



Issue Number Eleven

SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY

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ST/R

*The only arts magazine made by
prisoners for prisoners in Scotland*

SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY

Editorial

This issue's theme of Science and Technology has produced creative submissions that immediately caught our attention.

We liked how some people, such as Sean from Dumfries who was inspired by the pattern of DNA, thought outside the box and created a strange and beautiful painting (page 4). The theme stretched the imaginations of our readers and produced the original and inventive stories that you will find throughout the magazine.

Challenged to show the huge influence Science and Technology holds over our lives, our selected contributors explore science-fiction dystopias, the insidious grip of the internet, our changing relationship with nature and the theory of evolution. This could possibly be our best issue yet.

Having published ten exciting issues, the STIR Editorial Team thought it was time to refresh the magazine. As you can already tell, we have decreased and changed the paper to reduce its smell. This odor is a small sacrifice to be eco-friendly.

To make the most of the visual art and written work submitted to us, you will notice that our trademark slash has been ditched. We have also moved the editorial, list of contacts and comment cards to a useful flap which means the image on the front cover now takes centre stage. And did you see that we have used staples? You sent in your comments and we listened, so keep sending us your thoughts and tell us what you think of our new style.

After nine years of working as CEO of the Koestler Trust, Tim Robertson is stepping down and moving on to new things. To celebrate his contribution to Koestler, and to prisoners and detainees in the UK, we feature our in-depth interview with Tim on page 14, ensuring we end this issue on a high note.

Edited by Craig, Dennis, Eddie, Gareth, Jas, John, Jok, Neil and Stuart Shotts

*The views expressed in STIR are not those
of the Scottish Prison Service.*

Cover Art

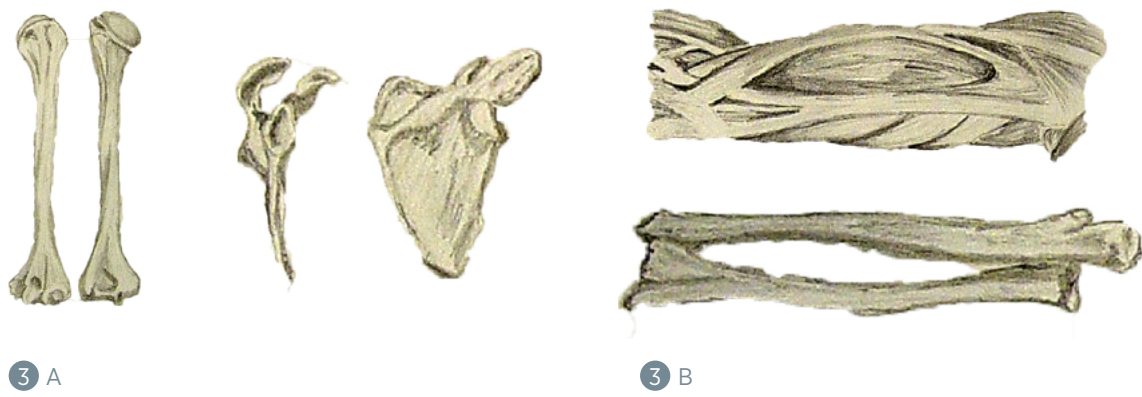
TRANSFORMER

Fraser Low Moss

Photographic Collage



SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY



Alien

Expelled from my mucus filled abode, I am dragged kicking and screaming into an alien-filled environment.

My eyes struggle to focus on this strange new world as light floods in like a tsunami, bringing with it the stings of a thousand jellyfish.

My lungs burst into life like the bellows of ancient furnaces, drawing in oxygen tainted by the clinical hospital stench and the occasional waft of sweat. Forgotten in an instant, as artic-like air blasts deep into the pores of my skin. Too much too soon... oh how I long to be back in the silken embrace of the womb, a sumptuous dwelling with sustenance on tap, accompanied by the hypnotic thump thump of my mother's heart. I drift in amniotic fluid like a zephyr travelling through cumuli.

Please... please let me go back home.

George Barlinnie

A Creative Response to Darwin

In order to survive
We must adapt and change;
Bring courage from within,
Gain wisdom and be brave.
Hold up our hands.
We all make mistakes.
In order to survive
We must adapt and change.

Rosie Cornton Vale



1 TIME CAPSULE (TRIPTYCH)

There are several interpretations of this on-going piece which I have found myself following as I work on it. However, the original idea was to imagine myself in the distant future looking back on the world as it is today, in the hope that we would look at the AK 47 assault rifle with a sense of disbelief; that we used all our science and engineering to design and build weapons to kill each other, and then taught our children to use them.

Keith Barlinnie
Oil on Canvas

2 AN ALTERNATIVE WORLD

Ian Greenock
Pencil on Paper

3 A, B & C ANATOMY

David Dumfries
Pencil on Paper

A Perfect Day on Mars

Jamsey, the owner of The Red Planet Inn – the finest boozier on Mars – raced around frantically, trying to find the keys to his space car. Since receiving the telepath call informing him that Michelle, his wife, had been rushed into hospital in the late stages of labour, his head went into overdrive. Kata, The Red Planet's manageress – a chain smoking battle-axe of a woman with teeth like a witch doctor's necklace – gave Jamsey her set of keys,

"Get a move on," she tells him, "or you'll miss the birth of your first child."

Jamsey quickly makes his way to the space car, starts the engine and instantly rises to an altitude of 1200ft, breaking the 1000ft limit for privately owned space crafts. He puts the pedal to the metal, and breaks the 300mph speed limit too. Jamsey's so tense and nervous he can't sit at peace.

"Please don't miss this," he mumbles to himself.

He finally makes it to the hospital in one piece, without being pulled over by the traffic patrol for breaking every craft violation in the book. He rushes into the room, just as the baby starts to breach.

