of the socks you're wearing. Take a deep breath, what can you smell? Close your eyes. Is that same smell stronger now? Listen to the sound your heart makes thumping in your chest. Are you always aware of it?

This perception of the world around us, however, isn't purely informational,

it's evocative too.

I'm sure you've had a cup of tea before; you know the taste, the smell, the senses that it tingles as it runs down your throat. The warmth you feel on your palms as you look at the mug's colourful design.

Now look at Jonah's picture. The cup of tea is the obvious subject, but the photo evokes some other scene, something personal and familiar to the viewer, maybe a childhood memory or a last Sunday.

The picture transforms into a wonderful mirror of our own personal, sensory experience.

I won't ruin this comment by talking about Jonah's technical skills too much, but it would be remiss of me not to mention the razor-sharp focus, the mellow

shadows, the soft highlights, and the great composition that makes us feel like participants in this tea ceremony. Just a little bonus for the photographers out there who think that the camera takes the picture.

Minor White, a twentieth century American photographer, took many pictures on this same topic. "At first glance, a photograph can inform us. At second glance it can reach us," he once said.

This is a great way to describe Jonah's picture: at first glance, a cup of tea; at second glance, some long-lost heartwarming memory. *Peeled Paint* (1959) by White offers a comparison to this photo. You can almost feel and touch the paint, but the real subject of the image is an evoca-

tion, a symbol of our own which doesn't need to be shared with anyone else.

Untitled is a powerful picture, one that can speak differently to everyone who looks at it. I'd call it *A Quiet Sip*, but I suggest you give the photo your own title.

Scan the QR code to submit for the next theme 'Paranoia':

