

## **PAINTINGS AND/OR THINGS**

When looking at these paintings all I could think about was my childhood school principal. I don't know why he came to mind. Growing up in fear of him was awful. He was such a harsh man that used to go red with anger and scream at everyone for the smallest of indiscretions. One day he drove past me as I was happily wandering to school. He stopped his car and screamed at me for being messily dressed. I had my blue button up shirt un-tucked from my grey trousers and my navy blue and yellow striped tie was crooked. He told me as soon as I got to school to go to his office. He made me stand outside his office facing a red brick wall and wait there to speak to him. I remember the secretary asking me what I had done. He made me wait there for ages. He eventually called me in and said I was disrespectful and told me to wear my school uniform properly even when outside school grounds because I was representing the school no matter where I was. He was such an intimidating bastard. I hated him. I always wished bad stuff would happen to him. I Googled him and apparently he had a brain tumour and died last week.

Neville, I'm sorry if my bad wishes had anything to do with it. I was just a kid.

When I walk to work in the early mornings, past the fucked up crowds spilling out of the Vauxhall nightclubs, I have to negotiate my footing, being careful not to slip on the sea of nitrous oxide canisters covering the streets and park. Some canisters are still shiny, new. Others old and rusted. A history of 'highs'. The canisters colloquially known as nangs or whippets, are used as a recreational drug. Discovered in 1798 as a medical anaesthetic, English society became very interested in the euphoria inducing properties of laughing gas. It became very popular and it was common for the upper class to organize 'laughing gas parties' for amusement. They are inhaled by either using a cream charger device or releasing the gas into a balloon before breathing it in. When the gas is released from the charger it is extremely cold and can cause frostbite, so the gas is warmed up inside the balloon. The effect is a short burst of shifting reality and dissociative hallucination, alternating perception for a very brief period.

The park I pass through is the Vauxhall Pleasure Gardens. Between 1661 & 1859 people used to flock to this landscaped 'theme park' to be entertained and take the fresh air. They could experience all manner of nonsense – jugglers, orchestras, tightrope walkers, fireworks, sculptures, alfresco dining in elaborately decorated rotundas, thousands of lanterns lighting the park, singers, prostitutes, and even balloon ascents. It was possible to ascend in a tethered hot air balloon above the park. The pleasure garden was very much a euphoric escape, lifting the patrons albeit briefly from the realities of London's noise and filth.

Escapism is seen as negative and escapists are seen as the sad folk who cant quite connect with reality. Maybe the elevated state of uncertainty feels more real than reality. A timelessness and connection to being. In the same way anyone pursues any pastime or career for that matter. For happiness, pleasure, self-fulfilment, some kind of elation or shift in sensation.

Making art is a generative process or conduit to reach ideas or sensations beyond language, deconstructing meaning, shifting reality and giving something, which is essentially nothing, the chance to become everything.

I am now writing this on the toilet. I needed a change of scenery. I'm trying to relate ideas of sensation, experience, existence. Everyone searching to find some kind of high, an elevated euphoric state in between scrambling to leave a mark behind to make sure the future remembers them.

David Turley, 2014