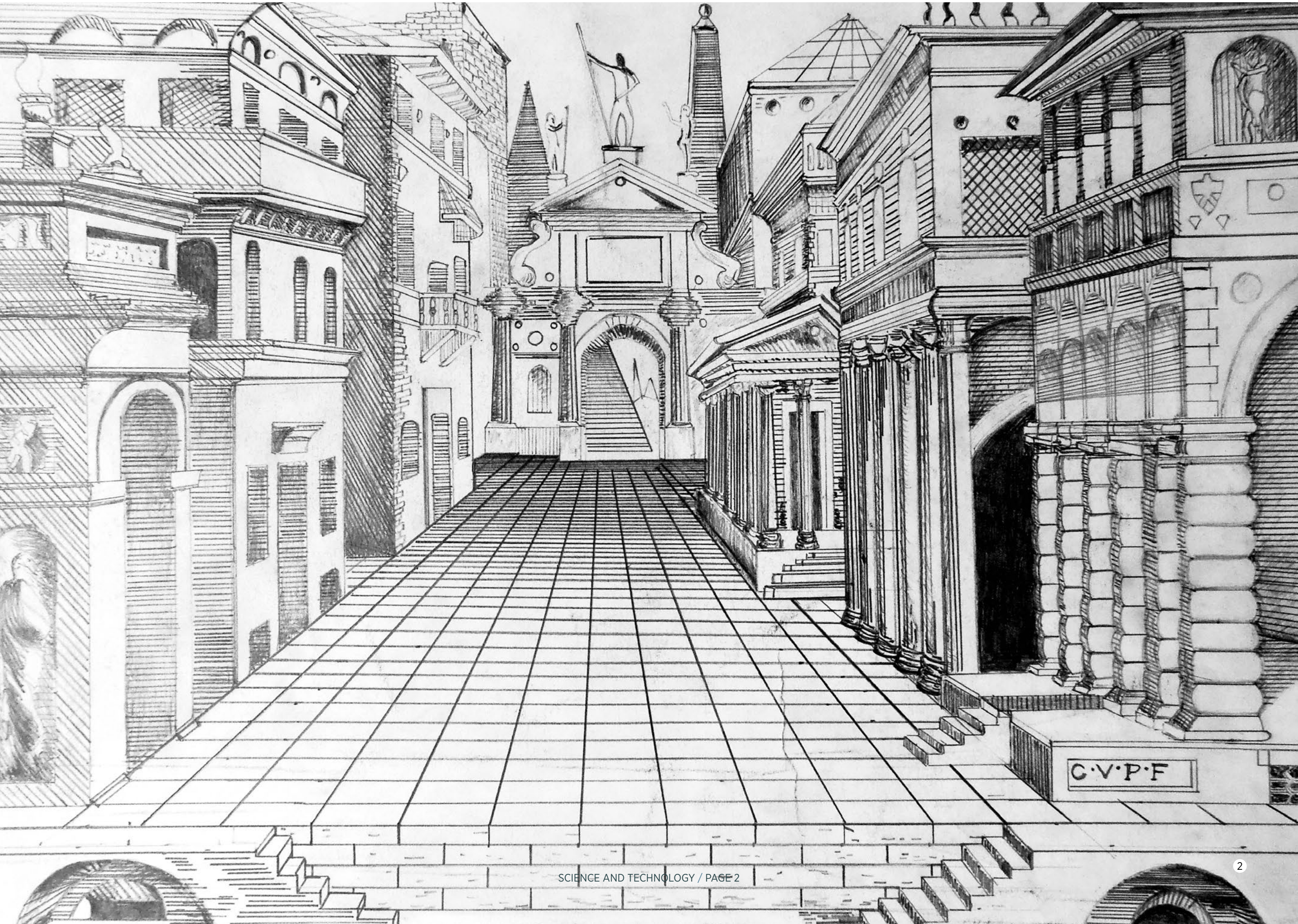
"Just one big push Michelle," he says, and with all her strength she makes one final effort.

"You have a beautiful baby boy!" says the midwife, "Congratulations." Immediately the cries of the newborn fills the room.

As other members of his and Michelle's family arrive to greet the latest addition to the clan and like any new parent, Jamsey and Michelle's biggest worry was that their baby would be healthy and normal. So when the midwife hands Jamsey the baby to hold, and he sees it for the first time, he is immediately overcome with pride, and relief. He lifts the baby gently, kissing it on the forehead of each of its two identical heads.

Such a perfect day.

Michael Shotts



THE JOURNEY TO LUNA

High in my stilted home, I stood frightened and my eyes gazed sadly through the window into the blue stormy sea. Choppy waves crashed and swayed as I watched the last shipment of prisoners being towed towards what was left of the abandoned island. I felt sore about the situation, but was forced to keep my mouth shut, especially if I wanted to be one of the first newcomers on the magnificent, new planet ‘Luna’.

My name is Carla and I'm a 22 year old university student, studying Geographical Physics. My parents saved most of their lives to make sure I got the best start. I got engaged to Channan, the love of my life, but he went missing in the flood. Channan is the quiet type, deep and serious, he loves his job as a scientist, well, loved it. When we met through university, I was three years younger than Channan, so that meant he graduated three years before me. He got a job in aeronautics, working for the government, and basically, in a nutshell, that is how I got my job. We've been in love ever since.

I spend all my spare time going out on survival runs on the hovercraft searching for Channan. Very seldom do we find strays, but I won't give up. I'm not going to 'Luna' without him.

Luna is the new planet that is going to save us all. It has been the only hope for human survival, ever since earth was consumed by the most aggressive tsunami it had ever seen. Chaos has since overtaken the nation with looting, killing and mass murder: the new form of politics. Mass destruction and carnage have overtaken with no mercy. Only a couple of thousand or so survivors of the tsunami have managed to build a community high above sea level, and I am one of them.

Hermetically-sealed spacecrafts have been built and crafted with the best new materials, brought back from secret missions to 'Luna', which were designed to discover if the new planet would be tolerable to humans. It was in fact, perfect. The only problem was there was not enough fuel to transport everyone to the new planet.

This sad fact made the tension in the community unbearable at times.

Luna is the most welcoming and beautiful planet anyone could imagine. Mountains higher than Everest, forests and plants so vividly green they almost glow, rivers twice as long as the Nile, and the sea wider than the widest oceans. Trees on Luna are double the height and breadth than any on earth, and the varieties of fruit are so outstanding they could feed an army. Fields of all shades and colours draw the eye, so much that you lose yourself in their greatness. But the most spectacular of all are the waterfalls and rivers, for the intensity of the water is so great it is almost frightening.

I thought I would go out for an extra survival run today. Something inside was telling me Channan was out there, trying to get back home to me. We took the usual men; Bob was the captain of the craft and had been in the Lunar Navy for most of his life. Then there was Steve who was cocky... still, he was sweet. I still think to this day that he has a crush on me, but he's harmless. And last but not least, Geoff! He was more of a broody sort of a guy, but his bark was worse than his bite. Everyday these guys get together of their own accord and try to find the survivors. So far they have managed to bring in at least a hundred of them.

So we headed west, out into the blue. I was feeling very anxious, more than usual, and I knew something was different this time. I could feel it in my bones. Half an hour went by and we came across some land. As I approached the community, I could see two silhouettes in the distance walking towards us. One of them was male and was limping as he held onto the other, who was female. As they got closer I could hear them shouting at us and waving their arms, trying to catch our attention.

My eyes focused hard on the man, and as he shouted out, in that split second, something inside me told me that I recognised the voice. The way he walked and looked felt familiar to me. It was Channan! My heart lifted as the moment registered in my mind; all this time and now, finally, he was right there in front of me. He knew it was me and as he hobbled towards me, I ran. I ran as fast as I could, shouting to him "It's me baby! It's Carla!" As we got closer tears ran from my eyes, and then we touched. He grabbed me and held on so tight, as if he would never let me go.

That is... until the day when the gods' cruellest act came to pass. There was only room for one of us on the spacecraft to 'Luna'.

Rita Cornton Vale



1
WHERE DINOSAURS REALLY COME FROM
Craig Shotts
Acrylic on Canvas

2
SHORT CIRCUIT
Paulo Shotts
Oil on Canvas

3
THE SUN
Walter Low Moss
Acrylic on Canvas

4
DNA
Sean Dumfries
Pastel on Paper

Solitary

It is rooted within human nature to hope, It is why we peer through our telescopes, starting with Sputnik, right through to Hubble, forever searching for life, another habitable bubble. We exiled Pluto, & created the ALMA Radio, pondered the fallen apple – proving the theory of gravity – before Apollo, and driving to the sea of Tranquillity. Witnessed the power of super novas, discovered Europa, Andromeda, the pulsar and chose a comet for Rosetta. Introduced Da Vinci to Elvis, in Voyager, & fired them out, past the belt of Kuiper. Could we truly be alone in our universe, our galaxy? Among the vast array of planets, is Earth the singularity of life in the cosmos, a bastion amid the constellations, having survived solar wind, meteors & cosmic radiation? Unlikely odds spawned through chaos, infinite time in a finite cosmos, gyrating around the sun - Earth on its magnetic poles – the Milky Way, at its core, a super massive black hole.

With so many star systems and planetary bodies, red dwarves, spiral galaxies & nebulae, are we, as beings, in solitary?

Craig Barlinnie

Technical Magic

Our faces are illuminated by our TVs, channel surfing at midnight. The TV carries us all over the world with an invisible command. Would our teenage grandparents think it magic? And the remote-control, a magic wand wielded in a sorcerer's hand? Step back to the time of kings, knights and Round Tables, Feel the terror in the grip of our ancestors' hands on our shoulders, Hear the insane denials as they see tame dragons known as Airbus Carrying their descendants across the world in metal bellies. Let's walk down a museum's echoing halls and exhibits, Past the cavemen whose names are lost in a cloud of years... When a child dies from an infection that kills millions And we defeat it with our magic beans, our common antibiotics, Would our ancestors call us unnatural, voodoo-powered wizards? Or as we heal the sick, cure the lame, would they see us instead as gods? If we look down the railroad track to tomorrow, what would we see? Our grandchildren as magical? Gods of everything that will ever be?

Alastair Dumfries

Technology

T is for the time that has gone by
E is for every event that has passed us by
C is for the computers and technology we have to buy
H is for the hundreds of millions stars in the sky
N is for New Year's parties flying by
O is for old inventions that have begun to die
L is for luxury items we need to survive
O is for our world changing and yearning to thrive
G is for great inventions that have changed our lives
Y is for the hope of our youth overcoming the struggles and strife

Michael Low Moss



SCIENCE TECHNOLOGY & ART

What do you mean science and technology isn't art?



YANKEE 13.5MGT (1954)

Scientific advances have also led to the creation of the atomic bomb and nuclear weapons. Since their invention in the mid 20th century, artists have attempted to depict the iconic, and threatening, image of the mushroom cloud, like the example illustrated here.

Colin Dumfries
Pastel on Paper

It's safe to say that when people conjure up the idea of science and technology, they do not associate it with art. Instead they visualise stereotypical and traditional images of lab coats, beakers and clinical, sterile work surfaces. Meanwhile, art is considered creative and beautiful, but, this is not always the case; there is a shared relationship between them.

Art has developed enormously from its origin, as paintings on the walls of caves, to the digital age of today. Cave painting came before the written word and therefore was the first way of telling a story, using charcoal and earth pigments to make powerful images that are now seen as art. Gradually, these images were applied to more mobile materials, such as animal skins, and they were also carved into stone.

The subsequent development of hieroglyphic signs allowed inscribed stone tablets to be created in Mesopotamia and Egypt around 3,500 – 3,000 BC. Alongside this breakthrough, the use of papyrus and parchment, as a ground for images and writing, opened up the kind of visual world that we would recognise today.

Even though art and writing had developed by the Middle Ages, it was still mainly commissioned for religious purposes, and it was primarily the monarchs, bishops and aristocracy who benefitted from the work of artists.

One of the biggest leaps forward in the expansion of image making came with the development of photography in the early 19th century. After the invention of the Daguerreotype in 1839, came the box camera, powder flash and Collodion dry-plate process of 1855. By the 1880s the hand-held 'Box Brownie' allowed photography and image making to become widely accessible to everyone, regardless of status. The invention of cinematic film further extended our ability to record our lives in movement, and the wider world around us.

The 20th and 21st centuries have seen a revolution brought about by digital technology, allowing the making and sharing of art, and information, on a scale never seen before. This panorama of visual references, drawing on global cultures, environments and peoples, now provides a deeper understanding of our own history and heritage, but has also become a powerful tool to develop new concepts and ideas.

Inspired by a contribution from Nigel from Low Moss

Artist in Focus: Christine Borland

One artist who uses science in her work is Turner prize nominee (1997), Scottish-born, Christine Borland. Christine uses medical science and technology in her artwork to explore human identity. Her exhibition 'Preserves' in 2006 showcased Bullet Proof Breath (2001), which is a stunning work that was inspired by the American military's research into the possible use of spider silk as a bulletproof material. The concept being that natural substances can be manipulated to protect people and that something so delicate can be so strong. However, Borland turns this on its head and portrays the silk as a danger, as she wraps it around a hand blown glass representation of the bronchi of a human lung, highlighting the delicacy of humankind.

Another work by Borland, A Treasury of Human Inheritance (2000), explores muscle and nerve diseases that affect movement, such as Muscular Dystrophy. She displays these diseases using agate slices, the colours of which represent different symptoms and diseases. Cleverly, the agate slices resemble brain scans, all of which are different from each other.

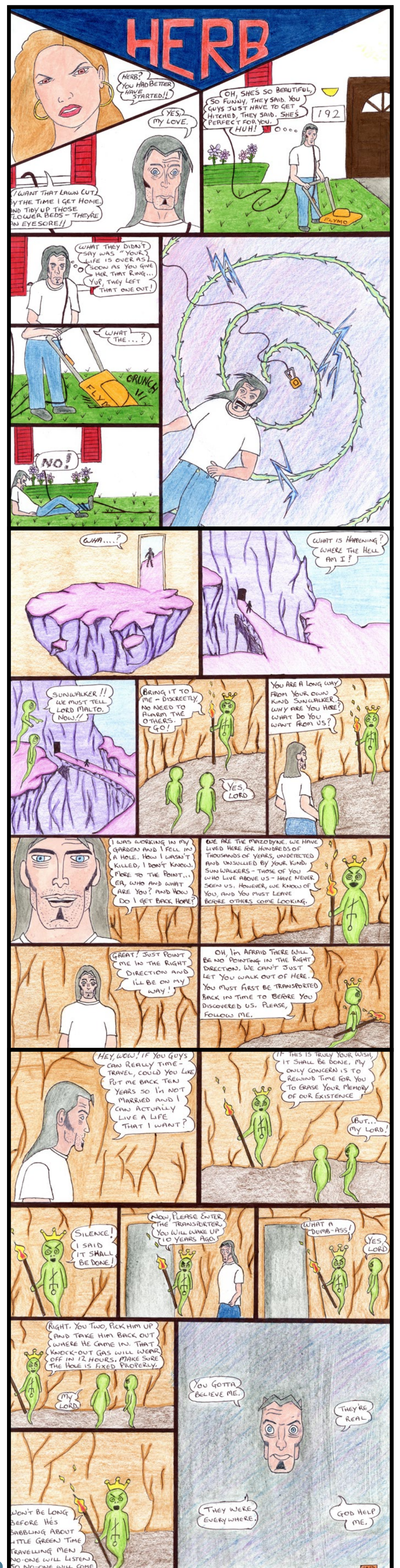
There is no doubt that there are differences between scientists, inventors and artists, however, they all share creative minds that have inspired each other to try something different and push back the boundaries in their respective fields. Undoubtedly, art would not be where it is now without the efforts of these individuals, trying to advance our knowledge and understanding, in an ever-changing world.

Craig from Shotts

1
A TREASURY OF HUMAN INHERITANCE (2000)
Christine Borland

2
BULLET PROOF BREATH (2001)
Christine Borland

3
WHERE DOES THE TUNNEL LEAD
Mark Shotts
Pencil on Paper



GO GLOW CAT GO

GLOW CAT
Jimmy Dumfries
Chalk on paper

Scientists constantly strive to find cures for HIV and AIDS. Serious research has gone into identifying these diseases, including ways of amalgamating a certain luminescent protein from a jellyfish with a rhesus macaque gene producer of an artificial protein and inserting this into feline eggs, to produce glow in the dark kittens that would show up the rogue cells. One greedy scientist, thinking to grab all the glory, stole the research and concocted his own serum. However, he over-calculated but did not realise this. He also decided to cut out the middle man, so to speak, and injected the serum straight into a live kitten. He put out the lights, and the effect was astounding! The poor moggie lit up like the Fourth of July! The scientist rushed to fetch his camera, but in his haste left the door open, and the cat escaped into the dark evening.

The kitten, now free, decided on a stroll around town. In a small darkened alleyway a young lady was snogging her boyfriend when her gaze caught the top of the brick wall. Unfortunately for her, it was at the same moment that our wee glowcat was prancing along the brick top. The poor girl's eyes shot open and she tried to scream. The scream stuck in her throat! The boy broke contact, and promptly fainted!

Old Mrs McDuggan had just baked a beautiful apple pie. She opened the kitchen window and was placing her pie on the sill to cool when Glowcat landed on the ledge. The pie flew out of her hands, landing in a mess on the newly mopped floor, and the poor old soul almost had a heart attack on the spot! Still the cat strolled on. He came upon an old deserted house and, hearing voices within, decided to investigate. A group of teenagers were engrossed in holding a séance in the darkened room, the only light coming from two candles. It was rather unfortunate that a voice intoned, "If there is anyone there please show yourself now" at that precise moment... Glowcat obliged, and landed slap bang in the middle of the table. All hell broke loose! Screams split the air as terrified teenagers fled the building! Poor old glowcat was left wondering just what was wrong with him to have such an effect.

Still he ambled on. An old drunk sat on a bench swigging meths from a bottle when Glowcat landed on his lap. He immediately lost control of his bladder, stared at the apparition before him, then at the bottle, and promptly chucked this as far as he could, swearing to sign the pledge!

Soon daylight came and the cat curled up to sleep. That night he knew that something had changed. He was back to the way he had always looked. He strolled into an alley, meeting a female cat there, and stayed with her and her friends to this day.

Frank Dumfries

Shy Boy

Sheldon's fingers flew over the keyboard. Numbers and letters made up the code that filled the widescreen monitor in front of him. Rain pitter pattered off the basement window, the bright night lights of Washington, smudged by the raindrops, twinkled in the background. The basement was cold and damp yet droplets of sweat lined Sheldon's furrowed brow. Just a few more tense minutes and he'd be finished.

At the tender age of fifteen he'd be the only person in the world to have ever hacked into the US Government's Super Computer. The computer that runs everything in the country: everything. The traffic light system. Maximum security systems in prisons. Military defence systems for the entire nation. A couple more seconds and he'd be in control of it all. And why? Just because he could.

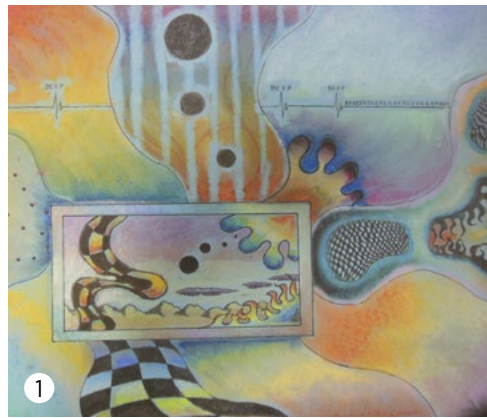
Sure, other lesser beings had tried but they hadn't even come close to succeeding and all they had got for their pathetic efforts was a red death laser straight to the brain from the Tactical Extermination & Intelligence Agency (TEIA for short).

Sheldon eased himself back into his chair and stretched out his long skeletal arms, entwining his fingers together behind his head. A sly smile slowly spread across his lips. Three years ago when most other dim-witted twelve year olds were starting high school, Sheldon had been starting his doctorate in Computer Physics. He had told all those losers that one day he would do this but, of course, none of them believed him. Nobody had ever taken his genius seriously. Well now they would have to, wouldn't they?

Because today, on 17 February 2030, Sheldon Percival Granger had just hacked into the world superpower's, Super Computer.

He was in control! He was the world superpower now!

Anon Cornton Vale



Junktown

Welcome to junk town. Plug in and change your mind. Wash your hands. Hygiene is a... coffee pot. Just add fuel. Smoking seriously harms you. Probably that or that bad cheese you ate. A craving only lasts three minutes. What's for dinner? Food poisoning... Changing nappies #unhappy

It's that type of fudge you need to have. Every little helps. Aw that stuff like stuck, you know like stuck in yae. Say it with... Rice Krispies. Mouthwash, jukeboxes and gasoline. Irreverence is my disease. Money is nature. That's why Judas wept.

Silly pointless, self-obsessed. The rise of the v-loggers. Can you take it all away? Up to 60% off. Do you think you could minimise?

Piracy will never die. From air-bed to world domination. On the trail of forgotten typewriters. It's so special and unique. I can give you five good reasons to punch a dolphin. There are dying ogres and pixies too. This is not like the future but I sense it's right up there. Moon pic... what a time to be alive. But you can't water a camel with a spoon. Swallow but nothing's forgiven. Balderdash: noun. 100 metre race for the follicly challenged. The grey chapter.

You can plug it into your phone. Switch that sound that we didn't know was there and turn it into a distant hum. There's no leaving now. Look up!

Craig Barlinnie

CREATIVE

The Book of Life

Amid all the other books, there was one that stood out from all the rest. Battered and worn, it wasn't the best-looking on the shelf, and to the everyday observer it looked as if it had been disowned by all the others. They were smart and shiny, with their top of the range dust covers, while Old Battered and Worn was shabby and dirty. The others would talk among themselves. He let their side of the library down and something would have to be done about him. How were they supposed to attract the better class of reader with him on their shelves?

Hearing of this unrest on the bookshelves, the Head of the Committee for Books decided to call a meeting to see if the situation could be resolved. After a tense and acrimonious meeting the decision was taken to ask Old Battered and Worn to leave the bookshelves.

The Head of the Committee approached Old Battered and Worn to tell him of their decision, asking him if he had anything to say in his defence.

"I have, Sir." Old Battered and Worn replied.

"I would ask the rest of the books, do they judge every book by its cover? I may well be battered and worn, and not pleasing to the eye, but over the years I have given many people pleasure and inspiration. I have entertained kings and queens, prime ministers and presidents. I have been purchased many times over the years, so I concede that wear and tear is starting to catch up with me. Sir, when I was just an idea in someone's mind, I always believed that beauty was in the eye of the beholder and it's what's inside that really matters. I'm disappointed by the decision of the other books. Hopefully, through time they will come to realise that if they are lucky like me, they may become battered and worn and what will their reaction be when the other books wish to disregard them because they may be a bit frayed round the edges? I thank you for listening Sir, and hope my words reverberate around all the bookshelves."

The Head of the Book Committee returned to the bookshelves with Old Battered and Worn's response and explained everything the old timer had said. The smart and shiny books with their fancy dust covers were ashamed. They apologised and promised that such a situation would never arise again. It's so easy to dismantle someone's feelings. It can be hurtful and cause untoward damage over the years. We all become a bit battered and frayed round the edges over the years, but as the old book says, it's what's inside that counts.

John Dumfries

1 SCIENCE MAN

Craig Greenock

Pencil on Paper

2 PINK FLOYD THE WALL

Andrew Shotts

Acrylic on Canvas

3 STUDY BY CANDLELIGHT

Karl Barlinnie

Pencil on Paper

4 ANYTIME BUT NOW, ANYWHERE BUT HERE, ANYONE BUT ME

Benno Shotts

Oil on Canvas

WRITING



FIRST TIME SUBMITTED ARTISTS AND WRITERS

1
THREE POPPIES
Sheena Greenock
Acrylic on Canvas

2
JACKDAW
Gordon Barlinnie
Pencil on Paper

3
SCIBOTIC
Mary Cornton Vale
Collage

Is Technology Robotic?

Science has been around for centuries, from the days of Galileo to present day Stephen Hawking. Science is spread over different platforms, from plant life to the universe and lots more in between. The most important area of research would most likely be the human body, and research in this area has come a long way with transplants, artificial limbs and cures.

One hundred and fifty years ago, scientists and doctors were just starting out on the long journey of discovery; what they discovered on that journey just kept getting better and better. Gone are the days of trial and error, today the scientists and doctors need to know exactly what they are doing. Although some cures have yet to be discovered; these days it's hospital one day and home shortly thereafter. Bigger operations take a little longer, and to find a cure, well that can take a lifetime.

Technology has developed from the industrial revolution to the information super highway and can be most easily seen in machinery, transport, robotics and computers. Each of these concepts has evolved dramatically over the years; the latter two are more recent and now seem to go hand in hand with science. For example a robotic limb needs a computer to make it work.

Today robotics rule over machine shops. They build cars and are also used to put circuit boards in computers. Computer technology is now used globally, and computers more or less run our lives.

Some people say science and technology make a good couple. My personal opinion is that science can only get better, but is technology always a good thing? I'm not so sure.

Thomas Glenochil



In a Field of Poppies

In a field full of real poppies
A British soldier falls,
His mates all take cover
"Medic! Medic!" his friend calls.

So senseless, so brutal
No training ground here
So, Mr Prime Minister,
How many is that now this year?

We remember those that have fallen before
With tears of sadness, God how many more?
Hundreds of thousands have lost their lives,
Making widows and orphans, please, God,
hear their cries

Conflict, war, call it what you may
The pain it causes, believe me, is here to stay
So on going to bed on this calm night
Say a prayer and remember
those who went to fight
We must all, remember them!

Chris Glenochil

Without You

Neither do I live, nor do I die.
Tell me what to do -
I want to say goodbye.

As hearts torn apart
before they were tied -
souls separated
by a chasm, so wide.
These eyes fill with
tears yet again
seeking a glimpse of you
but in vain...
Day on day,
this desolate bay.

Without you
Neither do I live
Nor do I die.

Sherry Cornton Vale

The Fat Cat

the fat rat
saw the fat cat
sat upon its box;
dread and doubt
filled its face,
a quick dash across the floor-
death or freedom awaits,
too late...
the cat has leapt

Anon Shotts



1
RISE UP WITH TECHNOLOGY
Amit Glenochil
Pencil on Paper

2
EINSTEIN
James Dumfries
Pencil on Paper

Snow

You came out of nowhere
And took me by surprise
Millions of snowflakes falling from the sky
As if to music you danced a mystical dance
I could almost hear your high notes
And looked hard for your lows
You were like a ballet of graceful flowing
Movements and little pirouettes
In my head I could hear violins
And flutes played in tune
And every so often
The whole orchestra joined in
As you neared the ground
A crescendo of sound went off in my head
As you gently laid down
And filled the land
A lovely shade of white

Eddie Shotts

Taking Sides...

Equilateral triangle where did you go?
Ran off with the hexagon up the disco
upside down circle how different you are
look at that square: it's the same as the star
where's that rectangle? Check down the sides
"Look! that isosceles is just like a slide"
Icosahedrons which face can I see?
Whose side to take is a dilemma for me.

George Barlinnie

Marvellous Springs

We have been to Mars and moon
We have reached to stars and Neptune
We have created more deadly equipment than ships
We have created computers and micro chips

Every day brings new inventions of technology
Every day we discover something new in biology
Every day we find treatments for many deadly diseases
Every day mankind produces many new masterpieces

We have built nuclear weapons
We have created more deadly equipment than cannons
We have accomplished magnificent things
We have seen many marvellous springs

We have made progress in every field
Yet wounds are left untreated and unhealed
Human beings are dying under oppression
In refugee camps and under aggression

In the ongoing wars and under walls
Under bad governments, dictators and fireballs
Still we think we are champion of human rights
While humanity is crying and dying in dark nights

Javed Low Moss

Evo

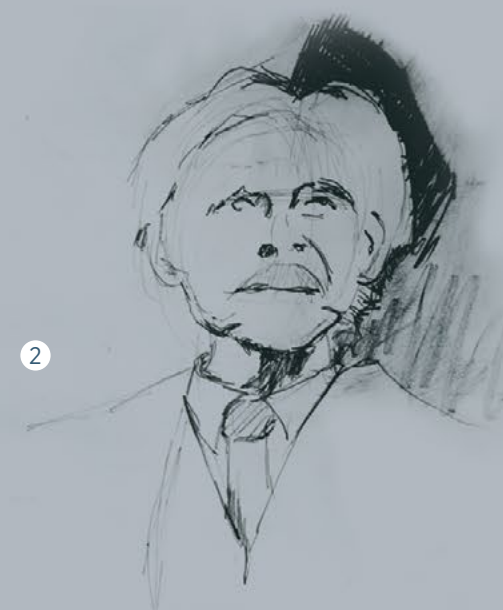
Perhaps The Hand of God?
Or quantified by time gone by.
As basic as the search for food,
The blueprint for the future brood.
From cell in man to man in cell,
Existence carries on,
Passed from she to him to me,
Each draft a chance to set life free.
From fire fly to Einstein's brain,
Same blueprint not all result the same.
Mona Lisa's smile, the SS shame
Nature or nurture, what to blame?
Good and bad who's to say,
As man blows the gods away.

Richard Glenochil

Earth in F#

Cosmic
Strings
Space time
Created by mass
Ripples falling slowly away
In every direction sounds like bells
What tunes do planets play
Planets of gas
Iron cores
Spinning
Ringing

Stephen Barlinnie



Book

The Martian

Andy Weir

The Martian was first published independently in 2013 by its author. This edition was promoted by the literacy-focused charity The Reading Agency, who host the annual 'World Book Night' event. Our librarian selected this sci-fi thriller for our informal reading group and, unable to put the book down until it was finished, I have to say, she picked a corker!

RE

Set mainly on Mars, sometime in the very near future, this is a tale of an astronaut's attempt to survive against all the odds. It's Robinson Crusoe for the twenty-first century. Fast paced, engaging and with plenty of dark humour, we follow the main character's commentary through the form of his extensive and hilarious log entries. It's probably time to introduce him.

Mark Watney is an astronaut and part of a manned mission to Mars. It's a place where, as you can imagine, when things go wrong it usually spells disaster. Unfortunately for Mark, things couldn't be much worse and his life is on the line. He's also an engineer and a botanist, which should come in handy when he doesn't have enough food to survive. Once he's figured this out, and how to 'make' water, breathable air, a way to communicate with Earth, heat and power...well...then he can concentrate on the rest of his problems.

Being stranded on Mars is obviously terrifying, but Watney deals with this in two ways. Firstly, he is remarkably ingenious and secondly, he is hysterically irreverent. Some of his messages (broadcast worldwide) are hilarious and break up the tension that the author creates in the form of challenging obstacles and the ever-present threat of death. But what happened to his crew, who unwittingly left him stranded on Mars? Will he survive? For the answers to these and many other questions, such as, 'How many calories are in a potato?', you will have to read the book.

I enjoyed this book immensely and would recommend it to anyone who is even mildly interested in space travel. It is wonderfully researched and everything about living (or trying to) on Mars is considered. As a final comment, I should really quote the protagonist:

LOG ENTRY: SOL 6

"I'm pretty much f**ked.

That's my considered opinion. F**ked."

Gareth Shotts



Album

I Forget Where We Were

Ben Howard

I Forget Where We Were by Ben Howard, is the follow up to the critically acclaimed Every Kingdom, the album which won the singer-songwriter two Brit awards in 2013 and a nomination for The Mercury Music Prize in 2012.



VIEWS

I am blown away by the man's talent! Just quite how he is not a name on everyone's lips is beyond me. He is a magician with a guitar and his lyrics are spellbinding. Ben Howard is a kaleidoscope of musical genius. Ed Sheeran should take some notes. In saying that, Ben Howard could be described as the anti-pop star. You see very little of him on TV or in the printed media. In a rare appearance on 'Later with Jools Holland', he hid behind his band when introduced. He prefers to let his music do the talking. You never find him name-dropping or hanging out with celebrity friends. The 27-year old Devon-born Howard has spent the proceeds of his million-selling debut album Every Kingdom on a house near where he grew up. The two major requirements when he started househunting were a place near family and friends, and enough space to build his own recording studio. In a rare interview he stated,

"There's no chance to get an ego with my mates, as they constantly take the mickey. They're the most important people in my life besides family and I am blessed they all understand my lifestyle."

He came across as more affable than his introverted reputation suggests. Of that reputation he said,

"I am really opinionated when I want to be but I'm just not loud. That's why I'm not on Twitter as everything seems to be on CAPS lock. Plus, I don't have time to answer every question I'm asked. I don't want that responsibility either. What if I say the wrong thing in such a public domain?"

This goes a long way to explaining Howard's reputation for awkwardness with the media. But there is more to it than being shy of attention. He said,

"I've just deleted my entire Instagram, I was frustrated by everything on it. Creating a character and having to stand by it; explaining everything to strangers – you're a different person every five years. People say I'm difficult but I'm not. I'm a bit shy but it's funny how I can sing in front of an audience and get up on stage."

I Forget Where We Were is the sound of Howard exploring new areas, in particular on the track, End of the Affair. Those who saw Howard perform on 'Later' will know the intensity and raw emotion on the track. At over seven minutes long, it is the album's central track. Listening to this one song will leave you wanting more.

Track 1, Small Things is a beautifully written song about how insignificant things seem when you lose love. You'll be grabbed by the hauntingly sensational melody.

Track 2, Rivers in your Mouth creates an atmosphere of freedom to speak and to not feel ok:

"I am not myself today.

I am not feeling ok"

You know how sometimes things are boiling inside of you and eventually it all comes flooding out...? It's about that feeling of relief in the aftermath.

Track 3, I Forget Where we Were is a slow-builder, describing the moment you realise a relationship is stagnant. Do you hold on for better times? By the end of the song, having been pulled along by rolling, marching drums and a wonderfully simple riff, you might just realise peace comes from listening to each other.

Other highlights on the album include the stunning and expansive Time is Dancing, and the title track I Forget Where We Were. Track 6, Time is Dancing is a must-listen for anyone who has had a relationship with someone who can't cut the apron strings.

It's obvious to see I'm a fan of Ben Howard. Not just for his wonderful music that, when you pay attention, draws all sorts of sensations and emotions, but for the man he is. His reputation as introverted and awkward, is inaccurate. He is in my opinion someone who knows his own mind and heart, and realises it's ok to show emotion. He is not your typical pop star. He actually keeps it real.

"I'll never complain about this job. I've been very fortunate and whatever happens with this record, I'll never take it for granted".

There is no celebrity persona from Howard. He is a down-to-earth young man who is aware of his talents and abilities. He doesn't crave fame or attention; he simply loves to make music. I could listen to him sing the phone book and come back for more.

This album is honest and heartfelt. Full of intense emotion and like Howard himself a source of motivation. He makes you consider your relationships –

"Hello love

My invisible friend

For you I have so many words

But I, I Forget Where We Were"

Everybody forgets where they are sometimes... we get lost in life... especially in this mad, busy, media-led world.

Stephen Dumfries

Tim Robertson, CEO of the Koestler Trust, visited Shotts for his last ever prison visit. Luckily, the STIR Editorial Team got the chance to interview him, before he stepped down after nine wonderful years, to discuss how he became involved in the Koestler Trust, the importance of prisoners' art and what he has personally learned while working there.

What attracted you to become the Chief Executive of Koestler?

The glory, the money, the power (laughs)...well no, my degree was in English Literature and I knew, in my early 20's that I needed to see a bit of life. I had had a very comfortable, middle class upbringing. I first volunteered, working with HIV sufferers in the 1980's and then spent 14 years working as a social worker in the London borough of Camden. Camden is a tough neighbourhood and the projects there, that I saw working, were not the standard, researched and evidence based psychology informed ones, but rather arts based. These had the most visible positive effects for me. At this time the Koestler Trust came along and it was a mix of both arts and social help project. It had no money at the time, there was just me and two other girls, a desk and a phone. I said to the trustees at the time, "I don't know if I can save this".

What do you think are the main things you have learned while working with Koestler?

I think I've learned that prisoners have extraordinary insights and a creative fierceness, a creative intensity, a passion for creating art. I've also learned that there is a requirement for cultural and social change, as well as individual personal change. Obviously there is a need for personal change and development for individual prisoners, so that they can reintegrate and become citizens, but in order to do this there is a requirement for the attitudes of society to change in order to facilitate this. There are a lot of social and cultural barriers that prevent this reintegration process. One of the things that art and Koestler does is hopefully to break down some of these barriers.

We just wanted to say that Koestler is a big thing for us. It brings people to the Learning Centre who otherwise don't engage with this part of the prison.

Coming and presenting Koestler awards is, I think, the most moving thing I've ever done in my life. That is what Arthur Koestler, after spending ninety days in that Spanish prison cell in 1936, understood. He absolutely understood how powerful it would be if what he created could get out and be seen, judged and get something back. All we really do at Koestler is say 'well done', and I've been really moved and amazed at how powerful that is and I've seen how much that can mean through a long sentence.

Thank you for taking the time to come and visit us. We really appreciate it, and good luck!

Eddie and Gareth Shotts

THE KOESTLER TRUST'S TIM ROBERTSON

1
TIM ROBERTSON

Craig Shotts

*Pencil on Paper with
Recycled STIR Issues*

Why do you feel that it's the arts that encourage people to engage?

I think there are four basic levels of human experience – body, mind, heart and soul – so physical, intellectual, emotional and spiritual. You have to engage all four if you are going to create art that will ring true to you and to reality. If you think of other kinds of interventions, such as psychological, it only operates on one or two of these levels. The arts don't work for everybody but for me the arts are a way to reach a great many people. It's a way we get to truthfulness and we all judge art on the basis of 'does it ring true'.

Do you think the Koestler Trust has changed the prison system for the better?

That's a very good question. I guess what we try to do is be both establishment and radical. We have to maintain a good relationship with the prison authorities, otherwise they wouldn't support us. We give motivation, a spur and encouragement, for prisoners to express themselves and get their art out to be seen by members of the public. I'm always impressed at how all the prison systems (English, Welsh, Scottish and Irish) allow art to be submitted and displayed that is very critical of the prison system. I don't know if we've changed the prison system but I think we're a very good force within it. Great Britain is the only country in the world that has a national competition and exhibition for its prisoners. When I visit other countries they are green with envy and I feel I have been the custodian of that tradition over the past nine years.

Do you think there is a difference between prisoners' art and the art produced by people who aren't in prison?

In some ways, no...in some ways, yes. Many of the issues that come out of prison are about life and love but there are some specific things that come out of prison, specifically the poignancy with which prisoners can reflect on prison life and comment on that. Also, you have a perspective on the outside world that the rest of us simply don't have, because you're taken out of it you sometimes get an objectivity and an insight into it that other people don't see. I also think that it's the very fact of imprisonment, for people who would normally be busy living or be from a disadvantaged background and not have had the opportunity to draw, paint or write poetry.

What do you think of the entries you received from Scotland for last year's Koestler competition?

One of the huge pleasures of my time at the Koestler Trust is at the way we have been able to engage with the work from Scotland. We've made a few trips up to visit, organized exhibitions in Scotland. The quantity of entries we have received in my nine years has increased four times and, as well as the exhibitions in Glasgow/Edinburgh, it also features prominently at our displays at the South Bank Centre. This, unfortunately, is in stark contrast to what's happening down south where the numbers of entries are declining. This is because of budget cuts and changes in policy and the whole putting out to the market of criminal justice services. It's all done so much better in Scotland.

What would you say to someone who has never entered the Koestler competition?

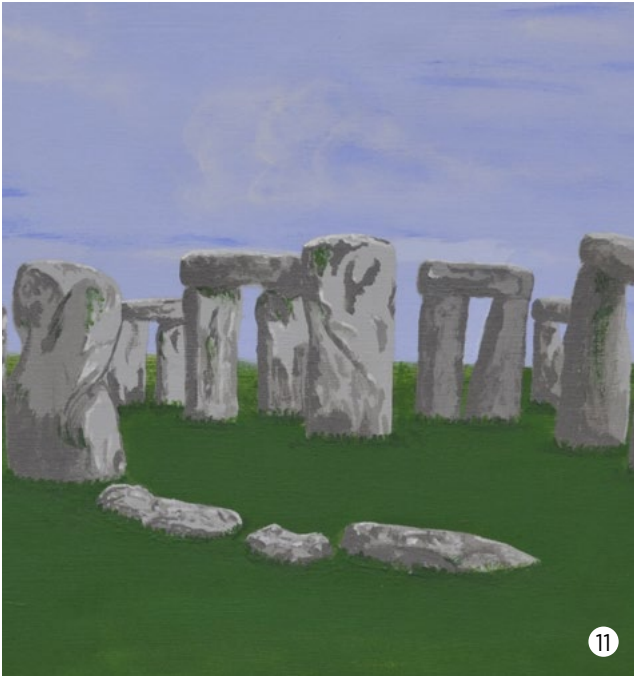
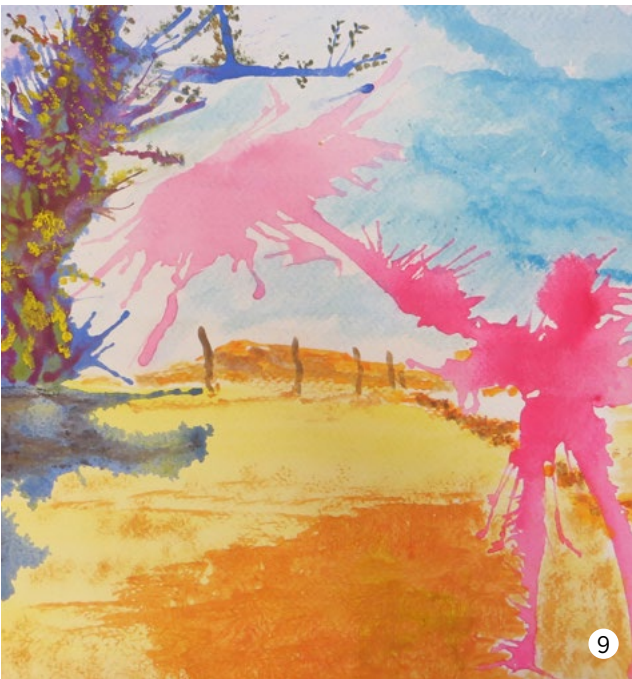
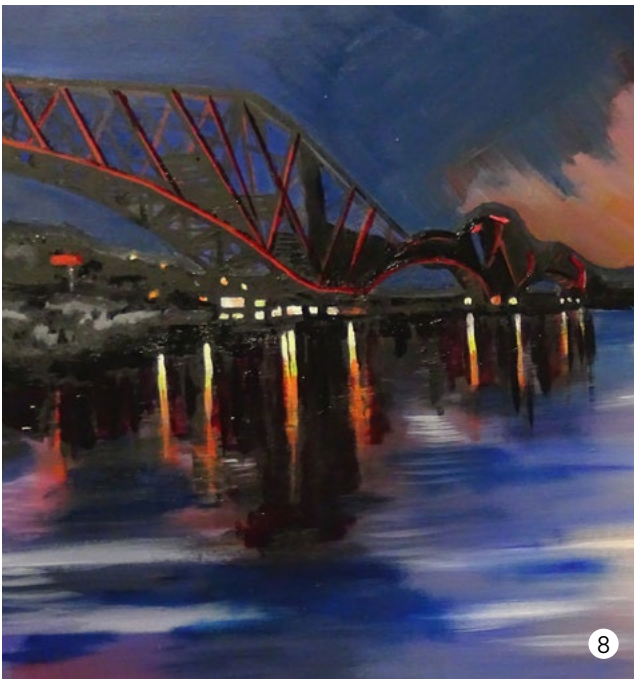
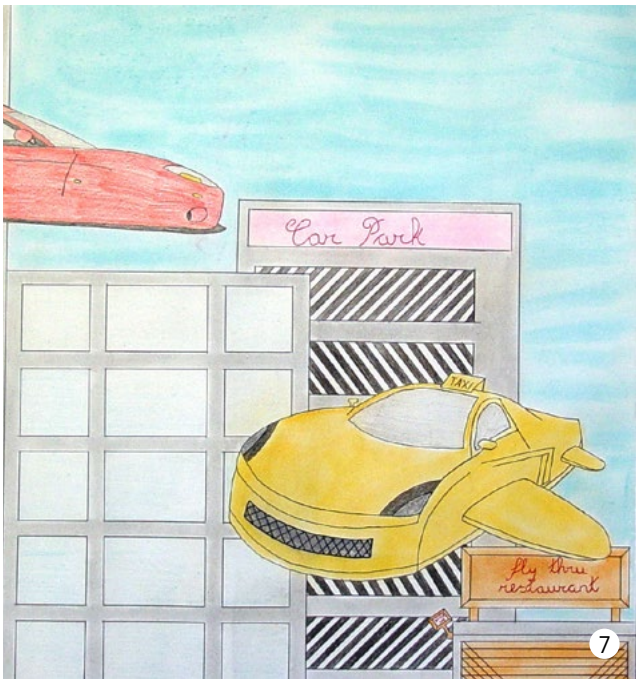
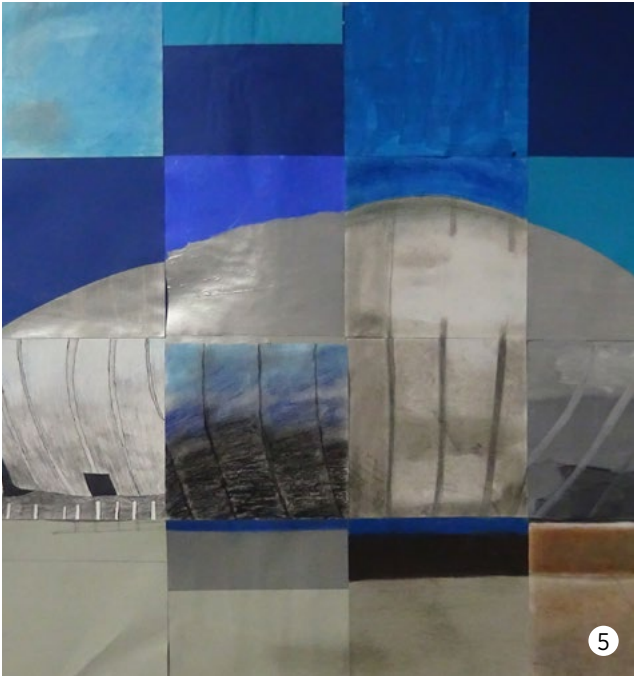
When we do our outreach visits to prisons we do a slideshow and we try to show, as much as possible, prisoners who have done well in the Koestler awards and particularly the art, creative projects, painting or match sculpture that has been done in a cell. The simple pieces are often the things that do well. We've all got something to say; you don't need the most expensive easel and the best oil paints to say it.

I know you're coming to the end of your time at Koestler. Have you any plans for the future, after Koestler?

I've done the same as I did when I left my social work job ten years ago; throw the cards in the air and see where they land. I've got a couple of bits of freelance work and then hopefully a role will come up as a director in an arts project. I realised last summer that I've thought as much as I can and said as much as I can about arts in the criminal justice system. The Koestler Trust needs to make its next step. I've taken it as far as I can.

1





Feedback from Questionnaire

There needs to be something that could engage more people taking part and submitting entries. Would like to see more entries for music.

The concept of themes is a good one, perhaps some could be more controversial. STIR seems safe and avoids tough matters.

It's too focused on looking good (maybe that's for people outside such as the public and charities etc, that help finance and support it) rather than being focussed on the people in prison reading it.

I would change nothing, it is good the way it is.

Winning Artwork for Issue Ten

Visual Art

Andrew Shotts - *Paris at Night*

Using oil paints, Andrew has produced a beautiful and classic image of the Eiffel Tower. The emphasis of the lights creates a serene setting with wonderful results.

Written

Nathan Dumfries - *Unaboriginal*

A minimilistic poem, using couplets, that is hard hitting and honest about a subject that is probably overlooked by many.

In the Gallery

1
SELF PORTRAIT
Jason Barlinnie
Acrylic on Canvas

2
THE POWER HOUSE
Patrick Greenock
Pencil on Paper

3
FLOWERS
Scott Greenock
Origami with STIR Magazines

4
BATTLE OF THE SOMME
David Shotts
Oil on Canvas

5
SCIENCE CENTRE
Group Low Moss
Collage

6
PURPLE LADY
Harvey Shotts
Acrylic on Canvas

7
FLYBY
Mohammed Dumfries
Pencil on paper

8
FORTH RAIL ILLUMINATIONS
Robert Low Moss
Oil on Canvas

9
TRANSFORM
James Dumfries
Watercolour on Paper

10
MICHAEL'S FERRARI
Paul Glenochil
Acrylic on Canvas

11
STONEHENGE
Mark Shotts
Acrylic on Canvas

12
KILLER BEE
Alan Shotts
Acrylic on Canvas

ST/R

Call for submissions for Issue Thirteen

The theme for our next issue is
Comedy and Humour.

What makes you laugh?

What would make others laugh?

Why is humour important to you,
and for society as a whole?

**The following is a list of things that might
encourage humour (allegedly):**

- Favourite comedians
- Caricatures
- (Funny) Jokes
- Cartoons
- Funny stories and anecdotes
- Satirical or comic sketches
- Memories of funny situations
that bring smiles
- Humorous dialogues

Please send in your submissions
by 30 October 2015.

CONTACT

Submit your work to your New College
Lanarkshire Learning Centre through
the following contacts:

WENDY MILLER
HMP Barlinnie

MARISA FARRELL
HMP YO1
Cornton Vale

EM STRANG
JOHN OATES
HMP Dumfries

RACHEL CLIVE
HMP Glenochil

TESSA DUNLOP
JACCI STOYLE
HMP Greenock

RACHEL WEBB
HMP Low Moss

IÑIGO GARRIDO
HMP Shotts



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